Alliance Insights is a twice-monthly email featuring “quick hits” about innovation from inside and outside of the housing industry. Along with an infographic (“Pulse”) and a mini-blog (“Rant”), it is intended to provoke thought and spur action.

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PULSE
The Value Prop Problem
More than 75% of U.S. Internet users see little or no value in smart homes (including nearly a fifth who’ve never heard the term), per a recent study by UK smart home brand Hive.

Why It Matters: Don’t buy the hype. Despite wanting to save time and be more in control of their homes, most tech-savvy consumers still don’t see a solid value proposition for smart homes and cite concerns about price, ease of use and device interoperability as barriers to adoption – issues still being figured out.

> View the Graphic

INSIDE THE INDUSTRY
An App Worth Having

An augmented reality app developed by Mortenson Construction reveals a photo-real rendering of what a building under construction will look like upon completion.

Why It Matters: The proprietary mobile app represents the next (and better) level of client and public engagement by providing a realistic sneak peek at a building’s finished exterior in situ and a virtual tour of key interior spaces to ease concerns, answer questions and achieve alignment.

Photo courtesy Mortenson Construction

> Further Reading
**RANT**

**When Amazon Calls**

When my then-teenage son was looking for a summer job, he nearly dismissed a call from an unknown number on his cell phone until I encouraged him to take it. Turns out it was the manager of the movie theater where he’d applied a week earlier.

Had my son dismissed that call, I’m sure the guy would have just gone to the next name on his list.

So, if you see an unknown number from Seattle, Cupertino, or Mountain View pop up on your phone, it could be nothing … or it could be someone from Amazon, Apple, or Google reaching out to see if you might be interested in working with them on your next batch of new homes.

Exciting, right? You might even get a little giddy – or, as global technologist John Ellis describes it, “childlike” – when a watercooler mate of Jeff Bezos is on the line.

It’s a natural reaction, but one Ellis cautions against. While the mere prospect of working with one of those brands might blind you with visions of SOLD OUT signs, it’s important to step back and make sure it’s your homes – and not your business – that are selling out.

Simply, Ellis says, those folks want data. More specifically, data from your homeowners by way of their apps and Alexas … a key cog in their grand plan for world domination. The housing market is generally untapped, and you’re just a conduit.

Not so fast, says Ellis. “Builders are skilled integrators, not just producers and suppliers of homes,” he says, referring to the ballet of

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**OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY**

**Straight Outta Tesla**

The Additive Manufacturing Integrated Energy (AIME) prototype not only shares renewable energy between a house and a car, but offers a clever and cost-efficient 3D printing scheme for buildings.

*Why It Matters:* The home’s “additive” or sectional printing process eliminates window or door frames (though not windows and doors), among other components, to reduce construction time, cost and waste. Unused energy generated by thin-film rooftop solar panels helps power a 3D-printed car … and vice-versa.

*Photo courtesy Skidmore, Owings & Merrill*

> Further Reading
subs, suppliers, code officials and others that a builder choreographs on a daily basis. As daunting or foolhardy as negotiating with Amazon or Google may seem on the surface, “They’re calling you, so you need to call the shots.”

At the very least, that means protecting your brand; if you get fancy-talked into a single smart home solution, says Ellis, it could reduce your buyer pool to only those who are loyal to that brand of system.

You should still work with them, but use your power for good. Negotiate for shared data to affect a customer-first approach that provides real-time information for better energy efficiency or alerts homeowners to product performance and service needs, among other ways to improve their living experience ... and your reputation.

It’s a potential win-win-win, assuming you don’t act like a knucklehead teenager.

*Rich Binsacca is Director + Chief Communicator of the Alliance*