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Top 10 New-Home Marketing Ideas of 2008

It was an epic year for the sales and marketing teams of new-home builders, who did everything they could to connect with buyers.

By:

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Builders have always been savvy marketers, offering buyers everything from free basements and swimming pools to payment of homeowner's association fees. In 2008, as buyers seemed to take permanent residence on the fence, the ante on discounts and incentives was upped dramatically. So was the need for extreme creativity as marketing budgets (and staffs) were slashed. Here are 10 of the most unique marketing efforts of 2008:

10. Pricing guarantees.

Builders across the country reacted to buyers' fears that their builder would offer the same house for less money in a few months by [offering to pay the difference](#) if the base price of the house dropped. Most limited the deal to 60 or 90 days after closing; one went as far as to extend the offer until the community sold out.

9. Buy some gas on us.

As if builders didn't have enough to worry about in 2008, gas prices made the tradition of driving around looking at model homes a thing of the past. Many builders responded by giving away [gas cards](#) just for stopping by.

8. Going once, going twice, sold!

A couple of years ago, builders considered auctions a last-gasp approach. Now they're a fairly regular occurrence. In 2008, Oregon's largest builder, Buena Vista Custom Homes, [auctioned off its entire inventory](#), and Idaho builder CBH Homes took it one step further, put several of its inventory homes up for bid on [eBay](#).

7. Buy a house, get an energy-efficient car.

Several green builders developed campaigns to expand sustainability beyond the house to their buyers' cars. Here's a report on a ['buy a condo, get a Vespa scooter'](#) promotion.

6. Buy a house, get a really expensive car – or something else that's really expensive.

[Five Star Development](#), a Scottsdale, Ariz., luxury developer, is throwing in a [2009 Bentley Continental GT](#) with the purchase of either of two multimillion-dollar properties. The buyer has the option of trading the car for a 50-hour NetJets card for access to a private jet or a one-month-per-year Marriott Vacation Club International lifetime ownership. At closing, there's something nice for the buyer's real estate agent as well; a [Breitling Bentley GT Chronograph Steel watch](#) (for men) or a [Cartier Pasha watch](#) (for women)

5. Professional sports sponsorships.

Builders have been sponsoring Little League teams forever. In 2008, [Epcon Communities](#) and [Holiday Builders](#) took the concept of [sports sponsorships](#) to a whole new level.

4. Party on--but with a budget.

[The Hollywood](#), the first new condo project in Hollywood, Calif., in decades, came to market just as the bottom fell

out of real estate. With no budget for traditional advertising, the developer worked a host of connections to throw a [slammin' grand opening](#)--complete with graffiti art on the walls lit by the headlights of MINI Coopers--in the parking garage.

4. Throw a football, get a house.

Pulte Homes' Delaware Valley division [teamed up with the Philadelphia Eagles](#) for a '[Take It to the House](#)' [promotion](#) that gave three Phillies fans a chance to throw a football through a house-shaped cutout during the last home game of the season.

3. Disney Innoventions dream home give-away.

Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Taylor Morrison Homes was involved this year in possibly the dream team of marketing efforts, working with Disney, Microsoft, and HP to create the [Innoventions Dream Home](#) attraction at Disneyland. The builder leveraged its involvement with its own [Dream Home Give-Away](#), plus a dream vacation for four to (where else?) Disneyland.

2. Try it before you buy it

Most people can only imagine what their new home will be like until after the closing. A Portland, Ore., condo developer offers serious prospects [one to two nights in a unit](#) that's fully furnished, right down to the fridge.

1. Buy one house, get one free

You know the market's really stalled when a builder is [this desperate to unload inventory](#). Of all the promotions held in 2008, this promotion might have generated the most chatter among real estate professionals.

Pat Curry is senior editor, sales and marketing, at BUILDER magazine.

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