

Mr. Clean

Steve Kempton, Taylor Morrison Homes' West Florida division president, doesn't look the part, but he has the same attitude toward dirt as the whirling dervish on TV. His campaign for cleanliness — from sales office to job site — is a factor in his division taking the AVID Award for building divisions that close 300 or more homes a year.

"If you see five people a week in the sales office, instead of the 25 that used to come, you can't afford to give them a reason not to buy," says Kempton at his Sarasota, Fla., headquarters. "If there's a cobweb in a model home or 2 by 4s scattered around a job site, that could be a reason not to buy."

Day and Night

Taylor Morrison doesn't just enforce the rule for cleanliness at the end of the workday. Builders are driven to keep sites clean at all times of the day and night. "We want our job sites to reflect the same cleanliness visitors see in our completed neighborhoods — real pride of ownership on our part, matching that of our customers," Kempton says.

"Clean and ready at closing" is No. 5 on Taylor Morrison's list of top customer experience scores, but three of the other four are clearly affected by the emphasis on detail that the cleanliness focus imparts:

(1) Time to correct walk-



Photo: Matt May/Getty Images

There's no messing around on job sites; Taylor Morrison West Florida Division President Steve Kempton stresses the importance of a spotless job site for great customer satisfaction.

through items

- (2) Cost of upgrades reasonable
- (3) Landscaping/grading
- (4) Builder's level of caring
- (5) Clean and ready at closing

"Cleanliness is part of our corporate strategy," says Taylor Morrison President and CEO Sheryl Palmer. "Our

emphasis is on the customers' experience whenever and wherever they arrive. It's about the feeling you get wherever you come in contact with our people or product."

The West Florida division builds in 25 locations from the north suburbs of Tampa to Naples. It builds product ranging from condominiums

and townhouses for first-time buyers to detached homes for well-heeled snowbirds. Since 2005, prices have crashed as much as 60 percent in these markets.

Taylor Morrison moved into more attached product, which is now a third of production, much of it targeted to entry-level buyers. And the firm is now putting money behind its emphasis on customer satisfaction. "When we have a house ready to close, we wait up to 10 days," notes Kempton, "so our quality assurance people can walk the house."

They are trained to look at it with the critical eye of a consumer. "We measure builders on completeness at the QA walk, then the builder gets five days to complete any outstanding items before the customer walks the house for the final time," says Kempton. "It costs us to put off closing by a week, but it's worth it in customer satisfaction and referral sales."

Taylor Morrison vice president of marketing Graham Hughes says he's thrilled to see "builder's level of caring" in the Top Five. "The customer care culture is infused at the community level now. It's coming from the trenches up, not the top down. Our people understand this is the way for all of us to succeed," he says.

They better not leave any cobwebs. **PB**