



YOUR 2022 GUIDE FOR

# Mastering the homebuyer experience



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## INTRODUCTION

# Mastering the homebuyer experience

Homebuyers have more expectations than ever. They know what they want. Not just when it comes to their home, but in regards to the customer experience they get between reservation and completion as well. They want a smooth experience – the same thing they get when ordering something from Amazon or eBay. Does it make sense to compare the purchase of shoes from an online shop to the purchase of a house? No, but nowadays, people tend to compare anyway. Even when products have nothing in common. This was also clear in a 2018 study by Ziggu. One surveyed homebuyer said: “I don’t get why I can follow my £15 pizza order from payment to delivery, but I can’t do the same with my £300.000 apartment”.

It comes down to this: people expect the same great experience everywhere, every time. But when they don’t get what they expect, they’re not afraid to vent their frustrations online. Homebuyers have become more assertive over

the years, and they don’t hold back. They will let the world know when their experience with you wasn’t good. That’s something homebuilders have to take into account more and more.

So, fed by great digital experiences in other sectors, homebuyers have also created a hunger for the same smoothness in real estate. They expect someone to listen to their needs and wishes, immediate answers to questions and 24/7 access to information. That’s a lot of added pressure for homebuilders and their sales managers. Does it seem impossible to keep up with all this and do an excellent job in every other aspect of the construction? Don’t worry; we’re here to tell you exactly how you can master your homebuyer experience and turn your customers into your very own brand ambassadors.

# From reservation to exchange

## Start with building trust

According to research by TwentiCi, more than 300.000 property transactions fell through in 2021 before the exchange. The customer insights & data agency's report also shows that sellers lost an average of £2,727 per unit when they didn't make the sale — having spent it on legal costs to prepare the exchange of contracts or marketing fees to promote the house. This research shows again how uncertain the time between reservation and exchange can be. Until the homebuyer pays the down payment and signs the contracts, they can pull out at any time.

300.000+

TRANSACTIONS FELL  
THROUGH IN 2021  
BEFORE THE EXCHANGE

£2,727

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## A significant investment

Why? Sometimes buyers simply realise their finances don't quite add up. As a sales manager, you can't do much about that. But buyers often change their minds because they don't trust the homebuilder anymore. Miscommunication, being difficult to reach for questions or not helping them through the conveyance period are all good reasons for buyers to pull out.

You can't blame them: buying a home is a significant investment and comes with a lot of emotions — it's the place where they'll raise their kids, the place where they'll put down roots, grow old together. So it needs to be perfect, or at least as close to it as can be. Unfortunately, once your homebuyer has lost trust in you, it's hard to get it back.





## CHAPTER 1

# From reservation to exchange

### How you can do better

As a sales manager, it's undoubtedly disappointing when the exchange doesn't go through because buyers had trouble trusting you – after all, you know you'd do an excellent job with their home. But even the slightest feeling that there's no transparency from your side will turn off homebuyers very quickly. At the same time, you might already be at your wit's end, trying to cater to these homebuyers and look for new prospects.

Using a homebuyer portal, however, is a great way to provide transparency for your customers and allow yourself some time to keep up with your other to-dos, as you'll be able to work more efficiently. With an online personal space like a homebuyer portal, you can give customers access to information at all times, guide people easily through every step of the construction process and treat them with

behind-the-scenes updates from the construction site.

You're not just telling them they can trust you; you're showing them. And that's incredibly important: this transparency will give homebuyers some peace of mind, and you'll keep their trust more easily.

# From reservation to exchange

## Out with traditional tools

**We all use email, we all love email, we never doubt that it's a great way to communicate. And yet, it's not always the perfect tool. A construction project equals a lot of documents: plans, quotations, contracts, etcetera. When you share all that information with colleagues, partners, suppliers and homebuyers via email, things will go wrong. Your email goes missing in the recipient's crowded inbox, it goes straight to their spam folder, or worse: there are so many different versions of a document in circulation, nobody knows which one is the correct document anymore. Let's be honest: we all know at least one story of two contractors standing side by side on a construction site holding two different versions of the building plan.**

## Looking for answers

Homebuilder VOLUS knew this problem all too well. Their sales team communicated with all the key players of a construction project via email. But, as project leader Kevin Cosijn, says: "In a mailbox, you miss things more easily". Also, he notes, it's easy to delete a message accidentally in a full inbox and not realise it. "A lot of information gets lost with traditional systems like this", Kevin concludes.

