

Reconnecting at PCBC

Premier West Coast builders' show devotes area to technology. *by Jason Knott*

SAN FRANCISCO — Held under the theme “Re-ignite, Re-explore and Reconnect,” this year’s Pacific Coast Builders Conference (PCBC), organized by the California Building Industry Association, definitely had a different ambiance compared to previous events.

While technology exhibits were clearly highlights of the conference, the housing market downturn appeared to be reflected by a corresponding downturn in attendance. When homebuilding is super busy, builders often don’t have time to attend trade shows. Likewise, when times are tough, they cut out the expense of traveling to certain events. The proximity of the event to

the Memorial Day holiday weekend may also have affected the turnout, which last year was a record-breaking 33,455 attendees. According to several exhibitors, show organizers informed them that pre-registration was down about 30 percent.

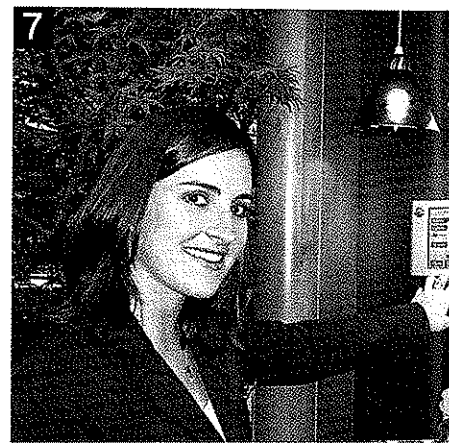
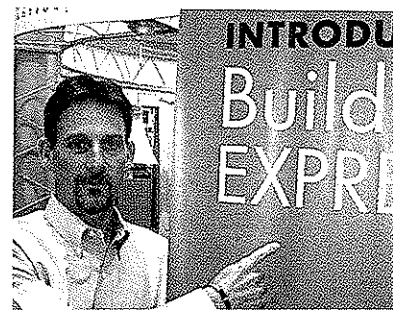
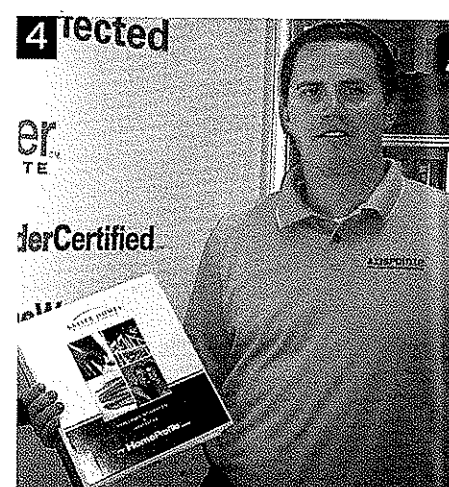
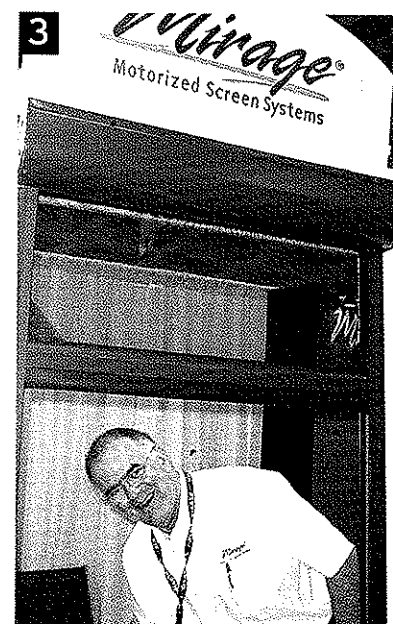
Nonetheless, PCBC managed to put on its usual first-class, well-attended event for West Coast builders. Notable features of this year’s show include expanded exhibits in the new West Hall at the Moscone Center, a beer garden where builders could relax during the show and a full slate of conference programs targeting hot topics, like online marketing, green building and how to stay lean and mean

through difficult times.

During the show, PCBC announced its 2007 Cool Products winners, voted on by 7,000 builders, architects and real estate and marketing professionals. Among the tech products taking home honors were GE and Computer Presentation Systems. On the showfloor, the HomeTECH Connect section of exhibits included many of the leading companies in the fields of software and home technology. On the educational front, there were several classes dealing with Web marketing techniques, but few classes covering home technology installations. Next year’s event takes place at the same location June 24–28, 2008.

