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# 5 Cutting-Edge Online Marketing Platforms for Home Builders

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The homebuyer journey isn't as simple as it used to be.

It used to go something like this: You'd get a referral, make contact, and schedule a few showings. Within a month, you might have a new home under contract.

But that's no longer the reality for many of today's builders.

Home buyer needs have changed, and so has the ideal home buying experience. Buyers begin searching for homes [up to 12 months](#) before actually making a purchase, while the entire home buying journey can span more than [two years](#). Builders need to cultivate longer relationships with their customers than they used to, and much of that relationship nurturing is taking place online.

With [two-thirds](#) of a buyer's journey now unfolding in digital spaces, a solid digital marketing strategy is a must-have for builders—especially those who want to reach the coveted Millennial demographic, which accounts for [one in three](#) home buyers. Between their digital prowess and their high consumer expectations, Millennials are challenging the marketing of industries across the board. They want their needs and expectations met and new home construction is no exception.

“Winning over the Millennial generation is all about becoming their partner in the home buying process,” says advertising expert [Andy Bergren](#). “The path to purchase needs to be made easy for them. They have high standards for their purchasing experience, and when you understand how to connect with them you will win the sale.”

Moving forward, the most successful companies will be those that organize themselves around providing an exceptional customer journey from start to finish.

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According to Forrester research, customer-centric companies achieve a [43 percent](#) increase in performance, while those that neglect customer experience face a 34 percent decrease.

## The rise of omni-channel marketing

So how can builders use the power of digital to give customers the home buying journey they crave? The answer lies in omni-channel marketing.

Today’s home buyers interact with builders in a variety of ways and expect to receive service on the channel of their choice, whether that’s email, text, mobile or social media. Omni-channel marketing means meeting customers wherever they’re at and providing a smooth, seamless journey across all platforms and devices.

“Whether your customer receives an email, looks at your social page, or walks into your model home, they should be able to tell that they’re communicating with your brand,” Bergren says.

[Seven in 10](#) businesses say omni-channel marketing strategies are important for their success, and 62 percent of companies have one or are in the process of creating one. Builders who want to gain a competitive edge in the coming year can start cultivating an omni-channel marketing strategy by leveraging a handful of key digital platforms.



### 1. Email newsletters

Email newsletters are enjoying a renaissance among marketers, due in large part to innovations such as automation and audience segmentation. The ability to personalize promotional emails, for example, can lead to a [29 percent](#) increase in unique open rates and a 41 percent boost in unique clicks.

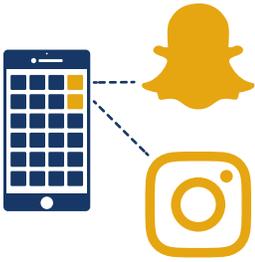
“It’s now possible to segment your email lists and target them with the most relevant email content, increasing the likelihood of engagement and decreasing the likelihood of disaffected users unsubscribing from emails they feel are not relevant to their interests,” says digital marketing expert, [Rebecca Sentance](#).

For home buyers, a quality builder newsletter can provide something interesting to read and share with friends while they’re on the go. For builders, it offers the opportunity to collect consumers’ contact info, promote their own content, and position themselves as industry leaders.

With customers increasingly reading their email on the go, the key to effective newsletter marketing is to make use of responsive or mobile-aware design—something [nine in 10](#) email marketers consider important.

