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Winners share best practices.
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Benchmark Conference

September 26-29, 2006
Ritz Carlton, Lake Las Vegas
See pages 34-35 for more details

Gold Standard

Kevin and Jo Anne Estes take home National Housing Quality Gold Award

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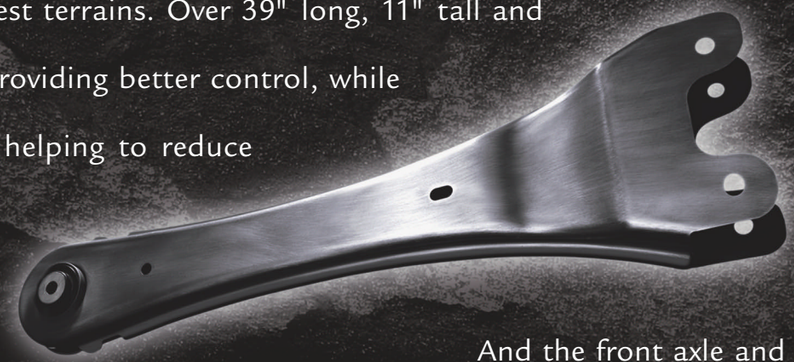

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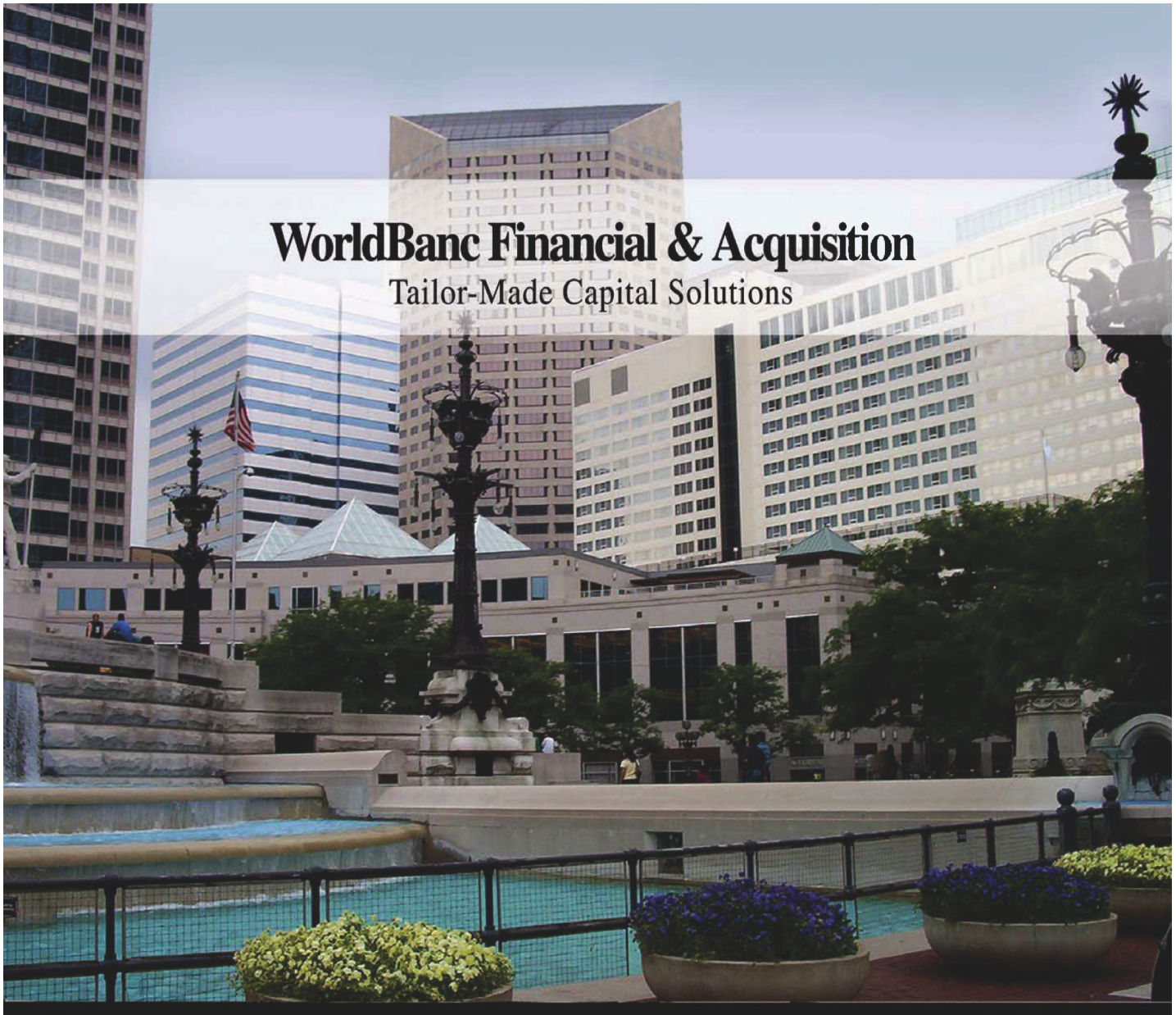

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September 2006

VOL 71 NO. 9

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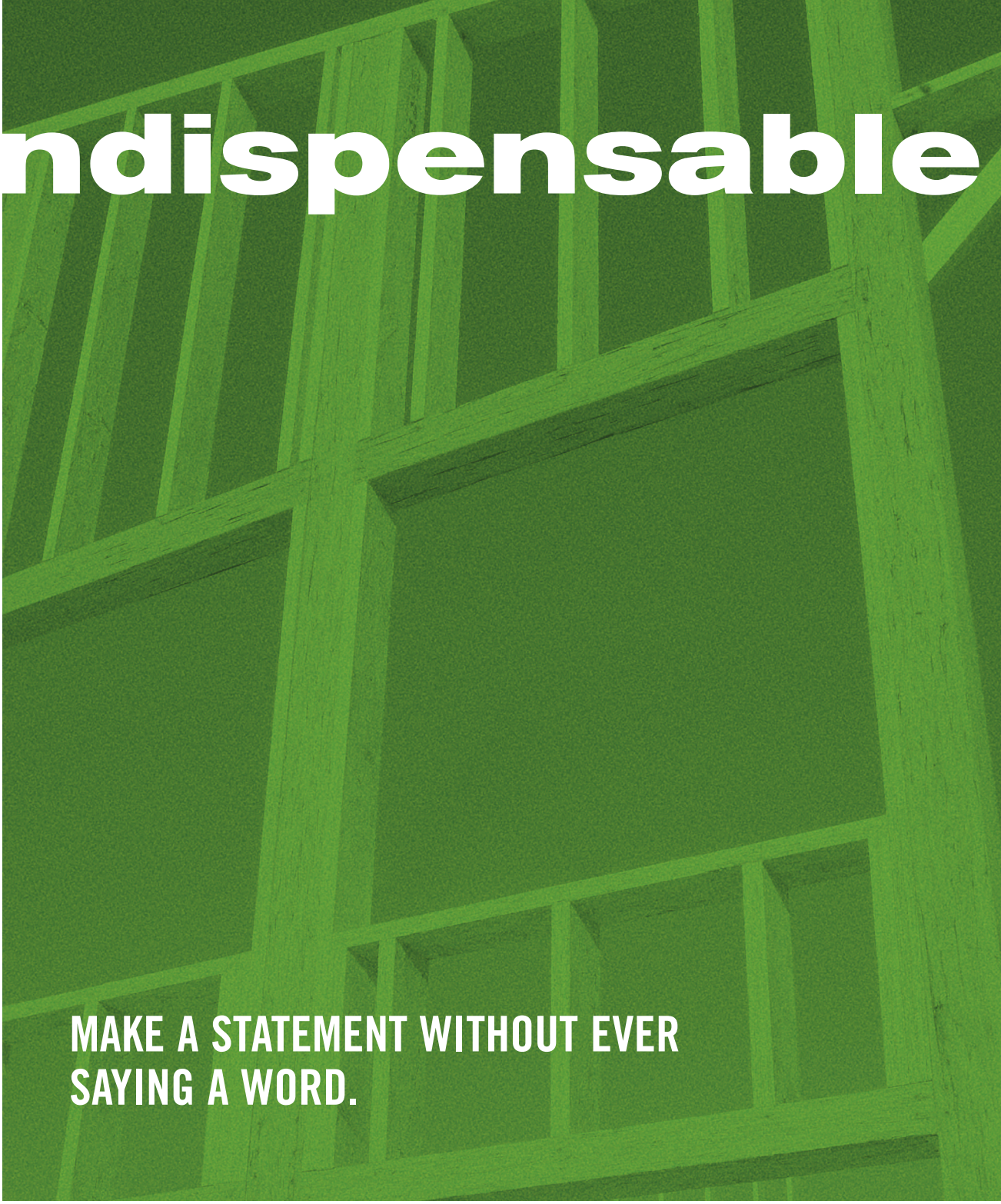

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Community Development

We live in a time of massive divisiveness. Red State, Blue State. Liberal, Conservative. Just turn to this month's letters pages to see how readers have responded to our articles in August about illegal immigration for an immediate example.

In the home building industry, there is a common ground that is basic to the operation of our businesses. Regardless of our political stripes, we should all be able to agree that the goal of any home building company is to be an essential part of the community.

At first blush that might sound as if I believe owners should plow their well-earned profits back into the community in the form of charity, good works or even — heaven forbid — taxes. I'm not. In fact, I think too much direct community involvement may be detrimental to a business. I've seen plenty of companies with soaring charitable profiles who have crashed and burned because the management team took its eye off the important business of running the company.

What I mean is simple: Businesses are essential parts of communities. They have a role as valued and important as schools and churches. Find a neighborhood with strong schools, active churches and vibrant businesses and you will find a community that is thriving.

Because housing is one of three basic needs in life (food and clothing are the other two), home building and remodeling businesses are especially important to the commonwealth.

What does it take for a business to be an essential part of the community? Here's my list:

Hire talented people. Nobody in business can succeed with deadbeats and knuckleheads running the operation. The most talented bring the most return.

Turn a profit. Profit is a measurement of the risk a business owner takes. Not earning a profit endangers your company, which, in turn puts your employees, their families, your suppliers and the community at greater risk.

Share in the profits. You want your talented people focused on what's most important. To achieve that, they have to get a piece of the pie. Building a great company can benefit everyone, not just one owner.

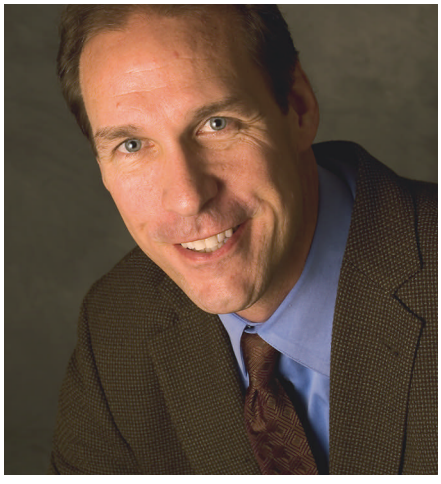
Be driven by customer demand. Home building companies are generally good at a few aspects. They do the market research, they react to changes and they deliver product at appropriate price points. Recently, the increased focus on customer satisfaction has forced them to identify other, less tangible customer demands. Builders who understand all the aspects of customer satisfaction will excel compared to others who only focus on the product.

Be driven by quality. Few businesses are as focused on quality as they should be. Fewer still have processes in place to deliver it consistently. Check out Estes Builders (page 56) to see how one company has made delivering quality a passion.

Be growth-oriented. If you are not growing, you're dying. Growth brings purpose and strategic intent. Without it, companies become filled with malaise and find it harder to attract talented people and dedicated suppliers.

Be ethical. The breakdown in ethics for home builders seldom comes at the ownership level. They fail to communicate a clear vision of the company's value that all employees know, understand and embrace.

Take a moment and match your list against mine. Drop me a note and let me know what you would change and why. Or, better yet, come to our Benchmark Conference Sept. 26-29 and tell me in person. **PB**



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STAFF VOL 71 NO 9

A Brewing Storm

Illegal Immigration Hits Home

Seldom have issues at the federal level touched my heart so strongly I felt the need to speak out, calling on our federal representatives in Washington to act without delay to resolve an issue that is fast becoming a national crisis. As the son of an immigrant father, however, I am calling on Republican Senators Mitch McConnell and Jim Bunning of Kentucky to join ranks with their fellow GOP Senators from Ohio to act decisively in dealing with the proposed immigration legislation proposed by President George W. Bush.

Emerging Issues

Clean Sweep?

As Congress debates how to deal with illegal immigrants, home builders split sides, too, while the fear of losing their skilled immigrant labor sets in.

If you're like most home builders, you're already caught in the passionate debate over immigration reform sweeping America and as likely as anyone to rue our porous borders in an age of terrorist threats. Before you pitch a fit of indignation over the 12 million foreign nationals living illegally in the United States, give some thought to what it would be like to build — and sell — houses without them here.

We need an immigration policy that provides the opportunity for those we have allowed to live in this country for longer than a few years to apply for citizenship and remain here throughout the process.

Best Practices

LESSONS LEARNED

Home Building's Perfect Storm

Problems are brewing over labor issues.

We need to require those individuals, identified now by some as illegal immigrants, to learn the English language, the basics of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and then test them for proficiency before they are granted citizenship just like they did my father and my aunt more than 50 years ago.

It's time we, as a nation, acknowledge we have enjoyed the fruits of the labor of those working in this country and raising a family in this country. Because of their work, we have enjoyed the benefit of cheaper housing costs. We have also enjoyed lower food costs because of their work in harvesting crops from the coasts of the Carolinas to California.

The bottom line is this: our nation has benefited from their work, and now there are those who seek to vilify them and call them criminals. Where is the compassion? Have we become a nation whose spirit has grown so cold we are unable to share this great land for which immigrants fought and died over 200 years ago?

The Republican-led Senate, often referred to by historians as the more deliberative chamber of the legislative branch, has an opportunity to right the wrongs. It's time for our nation — a nation founded by immigrants, a nation of compassionate people, a nation founded on freedom — to call on Congress to pass legislation that reflects the greatness of our nation.

RALPH A. DREES
Fort Mitchell, Ky.

