



# Constructive Insights

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DOORS

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### Tech Tool Trends

Web-based technology for the construction industry is not just growing in popularity, it's becoming more sophisticated.

Now that Internet access is universal to almost every builder, remodeler and trade contractor, more construction industry professionals are using Web-based technology to improve time and cost efficiencies within their businesses. Web-based cost estimating, scheduling, design, project management and bar-coded tool tracking systems are just a few tech tools now considered construction industry standards.

As long as everyone is plugged into an Internet connection, work orders and contracts can be delivered electronically to contractors; changes to design and layout can be seen real time by everyone involved in a project; double entry of cost data is eliminated; and a bar-coding system can pinpoint the exact location of a tool or document whenever, wherever and by whomever.

### Automating the Selection Process

After getting frustrated with a custom builder who built his own home, Andy Elsbury, founder and president of Indianapolis-based Custom Partnership Network, developed Web-based software SelectionWare. SelectionWare allows custom builders to organize and automate the selection process and keep track of schedules, change orders and costs throughout the building process. Custom builders purchase the product and training from SelectionWare and then pay a fee for each home they build using the program.



With the tool, the builder, trade partners and home buyers have access to blue prints, specs, selections and schedules, so everyone stays on the same page. If a customer needs to pick out an exterior door, she can select from her builder's options shown on SelectionWare or find her own door on the Web and upload the product information on her SelectionWare site for the builder to see. With its visual communication capabilities, SelectionWare can become a custom builder's virtual design center or complement an existing center, as home buyers are able to review products and make decisions online.

Bob Kostelny, president of Meyer & Meyer Construction of Skokie, Ill., started using SelectionWare in his ultra high-end custom home building business three months ago, and it's turning out to be an effective selection management tool and a valuable marketing tool.

"One of the biggest challenges we face as a custom builder is that our clients can literally have hundreds of decisions to make," Kostelny says. With this tool, we can prioritize for clients what decisions need to be made in a given time period, and they can make those decisions 24/7."

[Click here to learn more about SelectionWare.](#)

### Visualizing Selections

During the often overwhelming product selection process, builders and remodelers can also offer customers the ability to see a digital image or blueprint of their home with all types of windows, doors, paint, siding, brick and more applied to it.

### Selection Tools from Therma-Tru

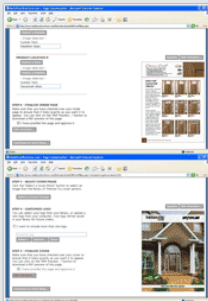
Take advantage of these free online tools to help you market your business and simplify your product selection process:

#### Online Door Designer



Therma-Tru's new Web-based design tool, *Door Designer*, allows users to visualize how Therma-Tru door systems would look against popular home styles. With just a few clicks of a mouse, users can select a home and door style and then adjust the color of the home, trim, door and roof. Users can also change the selected door's stain or paint color as well as its glass design, leaving nothing to chance. Once a door design is completed, it can be saved as a PDF file for sharing electronically or as a printout. Printout summaries can be brought to a Therma-Tru dealer or home center for easy ordering. For more information about Door Designer and its application for builders, remodelers, designers and architects, visit <http://www.thermatru.com/StyleDoorDesigner.aspx>, or call 888-902-Door (3667).

#### Build a Custom Brochure



Reach your customers with a new build-your-own custom brochure program designed to get you noticed. Using Therma-Tru's online marketing program you can:

- Create a 1-, 2-, 4-, 8-, 12- or 16- page brochure showing only the doors you want to offer your customers
- Add your company logo and images of your homes on the front and back covers

input digital images of a customer's home, apply more than 60 actual exterior and interior building and remodeling products, and supply a photo-quality printout of what a customer's home will look like after a project is complete. RenoWorks has partnered with many top manufacturers in the building products industry so that their brands can be selected by software users. "We are very pleased to be a part of the RenoWorks visualization tool," says Scott Phillips, vice president of marketing, Therma-Tru Doors. "By allowing builders and remodeling contractors to coordinate our doors with their clients' actual homes, RenoWorks is a very valuable sales tool that can lead to increased upgrade sales."