For homebuilder Furnibo "there was simply too much noise with email", according to customer advisor Delfine Vermoote. "If we had to look for a certain email or specific document, we were looking for the proverbial needle", she says. Emails from colleagues, clients, suppliers and supervisors on the construction site were all in the same melting pot. Delfine adds another good point: "We scratched our heads whenever we took over a project from a colleague –

looking for answers in someone else's mailbox is far from ideal."

## Homebuyers want order

This can lead to big mistakes during construction, but it's also a waste of time for everyone trying to find the needed information. What's more: missing an email from a homebuyer, sending them a wrong document or sending so many it becomes a big mess are all things you'd rather avoid. It comes across as chaotic and untidy – it's simply not a good look. Moreover, it might make homebuyers worry – 'Is our home's construction going to be as messy as their communication?'

Research by Ziggu in 2018 showed that 51% of homebuyers were not at all satisfied with the way they were kept informed during construction. These respondents indicated that they didn't have an online environment to keep



# From reservation to exchange

up with their home's evolution or to contact their homebuilder, but depended on email to get information. On the other hand, 85% of respondents who did get access to an online environment from their homebuilder and didn't just rely on email, were very satisfied with the way they were kept in the loop. So you get it: even though we are so used to communicating through email, it's not exactly the most bulletproof means of communication with partners or homebuyers.

## How you can do better

You don't want the mistakes to pile up, you don't want to waste time on random tasks like looking for an email, and you certainly don't want homebuyers to doubt you. With a homebuyer portal, you can do better. Everyone involved with the construction project gets access to the portal. You gather all the documents and information about that specific project in one spot. You, your partners, and homebuyers get a clear overview of the latest records.

Not only that: you can also add an FAQ page so that homebuyers can find the answers themselves. That means that you don't have to constantly answer common questions anymore, but can focus on helping homebuyers on more important issues, like choosing a kitchen style or getting in touch with a conveyance solicitor.

# From exchange to completion

## We're all in this together

**A construction project requires a lot of people: architects, supervisors, kitchen builders, electricians, etcetera. Keeping in touch with all these people is no small feat. The homebuilder is often the middleman. The sales team or project manager are the ones between homebuyers and suppliers or solicitors, going back and forth with construction plans, explaining new changes to customers, clarifying their wishes to the floorer. Let's be honest: it's exhausting, and who really has the time to be the middleman, right?**

## A game of Chinese whispers

Besides the fact that being the ping-pong ball between the different parties is time-consuming, it's also risky. The chances of making a mistake are much higher when someone in the middle is responsible for getting the message from point A to B. We all know how games of Chinese whispers end, right? You never end up with the same sentence you formed in the beginning. In the case of this game, the result is usually very amusing. But when it comes to home constructions, wrongly informing people could lead to discussions, delays, or painful financial situations.

There are so many documents and messages going back and forth during construction. What's more: last-minute changes to plans are very common. Homebuyers ask for an upgrade, or they want their sockets in different spots after all, an unexpected problem arises on the construction site, and so on. If you get your wires crossed and fail to communicate correctly, those sockets will be in the wrong place, and the problems on-site will not be dealt with appropriately.



# From exchange to completion

## How you can do better

Being the middleman is difficult. It's not your main job to handle the communication between homebuyers and suppliers — yet, you have to do it anyway. Or do you? The sales managers at homebuilder ION, for example, are no longer the ping-pong ball between those two parties since they've implemented a homebuyer portal. Instead, they now give key players access to the same online environment when a new construction project takes off.

