

## Adapting to a Crisis: Learn from the Best

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Zero Energy Ready Home team has reached out to our most active builder partners to identify lessons learned coping with the economic and health challenges confronting the housing industry. The table below summarizes challenges and actions taken. Some of the changes will be temporary (e.g., staged trade to minimize contact), and others may be permanent (e.g., paperless transactions). Uncertainty remains the order of the day. Builders will have to be nimble adjusting to the ever-changing forces acting on their businesses. However, the key lesson learned is that crises often reveal significant opportunities to improve process and eliminate waste. They are in fact a catalyst for innovation.

Challenges	Leading Builder Actions
<b>Construction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Balance</b> trade schedules to reduce contact, even if it adds delays to the project.</li> <li>• <b>Focus on</b> employees with necessary safety precautions.</li> <li>• <b>Review and follow</b> safe work and personal protective equipment guidance given by OSHA and CDC as well as city, county and state leaders.</li> <li>• <b>Keep</b> employees up to date with federal, state, and local guidelines.</li> </ul>
<b>Sales Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Implement</b> more digital marketing to reach consumers including Internet, mobile devices, social media, search engines, and other channels.</li> <li>• <b>Outfit</b> model homes with remote access locks to allow homebuyers to visit without personal contact.</li> <li>• <b>Use</b> virtual tools for sales (e.g., DocuSign) and walk-throughs (cameras)</li> <li>• <b>Learn</b> to sell homes without a single shred of paper.</li> <li>• <b>Establish</b> an online process for customers to personalize their homes.</li> <li>• <b>Showcase</b> model homes online including virtual tours and 360° visualization.</li> <li>• <b>Evaluate</b> conversion rates by lead sources to prioritize marketing.</li> <li>• <b>Emphasize</b> the home as a “health hub,” a topic that has been rising in homebuyer interest for several years, and even more timely now.</li> <li>• <b>Communicate</b> the total value of high-performance homes to your clients (e.g., utility savings, advanced technology, indoor air quality, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Meetings/ Presentations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enhance</b> video and online training capabilities for employees, trades, and sales team.</li> <li>• <b>Offer</b> virtual training and conference options.</li> <li>• <b>Conduct</b> most business and meetings virtually.</li> </ul>
<b>Business Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Focus</b> on internal processes</li> <li>• <b>Communicate</b> with staff constantly to be more connected than ever.</li> <li>• <b>Build</b> confidence in getting the job done under extreme circumstances.</li> <li>• <b>Inspire</b> cohesiveness by ending meetings with employee expressions of gratitude.</li> <li>• <b>Repurpose</b> rather than let go of staff (example: transition warranty specialist who is idle to other responsibilities such as inspecting homes before closing, enforcing OSHA requirements, and disinfecting houses prior to occupancy).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Deploy</b> new software tools (e.g., relationship management, sales, and digital project scheduling).</li> <li>• <b>Improve</b> internal processes including optimizing business operations, telework, and website.</li> <li>• <b>Create</b> a pipeline of future builders and trades by offering scholarships to construction students at local community colleges.</li> <li>• <b>Reach</b> out to trades and suppliers to strengthen partnerships through the current challenge and beyond.</li> <li>• <b>Invest</b> in training and education for trades and sales staff while time is available.</li> <li>• <b>Take</b> time now to evaluate and retool business and product design processes.</li> <li>• <b>Work</b> hard to make it through the next year, then make adjustments from there to be prepared for future crises.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Business Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Diversify</b> business offerings with remodeling projects to maintain workload.</li> <li>• <b>Adjust</b> to slow-down in sales with more spec homes.</li> <li>• <b>Implement</b> risk management strategies.</li> <li>• <b>Explore</b> new opportunities to partner with DOE and Building America on research projects and case study homes.</li> <li>• <b>Integrate</b> new IAQ best practices, technologies and monitoring systems in response to greater homebuyer interest in healthy homes.</li> <li>• <b>Respond</b> to huge millennial buyer preference for small, super-efficient homes.</li> <li>• <b>Support</b> code and process changes leading to super-efficient homes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Small Business Incentives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Invest</b> time in tracking stimulus programs, including guidance and rules.</li> <li>• <b>Work</b> with various banks and financial institutions (especially small and local) to best make use of government support.</li> <li>• <b>Participate</b> in the PPP small business forgivable loan stimulus program.</li> </ul>