RenoWorks Pro is customizable, too, allowing users to import their own company logos and contact information on the printouts as well as on-screen when showing clients before-and-after images from a laptop or desktop computer. According to Robyn Rayner, marketing manager at the Calgary, Alberta-based RenoWorks Software, the printouts include a list of all products applied to an image so that a customer has specific models, colors and brands in hand.

"It's fun to sit with a client in their dining room and let them visualize what their home could be. They really are thrilled," says Michael Hartman, a remodeler at Cal Energy Exteriors in Rancho Cordova, Calif. "People buy on emotion, which is why this tool is invaluable in my remodeling business."



[Click here to learn more about RenoWorks.](#)

### Sizing Things Up, Digital Design Tools

Wouldn't it be an enormous time saver if you could take a photo of a home's exterior wall with a digital camera and have it spit out real-life dimensions of the door, windows and roof? That's not just

something for the wish list; it's a reality.

Software called iPhotoMeasure, dreamed up by Paul Minor, a former contractor based in Tarzana, Calif., turns a digital camera into a virtual tape measurer.

How it works: users place any rectangular object somewhere in the frame of what they're photographing and on the same plane (a wall, a roof, an exterior door, etc.) they are measuring. Once the rectangular object is up and a digital photo taken, the

image is ready to be loaded into iPhotoMeasure, where the measuring process begins. The software measures in both metric and U.S. customary and allows users to export final data as JPEG or Excel files. The best way to understand the software is to view iPhotoMeasure's application video at YouTube.com.

Tests done by PC Magazine proved accurate down to less than an inch, which certainly doesn't eliminate the need for professional measuring. But in cases where a precise measurement isn't necessary, such as in the bidding process, this technology may fit the bill. Currently, the software is available online only in two versions: Standard (\$149.99) and Deluxe (\$249.99). The major difference between the two is the export format options.

[Click here to learn more about iPhotoMeasure.](#)

### Design Tools

As the Web continues to evolve by incorporating more sophisticated graphics, design capabilities, easy-to-use features, integration of other software products, etc., Web-based technology for the construction industry is evolving, too. Consider one of the most exciting tech tools to hit the job site, SketchUp, Google's 3-D modeling program. The program makes it easier for architects and designers to not only create and modify 3-D models but to share them with clients in a professional presentation.

SketchUp was first released in 2000 by Boulder, Colo.-based @Last Software. After Google purchased @Last Software in 2006, SketchUp<sup>®</sup> was released. It's available in two versions: Google SketchUp, a free download, and Google SketchUp Pro, a \$495 program that includes tools for working with other major CAD programs and creating professional presentations.

- Choose from more than 40 popular layout templates and 25 marketing messages
- Customize pricing and part numbers
- Access Therma-Tru's library of product images
- View real-time proofs and approve them when you're finished
- Save money compared to an agency design process
- Co-op funds available to help offset brochure costs
- Take advantage of quick printing turnaround time

To learn more about Therma-Tru's new Build-Your-Brochure program and view sample brochures, visit <http://www.thermatru.com/custom/> or call 888-902-Door (3667).

“It’s an incredibly intuitive program that doesn’t require a CAD background,” says Larry Garnett, a Texas-based home plan designer featured in *Southern Living* and *House Beautiful* magazines. “The end result looks like a hand-drawn sketch that I would have done.”

Garnett, who has been a successful home plan designer for 30 years and just released his book, “Home Plan Doctor,” admits he was resistant to using a computer to create renderings he had been drawing by hand for years. Now Garnett uses a combination of Photoshop and SketchUp Pro daily. Garnett says he often looks to SketchUp to create small 3-D models to clarify a construction drawing in a builder’s hands. “If a builder needs clarification on a ceiling detail, I can create it quickly in SketchUp and e-mail it to him in the field,” says Garnett. “Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words.”



[Click here to learn more about SketchUp.](#)