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Florida's Custom Home Builder



**Written by Pauline Müller**

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**A**fter 45 years in the construction industry, ICI Homes, headquartered in Daytona Beach, Florida, has honed its skills and niche to fine perfection. Leading

its unique market segment with characteristic humility and outstanding customer service, the company has become a household name throughout Florida. ▶▶



► With a client referral rate of 96.5 percent and nearly 40 home design awards for the year to date, it is not surprising that ICI Homes is noted as one of the state's largest firms. Over the past two decades, it has consistently been ranked by **Builder Magazine** as one of the country's Top 100 homebuilders.

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***“Customers are routinely full of praise for the firm’s responsiveness, made possible by everyone from management to field staff being easily accessible and willing to assist.”***

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ICI Homes sets itself apart by taking care of details few others think of, creating a lovely, signature ambiance that is just about as hard to capture in a single definitive description as catching fireflies in mid-July. This attention to precision pays off in many ways, as many of the company's customers have purchased multiple homes designed and built to ICI's exacting standards.

Largely serving customers looking to build their second or retirement homes, the firm has a presence in some of the most distinguished communities from coast to coast in areas around Jacksonville, Daytona Beach, Ormond Beach, Palm Coast, Port Orange, Gainesville, Tampa, Sarasota, and Orlando. So it's no surprise that ICI Homes owners, Chairman and CEO Mori Hosseini and his wife, Forough Hosseini, ICI's Executive Vice President of Information Systems and Founder and Chair of FBH Community Organization, the company's flagship charity, live in one of ICI's distinctive communities.

With that same level of excellence visible in everything they do, the ICI Homes team is always ready to engage and offer solutions, alongside fast response times and a commitment to clear and consistent updates and communication. One customer perhaps said it best recently: “When you walk into an ICI model, you just know it's different.”

Indeed, customers are routinely full of praise for the firm's responsiveness, and that is made possible by everyone from management to field staff being easily accessible and willing to assist. ►►



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the past many decades. These are punctuated with around 64 complete home models for customers to enjoy and use to help them make design decisions.

At ICI Homes, customers become family, reaping the benefits of being sincerely cared for. Top-quality custom family homes at decent prices position this company in a league entirely of its own. Completing around 800 units annually, high volumes and performing all architectural design and fabrication in-house provide the company with notable efficiency savings which are then passed on to the customer.

Once customers have chosen their ideal floor plans and decided how they would like to amend them to achieve a bespoke result that fits their tastes and needs, the architectural team renders the final computer-aided designs. The process is fluid, with very few rigid ideas of what is and is not possible. Sometimes, customers even combine designs, rendering an entirely new floor plan. "They're all such award-winning plans that the customer has a level of trust that comes with designs that have won 40 awards this year alone," Rosy Messina, Vice President of Marketing, says. After another round of possible changes, the plans proceed to the engineering department and work on the project starts. ▶▶

▶ This generosity of spirit is also evident in the company's design ethos across all its projects. Creating spacious volumes, its typical ceiling height is 12 to 14 feet, while windows can measure 7 feet, rendering a true sense of luxury. Building in a variety of sizes ranging from large villas and mansions on acre-sized parcels of land within large communities to much smaller townhomes, ICI's impressive collection of floorplans tallies around 140 tried and tested iterations of beautiful homes that thousands of customers have come to love over



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▶ While amendments to existing designs are more common with private clients, large developers generally prefer to work with what is tried, tested, and true. “We’re somewhat of a unicorn; most of the production builders are getting cheaper and more efficient, while most of the custom outfits are struggling in this high-cost environment,” shares Tom McCall, Chief Operational Officer. “We made this niche. And not many people do it,” he continues.

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***“Attentive to even the smallest of details, this team knows that taking the time to be precise is what really delivers a quality result.”***

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The formula works. While others in this field cut down on comforts and skim over details to save on expenses, the ICI Homes team knows that creating an opulent sense of quality at outstanding value sells far better than the spartan atmosphere of new buildings that have fallen victim to cutting corners. Attentive to even the smallest of details, this team knows that taking the time to be precise is what really delivers a quality result. As such, everyone in the company

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Contributing to ICI Homes' efficiency is its committee representing every discipline in the firm, including designers and decorators. Established by its Vice President of Architecture, the mission is singular: to find anything and everything that is hip, hot, and

happening in architectural design and home décor. All design elements and techniques that pass ICI's rigorous in-house taste test are incorporated into its products, keeping everything it does on-trend and in vogue. This commitment to remaining in stride with the zeitgeist consistently secures the firm significant recognition, with its models taking home more than a dozen awards at one recent industry event.