Editor's note: For Mr. Drees' complete letter and others, please visit our TalkBack comments at www.probuilder.com/emergingissues-immigration.

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the (July) Perspective. I'm 58 years old and started working for my father in residential construction when I was 15 years old, graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with a B.S. in building science, and am still in love with work.

I never tire of telling people that somewhere along the way we came to associate hard work with stupidity. I believe my parent's generation somehow overlooked the dignity that was rightfully theirs as the fruits of their labor and gave too much credence to an education system I don't think they really understood. I'm thankful for the education my parents sacrificed to give me, but the education of honesty, integrity and con-

cern for others which they taught by their actions continues to be far more valuable and I appreciate more as I grow older.

Your article was an inspiration to keep trying, and I respect the courage it takes to take a stand as you have done.

Ron Kelly
Morris Plains, N.J.

Both the editorial and Scott Sedam's ("Home Building's Perfect Storm," August) hit a real nerve.

It has been more than a generation in this country that skills that use the hands have been de-emphasized to those that supposedly just use the mind. I chose my words carefully here; most fine craftsman must use their minds constantly in addition to having the eye/hand coordination to successfully execute their thoughts.

I guess it's my parents and my generation who are most at fault. Anyone who wished to go to a "trade school" was considered by many of not making the grade and taking the path of least resistance.

Try getting your computerized car fixed today by a flunkie and see how far it gets you. The systems and diagnosis skills required by today's average auto tech are mind-boggling. Yet we still have the same warped values; people who handle money are paid higher than people that handle things. Today, the only craftspeople who are highly valued are specialists who make reproduction furniture and span into the world of arts and crafts.

As the head of training for Toll Brothers, the assurance of a competent work force is my main concern. I, unfortunately, don't have a glib or quick answer to give on how to change our national values. Without immigrant labor to do the work, I can't imagine a sudden influx of Americans to back fill.

Myles Marcovitch
Horsham, Pa.

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The Right Stats on Software

As a leading software technology provider to residential builders, BuilderMT welcomes coverage of the technology sector, as builders recognize this downturn is time to tune-up their software systems. But the article "Shopping Software" (July) contains an error we'd like to correct for the record.

Stuart Siegel wrongly claims, "BuilderMT is good for 50 to 100 homes, but not 200 to 500." This is incorrect, and dramatically so. More than 550 production builders use BuilderMT production management software, and most of these builders are starting 300 to 800 homes per year; many do 2,500 to 3,000 homes per year, and our client Palm Harbor Homes is doing 110,000 homes per year! A small minority of our builders start fewer than 200 homes per years. In this article, the writer even quotes one of our clients, Dan Martin, with Sonrise Homes, who builds more than 200 homes per year.

Stuart Siegel has a misimpression of BuilderMT, and we hope he finds the time to learn more about our system and our expanding client base.

Tom Gebes
President, BuilderMT
Lakewood, Co.

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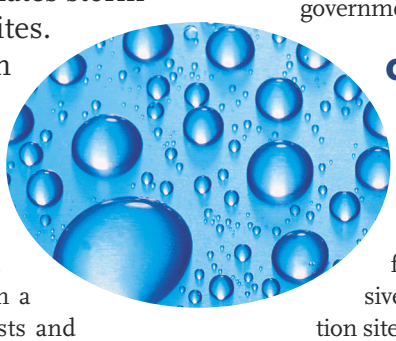
Proactive Solutions

>> **BY RHONDA JACKSON, STAFF WRITER**

Cleaning Up the Clean Water Act

Lawmakers are pushing to cut back on permit fees, which could make homes more affordable.

There are two initiatives underfoot to streamline the Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System of the Clean Water Act, which regulates storm water pollution on construction sites. The first initiative is a plan to reform current EPA policy, and the second is a Congressional bill following close on its heels.



Both moves are intended to reduce the number of times builders pay permit fees for state, local and national regulation policies. Such a change could mean lower construction costs and more affordable homes. According to a 2005 NAHB Member Survey, builders pay on average $312,298 per site to comply with storm water runoff prevention regulations — an estimated increase in housing cost of $1,400 to $7,000 per unit.

Leading the Way

This past May the EPA issued a missive to its regional offices saying the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans that builders submit to the federal government can meet local and state requirements, too. "This policy has always been around but is now being enforced," says Jim Tobin, staff vice president of government affairs for the NAHB.

On the Congressional Front

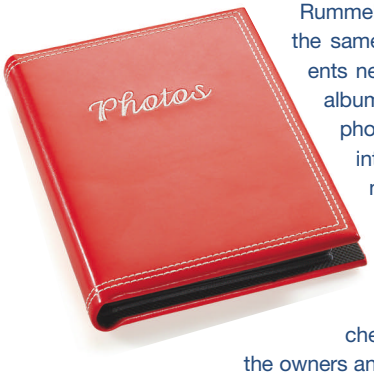
Rep. John Duncan (R-Tenn.) is spearheading an effort to revamp the EPA's water permit and enforcement policies. While Duncan's proposal, H.R. 5558, would also minimize duplication of permit fees and plans, it proposes more comprehensive changes. The bill aims to educate construction site managers on regulatory requirements; provide a vehicle for responding to EPA requests for building site information; give builders an opportunity to correct certain permit deficiencies; and provide for more leadership of EPA regulation on a state-level.

As of late August, the bill was in a House subcommittee; sponsors hope to present it to the President before the end of September.

>> **BY MARK JARASEK, SENIOR EDITOR**

Gifts that Make a House a Home

IF A PICTURE SAYS A THOUSAND WORDS, then Shelia Rummel's gift to her clients speaks volumes about how sincerely she appreciates their business. Rummel's idea won *Professional Builder's* contest in July to recognize the best housewarming gift ideas. The *Professional Builder* editorial staff selected the winner, who received a free pass to Benchmark, Sept. 26-29 in Lake Las Vegas.



Rummel, who heads her own business by the same name in Wilmington, N.C., presents new homeowners with a "brag-size" album and CD of professionally taken photographs of their new home's entire interior and exterior, including an evening shot of the lit residence.

The runners-up wowed us, too:

Gourmet Wine & Dine: Design Group Three offered a home owner an evening with a chef, who prepared a gourmet meal for the owners and six of their friends. The Glendale, Wis., business' gift allowed owners to show off their new home while learning how appliances in their new kitchen work.

A Touch of Tiffany: Pauline Dent of Atlantic Builders in Fredericksburg, Va., presents homeowners with a pair of Tiffany & Co. wine glasses and a bottle of custom labeled wine from a local winery. The gift arrives at the homeowner's doorstep with a "Tiffany blue" shopping bag.

Mini-Me Model Home: Homeowners receive a local artist's hand-painted miniature wooden model of their new home through Benchmark Traditions of Summerville, S.C.

Garden Care: Pulte Homes makes gardening easier for its new homeowners in the Evania at Anatolia community in Sacramento, Calif.; owners receive a garden hose wrapped like a basket with weed killer, a hand shovel, gloves and seeds inside.

Disaster Master: A CD-ROM-based program called "The Homeowners' Ultimate Guide to Mastering Disasters" provides essential information to protect from fire, water, wind or other damage for homeowners with Melesh Construction Co. of Annapolis, Md.

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>> BY **SCOTT SEDAM,** *TRUENORTH DEVELOPMENT*

LESSONS LEARNED

Self-Induced Labor Pains

The medical and home-building industries have at least one thing in common right now: the debate over self-induced problems. The medical community is at odds over just how much physical illness is self-induced.

PHOTO: BRAND X

Similar to medicine, our industry is at odds about how much we have brought on ourselves. Where do the ulcers of home building reside?

The Culprits

One area to consider is government regulation. Many of the laws and regulations that builders have to endure are indeed onerous. Another area that is self-induced is the shortage of skilled trade labor and the high costs that go with it.

In last month's column I described a combination of factors that could conspire to form what was previously believed impossible: falling demand with rapidly increasing costs. Sales are down an average of more than 10 percent nationwide, far worse in some markets. Basic economics would predict that with the decreased demand, costs will fall as well — or so we hope because that's the only way to preserve at least some of the margins.

But there is a catch this time, a potentially devastating one. I described in that column how any aggressive immigration reform measure that managed to get through Congress would cause labor costs to increase dramatically. Somewhere between 15 percent and 30 percent of our home-building labor is illegal — no one knows for sure — and in many of our better markets, that number may approach 40 percent or even 50 percent. Just imagine the impact if it all goes away.

I am convinced there is too much well-placed money out there to let the worst of these proposals pass, because the effects on many other industries such as hospitality, agriculture and health care would be equally devastating. And if we can just keep Congress distracted enough with wars in the Middle East, sanctity of marriage debates and flag-burning amendments until after the November election, the most vocal of the make-'em-all-felons-and-send-'em-back-home crowd should calm down, and we might just come up with a reasonable approach that includes some form of amnesty and a guest-worker program.

Yet, something will pass, and there will be an impact on labor. The reality is even in the very hottest growth years of 2003 and 2004, we actually didn't need at least 25 percent of the trade labor that we used in this industry. A quick analogy will prove it to you.

Builders have convinced themselves that buyer behavior drives our end-of-the-month, quarterly and yearly 'slam dunks.' That's simply wrong.

Learn From The Wizzel

Imagine you run a plant that makes a large, 150 pound device called a Wizzel. Set up is quite difficult and requires a very strong person working with the machinist at each station. Although heavy, it is surprisingly delicate and not amenable to robotic handling. The result is that the transport and set-up worker can only manage five Wizzels per day moving through production, and only about 1 percent of the population is even capable of handling the weight.

Due to the high incidence of on-the-job injuries and workers' compensation claims from handling Wizzels, you and all the other manufacturers of similar devices now sub-contract this work to outside firms. Your supplier, Monster Lift, provides you with a big dude who loves to lift and never calls in sick or hurt.

For a couple of years, you produce your five Wizzels per day, every day, and things are running smoothly. After a time, demand for Wizzels has grown, so much so that about half of the people who are even capable of lifting Wizzels are actually employed by contractors like Monster Lift.

You now produce an average of 20 per day, so on paper, you need four of Monster Lift's big dudes to get your 100 Wizzels out each week.

But getting bigger has added complexity. Due to circumstances you believe to be beyond your control, an interesting production pattern has emerged. Instead of building 20 Wizzels each day to get your 100 per week in a nice, even-flow production schedule, you build:

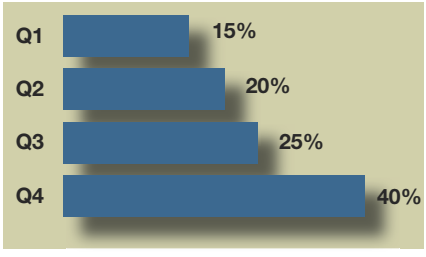
10 on Monday
15 on Tuesday
15 on Wednesday
20 on Thursday
40 on Friday

Despite your best efforts, this pattern occurs every week. So you instruct Monster Lift to schedule only two of their big dudes on Monday, three on Tuesday, three on Wednesday and four on Thursday. For Friday, you tell them to send eight of their best big dudes — or you'll be looking somewhere else!

This makes scheduling for Monster Lift very difficult, to say the least. You are not their only account, and it seems that nearly all of the big manufacturers build on the same crazy schedule. You are asking them to be four times bigger as a company on Friday than you want them to be on Monday, and so are a lot of your competitors. None of you ever stop and think, now, just how are they supposed to do that?

What the Wizzel Means to You

This is exactly what we do to our trades in the home building industry and the comparison is only slightly exaggerated. Here is a common builder production run by quarters:



Monthly and quarterly production schedules follow a very similar, back-end loaded production pattern. Here is a key point. If builders owned their own labor, they could not build this way. The expense of keeping these folks around the first week of the month, first month of the quarter and first quarter of the year would simply be prohibitive. We simply lay off the insanity of our scheduling and production onto the trades — then complain about how poorly they handle it.

How Trades Survive

So how have our trades pulled it off? Just like Monster Lift in supplying the Wizzel manufacturer. Your trades, if they are big enough, have a bunch of smaller accounts that can absorb some scheduling variance. They also have a few crew members who can outwork most other guys, and they send them your way. If your trades are really lucky, they have some accounts that have different fiscal years than you. And of course, there is that time-honored method: they cut corners. Meanwhile, they go find warm bodies, get them trained and hope for the best.

We could spend a lot of time debating the causes and the negative impact of this phenomenon, such as poor quality of the difficulty of attracting good people to the building trades, but the facts are clear. A huge percentage of our trade base requirement is self-induced by our poor scheduling and production practices. Builders have convinced themselves that buyer behavior drives our end-of-the-month, quarterly and yearly "slam dunks." That's simply wrong; I can name builders with fiscal year endings of March, April, September, October and December who all have the same year-end building frenzy. Buyer behavior has nothing to do with it.

Yet there are builders, one of whom I know does 1,600-1,800 units in a single market, who have figured out how to even-flow their sales and production. The trades flock to these folks.

But the fact remains that more home building is being concentrated in fewer and larger builders, most of whom suffer from this back-end loading syndrome. The result is an artificially inflated demand for trades and correspondingly increased costs.

Is there a trade shortage? On the micro level, to an individual superintendent trying to deal with his inability to get a good roofer on one particular project, the answer is, absolutely. But on the company level, absolutely not. It is just good business from the standpoint of cost, quality and operational sanity to get this figured out.

Should the threatened immigration reform debacle come, the only possible solution is for builders to learn how to schedule and thus reduce the relative demand for trade labor. Whether or not we actually experience the perfect storm, this is the one sure way I know to get you out of the weather. **PB**

Scott Sedam is president of TrueNorth Development, a nationwide consulting and training firm focused on quality, process improvement and organizational development. He can be reached at scott@truen.com.

