



WHITE PAPER

Configuration Module 2.0 — The Heart of a Modern Customer Journey

Why now is the right time to invest in digital customer journey management with the help of a configuration module and boost your sales and ROI simultaneously

The construction industry is in the middle of a transformation era. The transformation has been ongoing for many years. However, it has now entered a speedway. Recent world events have impacted the customers' way of working and living, and one can no longer take the same approach to the market as before. Covid-19 has changed homebuyers' needs and perspectives in a way that was unimaginable just a couple of years ago. People now want their lives to have more flexibility, and society has already shifted its way of collective thinking towards more personal ways of working. On top of that, our planet is in desperate need of our caring attention. But how can we approach these challenges within the construction industry?

One excellent way is to introduce yourself to the world of configuration. It has the ability to let the homeowner personalise the surroundings they live in — and possibly work in. The configuration module will enhance your reputation as a reliable and forward-thinking construction developer. It gives you the opportunity for digital data management that leads to better communication and helps to make fewer mistakes. On top of this, the configuration module gives you precise tools which help lower the environmental burden. Sounds appealing? Then keep on reading!

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What does the average homebuyer want from their biggest investment, and what do they want from the process of buying it? Stop and think about it for a second.

It might be that the purchaser has their eyes on their first home ever, or alternatively, your potential homebuyer has closed multiple property deals during their life. Whichever the case may be, there are many similarities amongst all homebuyers. According to recent data, this much is certain: what the customer wants is a home that feels personal and a purchase process that is straightforward and as easy as possible. What everybody wishes for is clear communication from the developer and a realistic timescale for the whole building project.

In the digital age, purchasing online has become the norm. With the Covid-19 pandemic sweeping through the globe, the online buying of homes has increased substantially. According to a recent study by McKinsey & Company, two-thirds of survey respondents believe that the COVID-19 crisis will accelerate industry transformation.[1]

Two-thirds of survey respondents believe that the COVID-19 crisis will accelerate industry transformation.



Overall transformation of the construction industry

Significantly slow down Slow Down Stay the Same
Accelerate Significantly Accelerate

As a result of COVID-19, do you believe that transformation of the construction industry will accelerate, stay the same, or slow down?

Share of respondents, %

Around two-thirds of respondents believe that the COVID-19 crisis will accelerate the overall transformation of the construction industry



Increased investments to adapt to the new future

No Yes

As a result of COVID-19, has our company increased overall investments to adapt to the new future?

Share of respondents, %

Around two-thirds of respondents believe that the COVID-19 crisis will accelerate the overall transformation of the construction industry

The need for customisation of personal spaces is also on the rise. As more and more companies are allowing their employees to choose between remote work and the so-called hybrid model, in which the employee can divide their time between the office and a remote location, it has become clear that to accommodate this new shift, people need more from their homes than ever before. This includes all kinds of customising needs, such as adding a home office, making the floorplan more flexible, creating new play areas for children, and even dedicating specific rooms for exercise.

62% of employees aged 22 to 65 say they work remotely at least occasionally and 16% state they are full-time remote workers. [2] This number is only increasing as we speak. For example, in the United Kingdom, 70% of people predicted that workers would never return to offices at the same rate as before the pandemic. [3] Therefore, it is time you take a serious look at a significant way your company can deliver personalised homes to the growing population of teleworkers.

This white paper explains to you how emphasising home personalisation and customer journey management, through using a configuration module, will help your company to thrive in the property development business, and how it will ultimately increase your profit and take your brand to the next level.

What is home configuration?

Home configuration is the process in which the homebuyer makes the specific material choices for their purchased property. Their selections are saved onto a software from which the developer is then able to communicate those choices directly to the builder.

The demand for online personalisation continues to grow

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In light of the latest studies, home buyers increasingly value realistic 3D tours as means of getting a better feel of their possible new home. 61% of possible purchasers say they would prefer to schedule in-person tours online, and 63% say it would be easier for them to unlock properties with their phones on their own time. This particularly applies to the younger generations as people under forty are more likely to use mobile applications as their means of communication and shopping compared to desktops. [4]

Due to this desire to handle the home buying process via mobile, it's clear the property developer needs to provide that opportunity for that specific customer segment. After all, it is this segment that is continuously increasing its presence in the home buying market.

