PlanGrid

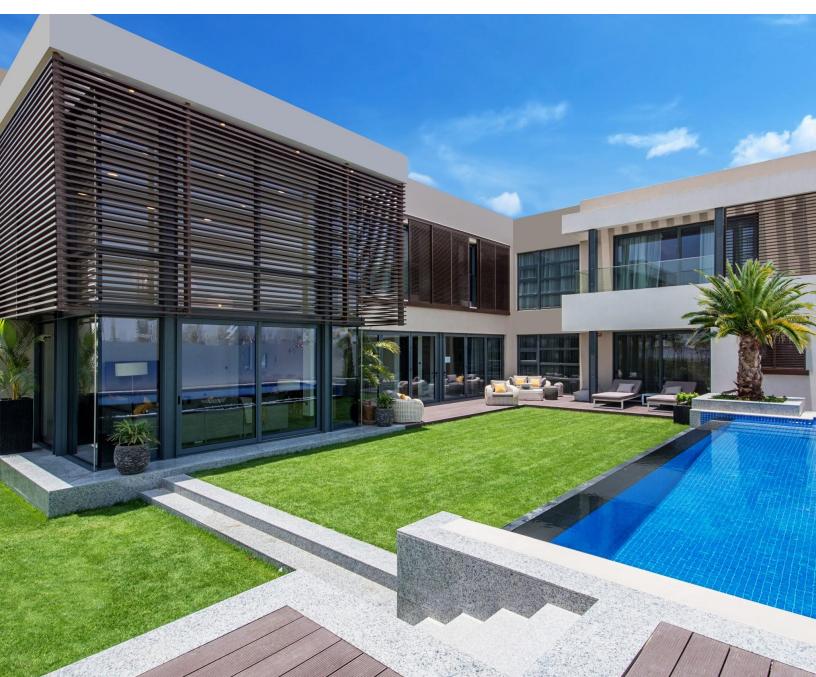# How Sobha Hartland took site collaboration and data sharing to the next level

Real Estate Developer | Sobha LLC | Case Study

Founded in 1976, the Sobha Group is one of the largest real estate organisations in India and the Middle East. The company operates as a backward integrated real estate developer, with a reputation for delivering the highest levels of quality, with no compromise, across its portfolio of businesses.

Sobha Hartland is located in Dubai and is concentrated on developing an 8 million square feet freehold community, which includes a school, lavish villas, town houses, and apartments in Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum City.

The company is bringing its renowned and highly regarded management of engineering, design, and manufacturing processes to create this world-class development along the Dubai Water Canal. Adopting a minimalistic design approach, the homes are constructed with premium materials and a keen attention to detail, which is in line with Sobha Group's philosophy of 'no shortcut to quality'.

Olaf Wagner is Head of the Quality and Technology Department for Sobha LLC. He manages a team of master craftsmen and engineers working on high end property developments in the region. The department was established by the Chairman of the Sobha Group in order to operate as a quality assurance function, ensuring that all of their construction projects adhere to the highest German standards, which have come to be expected.

Problem

In 2014, Olaf Wagner was charged with heading up a new department at Sobha Dubai/Middle East and was keen to ensure that his team made use of mobile business applications wherever possible. This was based on his previous experience working on construction projects, where drawings and specifications were shared manually through paper and any site issues were communicated via handwritten notes, photographs, and emails.

Work and material approvals proved to be challenging as both were processed by scanners and archived via document controllers, making access and efficient storage difficult. Reports were complicated and time-consuming to produce, with the team relying heavily on spreadsheets to provide insight on projects.

Olaf believed that mobile technology offered a clear path for Sobha Hartland to break away from the old inefficiencies, help reduce emails, and share all relevant information together in real time, and on one platform. His colleagues were adept with personal mobile applications and Olaf was confident they would be happy to embrace PlanGrid from the outset. He was also sure the team would appreciate the benefits in terms of time savings, allowing them to spend more time on site, rather than staying and developing spreadsheets and responding to emails back in the office.

Solution and Implementation

Olaf discovered PlanGrid in the App Store. He liked the name, and the description seemed to fit Sobha Hartland's requirements, so he downloaded a free trial account and started using the software. He piloted PlanGrid on a project to complete the Hartland International School, which is a social, cultural, and learning hub for the community located at the heart of the growing Hartland development. This was the perfect opportunity to test PlanGrid technology before rolling it out to the wider team - resulting in 2,760 issues stamps successfully closed with 7,375 photos on record.