1 | With the housing market in full gloom, PCBC organizers tried to put smiles on attendees’ faces with **street performers** outside the Moscone Center in San Francisco.

2 | **Darren Palmieri of Tyco Fire & Building Products** says the company will continue to lobby for the International Residential Code to mandate residential fire sprinklers in new homes. He commended the National Association of Home Builders for conducting a “good grass roots PR campaign,” adding that the association “absolutely distorted fire statistics” during the IRC hearing. Meanwhile, Palmieri shows off a new educational “cheat sheet” leave-behind card that Tyco has developed to attach to sprinkler valves. He estimates that up to 40,000 homes were built with residential fire sprinkler systems last year.



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3 | Ben Hume, president of Alco, ducks under the company's new Mirage automatic screen system, which uses Somfy motors and controls. The screens are well suited for outdoor applications, such as garages and porches.

4 | Andrew Smith of AxisPointe presented the four components of the SmartBuilder suite of products: HomeProfile, BuilderCertified, Builder OnCall and HomeWorx. Both BuilderOnCall and HomeWorx are warranty management systems for builders, with services ranging from answering homeowners' calls in a customized call center and creating job tickets to a complete turnkey operation that includes conducting a walkthrough of the home. Currently, AxisPointe has more than 1,200 builders and 30,000 home starts using its products, which Smith says are becoming more popular as builders look for ways to cutback on internal staff.

5 | Partnerships were on display in the Interactive Home booth, where (from left) **Ilya Billig of Lagotek, Greg Barker of InterActive Home and Stephen Holmes of Brookfield Homes** spoke about Interactive's deployment of Lagotek's wireless home control system as a standard amenity in Brookfield's new Bay Area development. The system uses Z-Wave technology to control lights, security, A/V and more from a wireless touchpanel that only needs standard 110 volts for power.

6 | For many mid-size builders, the endless paper chase in sorting documentation, invoices, faxes, etc. for supply purchase orders can be a profit killer. For years, eight of the top 20 largest builders have been using Hyphen Solutions' BuildPro to reduce waste, but what could a builder constructing 200 units per year do? Hyphen has now introduced BuildPro Express, a pared down version that maintains all

the same functionality except the ability to integrate among multiple divisions. According to **David Motes of Hyphen,** builders using the system save money on vehicle gasoline by reducing unnecessary trips and have even cut their cell phone bills.

7 | GE used PCBC to unveil its ecomagination program that incorporates 45 different products from the company, including appliances, security systems, lighting control, whole-house audio and thermostats. **GE engineer Lindsay Smith** shows off the touchpanel that displays a household's carbon footprint, electrical consumption, water consumption and solar panel generation. GE Energy's Brilliance Solar Electric Meter System won one the PCBC 2007 Coolest Product awards. The unit allows consumers to compare how much energy they are using with how much their photovoltaic system is producing in a single small display. The

unit uses 900 MHz wireless communication for flexible placement in the home.

8 | Peter Herem of Suttle displays the S1 fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) cabinet made by Suttle for Verizon and AT&T. The 28- x 14.5-inch enclosure is designed to be mounted in close proximity to the structured wiring box.

9 | (From left) Shelly Stinchcomb, John Tegen and Holly Youmans of O2 Interactive take a breather during the show. The company's OnSite CRM Buyer's Portal was the recipient of the Best Overall IT Product from the Innovative Housing Technology Awards.

10 | Kohler is bringing technology to the shower with its DTV II showering system. The system, according to Tim White from Kohler, includes waterproof stainless steel speakers made by Polk Audio, a graphical user interface that emulates an iPod and the new AmbientRain LED lighting system that mimics different atmospheric conditions.

11 | Sharp Solar recently completed a new consumer study revealing that 88 percent of Americans believe that solar panels should be an option on all new homes, according to **John Hardwick,** senior manager of training for Sharp's Solar Energy Solutions Group. Cutting electric bills is the No. 1 motivator for purchasing solar panels, says the study.

12 | Neal Manowitz of Sony displays the new CAV-CVS12ES high-definition distribution system. The unit is due out in September only through the company's Authorized Dealer Network. It distributes component video throughout the home. With the proliferation of DVRs in homes, sending video signals to different TVs in the home is gaining popularity.

13 | Nutone is more than just central vacuums and bathroom fans. The company has a whole-house audio system, including this new iPod docking station that debuted at PCBC. The dock connects with Nutone's intercom