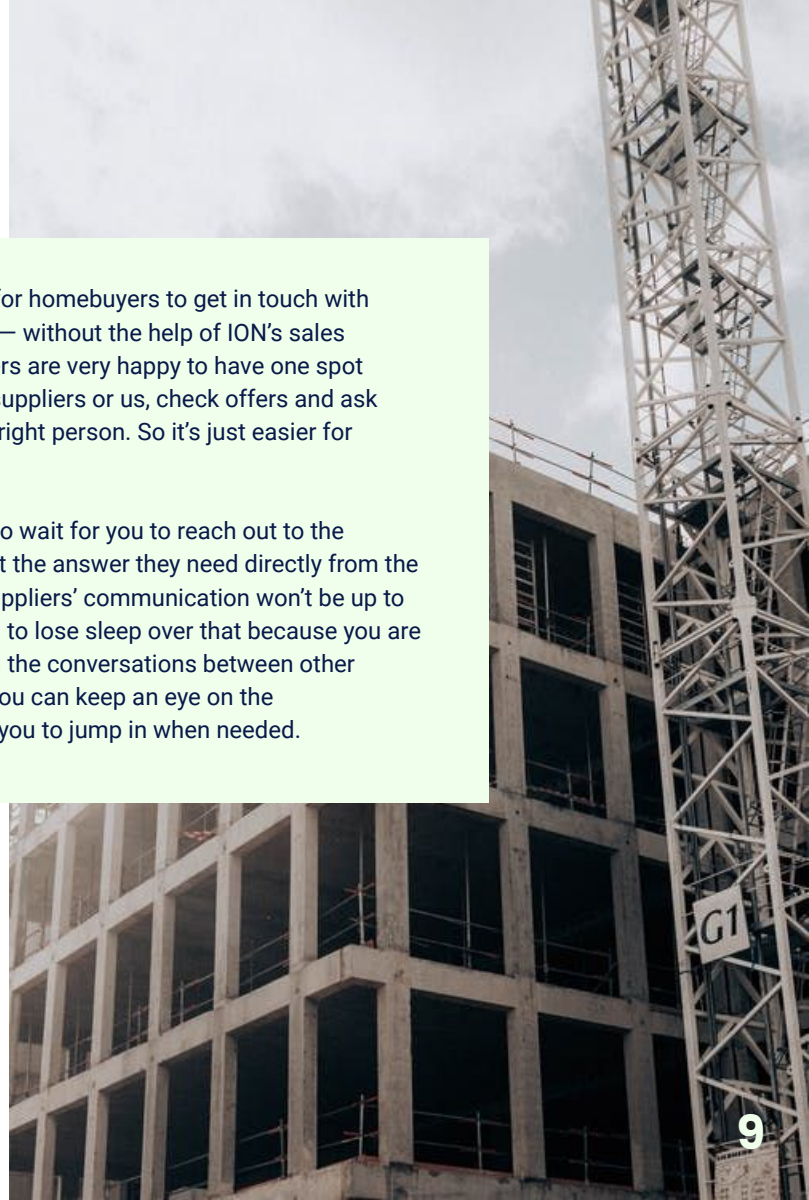
According to Ellen De Clercq, customer manager for ION, this makes it easier for everyone to follow up on the project and keep a clear overview of all the documents.

But it's also a great way for homebuyers to get in touch with suppliers and vice-versa — without the help of ION's sales managers. "Our customers are very happy to have one spot where they can contact suppliers or us, check offers and ask questions directly to the right person. So it's just easier for everyone."

Homebuyers don't have to wait for you to reach out to the supplier. Instead, they get the answer they need directly from the source. Worried some suppliers' communication won't be up to your standards? No need to lose sleep over that because you are automatically included in the conversations between other parties. In other words: you can keep an eye on the back-and-forth, allowing you to jump in when needed.

"Our customers are very happy to have one spot where they can contact suppliers or us, check offers and ask questions directly."

- ELLEN DECLERCQ, ION



# From exchange to completion

## Making decision-making fun

**Many homebuilders keep track of their construction projects with the help of Excel Sheets. Which phase of the construction is already completed, for example. Or if homebuyers have approved their kitchen design plans. But these sheets prove to be problematic sooner or later. If you want to use Excel as a project management tool, you need to update the sheets constantly. But the tool doesn't give you the best overview, it gets messy very quickly and is just not user-friendly to manage big projects. No wonder you or your team members forget to update the sheet – Excel fatigue is a real thing!**

## A stressful time

Unfortunately, this Excel fatigue can lead to annoying mistakes. For example: when building a home from scratch, a homebuyer has to make a lot of decisions – what kind of floor do they want in each room? Do they want a bath or a shower, or both? Do they prefer a modern kitchen or a more traditional style? This can be pretty stressful for people. They have to decide on things they'll have to live with for a long time. But they also have to make all those decisions on time, so the construction doesn't get delayed.

