

# Berkeley Homes

## THE INTERNET: THE KEY TO YOUR NEW HOME

In the past the main channels for those looking to buy a new home focused on advertisements in newspapers and a visit to the local estate agent. The key to your new home has since moved online; at least 89% of homebuyers now turn to the Internet as a primary source of information when looking for a new home.

Berkeley Homes, one of the top 12 contractors and house-builders in the UK, says that more and more homebuyers are turning to the Internet than ever before to help find their new home. The company also feels that online marketing and e-business is no longer something to take for granted. It is imperative to the company's continued growth and success.

The Berkeley Group use GOSS iCM software to deliver fully content managed sites to support their thriving presence in high quality housing development. The flexibility of the iCM platform has enabled the Berkeley Group to create additional sites quickly and easily. Using the Internet to communicate with potential customers has been an extremely successful strategy for the Berkeley Group who recently revitalised the [berkeleyhomes.co.uk](http://berkeleyhomes.co.uk) website. The Berkeley Group' range of companies is embracing the Internet as a key medium for selling property through initiating interest and meeting customer needs.

The company's sites use Flash technology to provide users with a rich interactive experience. The formation of microsites has enabled the Group to provide high quality imagery of their new developments alongside detailed information. Home-buying can be extremely stressful and people have little time on their hands and a very good idea of the kind of property they want in terms of location, specification and price. The Group's microsites deliver quality information to potential homebuyers who are able to see exactly what is available, using a medium that enables 24/7 access.

### The Benefits of Online Home-Seeking

Berkeley Homes believes that consumers can benefit from the following when using the Internet to find a new home:

- New developments within a specific geographic region can be located;
- The availability of plots can be checked and viewed;
- Homes that meet a buyer's criteria can be short listed;
- Purchasers can take a virtual tour;



- Floor plans, specifications, fitting options can all be viewed;
- Detailed photographs or artistic impressions of properties can be viewed;
- Comparisons can be made between homes that meet a buyers criteria;
- Show homes can be viewed online along with sales office opening times and contact details;
- Local information can be accessed e.g. schools, transport links.

The company says that the increased number of sales and transactions through its electronic channels supports these findings. These channels include Berkeley Homes' corporate websites, microsites, property portals and other online marketing services. These are not just successful but they are also cost effective, flexible and measurable. It has also seen an increase in the requests for brochures, registrations,

viewing requests and email enquiries since it began working with GOSS.

The Berkeley Group in partnership with GOSS has developed "Comprehensive websites that are packed with features and functions, easy to use and navigate and with an attractive design", says Lisa San. The sites, which include a simple registration process, are considered a pleasurable experience for the company's customers. They are in effect designed to attract interest in the houses and plots available, and retain customers, while enabling sales offices to track potential prospects and get in touch with them to either arrange appointments or answer a customer's queries.

The customer also has 24/7 access to information about what is available in the property market, and this includes a global reach. Electronic channels are also seen as being more cost-efficient, with a shorter lead-time, enabling more effective targeting, and with the potential for a higher conversion rate to sales. They can also send out personalised messages to each potential customer to provide a welcoming and customer-specific experience.

### **GOSS Wins the Key, But Why?**

The Berkeley Group feels that the GOSS iCM software is very easy to manage in terms of the content and data that is distributed across its sites. The solution attracted them to GOSS, over and above other providers in the market, because content can be easily kept apart from the design function of websites. This has made it possible to maintain high levels of consistency.

It cites other benefits including the ability of the system to automate approval processes, the re-usability of templates and code libraries. It says that it has also been possible to develop a number of microsites with different designs, but with everything still controlled and managed centrally. Further key benefits of working with GOSS include:

- Good customer service and account management;
- Excellent design, development and Flash skills.
- The provision of excellent technical support, knowledge and advice when necessary;
- The iCM product is flexible enough to enable The Berkeley Group to do a lot of the development without having to continually go back to GOSS for help;
- Continuous enhancements to the iCM system.

### **Plan Ahead to Feel at Home**

Microsites form an important part of Berkeley Group's e-marketing strategy, particularly so with regards to the

promotion of its flagship development projects. These sites are used to provide more in-depth and targeted information about specific projects than the corporate website can provide. This includes the use of various types of 'imageries' or graphics to enhance the look, feel, and attractiveness of the available plots and developments. This also has the complementary aim of answering a customer's enquiries at the first point of contact.

"We have found that microsites have been very successful in driving prospects to our show homes and marketing suites allowing our sales negotiators to convert them into sales or sustain an ongoing communication with them to cultivate the sales cycle", comments Lisa San.

GOSS iCM has allowed the group to push its design and web development skills to their limits too. All of its microsites use a similar type of structure and common functionality. This allows the developers to create the code once and then replicate it a number of times with ease, so a site can be deployed in a matter of minutes and the templates built in a few days rather than a few weeks.

The solution is flexible enough to help with the planning of the design, data hierarchies, and business processes. Any changes to an existing structure can be easily reflected in a new one with respect to the navigation menus and the site maps. Berkeley Homes have also effectively employed the approval processes contained within the solution to ensure that the content within the site is 'correct and valid'.

The Berkeley Homes sites have been identified as being up to date, informative and interactive, with the Royal Arsenal microsite winning the prestigious Daily Mail Property Developer Website in 2005. The Group plan to continue developing sites to provide home seekers with an online interface that is attractive and easy to use.

### **About GOSS Interactive**

GOSS provides hosted services and intelligent and enterprise-wide content management solutions. GOSS solutions are based on a sound understanding of your requirements and the technology we use to meet your customers' needs.

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