

## New Homes

### Builders get blogging

The use of social media seems to be spreading to all realms of business and the building community is getting on board the digital evolution.

Many local homebuilders have already jumped on Twitter and Facebook as a means of communicating with potential customers and buyers alike, but now the online world is also turning them toward establishing blogs. And it's not just about announcing new subdivisions or condo models, it's about builders' points of view on different topics and online discussions with possible buyers and anyone else interested in having a say.

Matthew Sachs, general manager at Urbandale Construction, and Bruce Nicol, co-owner of Tartan Homes, are two Ottawa homebuilders that have now set up their own blogs. It's a recent turn of events for both of these established, sizeable builders. Nicol started blogging in December while Sachs got going last June. One thing the two blogs have in common is they both take note of how the building industry is changing and all the new technologies that are emerging within it.

"Blogs are quite personal," said Sachs. "The intent is to discuss issues I'm passionate about and to have a place where people could dialogue about those issues."

The mission statement on his blog reads as follows: "This blog follows the latest trends in high performance housing from an insider's perspective. I am the general manager of one of Ottawa's leading homebuilders, Urbandale Construction, and it gives me a firsthand view of how the industry is changing. I've seen the barriers that builders face when trying to market new technologies and I've been working directly to overcome these barriers to bring new energy-efficient designs into Urbandale homes."

Sachs is involved with many green initiatives and committees and works with others across Canada interested in sustainable housing so his blog tends to have that focus.

He wants to use his blog to show the direction the housing industry is taking which he says is towards achieving more energy-efficient housing including net zero homes.

"This is more my personal journey on how to get there," he said of his blog posts.

He wants to reach those interested in green building not only locally but across the world.

Nicol is interested in showing the “human face” of their company and increasing interaction with customers.

He explains his blog is “my own personal impressions of the home building world.”

He wants to talk about such things as the evolution of home design, how new technologies move from being available to only a select few who can afford them to the mainstream as they drop in price, and attending community events in the suburbs.

Both Nicol and Sachs say their blogs will not be about promoting their companies or the products they sell.

“It’s a quiet place to reflect on the nature of our business,” said Nicol. He wants to connect with “somebody interested in new homes” and someone who wants to hear a slightly different voice.

Sachs says there are other marketing tools for getting info out about their homes and the communities they build in. While the posts haven’t been pouring in yet on his blog, Sachs is hoping for more traffic and resulting dialogue and comments.