Builders glean likes, dislikes from focus groups

Continued from Page 1
basement. Hather than a walkout
basement or a regular basement
with the small windows near the
ceiling, some sites lend themselves
to full-size windows that extend all
the way down the wall.

"That can really make a difference when it comes to how people
use the basement."

But focus groups are helpful in pointing out where builders 'ideas are impractical.

"Sometimes things happen by accident." Hyde said For example, when building a house for a recent Homearama, a decision was made to cut a hole in the wall between the master beforom and a second smaller bedroom.

"The people loved it," the said. They wanted to use it as a sitting area or a computer room—so move we include that as an option."

JOIN BRAND, executive vice president of The Brand Consulting Group, said just about any type of business can use the information culled from focus groups to improve their business.

"The key, the objective of any focus group is to understand why). Brand said. "Why they like something, why they have the something, why they but here." Each type of company will have a different 'why' they need answered. Brand said. The type of people in the focus group will change depending on what the company is trying to determine. "There's a sayling if the client wants to market something to people oxclusively with square belly but tons, well, we'll find them," he said. In the case of the builder, that why could be one of two things: why a house isn't for its selling; or why a sales program; docan't work (or works).

works).

"Sometimes you can see these things without the focus groups," he said. "It's not unusual to see a manager say, 'We know that" when he

that, why weren't you doing some-hing about 112".

The focus group does exactly what It says — It helps company mana-gers focus on what is important. Sometimes, managers get caught up in things that are important to the company, but they lose sight of things that are important to the cus-tomer."

things are tomer." People don't always know why they do the things they do," he said.
Focus groups are helpful tools in problem solving for several reasons, but perhaps the greatest reason is that they produce ideas that might not come to light otherwise.

ELLEN WHITEFIELD, market-ing director for the Selective Group in Farmington Hills, said focus groups have been an integral part of the company's marketing strategy

looks at the report. But if you know that, why weren't you doing some thing about III. The focus grower was the focus on the process of the property what the focus on what is important. Sometimes managers focus on what is important that community.

"After the sale, we want to know did we do what we planned to do," she said. "We might do a focus group after (a project is completed) if a community isn't taking off."

Because communities are different, a home in one community may not sell well in another, she said.

not sell well in another, she said,
"A builder may also use focus
groups to help determine why a particular sales program worked or
didn't work," she said. "Why is it
they came to visit a particular model? Did they like the ad? Was it informative? Was it not informative
crough and they needed more information?".

'What do you think about . . .?'

Although the process can change depending on what results the builder is seeking, focus groups involve, who evaluate house plane the builder is proposing for production. Putle thorne Corp. marketing director Deen Hyde sald. "After the architect designs the house, we walk them through earh room (on the drawings)." his said. Borrowing from its own experiences, the focus group then makes suggestions for change or points out

likes and dislikes about the plan, she

said.

Typically, the builder then takes
the focus group report, evaluates the
suggestions and comments, and then
incorporates them into the house
plan.

olan.
Then he builds a prototype, she said. Once completed, the builder lowites the focus group back to view the bouse and make additional suggestions.
Those suggestions are then incorporated into the final design that is then put into production. Building a prototype that people, may or may not like may seem like

printed in the Observer & Eccentric in January.

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an expensive proposition, she said, but that's not necessarily the case. We have a support of the long roun's light of the long buyers will result in a home has sells. "Otherwise, we'd get a house that a committee of builders like, but maybe no one else. "There's nothing werse than investing a lot of time and money into something that no one like," light said. "If we build four or five of them and no one buys them, then we'd have a problem.





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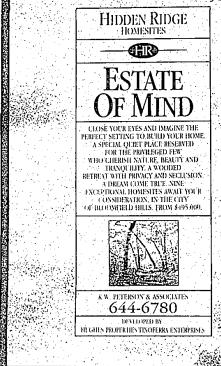
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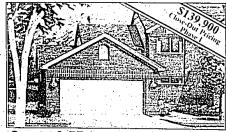
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