[5]

Share of buyers that agree somewhat/
completely with each statement

	2019	2020	2021
3D tours would help me get a better feel for the space than static photos	52%	62%	68%
I wish more listings had 3D tours available	46%	55%	61%
I prefer 3D tours over in-person viewings	26%	35%	38%
I prefer to schedule in-person tours online	—	57%	61%
It would be easier for me to unlock properties with my phone and tour them in-person on my own time	—	59%	63%

With the need for online buying comes the desire to choose one's interior design solutions. And for the homebuyer, it truly matters where, how, and when they make those choices. People's need for customising their kitchens, bathrooms, and overall feel of their future home continues to grow, and they want to do it at their convenience. Providing the customer with a simple-to-use configuration module for creating their own home with the exact finishings gives you an enormous advantage as a property developer.

Not all people can visualise spaces through their mind's eye from reference photos. And even though the majority would be able to, two-dimensional pictures with finishings from the neighbouring apartment — a sales custom that is used often — do not offer enough information many of us wish to receive. By providing the customer with exact 3D renderings, and with the exact specifics, even with the real window view, is taking the customer experience to the next level.

Not all configuration is built equally

Home configuration is often compared to car customisation. However, that is simply not an accurate comparison.

“For them to be similar processes, there would need to be a scenario where you would build a customised car from the scratch on your front lawn, and all of the building materials would be brought to you”, says Harri Majala, the CEO and Founder of GBuilder.

With car manufacturing, the customer will always be able to purchase a specific vehicle with the same measurements as all the other cars — considering they are the same model — produced in that same assembly line. Building homes, however, is not that straightforward. The measurements for upper-floor apartments will be different from the apartments located on lower floors. This variance is a consequence of variable piping and structural solutions that change according to floor levels. Therefore, it is essential that the homebuyer gets to know the correct specifications of their future home, thus being able to successfully personalise their property.

The configuration module opens up a whole new project management system for you to use

So how to provide your customers more than just static pretty pictures and lift the design experience to a whole new level? The answer lies in the configuration module, a process in which the homebuyer gets to step into the digital twin of their purchased home and fine-tune the space to match their liking. During the material selection phase, the configuration module will automatically save all of the changes into the system in real-time. The overall management of the project will become easier for both the developer and the builder. Time and money consuming misunderstandings are avoided and the schedules will keep.

Many forms of configuration — Personalisation packages seem to lead the way forward

Currently, configuration options vary tremendously from one property developer to another. Some developers choose not to provide this opportunity at all. Others provide the possibility for individual personalisation options, and some developers offer the customer a chance to pick out their favourite alternative from pre-selected and pre-priced personalisation packages. These are usually named in specific themes, and the customer gets to choose some specific details — such as countertops — to finish the design.

Right now, it seems that the pre-selected design packages are the ones that are generating the most traction. Developers are increasingly leaning towards offering their customers easy to choose options, yet still enabling their customers to have an experience where they can make detailed choices. This, of course, is in the best interest of the customer, since only a few of us are instinctively good at interior design.

However, it will be interesting to see if the increase in remote working will have an effect on this development.

The configuration module is so much more than just a simple sales tool

To reach the level of optimal customer journey management, you must understand how the configuration will serve all stakeholders of the construction process. For great results, you will need the best tools.

“It’s not just the end-user managing material option who benefits from the data accumulated by configuration. For us, it has helped all of the people working on the project, including sales, procurement, site crew, quality inspectors, customer service and so many more stakeholders to do their jobs more efficiently.” Mia Ollila, Group Head of Customer Service and Warranty, Bonava

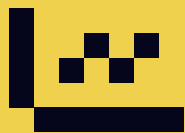
Arguably, the best tool is a configuration module that can combine the data used by all of the stakeholders. When data regarding one specific home is found in the common data environment, it’s very easy e.g. for the builder to know exactly which construction materials are assigned to a particular apartment. This makes the communication flow easier and decreases the chance of mistakes. And in the construction business, fewer mistakes correlate to a better customer journey. And, of course, more profit.

What is customer journey management in residential construction?