#### Best practices

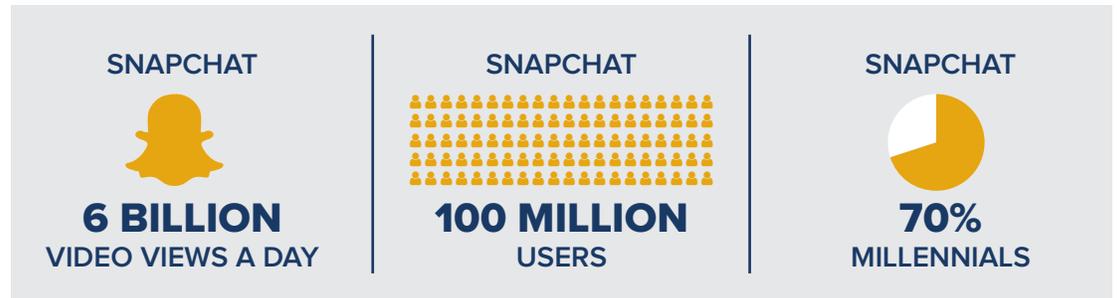
- ✓ Optimize for mobile.
- ✓ Make content easily digestible.
- ✓ Segment audiences and personalize messaging.
- ✓ Connect back to your blog and social media.



## 2. Snapchat and Instagram

Builders whose social media strategy stops at Facebook and Twitter are missing out on some potentially powerful marketing tools. While older buyers are still active on Facebook, younger buyers prefer to hang out on social media sites such as Instagram and Snapchat.

No longer just a place for teens to swap selfies, Snapchat sees [6 billion video views](#) a day and boasts more than [100 million users](#)—70 percent of whom are Millennials. It's quickly gaining ground among the 25-and-up set, who use Snapchat [12 times a day](#) and whose user numbers are increasing [twice as fast](#) as those under 25.



Snapchat and Instagram—the [first and second](#) most important social sites for Millennials, respectively—allow builders to harness the popularity of ultra-short-form visual content, providing a fast-paced space for showing off photos and videos of new homes.

Savvy builders are already leveraging Snapchat's marketing-friendly features to connect with younger home buyers. They're using targeted geofilters to promote local groundbreaking ceremonies. They're creating Snapchat Stories around model home openings or to show off newly built homes. They're mining Snap Maps to locate nearby hot spots for Millennial users.

### Best practices

- ✓ Pick a unique and simple username that reflects your actual name.
- ✓ Share your Snapcode so users can easily find you.
- ✓ Tell a great story with dramatic, colorful visuals.
- ✓ Engage users with contests and user-generated content.



## 3. Live video

They say a single minute of video is worth around [1.8 million words](#), and analytics show video listings get [41 percent](#) more clicks than plain text. With more than [180 million](#) people watching more than 36 billion online videos each month, video is a medium home builders can't afford to ignore.

Live video, in particular, is the place to be. The video streaming market exceeded [\\$30 billion](#) in 2016, and it's expected to more than double by 2021. Live video delivers [94 percent](#) ad completion rates—higher than other types of video content. Marketers have a variety of live video platforms to choose from, including Facebook Live, YouTube, Instagram Stories, Tumblr, and Twitter-owned Periscope.



Today's brands are using live video to expand the reach of live events such as product launches, interviews, campaign launches and publicity stunts. Home builders can stream everything from groundbreaking ceremonies to model home unveilings to live construction videos.

### Best practices

- ✓ Choose the right platform for your audience.
- ✓ Promote your broadcast in advance.
- ✓ Interact with users via social, chat, survey and polling technology.
- ✓ Include a call to action.

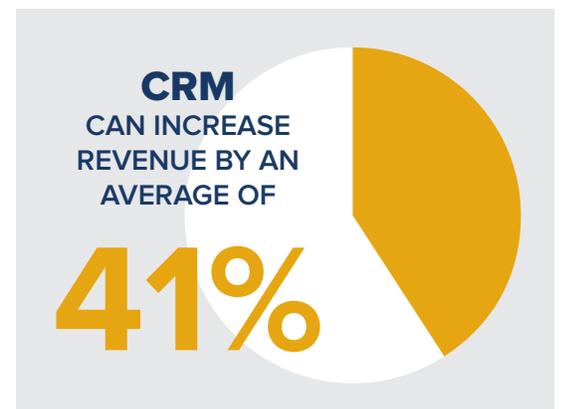


## 4. Customer relationship management

To execute a successful omni-channel marketing strategy, it's not enough to simply cultivate a presence on multiple channels. You've got to ensure a seamless customer experience across all of them.

