

8 Questions for US Modular President Todd Kessler

By Gary Fleisher, Modular Home Builder blog

Todd Kessler is the President of *US Modular, Inc.* in California, a modular builder that thinks outside the box when it comes to doing modular homes and projects. I asked Todd a few questions and I think you will find this builder to be one of the most unique and forward thinking people in our industry.



Modcoach: Todd, first let me thank you for taking the time to talk with me. How did you get started in the modular home industry?

Todd: *I am a second generation general contractor with over 30 years of Modular and Manufactured construction experience. I am hands on and involved in all aspects of the day to day operations. My responsibilities include overseeing all projects including: pre-construction services, quality control – on site and with factory partners, sub-contractor negotiations, scheduling, safety, estimating, budgeting and coordination of all parties involved thought the entire construction process. I work closely with all Engineers' and Architects to ensure projects are modular friendly and permitting is accomplished in timely fashion. Project experience includes Manufactured*

Single Family construction and Single Family and high density Multi-Family, systems built Modular construction.

Modcoach: **Are you doing commercial projects like hotels, apartment buildings, etc?**

Todd: *Yes, we are currently working on a 3 story, 106,000 sf 86 unit MF project for the housing Authority for San Bernardino in Redlands.*

Modcoach: **What “green” or energy saving products have you added to your homes, either as a standard item or as an option?**

Todd: *As a full service GC, we offer every green and energy saving product our manufactures offer... Cavco, Fleetwood, Skyline, and Silver Creek Industries.*

Modcoach: **Is the size of today’s homes different from the boom times before 2008?**

Todd: *Yes, avg. home in 20008 was approx. 2,200 sf, now avg home is 1750 sf*

Modcoach: **We hear a lot about Granny Pads, is that something that you are working on?**

Todd: *These are very popular on the West Coast, as many families have had to move in and live together. We are working with Cavco on their cottage series for just this purpose. This below is the explanation we have on our website for / Accessory units.*

An Accessory Dwelling Unit is a small apartment accessory to a primary residence. These units can be attached or detached and typically contain a kitchen, bedroom, bath and living area. Alternative names include” mother-in- law apartment”, “granny flat”, “granny suite”, “in-law suite”, and “accessory apartment”. USModular has many standard designs or we can design an Accessory Unit to meet your family needs. We handle design, permitting, and construction. Since 1986, California has had a “granny flat” law in place. Granny flat refers to a second-unit residential dwelling. Known as Government Code Section 65852.2 Second Unit Law, the statute is designed to provide affordable housing in population-dense areas, ease rental housing deficits, increase the property tax base, and allow for additional income to

homeowners. Any local municipality may adopt an ordinance to build second- unit housing in a single-family house. They may set certain standards regarding such things as restricted parking, unit size and architectural preferences. Localities have the discretion to consider such things as traffic flow and water and sewer services; however, localities must maintain the intent of second-unit state law, without undue provisions and requirements.

Modcoach: **Have code regulations been hurting our industry?**

Todd: *Over regulation hurts all industries, here in California, its worse than in most areas.*

Modcoach: **The cost of shipping homes is continuing to rise. How has that impacted modular home sales?**

Todd: *On the west coast this is a significant cost, however, in the overall budget to build a custom home... I don't see it as a major factor.*

Modcoach: **Are you getting more involved in social media such as Facebook and Pinterest?**

Todd: *We are very active on Facebook and Twitter. "Like"our USModular Home Builders Facebook page!*

Modcoach: **Why do you think that the modular home industry still stuck at 3% of the total new home market?**

Todd: *Our industry as a whole... as well as our trade organizations have not done a good job marketing our industry. We need to educate the consumer and all be on the same page, using the same terms. Most consumers we deal with don't know the difference between HUD and Modular. We in the industry confuse them even more with the terms we use to describe our product:*

- *Modular Construction*
- *Modular Sections*
- *Modular boxes*
- *Modular Homes*
- *Off Site Construction*
- *Pre fab*
- *Pre-Fabricated*
- *Systems Built*
- *Factory Built (this is what all the local jurisdictions in Ca use)*

- *IRC home*
- *Manufactured Home*
- *Mobile Home*
- *HUD Home*
- *Trailer*

Coach, need I say more?

We also need to get rid of the good ole boys in the industry, that have not changed their mind set... if we want to compare ourselves to site built homes then our quality needs to be comparable or better.

We use the term Off- Site Construction or Modular... Once stated we simply call it what it is a "Custom Home"

Todd, thanks again for answering my questions. I hope you continue to grow both your company and your reputation for being a great home builder.