If your Excel sheet is not up-to-date, or you simply forget to look at it, there's a big chance you might miss important deadlines for your homebuyers. If you fail to inform your homebuyers of a decision deadline, they either have to make decisions more quickly to keep up with your schedule, or you'll have to delay certain construction works. Either way, it's very frustrating for your homebuyers.

## How you can do better

Every decision is an important decision for your new homeowners. And you can make sure that all that shopping around for floor tiles, bathroom sinks and kitchen cabinets is actually a fun time for them. A homebuyer portal allows you to help them through the decision-making process flawlessly. By adding a timeline for every decision they have to make, you and the homebuyers clearly know what's due when. No one loses track of time, and everyone knows what's expected of them.

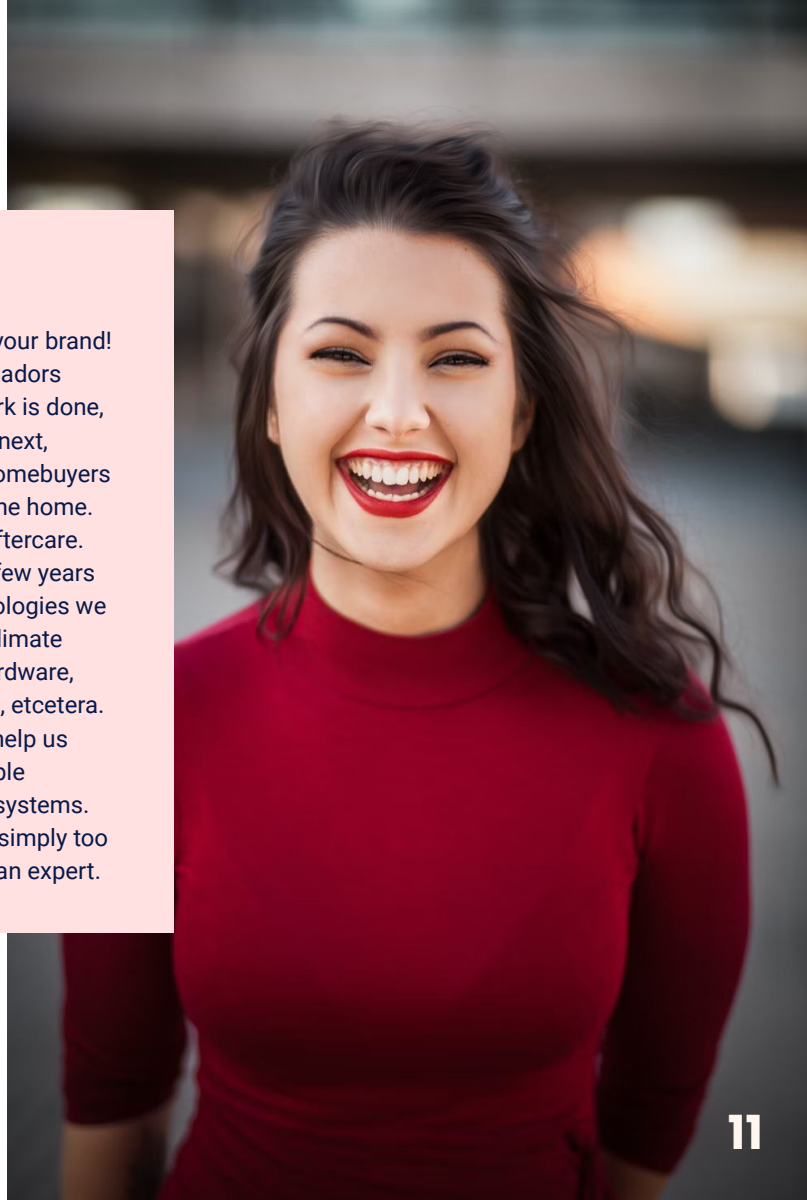
Automatic alerts to homebuyers remind them of decision deadlines, while you get reminders if they've missed a deadline. You can check in, ask them if everything's clear or help them make choices by giving your expert advice. You get it: handling decisions through a homebuyer portal will make the process more fun and worry-free for everyone involved.

## Aftercare

Aside from the efficiency you create using an online environment, it also helps you generate more engagement. For example, homebuilder CAAAP uses their portal to keep homebuyers informed and get them excited about their future home at the same time. CEO Stefanie Vanden Broucke explains: “Updates about the building location, ‘get to know the team’ posts or fun places near the site: these are all small elements that create a bigger story around the project.” Jens Thirion from Triple Living calls these updates “candy for homebuyers”. “They love it”, he says.