Adoption of PlanGrid was quick as the solution could be handled like Facebook or other applications already in daily use by the team. The ability to filter data collected via PlanGrid and visualize the areas of concern helped to drive implementation and has overall brought site collaboration and data sharing to a new level for Sobha Hartland.

"Adoption was quick because PlanGrid can be handled like Facebook or other apps used daily. We took already available technology and awareness and added PlanGrid to it, allowing us to take site collaboration and data sharing to the next level."

– **Olaf Wagner**, Head of Quality Assurance and Technology, Sobha Group

Olaf and his team are actively involved in the planning and implementation of projects and have found PlanGrid to be a lean and responsive system to capture and share information and data, enabling them to engage with consultants and contractors on a very efficient and precise level. All necessary requirements are captured clearly and are understood from the outset, ensuring project time is spent effectively and communication is clear between all parties.

The quality assurance team is also referred to internally as the "Sobha Quality Police" as they review and sign off on the work completed by contractors in the the wider project group. They use PlanGrid across all of their activities to manage this process. Olaf implemented a programme workflow, utilising the PlanGrid Stamp or Issue Tool, which brought visibility and efficiency to their work. Right on their mobile device, the team now had a tool to track, end-to-end, the work that needed to be done, who it was assigned to, and where it was located.

For example, using the Stamp or Issue Tool, Olaf developed a 10 step programme covering the critical stages required to complete each bathroom in the Hartland properties. Stamps are pre-populated in PlanGrid for each stage and assigned to relevant contractors. This process ensures that each stage gets completed on time and passed on to the next contractor, but only after the stamp has been reviewed and approved in PlanGrid. Always in the correct order. This creative and effective approach delivers a uniform process, helps avoids mistakes and delays, and ensures a clear flow of processes among the wider team, while maintaining the high quality standards and transparency of the Sobha Group.

PlanGrid

Results

The whole team is a fan of PlanGrid as it is easy to use and means they can spend more time onsite. They were quick to adopt the technology, helped by the clarity and speed in which information can be recorded and shared across several platforms and devices. One of the primary benefits was a reduction in the volume of emails as the team can communicate with contractors right within the PlanGrid platform. Furthermore, drawings, and specifications can be easily accessed while on site, reducing paper and energy costs, while also improving response times.

PlanGrid has brought standardization to the Sobha Hartland Quality and Technology Department. The team can record any issues as they arise and assign them accordingly with photos and notes - all from within the application. Previously, issues were tracked via handwritten notes and emails, causing information to be frequently lost or miscommunicated.

Before PlanGrid, when Olaf requested a report from the team, they would spend time in the office manipulating spreadsheets trying to interpret the data. Now, they no longer use spreadsheets to store information and the team has easy access to reports and charts, which can be generated quickly in a standardized, easily readable format.

PlanGrid has become a repository of valuable information for Sobha and is the single source of truth for all of their projects. All relevant data is recorded in the application and is easily accessible when required. This provides peace of mind and proof of the work to top management, clients and external auditors.

Olaf has also seen benefits from a people management perspective. He can effectively track the performance of his team, based on the quantity of stamps placed or updated, training and workshop time logged and approvals granted. Furthermore, it has been easier to bring new recruits up to speed with a project as all the information is stored in PlanGrid. They are visibly energized to work with a mobile, cloud-based application, which improves their productivity and drastically increases the amount of time they spend onsite.

Most importantly for Olaf, PlanGrid enables his team to deliver a uniform inspection regime for Sobha and ensures that the same attention to detail is given throughout the project. All resulting in a priceless result: Quality with Speed.

Key Benefits

- Bring standardization to all Sobha Hartland projects, ensuring the same attention to detail across the project lifecycle.

- Eliminate lost information or miscommunication by allowing users to record issues immediately.

- Generate reports in an easy to access and read format, reducing data manipulation and time wasted.

- Provide peace of mind and proof of quality performance to management and clients and external auditors.

- Assign role specific access and approval rights, making information available to target groups and specific stakeholders, increasing the focus and productivity of each player.

"We instantly reduced email communication by bringing consultants and contractors onto the PlanGrid platform. Using the reporting features, we could share selected issues and RFIs to those it concerned in order to follow up and get closure."

– **Olaf Wagner**, Head of Quality Assurance and Technology, Sobha Group