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Options Selection on the Go

It's a given that the options selection process can often be a long endeavor. While technology cannot reduce the amount of time it takes a buyer to decide which type of kitchen cabinet is most appealing, some solutions can help ensure no additional time is added to the backend when submitting the selections to the database.

When it comes to having option information many design center professionals are still using binders full of antiquated information. With today's constantly fluctuating prices, the chances of this data being accurate is slim at best.

Sales and options management technology is available to allow design center professionals to communicate with backend databases of pricing information, thus ensuring they are providing clients with the most update information. Even better, wireless technology allows these professionals the freedom to carry a tablet PC or laptop throughout the design center, taking updated information with them wherever they go. Yet, there are some precautions to using these wireless applications.

"The thing with wireless computing environments is that if you don't have 100% connectivity on a Web page based technology you lose your security certificates," says Paul Deffebach, western region sales manager, Sales Simplicity Software, www.salessimplicity.net, Chandler, Ariz. "So you can have a two hour option selection meeting and if you lose Internet connection any time during that meeting, when you hit save all the data you have collected up to that time is lost since the last save. You don't find that out until you hit save."

Deffebach says application streaming technology from Sales Simplicity Software sends all data associated with options selection and the customer to the PC. Therefore, even if an Internet connection

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is disabled, new information can still be added. When you save the information none of the data is lost because the technology is transferring encrypted data to the database server from the PC and stays on the PC until it connects to the database.

He is working with one builder that has equipped its design center with an in-ceiling wireless access point that will allow Internet connection to remain constant throughout all points of the center. Deffebach says Sales Simplicity Software automatically places an Active X and DLL (dynamic link library) client on a machine and utilizes .NET technologies that enable the transfer of encrypted binary compressed data, which is then rendered on the PC. This allows for faster performance because only data is being transferred, as opposed to everything that is on the screen.

"You can enter options as they are selected (roaming through the design center) without the need for a 100% guarantee wireless environment," says Deffebach. "The key with this tech is that you don't get translation errors from written, outdated documents that are printed out ahead of time. It is entered as 'chosen' and there is no data input into the system to generate the options addendum or other contract—it is all ready to go. You are now extending realtime data, rather than working off of antiquated binders."

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