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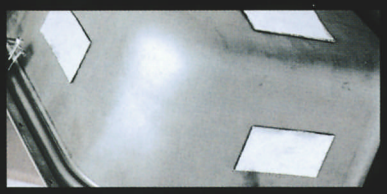

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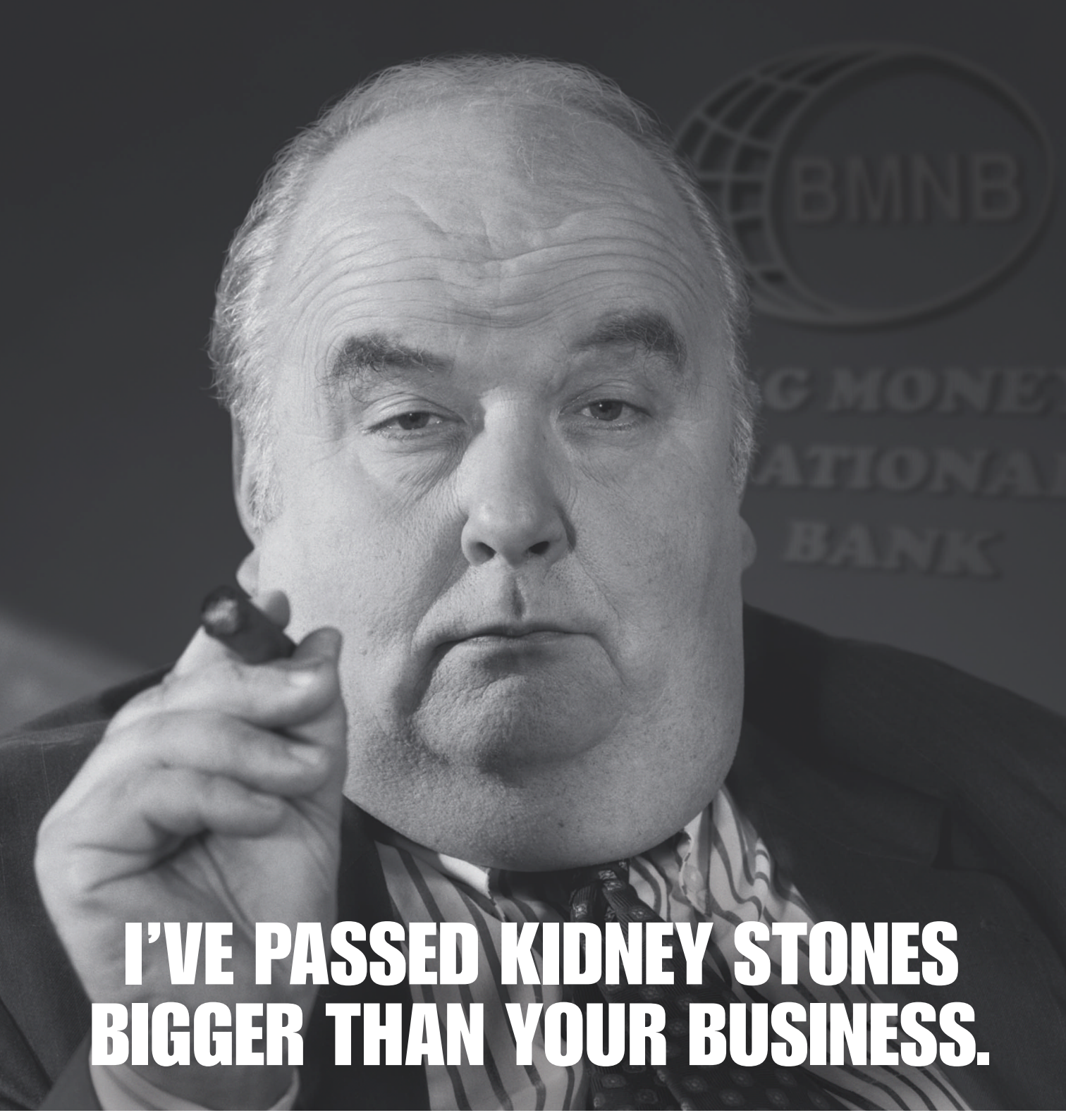

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>> BY **RODNEY HALL,** *THE TALON GROUP*

H.R. DEPT.

Employee Perks That Work

How to motivate employees without breaking the bank.

ART: JUPITER IMAGES

Few things have kept pace with the rapid growth of our industry as much as employee compensation. Bonus programs tied to division or company profitability have generated unprecedented compensation levels. As the housing boom subsides and begins shrinking this year's bonus checks, the focus on compensation will take on a new tact. Namely, how do you attract and/or retain great people who have become accustomed to such extraordinary income opportunities?

Most builders want to reward their employees for jobs well done. Rewards, perks, benefits — whatever the company may call all the non-monetary types of compensation — are moving front and center as employees feel the market adjustment in their wallets. The variety of offerings we hear about ranges from standard to quite creative.

Take Christopherson Homes in Santa Rosa, Calif. It which hands out a monthly Peoples Choice award, says the company's president, George Casey Jr. The prior month's winner chooses the next winner, who is always a non-management employee who best exemplifies customer service. Recipients are honored at a brown bag lunch and earn a framed certificate and a gift card. "It is a big deal and promotes recognition of those in the trenches who often go unnoticed," Casey says. The company also uses Way to Go forms to highlight employees who are "doing something right." Way to Go employees are recognized at the brown bag lunch, too, and every time they receive Way to Go recognition, they enter a drawing for a gift certificate to a local restaurant. "We find this promotes a culture of finding people doing the right thing and recognizing them for it."

Another way the company recognizes loyalty, Casey adds: employees who reach 10, 15 and 20 years with the company receive a trip that can include seven days on a cruise or in Hawaii with their spouses.

Another builder we've worked with has a 4-5-day workweek. This company closes at 1 p.m. every Friday so employees can get a head start on the weekend. This is such a valuable perk to employees that they organize their workweek to be as efficient and effective as possible. They value the extra weekend time and want to ensure they continue to deserve it.

As the housing boom subsides and begins shrinking this year's bonus checks, the focus on compensation will take on a new tact.

When retaining and recruiting talent, touting such perks can be a valuable tool. Not only are they highly desirable, but they also speak volumes about the company culture.

We often hear, "it's not all about the money," and efforts like these make it ring true. They go a long way toward building loyalty and commitment. So, why not try one or two things on a temporary basis and see what works best for your company? Ask your team for input, too; nothing makes your employees feel more valued than when you ask their advice and act on it. **PB**

Rodney Hall is a senior partner with The Talon Group, a leading executive search firm specializing in the real-estate development and home building industries.

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In a year of change, home builders face new pressures from all sides. Ensuring they execute the details of their businesses is essential to growth and prosperity. To help you succeed, the Professional Builder 2006 Benchmark Conference focuses on the specifics of operating a quality home building company.

Our keynote speakers will address the essential success elements of leadership and team-building, providing the framework for executing the details. Then our nationally recognized builders will delve into six areas that are essential to develop for your company's future success: Leadership, Strategic Planning, Human Resources, Trade Relations, Performance Management and Construction Quality

Tuesday, September 26

12:00 – 5:00
Housing Tour - Mountain Edge Community

12:00 – 5:00
Golf Outing - Reflection Bay Golf Course

6:00 – 8:00
Welcome Cocktail Reception

Wednesday, September 27

8:00 – 9:30
Keynote on Leadership – Patrick Lencioni

Patrick Lencioni is the founder and president of The Table Group Inc., a specialized management-consulting firm focused on executive team-building and organizational health. He has been described by the One-Minute Manager's Ken Blanchard as "fast defining the next generation of business thinkers." Pat's passion for organizations and teams is reflected in his writing, speaking and consulting. He is the author of five business books, including *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, which was on the New York Times Best Sellers list. His new book, *Silos, Politics and Turf Wars*, came out in March 2006. Pat consults executives and speaks to world class organizations, addressing thousands of leaders. Prior to founding his firm, Pat worked for Sybase, Oracle and Bain & Company. He also served on the National Board of Directors for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America from 2000-2003.

9:45 – 11:00
Real-Estate Market Update – John Burns, President, John Burns Real Estate Consulting
GIANTS magazine columnist John Burns provides unique insight to the real-estate market. He will share the trends, opportunities and threats facing home builders in an increasingly difficult market.

11:00 – 11:45
Building Material Market Update – Barry Rutenberg, President, Barry Rutenberg and Associates
Barry Rutenberg has been a leading voice in understanding the impact building material issues have on builders. He will share his timely information on regulations, tariffs and other events affecting product supply.

DETAILS

1:15 – 1:45
Leadership – Larry Webb, CEO, John Laing Homes
Establishing a culture of leadership in a company requires inspired direction and a strong plan. Hear from a recognized industry leader on successful methods for developing true leaders in your organization.

1:45 – 2:15
Strategic Planning – Mark Hodges, Senior Vice President, Corporate Operations, Hovnanian Enterprises
Leadership translated into action only comes from strategic planning. The future of Hovnanian Enterprises has been mapped by a clear plan. Learn about the methodology for strategic planning executed by one of the largest, most aggressive builders in the country.

2:15 – 2:45
Human Resources – Mark Upton, Executive Vice President – Western Region, Technical Olympic USA
The engine at the center of any successful home building company is fueled by quality employees. Technical Olympic's focus on supporting quality people with best practices points to the clear connection between recruitment/retention and superior operations.

3:00 – 5:00
Breakout Sessions – Leadership, Strategic Planning, Human Resources

6:00 – 10:00
NHQ Award Dinner

Thursday, September 28

8:00 – 9:30
Keynote on Performance – Keith Harrell

Known for his energetic, innovative presentations, Keith Harrell is a dynamic life coach who specializes in changing behaviors through a positive attitude. While growing up in Seattle, he aspired to become a professional basketball player. Although he never realized that dream, The Wall Street Journal says, "What sets him apart from less successful speakers is driving ambition and an attitude that refuses to flag." Through his company, Harrell Performance Systems, and his book, *Attitude is Everything: Ten Life Changing Steps to Turning Attitude into Action*, Keith specializes in helping companies achieve and maintain their goals. Harrell spent 14 years at IBM, where he was recognized as one of the top sales and training instructors. He is widely regarded as one of the country's best speakers.

9:45 – 11:45
Legendary Service at the Ritz
The Ritz-Carlton has earned a worldwide reputation for delivering customer services that set a standard for every business owner to emulate. How do they do it? Get the inside story on their methods to identify, hire, train and motivate employees to meet the demands of the most demanding customers.

11:45 – 1:15
NRS Satisfaction 1 Award Lunch

DETAILS

1:15 – 1:45
Trade Relations – Bryan Binney, Vice President of Operations, Shea Homes
Developing partners to support the future of your business is essential to mitigate the risk of home building. Trade partner relations mean sharing in each other's success. Executing that requires careful communication, attention to details and long-term commitments.

1:45 – 2:15
Performance Management – Bill Saint, CFO & Director, Simonini Builders
Every good company wants to improve performance. Establishing a foundation for performance management is essential. 2006 Builder of the Year Simonini Builders has created in-house methods that give the tools to its employees to meet enormous expectations from demanding clients.

2:15 – 2:45
Construction Quality – Charlie Scott, Executive Vice President, The Estridge Companies
Known for its superior customer service, The Estridge Companies starts the process through a program of superior construction quality. Learn the techniques this dynamic company uses to control, communicate and execute the craft of building every day.

3:00 – 5:00
Breakout Sessions – Trade Relations, Performance Management, Construction Quality

6:30 – 10:00
Networking outing – Nine Fine Irishmen Pub

Friday, September 29

9:00 – 12:00
Team-building Opportunities
After two days of hard work, bring your group together for fun and team-building exercises. Offered through the Ritz-Carlton, attendees will have access to hiking, biking, ATV riding and other outdoor activities in the beautiful Lake Las Vegas area. Also, take the opportunity to participate in team-building exercises such as a CSI Investigation or Building a Catapult.

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>> BY **PAUL CARDIS,** *NRS CORP.*

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Leading the Way to Better Customer Service

Many home builders invest in customer service training for their staff with the goal of providing an outstanding experience at every phase of the home-building process. As commendable as these efforts are, they will always fall short if the company's leadership doesn't model attitudes and behavior. Great leadership can translate into great customer service throughout the organization, but what constitutes great leadership?

Douglas Lipp, an expert on customer service who once headed the training program at Disney Studio's Walt Disney University, emphasizes the importance of leadership while addressing customer service issues. During his keynote address at this year's NRS Satisfaction 1 conference, he told the nation's top home builders that they need leaders who believe in a customer-centric approach to everything they do — even if that means making certain sacrifices to support the team's ability to deliver on the promises made to customers.

Everything that characterizes a company — from its mission to the way it handles mistakes — emanates from the leadership branch. Look at any company that excels in service recovery and is able to adapt to meet new challenges in a changing marketplace and you'll find strong leadership.

Lipp notes a good leader is someone who can outwit, outplay and outlast the competition, especially when it comes to providing and inspiring outstanding customer service for both internal and external customers. Leaders are smarter, quicker to respond and better at sustaining their stronghold in the marketplace.

Because they have these skills, great leaders are better able to overcome stumbling blocks and exploit opportunities.

Some common mistakes in leadership that lead to poor customer service include:

■ **Being stuck in the past.** When you live in the past, you let the old ways rule. This makes it hard to successfully respond to changes in the economy, culture, marketplace and industry. The home-building industry is dynamic and ever-changing. Those who ignore this fact will have great difficulty satisfying tomorrow's customers.

"Leading in our industry is all about attracting the best and the brightest.

■ **Allowing success to inflate your ego.** Once you permit yourself to believe you're the best, complacency often sneaks in. With your guard down, it's easier for the competition to steal away business.

That's what happened to the Walt Disney Company 25 to 30 years ago, Lipp says. The company kept basing future projects on past successes. After a string of box-office flops and a threat of corporate takeover, the company woke up to the reality that the business had changed — and the company had better change too if it wanted to survive. Creativity and innovation returned and the stu-

dio released such blockbusters as "The Lion King" and "The Little Mermaid."

■ **Building silos instead of teams.** When your various departments work independently, there's bound to be inter-department strife. And where there's strife, you can bet there is some poor customer service being delivered. Home builders need to tear down silos and create a flat organizational structure that thrives on teamwork. One example of this is a neighborhood quality team, which includes a representative of every department and comes together on a regular basis to discuss a specific neighborhood development.

■ **Cutting too deep.** Fiscal responsibility is a part of running any company, but when home builders try to save their way to prosperity, they can be short on resources when business takes a turn for the worse. When companies cut, slash and burn too deeply, the first one to feel the pain is usually the customer — the very lifeblood of the business. A good company leader considers how an expenditure truly affects customers before deleting it from the budget.

