

Developer using robots to sell high-end properties

By Paul Hagey, Inman News

New technology is taking virtual tours a step further by letting buyers drive cameras mounted on remote-controlled vehicles through distant homes, venturing from room to room, peeking around corners and taking in near-360-degree views from multiple vantage points.

San Francisco-based luxury real estate developer JMA Ventures – which also owns Homewood Mountain Resort – is using a system developed by Suitable Technologies Inc. to let homebuyers roam through its properties and communicate with sales agents in real time from anywhere in the world.

The Beam Pro stands over 5 feet tall and can travel over 2 miles per hour.

Key to the experience is Suitable Technologies' robot-like Beam Pro. The remote-controlled vehicle, which stands over 5 feet tall, transmits a video feed of homebuyers' faces onto a 17-inch screen and broadcasts their voices through six speakers arrayed on both Beam's front and back.

Buyers, in turn, see their surroundings through Beam's wide-angle camera as they use a computer keyboard to guide it, tooling around at speeds that can exceed 2 miles per hour. Users can also hear the sounds it picks up with its two microphones, as information is transmitted to and from the device by a high-speed Wi-Fi network.

JMA Ventures has been using four Beam Pros for about a year to help sell properties near San Francisco's iconic Ghirardelli Square, and also Lake Tahoe, to luxury buyers from around the world who don't always have the time to tour homes in person.

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