



Learning from the International Builders' Show

By Marty Coates, President
Home Builders Association of Dayton

Spending time in Las Vegas in January may sound like a lot of fun, but last week it was all work. Several Home Builders Association Dayton members made the trip west and reaped the rewards from working hard.

Each year, thousands of companies from around the world gather for the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) International Builders' Show® (IBS), a showcase of the latest products and technologies available to builders. More than 60,000 building industry professionals visited this year's IBS, which brought together 1,600 companies exhibiting products in more than 300 different categories spread across 750,000 net square feet space.

Innovation and environmental awareness were once again the leading themes of the show, where exhibitors premiered new products that help make the homeowner's experience easier and more enjoyable. Besides the exciting products and trends that you and your family and friends will soon start enjoying, many attendees took advantage of the 240 educational seminars offered at the show.

Today's economic conditions have changed the focus of future home buyers. A seminar titled "Consumer Preferences 2009" was standing room only as builders were searching for the desired features of new buyers. The speakers were representing the research departments from the National Association of Home Builders and Better Homes and Gardens magazine.

An impressive survey conducted by Better Homes and Gardens and presented by Gayle Butler indicated that buyers are following three trends that reflect the current living environment with focus on economics, simplification and efficiency. The trends include being "right sized", "organized" and "economized".

The trends start with 'right sized" and begins in the family room which is taking on more electronics including flat screens and complete with family entertainment such as room for Wii activities. The kitchen is now becoming "we" sized adding more furniture like islands with less cook tops but including microwaves built-in the base cabinets. Larger pantries indicate more families are buying in bulk. And eating in the kitchen is more popular then ever, as upscale homes are replacing the island with family sized tables and chairs. The desk that was once located in the kitchen is now taking on a new role in the family room as a place for family business and homework as well as supervised internet activities. This also helps in decluttering the kitchen area.

Dining rooms are becoming even less formal and less separate as they are sometimes used for casual double duty for special occasions.

Home offices are considered more important by three out of five surveyed. Even though only 5% work from home, more people are bringing more work home with them. At the very least, those planning on building should have a room that is "office ready"; meaning the ability to place office furniture comfortably with in the layout and properly prewired for all the connectivity needed for an office.

The owner's bath is becoming smaller but is still required to have the five basic fixtures; two sinks, one tub, one shower and a private toilet room. The latest request is for more storage within the bath area usually in furniture form.

For those considering their next home, 65% were looking for a second bedroom with a dedicated bathroom. This moves beyond just a guest room for occasional visitors but now shows families are considering more long term extended family stays of parents, relatives or boomerang children.

Since families seem to be staying home more often, the outdoor space is looking different. The a deck appendage overlooking large open yards is becoming less desired as the homebuyers surveyed are wanting more privacy, with a patio or deck or both that defines entertaining spaces, a separate eating area with grilling capabilities in close proximity to the home's kitchen since more food preparation is being done outside.

Next week I will go into detail on the remaining two trends presented at the International Builders Show; "organized" and "economized". So you too can begin to plan your next new home.