Meanwhile, good leaders also know how to improve the customer's experience. The following are obvious yet merit mentioning:

■ **Do the extraordinary in an ordinary fashion.** When customers see you do fabulous things in a routine manner, they have a better perception of you. It's one of the easiest ways to exceed expectations. Some builders choose to think of these things as "wow factors" — unique routines that impress home buyers and differentiate the builders from their competition.

■ **Be consistent.** This applies to your dealings with both employees and customers. Team members who feel they are treated fairly will reflect that in the service they give customers. Also, by making your expectations explicit, employees will be more reliable in the way they communicate and work with home buyers. On the consumer's side, it's important that all employees treat home buyers with genuine care, respect and generosity each time they communicate with them. A recent survey shows that 53 percent of consumers feel that a bad experience with an employee reflects poorly not only on the employee but also on the management and the company.

■ **Embrace change.** The country's changing demographic means that leaders need to know how best to serve customers from different cultural backgrounds. By hiring, training and promoting people who think differently, successful leaders are able to assemble a team that can view a business from a variety of perspectives.

The connection between adapting to change and providing superior customer service is an important one. As the Disney example illustrates, no one is immune to changes in the marketplace. But it's equally important to note that no one has all of the answers, either.

Lipp fondly points out that even monkeys fall from trees. This old Japanese proverb means regardless of how capable or skilled we are, sooner or later, we all lose our balance and make mistakes — especially if we're not adapting to changes around us. It is important to learn from our successes and mistakes and to apply that learning to the area of customer service, whether it is service to our employees or our customers.

Change is not difficult, Lipp says. "The challenge is in sustaining the change and weaving it into the corporate culture." He maintains that change requires two things: confidence that the change is the right course of action and a support system with people in place to give the change a chance to succeed. Larry Webb, CEO of John Laing Homes, says, "Leading in our industry is all about attracting the best and the brightest. Recruiting, growing and retaining great people is the difference between companies. My role as CEO is to place these people in an environment that is exciting, challenging and loving (yes loving)."

Lipp offers this simple exercise to help you make changes for the better. Create a table with three columns labeled Start, Stop and Continue. With the customer's experience in mind, look at your leadership style and list behaviors and activities that you should start, stop and continue. You can break these into short-term and long-term actions. Then do the same thing for your team, listing behaviors and activities you would like your employees to start, stop or continue, both immediately and in the long-term. This proactive approach to managing change is much easier and more profitable than having change forced upon you by the marketplace.

Ultimately, company leaders are responsible for customer satisfaction. And those who are the best at modeling, inspiring and rewarding great customer service will always be the most successful. Larry Webb as well as several others in the home building industry exemplify this type of leadership and serve as role models for the rest of us trying to take companies to the next level in this great industry. **PB**

Paul Cardis is CEO of NRS Corp., a research and consulting firm specializing in customer satisfaction for the home-building industry. He can be reached at pacardis@nrscorp.com.

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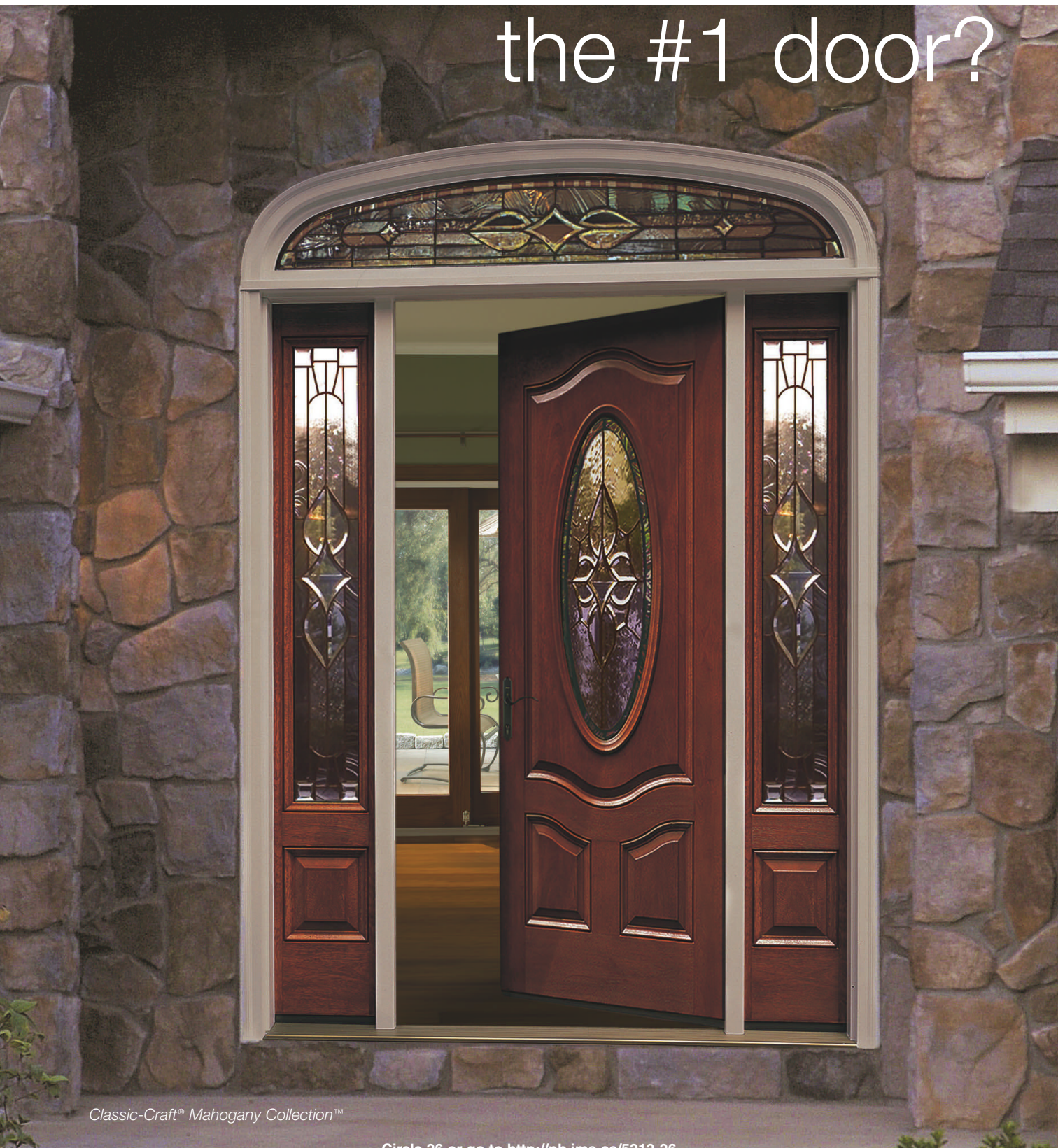

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>> BY **JOHN RYMER,** *NEW HOME KNOWLEDGE*

NEW HOME KNOWLEDGE

When and How to Discuss Price

When visiting a new-home sales center, most customers will tell you they are interested in two things: seeing the model home and finding out home prices. When sales associates hear this, many are only too happy to answer an easy pricing question.

For instance, when a customer asks, "What are your prices?" the sales associate might answer: "The base price on our Ashley model is $279,900, and our largest home, the Bentley, is $379,900. We also have a couple of completed homes at $305,000."

While accurate information is always appreciated by your prospects, this is not the best approach in taking the first step to what can potentially be a sale.

The Best Approach

Begin by understanding why customers visit your sales office: they want to narrow their choice of communities and they want to negotiate price. The goal of the sales associate is to build the perceived value of the community and to prioritize the customer's needs and wants. When customers ask for prices, they want to know if they can immediately eliminate the community from their home search.

The following conversations represent good and bad ways customers and sales associates could interact:

Customer: What are your prices?

Sales Associate: We have a wonderful community with two beautifully furnished models. Let's take a tour together, and let me show you all the included features in our homes and then we can discuss pricing.

Alternatively, America's best new-home sales professionals answer the question directly but also begin qualifying the needs of the customer at the same time.

Customer: What are your prices?

Sales Associate: Homes in our community range from the mid $200s to over $500,000. What price range are you considering?

This is a direct answer to a simple question and tells the prospect that you hear them. More important, it instantly lets the prospect know they are expected to do more than just listen: they are expected to respond with answers that will help the sales professional gain insight into their new home search.

The goal of the sales associate is to provide immediate, accurate information while engaging the prospect in the home buying process.

The goal of the sales associate is to provide immediate, accurate information while engaging the prospect in the home buying process.

Customer: We're looking in the $300s. What do you have at that price?

Sales Associate: We have several homes that fall nicely within your price range. The size of the home, the elevation, the type of home site, your delivery needs and level of finishes all play a role in the final price. Let's begin by discussing what's important to you. Once I understand your needs, we'll take a tour of the community and look at several homes that may suit you nicely. I'm sure we'll be able to provide you with a very competitive price.

This tells the prospect that the most important thing right now is to find the home that is right for them and that the two parties will work to get to the best price, rather than the other way around. **PB**

John Rymer is the founder of New Home Knowledge, which offers sales training for new home builders and real-estate professionals. He can be reached at john@newhomeknowlege.com.

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HUMAN RESOURCES

Making a Superintendent: Nature vs. Nurture

Are great site superintendents born or made? Many building firms now hire based on character — not experience. *Professional Builder* looks at the pros and cons of the latest practices for hiring and training these critical managers.

Good site superintendents can make or break a building company. They must navigate the fragile firewall that separates the trades from the customer, jumping back and forth between dual roles. Katherine Salant, author of "The Brand-New House Book," describes those roles as "drill sergeant and mother hen."

The description aptly lays the expectations for such a job candidate as well. "We're looking for somebody who can move into a project manager role in a reasonable length of time," notes Rich Warfield, human resources manager for Carl M. Freeman Communities in Selbyville, Del. "We're not looking as much for hammer and nail guys but people with a philosophy of management, and we're getting more people of that mind set."

Warfield is not alone in his "management first" criteria for landing high-caliber superintendents. But those criteria mark a break with the accepted norms of the past.

"At one time, the guy who became a super used to be a framer or somebody who came up through the

trades," notes Steve McGee of Unify International, a consulting firm in Santa Ana, Calif. "Now, you may be looking for a manager, but you still want somebody who truly believes that working with your hands is an honorable job and deserves good leadership and good scheduling — like a sergeant who is intent on keeping his guys alive — helping them make the most money they can under the best conditions."

think about our people-side differently. Now we're hiring more for character than construction ability."

Orser notes he is careful to distinguish personality from character and seeks certain traits in new employees.

"One trait we like is competitiveness. By that, I mean a fierce will to achieve and accomplish things, but not a 'let's grind the competition into the ground' mentality.

> "We learned that there's a **correct terminology** to use when dealing with subs. In fact, we **don't call them subcontractors** any more. That makes them feel inferior. Instead, you **call them your partners**, because that's really what they are." — *Larry Kuwamara*

With so much riding on the skills of superintendents, builders now use more elaborate screening techniques in their hiring process. Blame it on the hectic pace of production building. Blame it on changes in the job description. Blame it on legal risk. Whatever the reason, today's superintendents face even higher expectations.

Defining Character

Peter Orser, president of Quadrant Homes in Bellevue, Wash., says he looks for "character" in new superintendent applicants.

"What we did for a while was try to hire experienced supers, and that didn't work," he recalls. "You really can't teach an old dog new tricks."

The company now aims to hire employees who understand working with a customer, Orser says, which has improved focus on a disciplined process. To make that happen, Quadrant has created what he refers to as a superintendent university.

"We've got several hundred people crawling a site in any given day; that's a lot of responsibility," he says. "What happened was that when we went to even-flow construction, it allowed us to

"We still want diversity of thought," he adds. "I don't want a bunch of people walking around here who act just like me. Of course, not every idea is a good one, but [employees] need to feel like they're being heard."

How do you accurately measure the mettle of a potential employee? Orser doesn't leave that process to chance.

"We took 17 of our managers who do the most hiring and we put them through interview skills training," he says. "They learn not to give the [applicant] the answer in the question. They also learn that if the person is talking in generalities, you can ask for specific examples of how they used their people skills to solve a difficult situation. We try to get them to go deeper, to ask 'what words did you use in a certain situation?' for example.

"It's about probing and not judging the book by its cover," he adds. "We've learned that sometimes the person who's most expressive may be the biggest bullshi----. We're looking for certain qualities — competitiveness, commitment, coachability and a little humility."

CHALLENGING CHAOS

Good superintendents treat the job site like a factory, says one expert, and resist the urge to behave like petty tyrants.

Builder-superintendent tension can sometimes wreak havoc at a job site.

"If you walk onto any job site, the best you can often hope for is 'controlled chaos,'" says Stan Luhr, CEO of Quality Built, a home building consulting firm in San Diego. "But that view leaves incredible waste and inefficiency."

Instead, he says the superintendent should look at the house as a composite of systems and build each house with precision, the way manufacturers of products do.

How do they make that mental leap?

"By focusing on their biggest problems first and problem solving. They go out and do research on the Internet and elsewhere and work with the trades to solve the problem."

Once a superintendent learns to troubleshoot in this way, Luhr says, he will apply that philosophy to future problems instead of letting them recur.

Problem solving requires open communication with trades.

"The biggest mistake superintendents make is having an iron fist control over the job site," Luhr says. "It's bad because they operate the job site out of fear. They are people who have more to hide than offer. They're often covering up their inefficiencies and lack of experience."

As a result, he says, "they don't open communications channels. The trades begin to work things out on their own. So the super is constantly dealing with chaos as it happens instead of preconceiving ideas to head it off."

A SUPER'S MARKET

In coming years, experienced construction managers will have plenty of leverage.

Just how many superintendents are on the job? That's a tough one to nail down, but based on 2004 data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the top end of that figure falls somewhere around 80,000. That includes all "construction managers" working for both commercial and residential general contractors.

Whatever the exact figure, the bureau predicts that the demand for good supers will build, at least through 2014. To make matters worse for employers, the reports show the sophistication of construction will grow during that period, thinning the pool of potential hires.

