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## A Pitch for Technology

As homebuilders begin to examine IT (information technology) options, some are wondering what are some good places to begin the evaluation process. With an abundance of solutions on the market, some in the market suggest identifying areas that present the most value for your organization right off the bat.

Craig Schweikart, senior consultant, Shinn Consulting, Littleton, Colo., believes homebuilders should listen to their customers for a bit of guidance.

"I think right now there are two (distinct) types of buyers in the market; Generation X/Generation Y and the graying of America," says Schweikart. "Both groups have become particularly savvy when it comes to using the Internet as part of the (home buying) process."

Web-based collaboration technology is one area he believes more builders should be investing. This not only presents good value collaborating with customers, but also with subcontractors and suppliers.

"It has been clear in market surveys how much prospective buyers and prospective trade partners are using the Web," adds Schweikart. "People understand that posting to the Web is actually a very good communication vehicle/portal. I think builders are still a bit slow to adopt."

In many instances, even technology that streamlines critical areas, such as scheduling, have yet to experience strong adoption rates.

"Very few production builders use integrated scheduling," says Tom Gebes, president of BuilderMT, [www.buildermt.com](http://www.buildermt.com), Lakewood, Colo. "Think about the money being spent on rework and variance issues,

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just because of a non-integrated scheduling solution.”

Technology from BuilderMT, for example, integrates scheduling with accounting and estimating for homebuilders. Via a critical path method style, the scheduling application can maintain standardized practices and processes throughout the homebuilding process. This creates the ability for builders to share timely job progress information with partners, which ultimately leads to a reduction in overall cycletimes.

While adoption has been slow in some regards, Gebes sees more homebuilders coming around on the technology as success stories continue to permeate the market.

“I think what is going on is builders are starting to see that these solutions that are coming out really work,” adds Gebes. “Now they are getting ideas and coming to us with questions. They are starting to get excited about pushing the envelope (with some processes).”

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