The staff at ICI Homes are people who love people. And, as it is tradition, a diverse range of customers are welcomed to the family and made to feel at home and safe in knowing that whatever their dream home looks like, the team will create that for them. The result, of course, is a healthy amount of referred and repeat business. "[For us], referral is the best form of flattery and marketing," says Messina. ▶▶



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► ICI also consistently invests in technology to improve its efficiency. One recent example is a custom software system currently being developed to provide its homeowners access to all their property information in one easy-to-access, safe place. On completion, manuals and related information will be uploaded, storing all property info in a single place. In addition, it allows direct access to support. “Think of it as an accordion folder, but it’s all online,” Messina says.

Yet, as good as the going is now, this team is seasoned in weathering trying times creatively and successfully. While COVID-19 brought real supply chain issues, ICI’s sincere approach to its customers’ experience brought about runaway successes during this time and beyond. Noting that other contractors were not surveying their clients, McCall says the plan to go out and speak to people helped ICI turn the tide. By following some solid business advice on setting itself apart—by building real relationships and providing superior customer service—referrals started pouring in in no time.

***“McCall and Messina count 16 and 23 years of service respectively, yet they consider themselves the new kids on the block; some of their colleagues have been with the firm for four decades.”***

The result was that ICI’s employees also felt seen and appreciated, creating a positive feedback loop that continues to this day.

Naturally, with such a satisfied crowd of professionals coming to work here every day, the company is known for its employees’ exceptionally long tenures. McCall and Messina alone count 16 and 23 years of service, respectively. Yet, they



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consider themselves the new kids on the block, as some of their colleagues have been with the firm for four decades.

For those new to its ranks, it is very rewarding to discover just how seriously ICI Homes takes long tenures, making team members into lifers—as long-term staff are known here. “We want this to be your last career when you join our family,” Messina says. That is why ICI is so proud that almost 50 percent of its team has been with the company for five or more years, with many having achieved 10 to 35 years of

service. Considering the labor crisis and its comparatively small staff of approximately 270 employees, this is quite revealing about the ICI Homes culture.

For this same reason, hiring is a mindful and thorough process that has occasionally taken as long as a year and a half to fill certain positions. While this may appear excessive to some, the approach contributes to ICI's adaptability and the speed at which it pivots to meet market trends and fluctuations, since the team is so well-balanced and its company culture so well-integrated. ▶

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► Creating a sense of belonging extends beyond the ICI tribe, too. Through the dedicated philanthropy of its owners, ICI Homes is deeply committed to giving back to those in need. While there are multiple organizations that benefit from the company's contributions, FBH (Food Brings Hope) Community, founded by Mrs. Hosseini in 2007, provides over 1,600 underserved children within the Volusia-Flagler County public school system with meals on a weekly basis along with many other valuable services for the students. ICI also runs its own "Homes for Hope" initiative, inviting vendors and tradespeople to provide products and skills for a given charity project. The entire team works together to pull off one of the best charity construction models I, for one, have ever heard of: once costs are covered, the profit from the sale amount of such a property is donated to multiple charities. This year, they anticipate that over \$200,000 will be divided among four Gainesville charities. The concept has proven tremendously successful as buyers appreciate that their purchase contributes to the greater good.

***"We are not motivated by quarterly earnings and stock price. We can look more long-term and make decisions based on the right thing."***



Indeed, doing the right thing under all circumstances is one of the company's mainstays. And, thanks to being privately held, the team gets to execute that maxim daily and without wavering. "We are not motivated by quarterly earnings and stock price. We can look more long-term and make decisions based on the right thing," says McCall.

At ICI Homes, everything from land purchases to the quality of service is underscored by its striving to remain a legacy enterprise. "This is a family business that we want to see go on; we have a



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very long horizon," says Messina on the company's approach to succession and its long-term decision-making process. With the Hosseini siblings now on board as well, the family vision continues—and so does ICI's history of excellence.

Hosseini, Sr. established ICI Homes in 1980, emigrating to England from Iran during his youth to pursue an education in aeronautical engineering and then on to Daytona Beach's Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, where he obtained his master's in business administration. He later became Chair of the board of trustees of his alma mater, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and Chair of the University of Florida simultaneously, amongst his service to numerous other public service boards. Focusing his business model on quality over quantity, Hosseini has firmly cemented the concept that integrity and customer care trump volume in any given year.

With a collection of so many impressive projects in its rearview mirror, including Seven Pines, Nocatee, and Tamaya in Jacksonville; West Hill Estates and Persimmon Park in the Tampa Bay area; Plantation Bay, Mosaic, Woodhaven, and the Conservatory in the Daytona Beach area; and Laureate Park in the Orlando area, just to name a few. The company will soon be expanding its presence on the west coast and south from its current footprint through more land acquisition. In the meantime, this sterling team remains proud to produce its work across its existing territory. Everyone continues giving their best on every project.

"We won't rest until we get a 100 percent referral rate from happy customers," Messina says with a smile. As a result of these commitments, ICI's market-disrupting customization approach continues to make an indelible mark on Florida's construction scene, building communities that retain their value and continue thriving while expanding what is possible. ■



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