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Motivate Buyers

Panel Builder Says...

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Lead Is Key

SIP Builder Says...

It Takes A SIPA Village

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HYBRID SYSTEMS GAIN MOMENTUM

TOP 9 MARKETING CHALLENGES

Solutions To Make Your Sales Soar

LEAN LESSONS IN MANUFACTURING

Improving Lives & Bottom Lines

ARE MODULAR HOME BUYERS HAPPY?

J.D. Power's Survey Measures Satisfaction

IHC Earning Business Through Design

Destination resorts, fractional ownership developments, restaurants and lodges are all prime prospects for the log and timber home industry to expand its market share beyond primary residences and vacation home properties. But how do you attract the attention of developers?

Rodney Robertson, president of International Homes of Cedar or IHC (Woodinville, WA), who recently landed a number of multi-



family and light commercial projects, says showcasing the company's innovative designs helps.

BENEFITS OF A BROCHURE

"I took over as president of IHC in 2001 and it was one of my

goals to earn more light commercial and multifamily business. Obviously, with a company that has been around for 41 years, they have tackled a number of these projects over the years. We wanted to illustrate our capabilities beyond the single-family market," Robertson says.

IHC invested in a brochure of commercial and multifamily projects with an emphasis on innovative designs. This included six steak houses in Japan, a kindergarten in South Korea with an interesting application of roof planes and a Lions Club in Carpinteria, CA, that featured glulam arches in a 5,000-sq.ft. meeting room.

The investment in photography and printing paid off. At a Tacoma Log and Timber Home Show, the brochure attracted the attention of developer Suzan McCready. She was shopping for a building system for a 10-unit multifamily project in Girdwood, AK, 35 miles south of Anchorage. "It was serendipity," says Robertson of the meeting. "We were delighted to be awarded this project. Having been born and raised in Alaska, I understand the challenges of building in this remote area."

The Girdwood design, in turn, led to an 18,000-sq.ft., 12-unit townhome project in Pagosa Springs, CO, which the company designed, manufactured and shipped in December. "It's four units per floor on a golf course. This is the first of a three-building project. Design is playing a big part in earning this business. It showcases our abilities. We have all designers and engineers in house, which means we can do custom designs for our clients."



The Alaska project, shown here and on the cover.

SINGLE-FAMILY STILL STRONG

While some builders and manufacturers are eyeing multifamily and light commercial to help fill the void left by the slowing single-family market, Robertson says it hasn't slacked off for his company.

"My experience proves our industry is slightly counter-cyclic," says Robertson. "My theory is that when the market was super heated, like it has been for the past few years, people who owned land and wanted to build their vacation or retirement homes had a hard time locating contractors. Now that the market has cooled, they're thinking now is the time to get a better price. We've had the busiest winter we've ever had. We've just been slammed." ■

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