### Things get complicated

Talk about creating ambassadors for your brand! But what happens to all those ambassadors when the home’s completed? Your work is done, your homebuyers are happy, on to the next, right? Not quite. Taking care of your homebuyers shouldn’t end with the completion of the home. More and more, we see the need for aftercare. Houses are more complicated than a few years ago. Think about the many new technologies we have in or around our homes: indoor climate control systems, Internet of Things hardware, smart home applications, solar panels, etcetera. They certainly make our life easier or help us become energy neutral, but many people struggle to maintain or operate these systems. Manuals get lost, or the technology is simply too complicated to fix without the help of an expert.



# Aftercare


## How you can do better

The homebuyer portal doesn't have to be just a place to keep all the documents after completion. You can still take advantage of the many features, like the communication tool, for example. This gives homebuyers the opportunity to easily contact you or one of the suppliers when they have a question or when there's a problem with (technical) infrastructure. In addition, every key player still has the same overview of plans, documents, and FAQs, so they don't have to do a long search in their archives to find information about the homebuyer's house.

Homebuilder ION handles their aftercare through their homebuyers platform as well. Ellen Declercq explains why: "It's crucial to us that we can continue to inform customers, but that they also have a point of contact. So, even if they already live in the apartment, we still

want to emphasise our customer support." It certainly gives homebuyers some peace of mind when they know they'll always have a spot to find technical documents, answers to questions, and so on.

But you can take it a step further: instead of only being there when problems arise, why don't you help them get settled in or, years later, redecorate their home? Give internet providers access to the homebuyer portal and include furniture stores, so homeowners can use the platform for every step they take in their new home. Add the painter to the portal, so people can order the same paint used when they first moved in to do a minor touch-up. You'll be their extra life partner, the one who's there for them for everything that has to do with their home. The benefit for you? You get their loyalty and praise, which they'll no doubt gladly share with friends and family.



“Updates about the building location, or fun places near the site: these are all small elements that create a bigger story around the project.”

- JENS THIRION, TRIPLE LIVING

## Special case: how Newett Homes does it

UK homebuilder Newett Homes knows how to build houses that speak to the new generation of homebuyers. With a focus on environmentally friendly houses, attention to detail, and exceptional design, Newett Homes' projects sell like hotcakes. But an exquisite home in a great location isn't enough anymore. It's certainly a trend Will Newett has noticed in the last few years. Homebuyers in the UK are more demanding than ever and expect a smooth customer journey from beginning to end. So digital tools that help create a better experience have become the way to differentiate as a homebuilder. According to Will, 'in a competitive market like ours, a digital customer experience will give you a better chance of selling your project nowadays'.

### Location, location,... customer experience

We're already used to wonderful customer experiences in other parts of our life — setting up a bank account in just a few minutes, buying clothes through an app, having your groceries delivered at home,... —, but the need for these excellent customer experiences has trickled down to the real estate sector as well. 'Location will always be the most important aspect of a homebuyer's decision', says Will. 'But not paying attention to your customer's experience has become a big 'no'.'

According to Will, it's 'unfair to let people buy a house and then not speak to them until they move in'. Yes, that means your contact with homebuyers will happen more often, and it'll be more intense, 'but it's too important to us that they have all the information at all times. At Newett Homes, we ensure we're in constant communication with the homebuyers — during the reservation of the home, during the building process and even afterwards', he adds.

“Location will always be the most important aspect of a homebuyer's decision but not paying attention to customer experience has become a big ‘no’”

- WILL NEWETT, NEWETT HOMES





# Special case: how Newett Homes does it

## Yes, it pays off

So customer experiences are important, but how essential are digital tools in these experiences? According to the Newett Homes founder, incredibly essential. 'A digital platform enables you to communicate more easily and quickly. It allows you to keep every document in the same spot, so everyone who needs it has the latest documents at hand — something you're never quite sure of when you're messing about in your email inbox', Will explains. If you ask Will, he'll tell you that a digital platform is indispensable: 'It helps you create a more personalised experience, and it's simply more efficient for us as a homebuilder.'

