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By Mark Clement

Modular Excellence

Time check: Yes, it's still the 21st Century.

The technological power of modern life means individuals can be "bigger" than they really are. A cell phone and laptop practically qualifies some people and their businesses as global concerns.

When it comes to building, however, ours is still a boots-in-the-mud business where many of our problems can't be solved by modern technology. It's hard work and jobsite savvy that got us to this point, and those are still the best tools for the job. But that doesn't mean the modern world isn't catching up -- and fast -- with a traditionally piece-by-piece business.

We've all heard the *yadda yadda yadda* about modular homes: They're built in controlled environments. They're delivered to the site in large chunks. They're customizable. And because they're built in a shop, they eliminate a lot of weather delays that plague home builders.

But that might be a lot of yadda. A house is a big, complicated thing. And just as our job is to serve our customers' needs -- from full-on framing to the faucets they choose -- if we should decide to go with a modular builder, then their job is to serve *our* needs. Their task is to make us bigger, faster and better than we are using traditional methods. That's just what Excel Homes spends a lot of time and resources dialing-in, according to the company.

Excel has a top-ten list for things to look for in a modular home builder. I'll admit that some of the questions seem like they could be tougher, but enough are bulls-eyes. For example: Does the modular home builder have a truck fleet or will delivery be a charge after the fact? Are there in-house engineers to deal with structural issues, changes and architectural needs? And (I think this might be the biggest question) when a modular builder uses the word "custom," what do they really mean?

Excel states they have hundreds of designs. I looked at their website; they look primo. And according to Excel, not only do the components arrive properly detailed when they get to your building site, they go in fast and deliver a much tighter, better built house than going stick-by-stick, outside in the sun, snow and rain.

Excel also has an in-house "set team." I like this feature too because, let's face it, most of us come up stick building. Rigging, craning, and setting giant cubes is a specialization. I like that there's ready support from the people whose system I'm using.

Bottom line, it seems there's less yadda and more action with Excel's team, making the claims we always hear about modular seem more solid that ever.

Changing to keep pace with the times -- or outpace your competition -- seems like it's time has come.

[www.ExcelHomes.com](#)

Mark Clement is a remodeler and author of The Carpenter's Notebook and The Kid's Carpenter's Workbook, Fun Family Projects! Check out his books and current projects at his [new website](#).



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