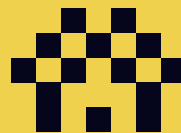
Customer Experience

Customer Portal
Configurator
3D/VR Visualisation



Project Management

Choices & Extras
Special Requests
Defects & Issues



Construction

Common Data Environment
Bim-based Data
Issue Reports

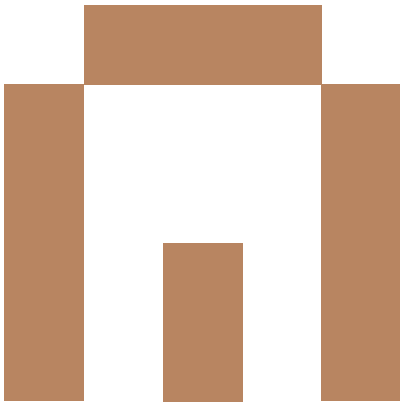


Aftercare

Defects & Issues
Extra Services
Digital twin/Homebook

Use configuration to your advantage

Make the home buying experience visually appealing and easy to access

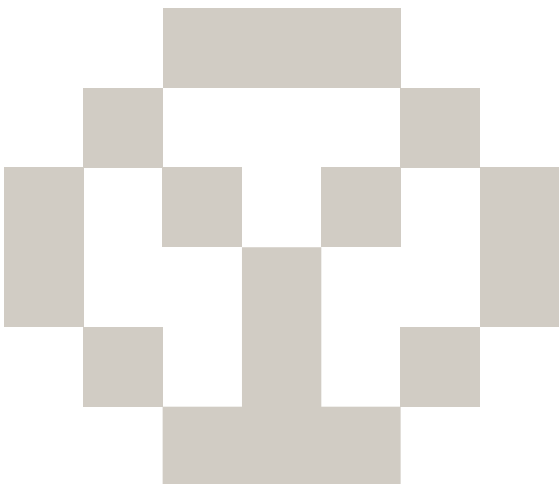


Provide the homebuyer with comprehensive 3D modeling of their purchased home. Elevate their customer experience by offering a vast selection of materials and personalisation choices, which can be selected in the comfort of preferred location and time.

In the configuration module, the homebuyer can list all the specifications and finishes they want to include in their home. They can choose to do this independently online or in a sales suite of a showroom. At the showroom, customers also get to see the materials in their physical form.

- It's important to note that 3D modelling makes it possible for the builder to identify and solve costly problems before construction begins.

Make material costs visible



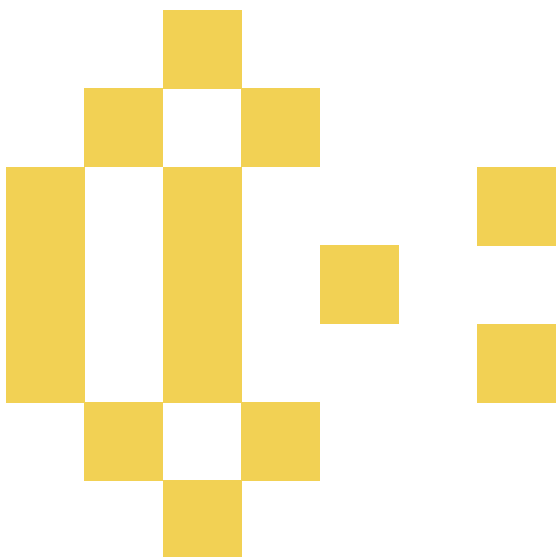
Provide your customer with clear and easy-to-understand pricing. With the help of the configuration module, they will be able to get an accurate cost indication regarding each material choice or change order. The configuration module will also help them pick out finishings within budget by showing the exact cost of the material.

Bring forth your best possible customer service



Liberate your staff from the tedious task of handwritten change orders and notes. The configuration module stores all the needed data under a common data environment where changes can be viewed and utilised in real-time. This will free your customer service and sales staff the resources they need to properly communicate with the (now happier) customer.

Communicate with the builder more efficiently and avoid unnecessary mistakes



The communication between the developer and the builder can easily be overlooked, yet it is tremendously important for the overall success of the construction project. There is not a builder in the world who wants to receive incomplete change orders, get information way past its due date, or even worse, get the wrong construction information altogether.

These kinds of mistakes are, however, completely avoidable. Having to build things twice is the fast track for the construction project to overrun on both time and budget. So do make that communication as effective and fast as possible. It will have a huge positive impact.