Prospects will be best for job seekers "with a bachelor's or higher degree in construction science, construction management or civil engineering."

To that end, Orser says, many of his latest superintendent hires have come out of management jobs in other industries, with no hands-on construction background.

"We've hired some people out of Eddie Bauer, plus warehouse management and customer service," he says. "They tend to be focused on a disciplined process; they recognize the value of the process and have some notion of customer service.

"Our supers have to take four important walks with a customer," Orser continues, "and buying a house is stressful. They need to still recognize that the customer is king."

Nature's Limitations?

Some experts argue that overemphasis on an applicant's psychology might neglect critical traditional skills. No matter how much the back office environment changes, knowledge of how a home is built is essential to the job.

"There's an emphasis now on hiring college graduates based on character and then training them," notes Steve McGee. "But there are divergent views about that practice.

"The problem is that many of these hired grads view the site superintendent job as a stepping stone," he continues. "They want to hang around for six months to learn the ropes, then become the president of the company."

Another issue, McGee says, is that supers without some years in the field may lack the 'street cred' needed to manage trades.

"There's a risk that a lot of them coming straight out of college — sometimes called the 'pink hands people' — they don't respect what it takes to work a job site all day long. So the trades don't work effectively with them."

The reason, he says, that the "salty dogs" of construction, such as framing crew managers, often lack subtlety is that they have never had any formal training.

The industry simply hasn't worked that way. The problem, he says, often stems from their experience as assistant superintendents.

"Unfortunately, a lot of site superintendents today are desk jockeys who spend all their time dealing with the option nightmare," McGee explains. "As a result, they send these assistants out into the field to manage everything else. But the assistants are green. They have no hard training. So right away, they develop bad habits."

Which brings him to his pitch: training is essential after the hire no matter what a superintendent's background, and remedial training is almost always in order — and should be an ongoing expectation.

Back to School

Fred Humphreys directs the Washington, D.C.-based Home Builders Institute, an affiliate of the NAHB's workforce arm.

"We talked to builders around the country and asked them what areas of knowledge they expect supers to have." Humphreys says. "What we found is that the project manager or superintendent is becoming more professionalized, whether it's dealing with OSHA safety regulations, budgets or codes."

Humphreys says that most of the big production builders are recruiting heavily from two- and four-year construction management programs, but these new employees typically have some gaps in their skill sets.

The HBI Residential Construction Superintendent Designation, like the training offered by Unify International, is a supplemental program almost always taken by superintendents who are already on the job — not would-be applicants.

"The demographics really run the gamut, from those just out of college to the super who has been on the job 30 or 40 years," notes Joe Krinoch, also of HBI. He adds that not every builder uses the same title to describe site superintendents. Beazer Homes, for example, calls them assistant builders.

Humphreys notes that when J.D. Power and Associates ranks various factors of customer satisfaction, customer management — the core of a site supervisor's job — ranks near the top of home buyer concerns. And it's a skill that can be learned.

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HBI superintendent program runs about $1,200. But Krinoch says builders can see tangible returns on that cost right away.

"There's definitely a market advantage," he says. "D.R. Horton has sent 63 of their people through the program."

To date, HBI has graduated about 800 students from the RCS program, and another 4,000 have entered the course pipeline. The institute will soon offer an advanced level of training for graduates of the first program.

Unify International also offers superintendent training. McGee says the difference between Unify's program and HBI is the amount of in-the-field training. He says his company tends to spend more "hands-on" time at job sites rather than in the classroom.

He shares HBI's assertion that the payback for builders is significant.

"We can show you statistically what the financial difference is," he says. "Right away, you can see savings on cycle time, variance cost and many other intangibles."

First Person Feedback

How do superintendents feel about attention to their attitude, their knowledge and their training?

Dave Mullineaux, site superintendent with Carl M. Freeman Communities in Delaware, recalls answering "the normal" questions. "They were looking for motivated people, people with common sense and management skills," he says.

Mullineaux notes important factors to staying with the company.

"They have a direction, he says, "and they treat you with respect. The benefits are good, and they're keen on the product they produce, which is very important to the customers.

"Of course," he adds, "Compensation is still a huge factor. This company is probably in the top percentile in terms of pay."

Larry Kuwamara, a project manager for Michael Sivage Homes and Communities in San Antonio, Texas, has been taking the HBI's RCS training program. His only complaint: "There's a big gap between courses in San Antonio. The last one I took was in April, and the next one is in July."

Kuwamara says the courses he has had so far have shaken loose a lot of misconceptions.

"The hiring course was really mind blowing," he recalls. "There were things we were doing that we thought were appropriate that ... well, there are things you can ask in an interview and things you can't. You have to be very careful to word things and conduct a proper interview.

"The customer service part of it was good, too," he says. "Sometimes you get in a situation where a homeowner is already upset, and you learn how to deal with that."

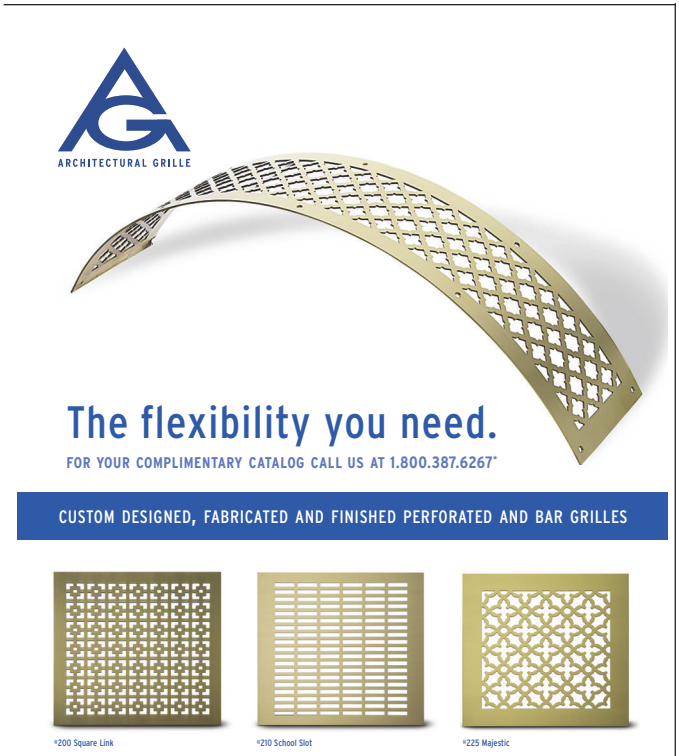
Other lessons applied to his dealings with subcontractors. "We learned that there's a correct terminology to use when dealing with subs. In fact, we don't call them subcontractors any more. That makes them feel inferior. Instead, you call them your partners, because that's really what they are."

So far the training has affected the company across the board. "From scheduling to interviewing, there's just a lot of things that cut time out of your schedule — skills that allow you to manage your time and your job better," Kuwamara says.

Peter Orser of Quadrant Homes adds that at the end of the day, superintendents stick with a company that allows them to take pride in their work.

"Our guy may not be painting or gluing or putting things together on the job," Orser says, "but he's proud of what he delivers on day 54. This is a new kind of craftsman, a craftsman who sees the big picture who is really involved in the vision of building more house than our customer dreamed possible.

"We're not asking people to become automatons," he adds. "They own that job site. It's about the process, and they understand that. That's what makes a great superintendent." **PB**



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>> BY BILL LURZ, SENIOR EDITOR

Paying the Piper

Plummeting shares are shaping public home builders in surprising ways.

After a decade of unprecedented growth, the party could be over for America's public home builders. As share prices drop under the weight of slumping sales, burgeoning inventories and builders' own deep pricing discounts, look for changes in the way companies operate that will profoundly affect housing markets — and private builders — across the country.

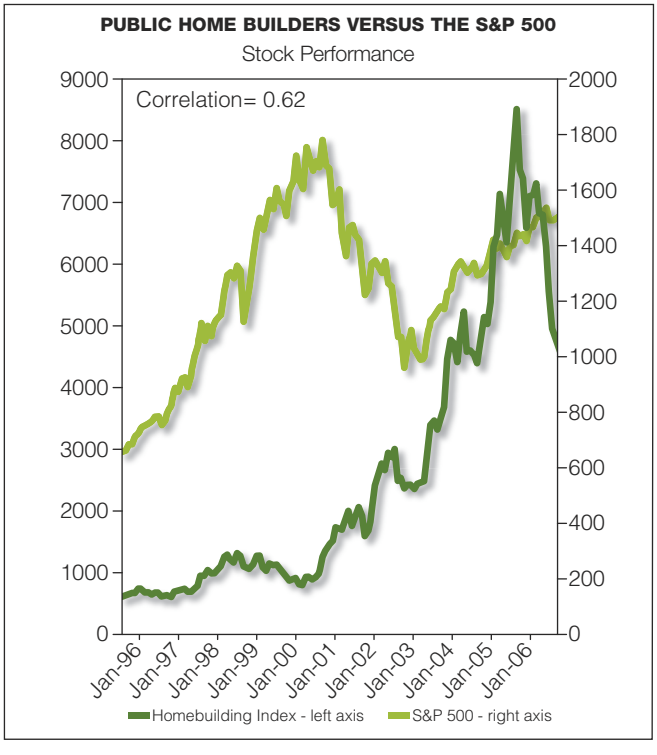
Builders' stocks have dipped. Take a look at the chart below showing how the stocks of 14 public builders, tracked by Credit Suisse Research & Analytics, have performed recently as an index against the S&P 500. It's easy to see the damage done by the sales downturns that began last fall. "Private builders are hurting," says consultant and *Professional Builder* columnist Chuck Shinn, "but not as bad as publics."

Some changes have taken place:

- Public builders are selling land and walking away from commitments on big land deals to save cash and keep assets off the balance sheet.
- Downsizing to reduce costs, publics are turning loose boatloads of employees who will be prized again when the market rebounds.

Other changes are more subtle and not yet visible:

- Declining share prices devalue the currency public builders use for acquisitions, so don't expect many M&A deals. "The currency value is reduced," says one Wall Street insider, "and so is the ability to do a secondary offering to raise equity capital."
- Larry Webb's WL Homes, which goes by John Laing Homes, suddenly has a huge advantage in the M&A marketplace. Armed with Emaar Properties' Middle Eastern oil money, Webb has a mandate to grow by acquisition, and he can pay cash to private builders now motivated to sell.
- Senior executives of many public builders may already be planning to launch home building businesses of their own to take advantage of a recovery.



Slow and steady, green building increases its pace

>> BY FELICIA OLIVER, SENIOR EDITOR

RESULTS OF A RECENT SURVEY INDICATE THE NUMBER OF HOME BUILDERS producing green homes grew 20 percent in 2005, and that number is expected to increase by 30 percent in 2006.

The "Residential Green Building SmartMarket Report," produced by McGraw-Hill Construction and the NAHB, estimates the residential green building market share will increase from $7.4 billion and 2 percent of housing starts last year to between $19 billion and $38 billion and 5-10 percent of residential construction activity in 2010.

>> BY SARA ZAILSKAS, STAFF WRITER

Not Just Katrina's Fault

The reasons behind materials' price hikes are changing with the prices.

Builders have watched prices for building materials rise over the past year and have heard the excuses. But there's more to the story.

Demand has declined in the past few months for gypsum and other wood products, which have had a capacity problem because there aren't enough mills, says Jim Haughey, director of economics for Reed Construction Data. Mills don't just pop up overnight to respond to demand, and similar to cement plants, "no one likes to live next to that," making future construction even more difficult, Haughey says.

Worldwide construction, especially in Asia, has had its hand in shortages, sucking up materials — particularly ready-mix concrete. And high demand means higher prices.

Last year's hurricanes have pretty minimal impact at this point, Haughey says, although "there are hints of shortages for roofing shingles" and asphalt supplies, which have become pricier because of oil politics in the Middle East.

Metals in particular could influence materials prices overall. "The metals — copper especially — are seeing shocks now, and all the cost in raw materials hasn't show up yet," says Michael Carliner, an NAHB economist. Haughey attributes the surge in prices — nonferrous piping and tubing has shot up more than 115 percent in the past year, according to Reed Construction Data statistics — to an economy that hasn't experienced as much growth since World War II. "When the world economy picks up 1 or 2 percent, copper picks up three to four times that. It'll be high for a couple years," says Haughey.

August's shut down of the BP oil pipeline in Alaska shouldn't have a measurable affect on building material costs in the short term because the crude oil inventory is large enough to meet demand for several weeks, Haughey says. The exception, however, is the Pacific coast, which relies on Alaska for most of its crude oil and keeps a smaller supply.

A long-term shutdown, however, could mean two things, Haughey says. "One is the rise in [cost of] fuels and oil based products; the second is the drop in economic activity as buyers become more cautious. "

What can change the overall picture drastically, Haughey predicts, are inflation fears that cause interest rates to spike; hurricanes that shut down the Mississippi River; and a shortage of money triggered by conflict in the Middle East.

Softwood Lumber June-July prices: Down 2.7 percent	Fall/winter outlook: Prices will likely steady or rise slightly – risk is low, Haughey says. "If home builders make adjustment to the lower levels [available], they'll order what they need. Right now, they're ordering less than they need." Carliner predicts a downward trend.
Construction Plastics June-July prices: Up .8 percent	Fall/winter outlook: For anything plastic, prices should stabilize with little inflation. "Barring any major hurricanes, it should be OK," Haughey says.
Brick June-July prices: Up .3 percent	Fall/winter outlook: The price builders pay for brick will depend on the part of the country; brick takes a lot of energy to make and it's expensive to transport. "If markets weaken in brick-intensive areas like the Midwest," Haughey says, "then we'll see that reflected in brick prices."
Nonferrous Pipe and Tubing (Copper) June-July prices: Down -6.8 percent	Fall/winter outlook: Copper has hit its peak, Haughey says, so builders can expect prices to stabilize. "Copper ore and scrap have stabilized, so it'll take a while for it to affect pipe and tube prices."
Steel and Metals	Fall/winter outlook: Steel, namely steel plates, will stay where they are and peak, staying high until early 2007, says *Purchasing* magazine's executive editor, Tom Stundza. Construction grade steel will likely be expensive in the second half of this year. "It's just seasonal demand."
Gypsum June-July prices: Up .9 percent	Fall/winter outlook: Prices won't dip, and any percentage increases will be in the single digits into 2007, Haughey says.
Ready-Mix Concrete June-July prices: Up 1.7 percent	Fall/winter outlook: Expect prices to continue to climb; in the past year and a half, prices have risen around 10 percent, and a world shortage doesn't signal any sign of relief, Haughey says. Carliner spots relief in 2007 to 2008.
Asphalt Roofing June-July prices: Up .4 percent	Fall/winter outlook: No relief until 2007. "There should be adequate supplies, but it's not going to retreat to what people would consider to be normal until late this year or next year," Haughey says.

