

Warranty Management Technologies, LLC

Tracey Gundersen

innovator
OF THE YEAR

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PHOTO BY BILL KLOZ

When Tracey Gundersen was scouting for new software to use at her home warranty management service in Burnsville, she found the available products woefully inadequate.

So like any good innovator, she helped create her own.

The result was HomSoft, a Web-

based software package that connects homebuyers with builders to expedite home warranty claims.

Due to a flood of water intrusion claims and right-to-repair legislation nationwide, home warranties have been a hot topic these days.

Unfortunately, “I don’t think it’s an area the builders have been good at communicating about,” Gundersen says.

Gundersen, a former teacher who keeps a framed copy of the Desiderata on her office wall, says HomSoft was developed in conjunction with the building industry to create a product that appeals to all players: homebuyers, builders and contractors.

The software lets homeowners file a warranty claim through a customized online form, which is also accessible to the builder. Both parties can then track changes to the claim — such as whether it was approved — and keep up to speed on repair work. A copy of the warranty is also uploaded onto the Web site for easy referral. “Part of the problem for buyers is they feel out of the loop,” Gundersen says.

In addition, HomSoft helps builders track the status of warranty work. In the past, builders often assigned a contractor to, say, fix some faulty cabinetry, but wouldn’t know if the work was ever completed until the homeowner called back to complain.

With HomSoft, a contractor can update work orders wirelessly in the field. And if they don’t, the builder knows.

HomSoft’s simple interface also cuts down on human capital. “If it’s difficult, people won’t use it,” Gundersen explains. “We’re really amazed at how few companies’ call us back after the initial training,” which takes just a few hours.

The software is also hosted offsite, so a PC and Internet connection are all that is needed to use HomSoft. “It’s very, very user friendly,” she says.

The Homsoft software, released to a general audience in 2003, is especially well-positioned to guide the construction industry through Minnesota’s new opportunity to repair law, which gives builders 30 days to address construction defects before the matter can go to court.

So what’s next for the company? Gundersen says she has gathered a wealth of data about the types of warranty work being performed, and how quickly builders respond. That information may be used for future benchmarking or reporting.

Gundersen also hopes insurance companies will plug into the system. By witnessing how their clients manage claims, insurance providers may provide incentives — such as lower premiums — for those with a positive track record in warranty management.

— Michael Krieger

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