



YOU'VE GOT THEY NEED

ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS CONVINCING THEM!

by Laurence Weinstein



“YOU” are the manufactured and modular homebuilders.

“THEY” are close to 80 million boomers and their parents.

Find a need and fill it

When I first started my successful design/build business 40+ years ago, a wise old timer in the industry told me to choose the potential market I want to reach, find out what they really need...and then find a way to fill that need! Following his words of wisdom helped me to consistently succeed for over four decades in both the best of times...and the worst of times.

The enormous age 50+ housing market

The current U.S. population over age 50 includes about 80 million people, with another 40 plus million to be added to its ranks by 2020...and is the fastest growing market today. Someone turns 50 years of age every six seconds. They control 80 percent of all money in U.S. savings and loan institutions and 77 percent of all privately held financial assets. The mature market is credited with half of all discretionary spending in the United States. They control 70 percent of the disposable income in America. It's simple math.

One-third of the nation controls two-thirds of the spending capital.

At least one in five Americans is affected by a functional limitation that impacts everyday living activities. Over 54 million Americans of all ages have some form of permanent disability, and millions more incur an unexpected short term disability that can last for months and even years. In addition, the large baby-boom generation are now in their 50's, and as they enter this new life-stage, face changing physical needs requiring practical changes in the home to accommodate these needs. What's more, many are facing important decisions regarding lifestyle options for their aging relatives, such as the challenge of caring for an aging parent or other family member in their homes, or adding a backyard cottage to afford them privacy.

Personal happiness and independence are deeply affected by our level of ability to perform everyday living tasks and activities—especially within our own homes. Even for perfectly healthy individuals, our ability to successfully cook and bathe efficiently and safely is often seriously impeded by the way most homes have been designed and built through the years.

Homes which were reasonably convenient when we were younger and in good health, can cause serious problems in later years, or for anyone, be they 8 or 80, who may incur an unexpected injury or illness affecting their ability to easily walk, bend, grasp, or see. As our lifestyles and needs change...so should our homes be changed to meet those new needs.

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Steps leading up to the front door create a potential hazard for youngsters and adults, and a major obstacle for anyone with mobility impairment. Narrow hallways and doorways are hard to get through when our hands are full of groceries, or carrying a young infant, or for someone using a walker or in a wheelchair. Round door knobs can be tricky to use for the small hands of children as well as the arthritic hands of adults. Trying to get something from upper cabinet shelves can be a challenge for anyone who is short or has difficulty stretching and reaching. Getting in and out of the shower can be difficult and getting in and out of a bathtub can be almost impossible; lower kitchen and bathroom cabinet shelves are almost impossible to reach into. Poor lighting makes it difficult and at times dangerous to perform simple daily tasks. Wrong selection of building materials increases heating and cooling costs while wasting energy. Wrong finish materials make house cleaning unnecessarily difficult.

Build homes that people really need...and then successfully market them!

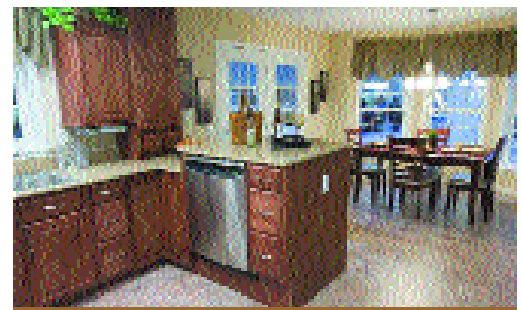
I strongly suggest that the factory homebuilding industry: A) design and build beautiful and functional homes incorporating practical Universal Design features, while incorporating certain green-build materials and energy saving products that will allow people of all ages and abilities to better perform daily living tasks and activities while saving time, money, and energy; and B) combine these benefits with the advantages that off-site built homes already have over site-built homes; then finally C) develop and launch a broad national industry involved consumer targeted PR marketing campaign to make millions of potential homebuyers across America realize that buying factory built homes is really the only way to go!

I spent over 45 years in the homebuilding industry as an architect, product designer, builder, and remodeler, and through all those years I had no idea that the industry even existed until, in 2002, I was approached by Champion Enterprises who gave me a “crash course” on the how’s, what’s, and why’s of factory built homes.

I had offices in four major cities, lots of ongoing work, and everything was going great...until during the 1990’s, the time came when the subcontractors that I partnered with for decades either retired or went to be with the Lord. Much to my dismay, I discovered that many of the “new generation” of subs did not possess the experience, wisdom and reliability that my old subs possessed and I suddenly, in 1999, found myself at my wits end trying to handle the stress filled juggling act of getting done what used to be easy to do! In addition, I experienced a rapid decline of available quality straight and dry lumber, along with other needed building materials.