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>> A REPORT BY ***PROFESSIONAL BUILDER*** STAFF

National Housing Quality Award Winners

In the most challenging award contest in the industry, these companies not only won – they became better companies.

Winning a National Housing Quality Award requires more than just operating a great building company; it requires real effort. Not only do you have to implement sophisticated operating processes in your company that improve performance, you have to document those processes in an extensive application. Then you have to prove to the judges during a site visit that those processes are actually in place and effective.

This year, the judges selected three winners and two honorable mentions:

Gold: Estes Builders, Sequim, Wash.

Silver: Floor Art, Tempe, Ariz.

Silver: Schuck and Sons, Glendale, Ariz.

Honorable Mentions: Keystone Custom Homes, Willow Street, Pa. and Atlantic Builders, Fredericksburg, Va.

These companies have won in two ways. They have improved their companies and they receive the recognition of the industry for the excellence of their operations.

Sponsored by the NAHB Research Center and *Professional Builder*, the NHQ Awards have recognized the cream of the crop for nearly 14 years. The process is so difficult that companies usually apply for several years before they get recognized.

Even the companies we don't recognize here are winners. Many applicants use the program as a benchmarking tool to measure how they have improve over time. Every submission receives a judges' report, detailing strengths as well as which areas the judges thought the company could use some shoring up. That report, for many companies, becomes the action plan for improvement over the next year.

The National Housing Quality Awards will be presented to the winners at the *Professional Builder* Benchmark Conference during a gala awards dinner on Sept. 27, at the Ritz-Carlton Lake Las Vegas. For more information, please go to www.probuilder.com/benchmark

The Judges

NHQ Award judges are past NHQ Gold Award winners, quality management experts or representatives of the NAHB Research Center or *Professional Builder*. All of them have donated time, effort and travel expenses to participate. For some, the investment is significant, and they receive little recognition for it. Their efforts keep the NHQ Award alive and thriving.

Todd Booze, Ideal Homes, Norman, Okla.
David Caligaris, The Green Companies, Newton Centre, Mass.
Tom Gillespie, Kennedy Homes, Barrington, Ill.
Dan Gorski, Veridian Homes, Madison, Wis.
Dan Green, The Green Companies, Newton Centre, Mass.
Mark Hodges, K. Hovnanian, Edison, N.J.
Denis Leonard, Veridian Homes, Madison, Wis.
Jerry Mairani, American Society of Quality, Milwaukee, Wis.
Cynthia McAuliffe, Grayson Homes, Ellicott City, Md.
Serge Ogranovitch, The Potomack Group, Vienna, Va.
Chip Pennington, Shea Homes, Highlands Ranch, Colo.
Dean Potter, K. Hovnanian Homes, Edison, N.J.
Bill Saint, Simonini Builders, Charlotte, N.C.
Scott Teel, Simonini Builders, Charlotte, N.C.
Karen Warren, Shea Homes – San Diego, Calif.
Frank Alexander, NAHB Research Center, Upper Marlboro, Md.
Paul Deffenbaugh, *Professional Builder*, Oak Brook, Ill.

Gold

Benchmarking the industry

Gold Award winner Estes Builders establishes clear goals for improvement and benchmarks itself against the entire industry.

BY PAUL DEFFENBAUGH, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

On the northern edge of the Olympic Peninsula in a small town with a funny name is a progressive builder with lofty goals. Estes Builders isn't interested in just being good; it wants to be great. "No matter what thing we're working on, we look to be in the top 20 percent nationally. We're benchmarking against the best in the country," says company founder and president, Kevin Estes.

Based in Sequim, Wash., Estes Builders received a Gold Award in the 2007 National Housing Quality Awards, the only company to achieve such recognition this year.

Even more remarkable is that the NHQ Award, which recognizes companies that focus on improving business processes, favors large companies with more resources to develop sophisticated systems. Estes Builders achieved this recognition while only closing 37 homes in 2005.

The Sequim market is nearly 85 percent active adult, and most competitors build three or four homes per year. A couple of production builders moved in from Seattle, but Estes Builders' market .knowledge allowed the firm to thrive while the new players struggled to match product to customer need.

Although the company has grown from just over $6 million in annual sales in 2003 to approximately $11 million in 2005, it did so with no increase in staff or overhead, delivering profitability well above industry averages. Those financials combine with a customer satisfaction profile that has 72 percent of its customers writing endorsements and more than 95 percent of its trade partners calling the company the best to work with in the area.

A SMALL GROUP of dedicated employees surround Kevin and Jo Anne Estes. Through shared devotion to improvement and process, they have brought a National Housing Gold Award to the Olympic Peninsula.

Leadership

That kind of performance begins with clear leadership. Kevin and Jo Anne Estes founded Estes Builders in 1990. The two established a core value: "We endeavor to have a positive impact on everyone our company chooses to interact with." The value didn't evolve over time, but, as Kevin says, "started right out of the chute. We wanted to establish it straight from the start. We didn't involve team members because we wanted to be the ones estab-

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> "WE INSTRUCT OUR PEOPLE TO ASK 'WOULD YOU FIX IT FOR YOUR MOM?' IF SO, FIX IT FOR THE CUSTOMER.'"
> — *KEVIN ESTES*

lishing values for the company."

The central values support a company constitution that delineates the bases for decision making. Among the elements are:

- People are the most important asset
- Continually improve
- Measure what is important
- Be a systems-driven company
- Keep promises

Strategic Initiatives

Those ideas inform all aspects of the company, but in many ways, it is Estes Builders' approach to evaluating and selecting strategic initiatives that most readily captures both the essence of the company and the reason the judges awarded it gold.

In the process of measuring performance, Estes identifies areas where the company is performing less efficiently than others. Recently the company initiated a 15-step process to improve its landscaping score on the customer satisfaction survey. It was the lowest scoring element, and the firm set a goal of increasing the score from 3.3 to 4.1 or higher on a scale of 6. A quality team of employees assembled a strategy, and within one quarter the company had raised its score to 5.3.

Most strategic initiatives are two to three year projects and don't see quite such astounding results. The results of employee evaluations showed an opportunity to improve how the company recognized employees. This improvement process focused primarily on managers, and the result was the creation of the Going the Extra Mile program, known as GEM. In this program, any manager or employee who sees someone going beyond the parameters of his or her job will notify the president and the manager. All recipients get immediate recognition; the company scores in this area rose from 3.89 to 4.14 out of 5.

Customer Satisfaction

That focus on employee and customer satisfaction — and the careful measurement of it — has also driven other changes in the company. For example, a team of employees reviewed every change order during an 18-month period. The result of the review was the "Design and Option Questionnaire," which is a checklist an Estes employee reviews with homeowners early in the planning stage. The questionnaire ensures small detail items get early attention and don't cause change orders later.

That level of communication with homeowners extends throughout the planning and construction phases in a well-established (and well-followed) system of phone calls, letters and meetings. At the end of the process, Estes Builders is managing the customer's expectations. During the hand-off to warranty, Estes ensures customers know that a house is a complicated structure and changes will occur. Although the warranty program handles that, he gets more specific. "I take them to trouble spots and say, 'You're going to have a drywall crack here,'" he says. He then assures them that the company will be there to handle it.

Estes Builders also allows employees to make decisions that improve homeowner satisfaction. "We instruct our people," Estes says, "to ask, 'What would you do for your mom? Would you fix it for your mom? If so, fix it for the customer.' We also use the 10 minute rule." If you can do it in 10 minutes, do it.

Trade and Employees

The underlying core values of the company extend to ensuring employee and trade relations operate just as smoothly. Estes Builders surveys employees twice a year to determine what areas the company needs to focus on.

Employees must like Estes Builders, because no management or key employee has ever left the company. Such loyalty extends to the trade partners; the implementation of systems has allowed Estes Builders to work with trades on quality improvement using objective measurements. Twice a year warranty trends are analyzed, and Estes Builders addresses recurring issues during biannual trade meetings.

The company also surveys the trade partners annually and develops quality improvement programs to address problems identified by the survey.

All trades are evaluated annually on field performance, bid requests, invoice procedures and warranty issues. Trades performing exceptionally are recognized at the annual meeting; poor performers set up improvement programs with Estes.

For that devotion to improvement and the introduction of systems to achieve it, Estes Builders has achieved two notable rewards. First, 95 percent of the company's customers would recommend the company to a friend. The other is the NHQ Gold Award.

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Silver

Floored by Technology

Software and the Internet help this Phoenix-area flooring company and its employees excel.

BY MARK JARASEK, SENIOR EDITOR

Floor Art, a small residential flooring contractor in metropolitan Phoenix, is intensely focused on customer and employee satisfaction. With a well-established strategic planning process, the firm stays a steady course toward growth and financial success. Technology is resourcefully used to effectively achieve the firm's overall vision and mission. These and other qualities helped Floor Art achieve the Silver level for the 2006 NHQ Awards.

Founded in 1994, Floor Art currently has 18 full-time employees along with a cadre of trusted independent flooring installation craftsmen to help meet business demands. In 2005, the firm installed flooring in 2,254 homes. Since inception, it has installed flooring in more than 15,000 homes.

Dave Brown, founder and director of Floor Art, leads by example with energy and enthusiasm.

"I depend on my employees to identify the problems they see out in the field and to come up with creative solutions to help solve those problems," Brown says. He points to a situation in which cracking in grout was causing a high number of callbacks. Incorrect mixing procedures were causing the problem.

"We hired an expert to do a demonstration for our craftsmen on how to properly mix the grout, and then videotaped that and put it on our Web site for future reference," Brown said. The net result was a significant decrease in the number of callbacks related to cracking grout.

The firm's vision, mission and values are central to maintaining a consistent tone that leads to success in customer and employee satisfaction. These are well-documented in the employee manual — easily accessible online —and clever reminders can be found on the walls throughout their headquarters.

A well-organized strategic planning process is central to Floor Art's continued progress and growth. It focuses on four key success drivers:

- **Quality:** Reflecting the mission's emphasis on high quality workmanship and the value of committing to be the

AT THE HELM OF FLOOR ART: (Back row, left to right) Dale Pfeiffer and Mike Flannery; (Front row, left to right) Bruce Berg, Georgette Cullen, Dave Brown and Jesus "Chuy" Vasquez.

FLOOR ART USES EXTENSIVE TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN SYSTEMS FOR TRACKING AND MEASURING KEY SUCCESS FACTORS.

best you can be.

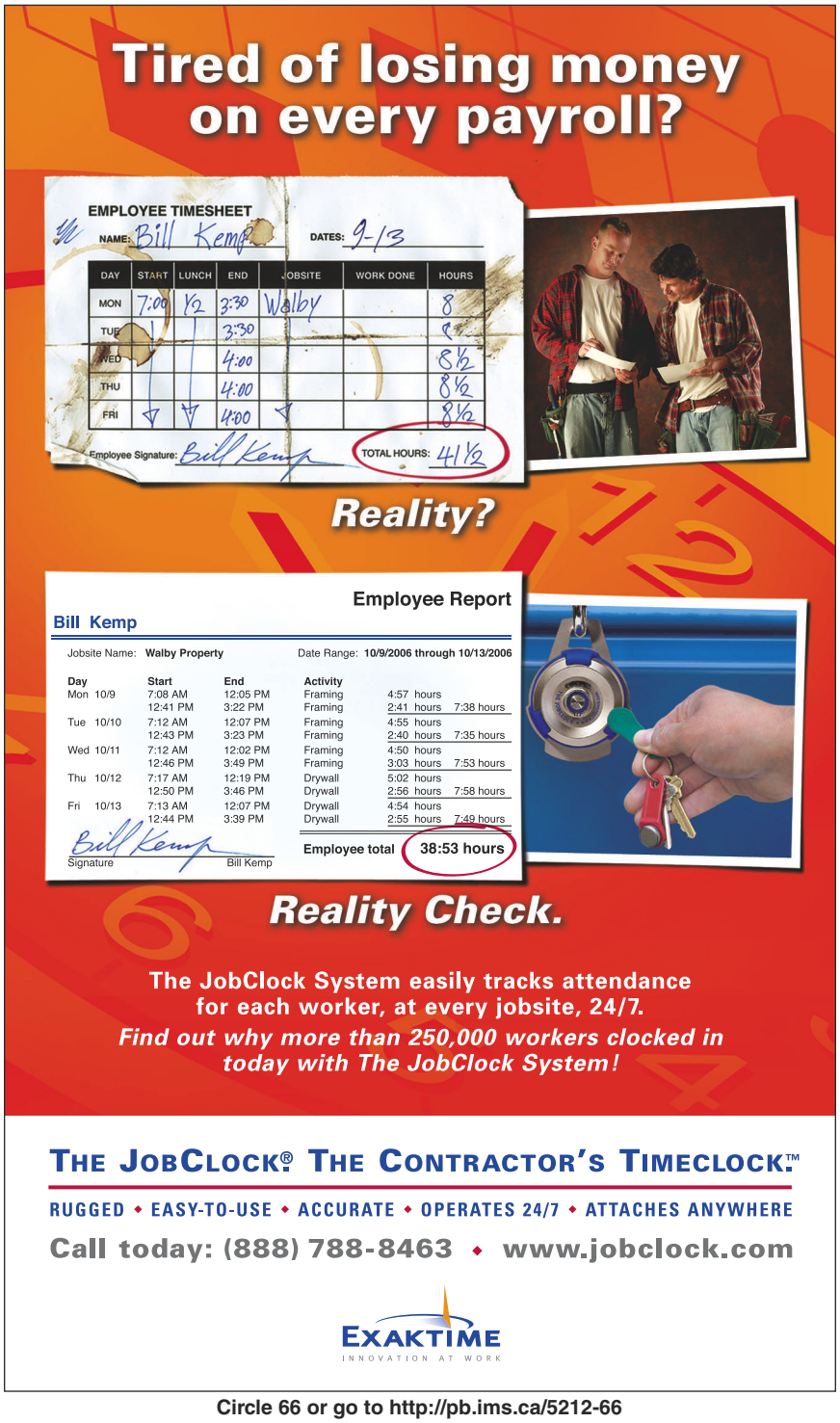
- **Client Satisfaction:** Knowing the value of relationships and importance of enhancing customer experiences.
- **Employee/Craftsman Satisfaction:** Professionalism starts with employees and craftsman who are happy in and proud of their affiliation with Floor Art. Goals of trust and honesty are critical.
- **Business Performance:** Floor Art leaders believe that if team members think strategically, do their jobs well, work continuously to improve and value customers, employees and craftsman, financial success will be the natural result.

