

as posted on www.ModularToday.com
PA Modular Builder Interviewed

Robert Fanelli
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Modular Today: What should home buyers do before they start looking at modular homes?

Robert Fanelli: There is a lot of information on the Internet that anyone can assess. It is always a good idea that they investigate the general subject as much as possible before they come to a sales center. Our web site www.RiverviewHomesInc.com has grown for years and requests for more posted information by salespeople and home buyers have been met. I believe the best thing that they can do is just decide they are going to look and have an open mind when they start through the models. There will be plenty of time to investigate all the questions once they decide that a modular home will work for them.

Modular Today: What lingo or special terms should modular home buyers know?

Robert Fanelli: As a builder we try to teach our salespeople to not talk in "industry speak". The home buyer should not have to learn a new language just because they want to buy a modular home.

Modular Today: What do you think home buyers overlook when considering modular homes?

Robert Fanelli: The builder. With the current product every modular home factory can do and offer just about the same as any other factory in their price range. In fact most factories can build more house for less money than most conventional stick builders. The difference between a happy home buyer and an unhappy one may boil down to the strength of the local builder and the relationship that builder has with the factory. So often the sale comes down to price, but price quickly becomes unimportant if the home is not set properly or if warranty work is not done quickly. These are items that are very hard to sell at point of sale to the homebuyer because every builder says their great at customer satisfaction. A lot of thought needs to be given to who is your builder.

Modular Today: Can you describe the typical buying process for one of your modular home customers?

Robert Fanelli: Of course each customer is different, but today we find ourselves spending more time with financing and building permit issues than we do with the house. The current finance situation is really dictating what the customer can buy regardless of what they want. Not that the house is not important, it is, just that there are many outside sources steering the process.

Modular Today: How should modular home buyers compare potential modular home builders?

Robert Fanelli: They need to compare two things, financial strength and their commitment to customer satisfaction. Easier said than done since most builders are privately owned companies, but a good way to do this is to learn if the builder has their own service and set employees or if they totally rely on sub contractors. This is not to say that sub contractors can not do good work, but a builder who has committed resources to having their own set and service crews plus the equipment to do that work properly and safely is planning on being in the business for the long haul.

Modular Today: Which upgrades should smart modular home buyers choose?

Robert Fanelli: A good builder is the best option they can pick. Everything else is personal preference or need.

Modular Today: What common mistake do modular home buyers make?

Robert Fanelli: They do not realize that buying and building a modular home is a process and in many cases the modular home is not the most expensive part of the package that they are building. In almost all cases the house is less expensive than the combination of land and site improvements. The home buyer needs to spend as much time looking at site bids as they do at the house bid. This is also a place that value and not price is an overlooked item. The lowest foundation bid is not always the one you should go with when you look at those bids closely.

Modular Today: How can home buyers get the best price when buying a modular home?

Robert Fanelli: We like to talk about value not price. A house can be inexpensive, but if it does not meet the home buyer's needs then the price is not really that attractive. Simple comparisons when looking at homes is not a simple matter, square footage and total cost does not tell the whole story alone.

Modular Today: What financial advice would you give to modular home buyers?

Robert Fanelli: Financing has become the single biggest hurdle for the new home buyer. It has also become a time consuming process. The more the home buyer knows about their personal finances and the more they understand their personal budgets and the more they are willing to be patient and cooperative with the lender the more likely they will be to find and finance the home they want.

Modular Today: How do you make your modular homes special?

Robert Fanelli: Just like other successful builders, we have very nice displays that are well kept and professional looking. Our model homes are nicely decorated and we think are best for our market, but more importantly we take personal care to make sure that Riverview Homes does everything that we were contracted to do and that we uphold our end of the sales contract 100%. We understand that we are selling a home building process not just a house and how we help with that process will have a lot to do with our success as a builder and our customer's satisfaction with their new modular home.