Don't believe Will's words? Let's look at the numbers then. In 2018, Ziggu went door to door in newly finished apartment buildings and asked the homeowners a few questions about their property developer. Unfortunately, the NPS — the score people give when asked how likely they are to recommend their property developer to a friend — was a disappointing -42. Out of this problematic situation, Ziggu was born: a platform that allows construction companies to do better. Now, four years later, new research shows that a homebuyer portal does pay off: the score homebuyers give their property developers is now +42 on average!

4.2/10

THE AVERAGE SCORE  
CUSTOMERS GIVE THEIR  
PROPERTY DEVELOPER  
WITHOUT ZIGGU

8.4/10

THE AVERAGE SCORE  
CUSTOMERS GIVE THEIR  
PROPERTY DEVELOPER  
WITH ZIGGU



# You don't have to reinvent the wheel (we did that for you!)

**More than ever, people do their research. They look for social proof: what was their friend's experience with this company? Was their aunt, uncle or nan happy with the end result when they worked with that company? And they don't just listen to friends and family; they pay attention to online reviews as well. Negative comments on review sites, such as Google Reviews, Yelp, or even Facebook, will negatively impact your business. In other words: learning how to master your homebuyer experience is not a luxury; it's a necessity.**

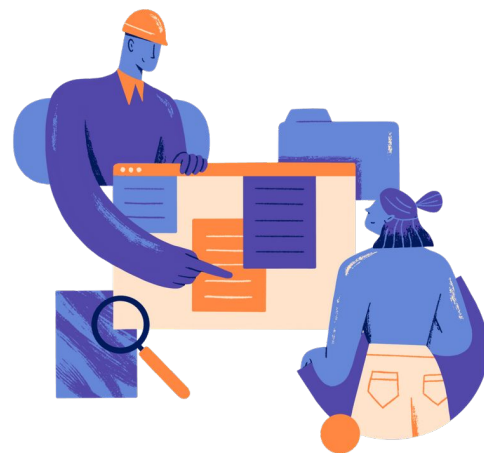
A 2022 research by Ziggu shows that a whopping 82.8% of respondents find our customer portal an added value. The fact that it's user-friendly, an effortless way to stay up-to-date about the construction, and it collects all documents and messages in one spot were all crucial factors for these homebuyers. In addition, 84% of people gave a score between 8 and 10 out of 10 for the 'ease of use in communicating with their property developer, showrooms and suppliers'. It's clear that customers appreciate the experience they get with a homebuyer portal.

### **Ziggu helps you keep it fun**

But at Ziggu, we understand this sounds like a lot. You already have so much to do, now this?! We get it. That's why we're here. With Ziggu's homebuyer portal, you don't have to start your homebuyer experience from scratch. You just jump onto our platform and start from there. We've automated a bunch of repetitive tasks, made other to-do's much easier, and created a user-friendly environment to keep it fun for you and your homebuyers.

### **Ziggu helps you win at efficiency**

You might think it's not worth the trouble or the investment, but our recent research shows that working with our portal improves your efficiency in no time. For example, you can save an average of 4.3 hours per unit by centralising all your documents on Ziggu instead of keeping them in your mailbox, folders or spreadsheets. In addition, proactively informing homebuyers by sharing photos and videos, news from the site or an FAQ list saves you easily another 1.7 hours/unit on average. And something as simple as letting our platform send out automatic reminders to homebuyers or



suppliers saves you another 1.4 hours/unit while collaborating with all key players via Ziggu saves you an average of 3 hours/unit.

### **Ziggu helps you earn more**

Making your homebuyers happy, winning at efficiency, but still not convinced? Let's talk money, then. When you switch to Ziggu, you can book an average of 5% more surcharges per unit. How so? The platform makes it easier for you to suggest minor upgrades to the homebuyers on top of your default choices such as the bathroom, kitchen or flooring. And homebuyers? They are more easily enticed to go for your suggestions thanks to the portal's user-friendly environment and convenience.

But wait, there's more: due to poor communication and a lack of efficiency, homebuilders quickly lose money, with an average of £200/unit. Using Ziggu's homebuyer portal helps you communicate better and work more efficiently; thus, it enables you to avoid mistakes and lose less money!

**Interested? Let's have a chat!**



## Interested? Let's have a chat!

See Ziggu's platform in action and learn how property developers achieve:



**15 hours in time  
savings per unit**



**Over 150% return on  
investment**



**46% increase in  
happiness**

**REQUEST A DEMO**

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