Floor Art uses extensive technology-driven systems for tracking and measuring key success factors. It is constantly improved to allow for timely and detailed insight and analysis.

The firm has to meet or exceed the expectations of both their builder customers and the owners of the homes were flooring is installed. Brown says the firm's evaluation tools and outreach activities are specifically designed to solicit feedback from all customer groups, which provides them with a more accurate assessment of factors leading to customer satisfaction.

The firm's small size and its philosophy of keeping the leadership informed on every customer issue enables employees to quickly respond to problems. The management team examines all occurrences to assess whether any processes need adjustment to reduce or eliminate the likelihood of recurring problems.

Floor Art's management believes satisfied employees lead to a successful company. The corporate culture aims to encourage pride in workmanship, dedication and service.



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Silver

Operational Know-How

Schuck and Sons Construction balances employee and business performance.

BY MARK JARASEK, SENIOR EDITOR, ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Schuck and Sons Construction Co. operates like a well-oiled quality control machine. With a solid reputation for professionalism and superior workmanship in the markets it serves, the company continues to experience steady sales volume growth. Already an NHQ Award recipient in 2004, the firm has once again achieved a Silver level award for 2006.

The Company

Schuck provides framing and trim/millwork carpentry subcontracting services to single and multi-family home developers in the metropolitan Phoenix, Tucson and Northern Arizona markets. The company also sells manufactured components and commodity building supplies, including roof and floor trusses; lumber and plywood; and custom doors and trim. Delivery is handled in-house by Schuck's fleet of company-owned delivery trucks.

The 40-year-old company employs about 1,700 people, most who are production employees. About 100 administrative employees are throughout the organization.

THE SCHUCK AND SONS CONSTRUCTION CO. MANAGEMENT TEAM: (Back row, left to right) Craig Steele, Frank Serpa (Front row, left to right) Paul Kalkbrenner, Mark Sidell, Doug Hassinger, Jim Tourek

Although the founder and his family are no longer involved in the business, employees contribute to policies, direction and commitment to excellence. It is 100 percent employee-owned under an ESOP program.

"Employees recognize they share in the success of the company, which has been a key component to its ongoing success," NHQ Judges observed.

What Makes the Company Work

Well-planned and thoughtfully executed performance management and quality assurance programs have guided the firm as it works to grow its position and reputation in the marketplace.

Efficiency and profitability drive decisions throughout Schuck's divisions, departments and sub-work groups. A mindset to constantly improve processes and procedures helps the company overcome any obstacles. Schuck and Sons strives to clearly communicate its goals and objectives to employees to make sure they're aware of changes to the company's strategic plan.

Realizing the risks associ-

> QUALITY ASSURANCE HAS BEEN VITAL IN SCHUCK AND SONS' ABILITY TO MAINTAIN HIGH CUSTOMER SATISFACTION.

ated with issues like construction defect litigation and rising insurance premiums, Schuck and Sons has strict quality assurance policies and procedures in place. The company possesses a great deal of experience and expertise in the area of quality assurance, having been one of the first contractors in the nation to achieve the NAHB Certified Framing Trade Contractor status. Schuck and Sons was also a pivotal partner with NAHB's Research Center in developing and piloting an ISO 9000-based quality program for the home building industry.

A Focus on Quality

Quality assurance programs at Schuck and Sons have been vital to the company's ability to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction. Responsibility for quality assurance is shared across many levels, from initial inspections of lumber and other material coming in from suppliers, to detailed checklist inspections of fabricated trusses, door and other products that are manufactured in the company's yard, to checklist inspections by foreman out in the field.

In supply departments, packages are checked for accuracy prior to delivery, and on-time deliveries are tracked to guarantee optimal customer service. All quality assurance data is collected and recorded. The data are analyzed and shared monthly with supervisors and foremen. Quality assurance is obtained through multiple in-house inspections of work performed.

Frank Serpa, vice president of construction operations, says the firm will soon be reorganizing the manufacturing yard to gain additional workflow efficiencies.

Safety Checks

Safety is important to Schuck and Sons. As a proactive measure, the firm recently voluntarily requested a workplace review from the Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health. There are several safety measures in place. An innovative in-house program called Safety Bingo encourages safety in the work field and their manufacturing yard by providing ongoing incentives for accident and injury avoidance. Weekly random job site inspections are conducted to review conformance to company policies. In addition, the company holds weekly division manager safety meetings to share best practices and new safety ideas. Managers attend monthly safety meetings to discuss incident reports and assess any special training programs that might be needed.

The firm's financial success has taken off, with a 60 percent increase in revenue and 13.8 percent increase in gross profits from 2004 to 2005. The company has also been diversifying its holdings. It recently purchased a building supply company located in northern Arizona, where Schuck is looking to expand; bought Acquired Integrated Stucco in Phoenix, which added 500 employees and $25 million in revenue for the firm; and started up a home building division, Schuck Homes.

Schuck solicits feedback on a regular basis from all external customers as well as their employees, which has allowed the company to stay a step ahead of its competition in many important ways.

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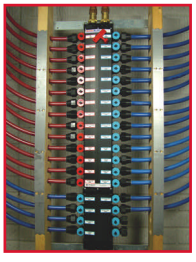

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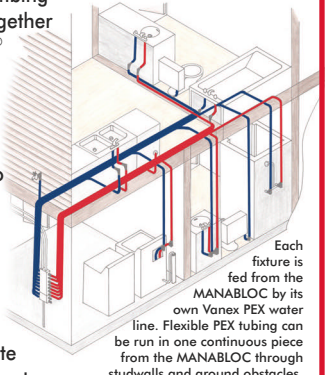

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Honorable Mention

Doing it Right the First Time

Keystone Custom Homes' mantra bridges communication with trades.

BY FELICIA OLIVER, SENIOR EDITOR

Keystone Custom Homes keeps its trades accountable to "doing it right the first time," demonstrating that the pen is mightier than the saw in ensuring construction quality. Upon arrival and departure from the job, trades are required to sign off on the condition of the work site and quality of work completed.

"The QA [quality assurance] form goes on a clipboard that is nailed to the wall after the house is framed," says Jeff Rutt, Keystone's president. "Each trade has one."

And trades working with the Willow Street, Pa., company are required to report on whether the job site was suitably prepped for their arrival, encouraging teamwork between trades.

"What we used to hear in trade partner meetings is 'Keystone messed this up. Keystone didn't have clean access to the job site,' says Mike Cahill, Keystone's vice president of construction. "But I'm not the one putting the stone in the driveway. That's your trade partner who was in before you.' This recognition gets the trades talking to each other."

Keystone has a checklist of items that each trade must sign, confirming that the work has been completed to spec. If it hasn't, the trade will be asked to come back and fix it. The act of signing off on work — knowing that someone will see his or her name attached to the condition of the job site afterward — holds subs responsible and puts their reputation and good name on the line.

Human Touch

Atlantic Builders reaps human resources rewards

BY ERIN HALLSTROM-ERICKSON, GROUP MANAGING EDITOR

It's not written in a formal statement or printed on any wall, but Atlantic Builders' mission is to instill a sense of ownership in its employees.

President Tom Schoedel and his partner Adam Fried have created a family atmosphere at this Fredericksburg, Va., building company by empowering employees and giving them a say in how things are run.

To get a sense of how Atlantic puts the company's continuous improvement in the hands of its employees, one needn't look any further than Atlantic Builders' teams. Each year, when the strategic goals are announced, employees are assigned to teams based on strategic goals. Everyone at Atlantic has a team and everyone reaps the results of a positive performance.

This best practice encourages everyone in the company to have a stake in the success of the company. Schoedel affirms that the difference between Atlantic's approach and that of other builders is simple: "We enforce the ownership concept."

Atlantic Builders also believes that satisfied employees also produce better results. To keep everyone in the family singing a happy tune, the company plans outings such as visits to Atlantic City, fishing trips, spa days and company picnics.

The company also actively participates in the community financially as well as through volunteer activities. Since its inception in 2003, the Atlantic Builders Charity Committee has donated time and money to multiple projects, including Habitat for Humanity and several local schools.

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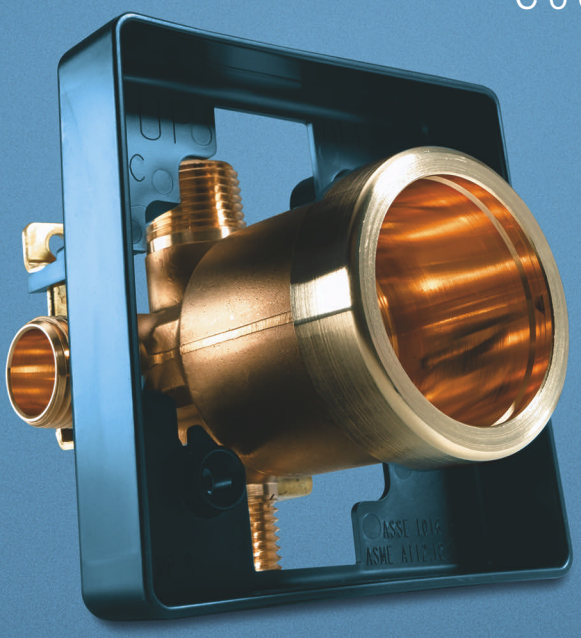

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415

>> BY **FELICIA OLIVER,** *SENIOR EDITOR*

A Good Mix

Chatham Square has been a triumph of smart development, creative design and social integration — and buyers just can't wait to get in.

Built on the former site of 100 units of public housing, Chatham Square is a mixed-income development. The community seamlessly integrates 52 low-income, public housing units with 100 market-rate, for-sale townhouses while blending in perfectly with the historic architecture of the neighborhood. It puts a new spin on the traditional idea of urban revitalization.

"It's right in the heart of Old Town Alexandria," says Bob Youngentob, president of EYA (formerly Eakin/Youngentob Associates) of Bethesda, Md., developers of Chatham Square. The neighborhood, surrounded by historic row homes and sites developed over the last 30 years, sits four blocks from the Potomac River.

The townhouses have attracted mostly move-up buyers and some first timers, with a combination of dual income young professionals, empty nesters and people who simply enjoy city living. Chatham Square is within walking distance of restaurants, the waterfront and many urban amenities.

Chatham Square is a bona fide success not just as a development, but also as a social experiment. Market-rate buyers have paid an average $850,000 to live side-by-side with public housing residents.

"The sales office opened on a Saturday, and folks started camping out to buy on Wednesday," says Jack McLaurin, AIA, a principal with the Lessard Group and architect for Chatham Square.

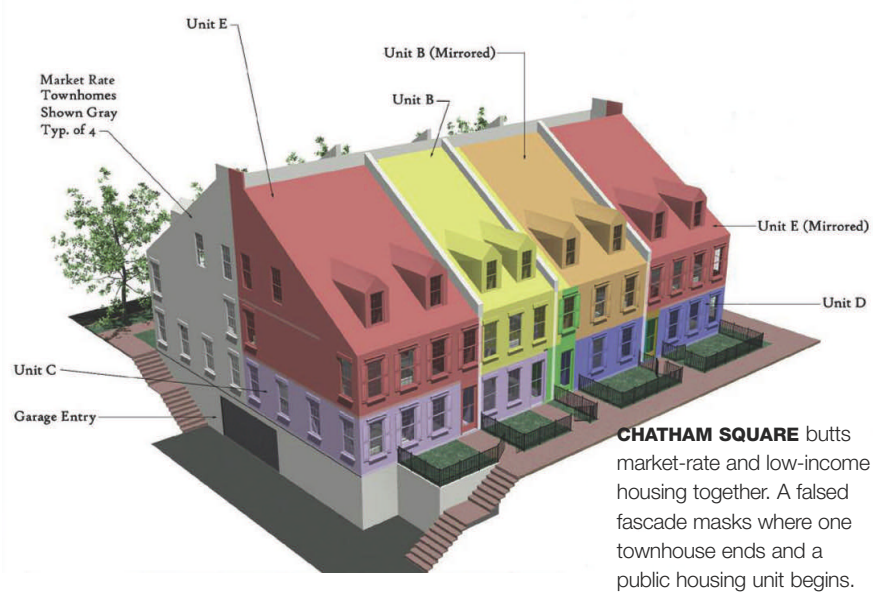

PHOTO COURTESY OF BORIS FELDBLYUM

CHATHAM SQUARE butts market-rate and low-income housing together. A falsed fascade masks where one townhouse ends and a public housing unit begins.

Opportunities

Plans to redevelop the original public housing units began as early as 1989. The Alexandria City Council and residents from the surrounding community came up with a comprehensive set of guidelines for the redevelopment. Proposals from two other developers were attempted but failed. The

VITAL STATS
Alexandria, Va.

Neighborhood: Old Town
Builder: EYA, Bethesda, Md.
Architect: The Lessard Group, Vienna, Va.
Interior Designer: Model Home Interiors, Elkridge, Md.
Developer: EYA
Models open: April 2005
Home type: Townhouses and public housing rental units
Sales to date: Sold out
Community size: 100 market-rate town homes; 52 public housing units
Square footage: 2,170 (Jefferson model)
Average price: $850,000
Hard cost: Approximately $100/square foot
Buyer profile: First-time, move-up, affluent singles, empty nesters and couples without children

THE JEFFERSON FLOOR PLAN at Chatham Square features a spacious, living room and dining room.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB NAROD

city extended another RFP, and EYA responded with a proposal that brought all the chief stakeholders together — including the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority — and found a solution that satisfied all.

