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At Your Job: Modular home salesman

Posted by the Asbury Park Press on 10/30/06

NAME: Andrew Calvo

AGE: 24

EDUCATION: Graduated from Monmouth University in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in business administration.

HOMETOWN: Ocean Township

EMPLOYER: The Modular Home Group LLC, Ocean Township.

JOB DESCRIPTION: I sell modular homes directly to the customer pretty much anywhere in New Jersey or surrounding states.

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR JOB?: My father has been in the business for almost 20 years, so I've always been exposed to it while growing up. In 2005, when I was graduating college, he started the Modular Home Group, and since I always had an interest in real estate and development, I decided to go into business with him.

SALARY AFTER FIVE YEARS: It's mainly commission based, so there is no limit on how much you can make, but a good average after five years is upwards of \$75,000. If you're an aggressive salesman with a lot of customers, it's easy to make much more than that.

WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE? Every day is different, which is what makes the job so much fun. Sometimes, I spend most of the day in the office talking to customers and potential customers on the phone, meeting with customers face to face and going over their floor plans, or helping them organize the subcontractors who will finish the house. Other days I'm on the road, visiting potential home sites, inspecting foundations and ensuring they are level or supervising sets to ensure things are going smooth.

Every once in a while, a customer will call us up and say, "I'm looking to build a house on a particular piece of property. Can you build a house there?"

So, I'll take a drive by and see that the electrical wires aren't going to impede the crane and make sure what they want to do can be done on that lot.

We supply the house to the customer, and we teach the customers how to build the house themselves. The benefit to the customer is he doesn't have to pay the general contractor's fee, which will save him 20 to 30 percent on the cost of the house.

Modulars are built on an assembly line in a factory, and when they're delivered to the site, they're about 85 percent complete. They get delivered and set on the foundation, and by the end of the day, they're weather-tight. The customer needs to hire contractors who will be able to install or connect the electricity between the modules, connect the plumbing and do some minor masonry work. For the most part, everything is done already. It can be less than 60 days from the time the house is set until the time the customer moves in.

We are in charge of the set crew, and they put the houses together. We have a house we're working on in Fair Haven that's made of five boxes. There's going to be a 100-ton crane that will place the boxes on the foundation, and that will take about eight hours.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT YOUR JOB? I like the freedom that my job gives me. I don't have to be behind a desk from 9 to 5 to be productive, yet I don't have to travel five days a week either. It's a little bit of both.



Andrew Calvo

(STAFF PHOTO: DAVE MAY)



Andrew Calvo looks on as workers prepare a foundation for a modular home being built on Kemp Avenue in Fair Haven.

(STAFF PHOTO: DAVE MAY)

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I love explaining to people the benefits of a modular home, because it's such a great product. The product sells itself, which makes it easy. I love helping people configure and build their dream home. Building and buying a house is such a big step for most people, and it gives me a great feeling to sell a quality product, while giving them useful advice throughout the process.

Plus, with all the different ideas that each customer puts into their house, I have a huge list of things I'd like implemented into my own house, which I hope to build in a few years.

WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE ABOUT YOUR JOB? The industry I work in has many unscrupulous companies. It's unfortunate that a few bad apples can give everyone in my industry a bad name, or at least make the customer very dubious about anything I say.

I also dislike losing a sale to these other companies because their price is supposedly lower than mine. Past experience has shown that when all is said and done, the customer would have if they stayed with us. Unfortunately, once they find that out, it's too late.

SUGGESTIONS FOR OTHER PEOPLE CONSIDERING THIS TYPE OF WORK: You need to understand everything that goes into building a home, everything from approvals, permits, contractors, site preparation, as well as the components and materials that make up the home itself. The customers always comes to you with a lot of questions, and if you are unable to answer them correctly or if you give them the wrong answer, they will quickly go elsewhere, or not trust your advice, causing the customers and the salesman headaches down the line.

Selling a modular home is not like being a real-estate agent, where it can take a month from the time the buyer first sets foot in the house until closing. With modulars, we have to work closely with the customer from the design of the house until it is delivered and set, and sometimes even after that, so it can take a number of months to finish a sale. So the salesman has to have patience and be willing to work with the customer for that amount of time.

Edited for space and clarity from an interview with Assistant Business Editor Dennis P. Carmody. If you are interested in participating in this feature, please write to him at the Asbury Park Press, Business News, 3601 Highway 66, Box 1550, Neptune, NJ 07754-1551 or e-mail dcarmody@app.com

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