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See how 2 builders satisfy consumer demand in this hot market

By [Sam Reiss](#) | on November 8, 2016 |



Although it is one of those rare “good” problems to have, it’s no mean feat keeping up with consumer demand at sales offices these days. Particularly in the low-rise sector, where supply just can’t keep up with demand, builders are faced with the heartbreak of would-be buyers who aren’t able to purchase a desired property because someone else got there first.

Managing expectations has become a top priority for builders like Heathwood and [Losani Homes](#). For Heathwood, whose recent Country Lane development in Whitby had close to 10 times the number of prospective buyers as units available, they were faced with a challenge.

“The unfortunate part of this market is that we, as an industry, just don’t have enough land to meet demand,” says Heathwood COO Bob Finnigan. “There’s lots of rhetoric out there, but in the single-family world, the problem is supply. The land is there, but we can’t access it fast enough.”

“It’s an odd thing to talk about,” says Fred Losani, CEO of Losani Homes. “We want to satisfy every purchaser coming through our door. After 40 years in the business, we cherish taking care of every customer. It’s an unusual thing to deal with. To see it happening in such volume teaches you a lot of humility. We recognize how fortunate we are and how thoughtful we have to be with our current and prospective buyers.”

All they can do is be proactive and transparent, which has meant a renewed focus on customer service, particularly when it comes to keeping would-be buyers informed. Some, like Losani, are using a tiered system that speaks to their most loyal customers, which is their Loyalty Club members. Registering and

staying abreast of what's going on at your favourite development is key for homebuying success in this competitive market.

During their "Reveal Program," an online education platform for prospective buyers, Losani says their goal is to educate registrants as much as possible so that they can make an informed and confident buying decision, rather than showing up to a sales office and having to buy that same day without having information in advance.

Their boutique Reveal Program provides registrants information in a strong macro to micro format. Registrants are sent aerial and location information, giving them a sound understanding of the area and community, then they are sent video trailers and area amenities. In the later stages of the Reveal Program they are sent the site plan, grade conditions, features and finishes, floor plans, and finally their preview invitation.

All this pertinent information is all sent before sales begin. Losani saw great success with the program for the launch of their Woodlands community in Ancaster, which featured desirable singles on court lots backing onto conservation land. Allowing prospective Woodlands buyers to truly understand the location and product prior to purchasing was of great value to them and provided confidence in their decision to buy a Losani home.

Losani's Loyalty Club, which encompasses trade suppliers, business associates, and previous Losani homeowners, offers the same VIP benefits. To ensure that both groups have a fair opportunity, the company limits the number of units they'll sell in the first round of purchases to Loyalty Club members.



Country Lane by Heathwood Homes

"We may have a week-long Loyalty Club event and a VIP event after that, but we make sure we've maintained the opportunity to buy. Both groups are offered quality homes available in all lot and product categories. We won't sell out at the first event," says Losani. "We try to have a system that has a great deal of respect for the buyer. We don't want camp-outs, people waiting in line. We believe that when you're spending this amount of money, it has to be very respectful and enjoyable process."

Finnigan agrees. They, too, work within a tiered system of communication, where only those invited to opening events have eventual access to full specs and floor plans online. Experience has taught them to be well prepared. "Like life, you mitigate any anxiety with the right information and enough of it, rather than sitting in the dark waiting for a door to open and being thrust through it," he says. "You have to know where you stand."

Being fair is as important as being transparent; Losani Homes runs group Preview Events, which are by-appointment presentations to 70 or 80 people. Attendees pick up a hard copy of the material they received during the digital program, and attend an informative 15-minute presentation by staff, who outline the rules for buying and how to move forward with a purchasing appointment.

The presentation is followed by a Q&A and the distribution of product brochures. There's always a full-service café on the go as potential buyers can then take their time to wander the office, exploring touchscreens and talking to staff, who sometimes number in excess of 20 for the night.

Later in the week, all attendees of the week's previews are emailed instructions for an online booking system that opens at noon, where they can book an appointment to buy. "They already know what they need to come qualified," Losani says. "They pick a slot and identify what they want. It has worked really, really well and overall, has been well received by our Loyalty Club and VIP members. They appreciate the consideration we have for their time."

Heathwood also makes sure buyers have everything they need online before their sales appointment, right down to a copy of the offer they can send to a lawyer. Such a market often gives builders the luxury of not having to accept conditional offers, so they do everything they can to make sure potential residents are qualified in advance. "By the time they come in, it's basically a matter of picking a lot," Finnigan says.

On sales days, having sufficient professional staff on hand and ensuring efficient processes are in place help everyone stay positive about the project and the builder. Finnigan says he's spent the day signing off on offers himself on occasion. Mitigating potential disappointment has become a concern even after a project sells out; Losani says that at Park Avenue, phase one at Central Park in Hamilton, they offered everyone who wasn't able to buy a home at VIP Sales elevated status for their next phase, as well as an exclusive bonus offer that can be used at Astoria Grand, opening this November in Ancaster.

Even with the best planning, there are bound to be a few party-crashers, and pains are taken to make sure they, too, leave smiling. "People just want to be treated with dignity," Finnigan says.