"If you've got a solid social strategy, a high converting website, and a great mobile experience, you've got a multi-channel experience," says digital marketer [Alex Birkett](#). "But if they aren't working together, in coordination, it's not an omni-channel customer experience."

A customer relationship management (CRM) system is instrumental in providing that seamless customer journey. CRM tools capture data at every stage of the customer journey, providing a window into where leads are in the sales funnel so sales teams can respond appropriately. When used correctly, CRM can increase revenue by an average of [41 percent](#) per salesperson—yet 43 percent of businesses fail to take advantage of their full capabilities.



By combining CRM with marketing automation, home builders can ensure consistent messaging across all channels while streamlining the customer experience and gaining valuable, actionable insights into home buyers' needs and preferences.

### Best practices

- ✓ Catalogue social media data on prospective customers.
- ✓ Set up automated alerts so sales reps know when to reach out.
- ✓ Synchronize CRM data with marketing automation.
- ✓ Mine data to create targeted messaging for segmented audiences.



## 5. Landing pages

Landing pages are the heart and soul of an effective digital marketing strategy. These stand-alone web pages use persuasive elements and targeted content to convince visitors to take the next step in the lead generation funnel.

One of the biggest mistakes businesses make is getting customers to click on an online ad and then sending them to the company's homepage rather than a highly targeted landing page. Ad-specific landing pages have been shown to outperform generic homepages, increasing lead form submissions by [115 percent](#). They're also helpful for leveraging digital content, such as eBooks and whitepapers, to capture customer information.

“Creating landing pages allows you to target your audience, offer them something of value, and convert a higher percentage of your visitors into leads, while also capturing information about who they are and what they've converted on,” says HubSpot marketer [Pamela Vaughan](#). “It allows you greater control to direct them and help them find what they're looking for much faster—and this, in turn can ripple out to affect your search engine rankings too.”

### Best practices

- ✓ Use landing pages to segment audiences and offers.
- ✓ Create landing pages to test and track pay-per-click ads.
- ✓ Keep content simple, focused and uncluttered.
- ✓ Include a compelling call to action.

## Seeing the home buyer journey through

All of these digital platforms can help builders nurture relationships with home buyers at every stage of their home search. But it's important to remember that the buyer's journey doesn't end once they close on their home. Builders also need to consider what happens after moving day.

“Suppose the entire buying and building process goes great, but the basement floods after move-in and warranty is unresponsive,” says builder [Jimmy Diffie](#). “Willingness to refer' gets a zero.”



These same marketing strategies used in the pre-sale environment need to continue even after home buyers sign on the dotted line. It's important to let buyers know their satisfaction matters even after the sale has closed.



For example, builders can:

- ✓ Provide buyers with tips and helpful information about their new home through their newsletters and follow-up emails.
- ✓ Create opportunities for buyers to share their experience via video testimonials.
- ✓ Invite homeowners to share pictures of their new homes on social media.
- ✓ Engage with homeowners on social media if they are open to participating.

Builders should also look to their trusted partners for omni-channel marketing to highlight additional features that are offered to their homeowners. As a valuable resource and marketing partner, PWSC helps builders deliver the warranty customer experience home buyers want at every step of their journey—even after the sale has closed.

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Additionally, engaging online tools, like PWSC's HomeOwner Platform (HOP) allow a builder to stay in front of his or her customers, continuing a positive, valuable, relevant extension of the customer experience through the lifetime of the home. This website for the home concept is a one-stop location to manage the home for a new buyer with monthly maintenance reminders; storage for all home documentation; photos, receipts, wishlists for current and future repairs and upgrades; and an identified list of go-to, reputable and recommended service contractors, should an issue arise.

Through customized marketing, video, a wealth of relevant industry content and unique online tools, PWSC is ready to support builders in their builder's warranty marketing efforts both before and after the home closes.

With so many helpful tools at their fingertips, builders can create a robust omni-channel marketing strategy that will help propel them to success in 2018 and beyond.



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