CASE STUDY: WHAT M/I HOMES DID TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Overview

The home buying process is stressful for most buyers and can be even more daunting and overwhelming for first-timers or those with complex circumstances or needs.

M/I Homes, one of the largest homebuilders in the nation, recognized that their website, mihomes.com, is a critical pillar of the M/I customer experience. It introduces visitors to its unique brand promise, diversity of community locations and array of home product offerings.

As such, M/I's leadership wanted to leverage the site to help simplify the buying process and reduce the stress on buyers.

The company decided to embark on a website redesign using Sitecore that would deliver a more user friendly and relevant web experience. The aim would be to: 1) create a more intuitive and engaging experience for both prospects and customers and 2) consolidate and simplify existing website features.

Market Reality

In today's real estate market, a company's website is often the organization's first opportunity to make a good impression on potential clients as they begin their home-buying journey.

Research shows that design options and personalization together are the #2 driver of new homes, after location. The websites of industry leaders must excel in homepage design and navigation, enabling users to find the content they need to propel the home buying process forward. M/I stood to improve its industry position significantly by providing design-options content and an interactive interface.

Business Opportunity

M/I already had a digital partner to provide website and marketing content, but still needed a technology expert to build out the site.

M/I decided to work with Fusion Alliance to strategically think about its website and long-term goals.

Objectives

- *Build website on Sitecore so that marketing can leverage the product's marketing and analytics*
- *Reduce stressfulness of buying process*
- *Redesign M/I Homes website to be more intuitive and engaging, streamlining and simplifying customer experience*
- *Use Sitecore to deliver relevant content faster and improve internal M/I processes*
- *Provide an online experience that produces lifetime loyalty to M/I Homes*

Approach

- *Identify core challenges, different user needs and preferences in each market*
- *Build use cases beyond basic requirements of website*
- *Work with third-party digital team to deliver more relevant content*
- *Create additional functionality and features, such as personalized searches*

Business Impact

- *M/I's marketing team can better curate website content with improved functionality*
- *Simple, more user-friendly site offers more content than competitors' and attracts and retains more customers*

Keys to Success

- *Clear understanding of how business goals integrate with technology*
- *Trust in partner's experience and expertise*

Partnering together, they identified core challenges their new website launch would overcome, including a lack of consistent branding and messaging, different needs and preferences in each market, and difficulty finding relevant information. Then they would employ Fusion's technology expertise to execute the vision.

M/I Homes' Solution

M/I's search for an industry-leading technology expert led them to partner with Fusion to get the project moving.

Fusion suggested Sitecore as the new web content management system (CMS) and helped M/I lay out the process to implement it. **M/I and Fusion's goal for the new website was to deliver the right buyers to the right homes, faster.** The premise is that the more the website can set buyers up for success, and the better the information it provides, the faster homebuyers will be able to move through the process.

Fusion built out use cases beyond the basic requirements of the new website and worked with the third-party digital team to include more relevant content. As a result of Fusion's work, M/I is now able to grow the capabilities of their website in significant ways.

Using the new CMS, M/I marketing can now publish web content and new material more rapidly to better meet market and client needs. With Sitecore's marketing and analytics tools, marketing is equipped to make better decisions to improve the customer experience. Front-line teams now evaluate content success and make necessary changes. The website also features more content, including rich content pages that have improved information quality overall.

The new website also includes an overall search feature that allows users to search the entire site using filters based on their specific needs. Initial website research showed that there are different needs based on buyer type and market, and this overall search feature allows users to find relevant, specific information, which creates an individualized experience.

Partnering with Fusion, M/I was able to successfully create an online experience that met its goals of catering to the needs of home buyers and streamlining the organization's internal processes for creating and publishing relevant content.

Relevant Takeaways

In a data-driven, digital world, consumer behavior demands a change in the way companies operate. To stay ahead of the curve, organizations must:

- Prioritize the organization's online brand
- Create an online presence that caters to individual needs while providing relevant and focused information
- Implement up-to-date digital technology that allows for customization to meet ever-changing corporate and client demands

By seeking a partner experienced in leveraging technology and executing strategic vision, businesses are poised to better compete with other industry leaders and achieve their desired results.

M∕I HOMES

About M/I Homes

M/I Homes is a homebuilding company founded in 1976 and headquartered in Columbus, Ohio.

M/I Homes is one of the largest homebuilders in the nation and currently has homebuilding operations in nine states. For more than 40 years, M/I Homes has prided itself on its guiding principle of "treating the customer right." It has fulfilled the home-owning dreams of more than 100,000 people.

Fusion Alliance

About Fusion

Fusion Alliance delivers actionable insights, customer experiences and human-driven technologies that transform the way our clients envision and shape their businesses.

That's why businesses across multiple industries have relied on Fusion's expertise and partnership for over 25 years. Fusion Alliance is the catalyst that moves your ideas to execution.

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