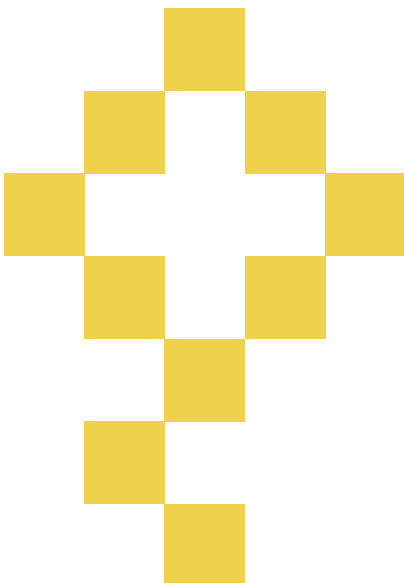


The fact is, that the construction industry is the largest consumer of raw materials derived from natural sources in the world. Also, the building construction process produces staggering amounts of material waste that negatively impacts the environment every day. [6]

Therefore, it is not acceptable to turn our backs on the waste issue. Every developer should strive to minimising the amount of construction-related waste in their projects. Consequently, this will have a positive effect on your profit margin. For every home that's built generating the minimum amount of waste, there is more profit to be made. Yet again, the configuration module provides a helping hand by enabling the builder to order the correct amounts of construction material. By doing so from the start, they can avoid big bulks of excess material, that would sadly in many cases, end up at the landfill.

- The yearly amount of construction development waste is over 800 million tons
- This accounts for roughly 25-30% of all waste produced in the European Union (EU)

Offer more sustainable solutions



As a developer, the configuration module offers you many ways to alter the current construction habits for the better. By providing your customers with the chance for personalisation, you can guide them to make environmentally sustainable choices. This happens easily during their material selection process, where they can see what the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of a certain material are. They can also compare the materials with each other. e.g. to get the idea of which of three types of wood flooring has the lowest CO₂ impact.

We have no choice — The time for sustainable construction is right now

Let's talk openly about the issue almost every one of us knows, but still, not all are willing to accept the facts. Climate change has been physically happening under our nose for over a decade now and the construction industry is one major player in contributing to that development. At GBuilder we strongly believe it would be unethical not to strive to change the status quo on this matter.

The configuration module has multiple built-in steps which help you to tackle the current environmental problems faced by our field of work. Currently, the construction industry is globally responsible for 40% of the yearly CO2 release. [7] In order to slow down climate change, the EU together with the UK has a strict goal of being completely climate-neutral by the year 2050. [8] By using the configuration module, you can put the 3R principle — Reduce, Reuse & Recycle — in action. As a developer, you have the power to offer your customers information on whether there are more environmentally sustainable materials they can choose from. This can be done cohesively when the customer makes their material selections in the configuration phase.

As history tells us, companies that in challenging times proactively adapt to new ways of working, are usually the winners in the long run. Therefore, being a frontrunner in sustainability will most likely enhance your chances of establishing your market position even further. In the best-case scenario, your market share will grow when people come to think of you as an environmentally sustainable choice.

You might have heard of the saying if it isn't broken, why fix it? And some of you might have even agreed with that idea. However, after reading through this white paper, do you still think your customer experience is as good as you thought? Or could it be so much more than it is now? Could it possibly elevate the whole level at which your company operates? Not being broken is not an excuse to stay stagnant and underperform. It is not an excuse to shrug one's shoulders and say "we could give you better customer service, but we choose not to". Also, when you think about the yearly produced levels of CO2 emissions, we cannot really say the system isn't broken, can we?

Adding the configuration module to your service repertoire will push your company towards the brand leadership position it needs and wants to be in. The combined data that is accumulated through configuration simply has no match. There isn't an alternative system out there, that would be able to free so much of your resources, make the staff more productive, enable a safer work environment, and help to reduce the number of mistakes and waste. Whether you want to cater your services to the first-time homebuyer or the experienced real estate investor, it does not matter. All that matters is your responsibility as a developer whilst guiding your customers through this otherwise rather complicated experience of the home buying process. What matters is how you choose to set your mindset as an operator in the industry. Is it change-averse, or is it change-tolerant? Or could it be an industry forerunner? Hopefully, you answered the latter.

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Contact

For more information about our products and organisation,
please visit gbuilder.com

Jarmo Ollila
Chief Sales & Marketing Officer
+358 (0)40 5722 851
jarmo@gbuilder.com

HEAD OFFICE
Hallituskatu 13-17 D
90100 OULU
FINLAND

Charlie Olpin
Business Development Director, UK
+44 (0)20 4538 7742
charlie@gbuilder.com

LONDON OFFICE
86-90 Paul Street
LONDON, EC2A 4NE
UNITED KINGDOM