In March of 1999, I closed down my business and transitioned from for-profit to non-profit status and developed a national non-profit organization dedicated to teaching and showing builders, remodelers, and consumers, how to build new, and modify existing homes in such a way as to assure that people of all ages with all levels of ability, will achieve maximum, safe, and energy efficient daily living.

I find it interesting to reflect that had I known in 1999 that there was such a thing as quality factory-built homes available, I would have immediately hooked up with a quality factory homebuilder, reduced my actual work to site preparation and set-up...and most probably still be marketing new off-site built homes today with a minimum of effort and a maximum of profit!



Raise dishwasher about 6" off floor to minimize bending and back strain. Install beautiful and easy to maintain non-slip when wet flooring.



Provide full extension drawers on all lower cabinets instead of doors and fixed shelving, affords full easy access and minimized back strain and injuries. Install easy-to-grasp drawer and door handles or knobs.



Provide Energy Star qualified appliances, and cooktop with easy-to-grasp and see control pad mounted at front of unit.

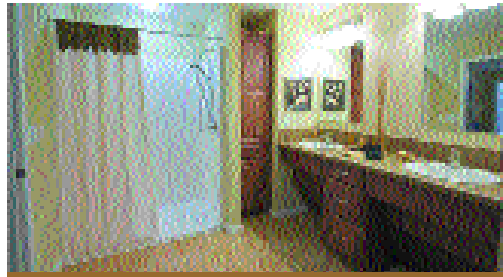
Making homes into “homes for a lifetime”

Some of the elements of a “Universal Design featured Livable Home” are: a zero-step main entry into the house; all hallways are 42" minimum width and doors 36" wide; all lower kitchen and bathroom cabinets have full extension drawers for ease of use and open finished accessible spaces underneath the kitchen sink, cook-top, and bathroom sinks; elevated, front load and front controls dishwasher and clothes washer/ dryer minimize bending; clear 5' diameter open

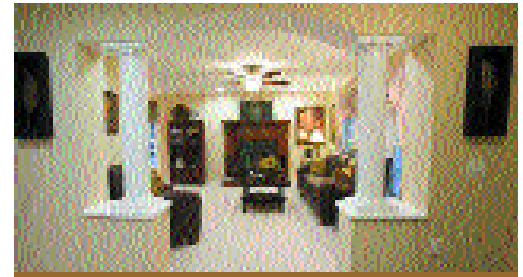
spaces in all rooms; a spacious curb-less shower; electrical outlets, light switches, and thermostat all mounted at convenient accessible heights; great energy-efficient, high output fluorescent lighting throughout the house...are just some of the needed features.

Most of these features should add little or no actual added cost to the home!

Livable Homes incorporate certain functional and esthetic universal design features that help make them usable, to the greatest extent possible, by ALL family members. The home incorporating universal design features will accommodate the needs of many different people with varying levels of ability. These features will increase a home's worth, while enhancing its beauty and functionality, resulting in optimum independent and safe living for everyone...through ALL stages of life!



Install curbless easy-to-enter and leave shower unit with ergonomic hand spray on hose, and slider type vertical safety or grab-bar. Full, open access under all sinks. Easy-to-grasp and use faucets.



Open spacious floorplan throughout the home, with 42" or wider hallways and 36" doors throughout. Install excellent Energy Star compact fluorescent lighting in all rooms and areas.

If most all of the factory homebuilders would unite and develop an ongoing national program to "brand" the factory homebuilding industry as a whole through a comprehensive PR media program...then and only then would people become aware that buying a factory built home is the only way to go!

Look at what the pharmaceutical industry has so successfully accomplished in recent years using extensive media campaigns to successfully

"brand" their products to consumers. The time is now for the factory homebuilding industry as a whole to develop a successful extensive media campaign to "brand" the merits of factory built over site-built homes. ■

For information about Universal Design featured Livable Homes, please contact the author at: lwdb@s@aol.com. Check out our website: www.livablehomes.org.

United We Stand!

Why should people buy manufactured and modular homes over traditional on-site built homes? You all know the "whys", but unfortunately most potential home buyers do not!

Some of you are concerned about what your competition within this industry are doing, instead of looking at what should be of real concern to all of you. I am referring to the on-site homebuilding industry which presently has a captive audience of the vast majority of potential home buyers who have little or no awareness of the great benefits of factory homebuilding, and unfortunately still associate the industry with "mobile homes" of years past! Until the off-site homebuilding industry unites in a concerted effort to educate the almost 80 million age 50+ consumers, most prospective home buyers will continue to buy on-site built homes.

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