The development of Chatham Square not only provided low-income residents with housing, it provided them with construction jobs and job training, which were part of EYA's agreement with the housing authority.

The featured model is the Jefferson. As with the other models, it had to fit into the architectural fabric of Old Town.

"We spent a lot of time on the exterior detailing to make sure it captured many of the historic features found in other parts of Old Town," says Youngentob.

The Jefferson is a rear-loaded, two-car garage plan with a rec room on the lower level. The first floor has an open living room/dining room and

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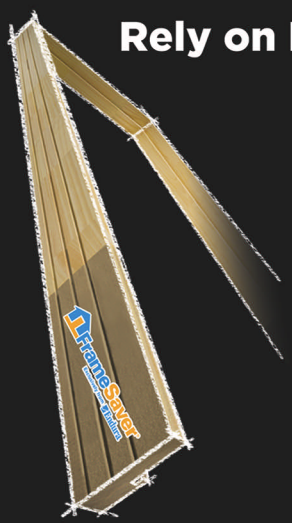

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THE JEFFERSON has an open kitchen/breakfast area with high-level standard finishes.

kitchen/breakfast area; the second level includes a generous owners' suite and second bedroom; and the third level features a third bedroom with an open loft area and roof terrace.

Obstacles

How were market-rate prospects convinced to buy in a mixed-income development?

"There are some people who will never feel comfortable living in a mixed-income community," says Youngentob. "For those people, Chatham Square wasn't the right plan. But there are as many if not more people with a social conscience such that this was more attractive to them than living in a 100 percent market-rate development. There were some people who were willing to give it a shot."

In fact, demand for these units went beyond what EYA expected. The developer cautiously priced the market-rate homes at a slight discount compared to neighboring market-rate townhouses. But sales for the Chatham Square units exceeded the market rate homes in the surrounding area on a price-per-foot basis. ARHA realized a $3 million "bonus" as a result of the additional sales proceeds.

Then there was the issue of how to build the public housing and market-rate units side by side.

"We had two market-rate unit styles — the Fayette and the Gibson — that were together," says Youngentob. "There were four in each building, and they were combined with six affordable housing units in a back-to-back townhome building design that was on top of structured parking. So one half of the building had the four market-rate units, and the other half had six affordable units that looked like four market-rate townhouses."

There was no way the average observer could differentiate from the outside where a townhouse ended and a public housing unit began.

"The façade was falsed," says McLaurin. "It looks like you have a 16-foot-wide townhome next

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KOHLER Whirlpools and Baths

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Shapes and sizes to suit your needs	Allow builders to meet a variety of specifications, from standard floor plans to custom installations
Installation flexibility for any floor plan	Delivered in configuration options such as integral aprons, tile flanges and custom pump locations
Customized upgrade options	From whirlpool models to BubbleMassage™ baths, bathers can tailor their experience, from relaxing to massaging to invigorating
Coordinated design solutions	KOHLER suites elevate the bathroom design by achieving a unified look

Shown on front K-1114-LA-96 Windward 6' ProFlex whirlpool with integral apron in Biscuit.

K-1164-0 Sunward™ 6' ProFlex drop-in whirlpool in White.

K-1160-LA-0 Tercet™ ProFlex bath whirlpool with integral apron in White.

K-1337-G-0 Serif™ 5' BubbleMassage drop-in whirlpool in White.

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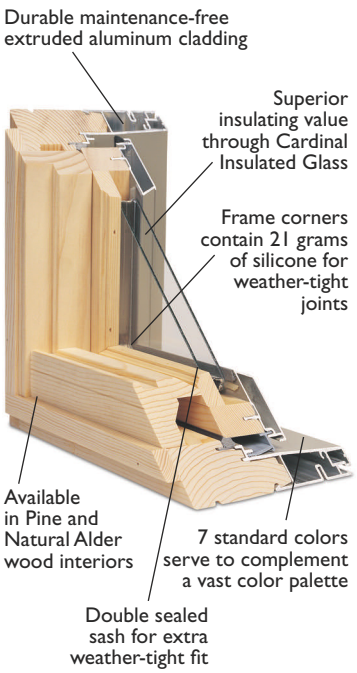

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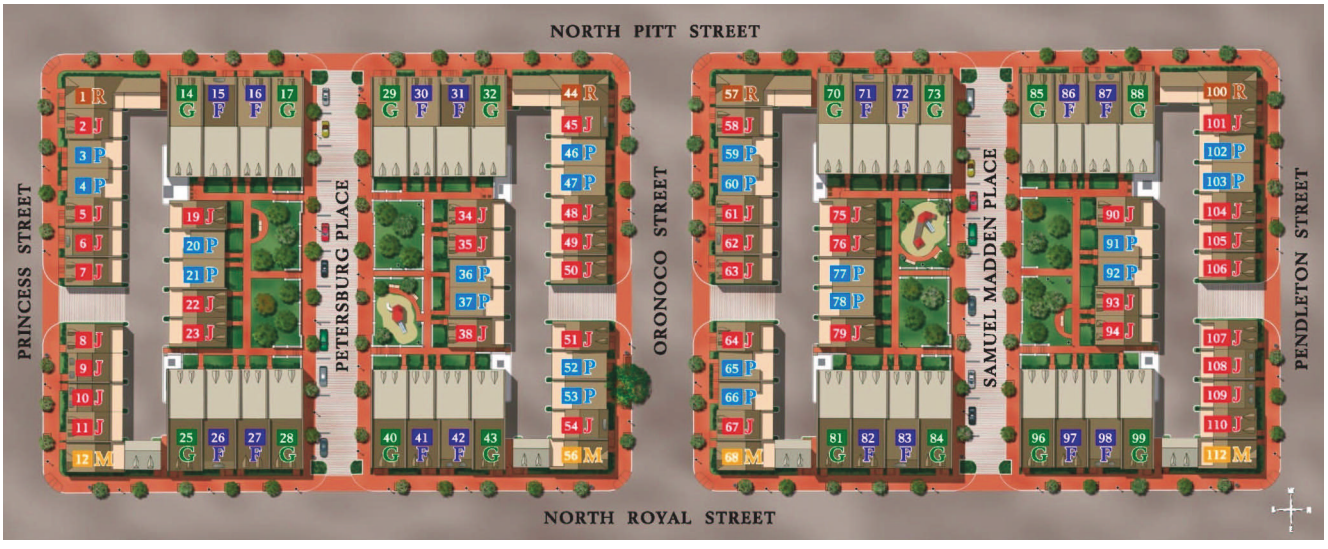
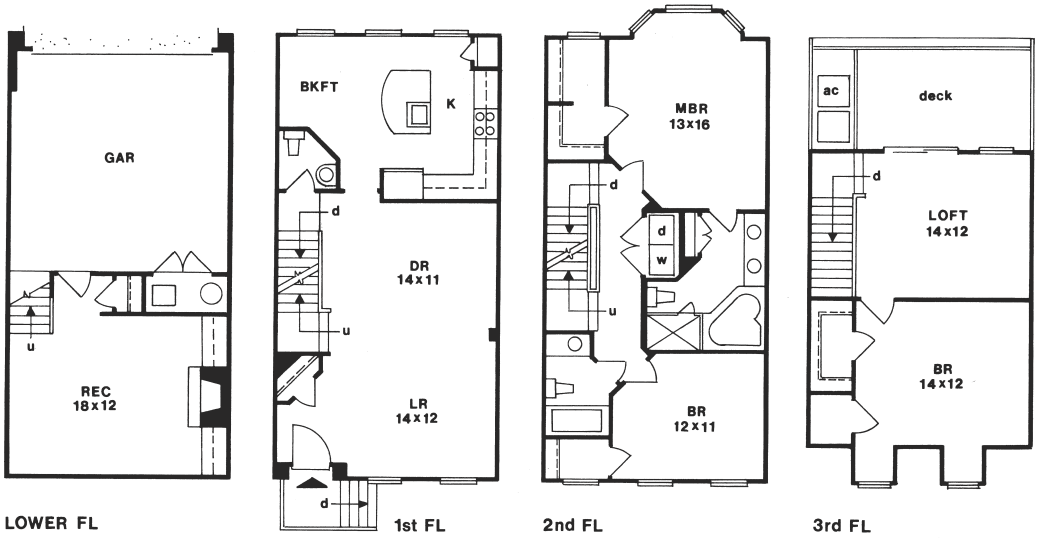


THE SITE PLAN FEATURES walkable, central courtyards. Elevations and color schemes for every lot were predetermined, so the final product matched what was presented at the beginning.



to a 20-foot-wide one next to a 24-foot-wide one. And there's a combination of brick and siding."

"There was a very high level of standard finish — hardwood floors on the main level and in all the baths," says Youngentob. "You could option cosmetic changes, different colors of granite, and some upgrade cabinet treatments."

But buyers had no choice when it came to the exterior.

"We predetermined all of the elevations, color schemes and materials for every single lot," says McLaurin. "In order to deliver the final product and the picture that we painted early on of what it was going to look like, we had to control the exteriors and the public façade.

Outcome

Chatham Square is sold out and settled. All the public housing units are occupied.

From a design standpoint, the project is a huge success. It was a finalist in the Urban Land Institute's Award of Excellence competition. The project won several local and national design awards, including *Professional Builder's* Best in American Living Award for Best Attached Urban Infill.

Many municipalities have also recognized Chatham Square as an example of how to successfully redevelop mixed-income housing.

"When you speak to some of the public housing residents," says Youngentob, "you see the impact on their lives — whether through the job training program (many are still employed by either subcontractors or other businesses in the area), or simply by providing quality housing in a neighborhood in which they can be proud to live." **PB**

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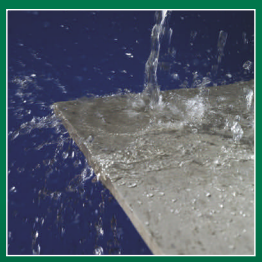

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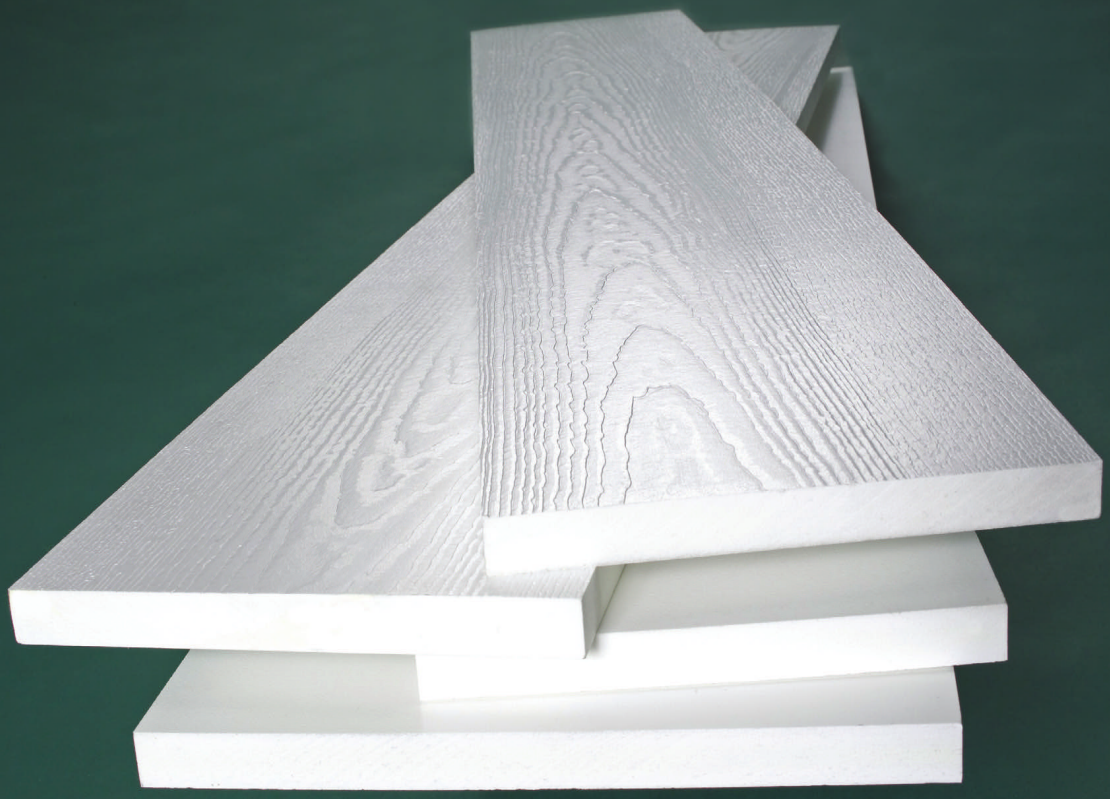

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>> **BY NICK BAJZEK, PRODUCTS EDITOR**

CFLs Are Shining Bright

Builders can use energy-efficient lighting solutions as part of their normal planning as well as a great selling point.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy say the average American household spends $1,400 a year on energy bills. With rising fossil fuel prices, maximizing energy efficiency in the home is one way builders can alleviate stress on our natural resources.

In fact, according to Energy Star, the government-backed rating system and organization for energy efficiency, if every household in the U.S. replaced one light bulb with a newer Energy Star-qualified compact fluorescent light bulb, it would prevent enough pollution to equal removing 1 million cars from the road. CFLs use 66 percent less energy than a standard incandescent bulb and last up to 10 times longer.

Let There Be Light

Unfortunately for many builders, lighting is often an afterthought in the design process and considered decor when more emphasis should be given to wiring considerations and lighting schemes. A lighting plan should include both the location and the specifications of fixtures and controls in the architectural plans. Decorative, task, focal and safety lighting should be addressed in the lighting plan and specifications, along with the ambient lighting prescribed in the codes.

What's Available?

One of the most exciting advances to emerge in the past few years is LED (light emitting diode) technology, new to the residential lighting scene. LED uses 90 percent less electricity than incandescents. Because of LED's long life and additional up-front cost, it should be used in heavy-traffic areas. But LED allows builders to get more creative, because an LED is about the same size as a Christmas-tree light.

The Latest Breakthroughs

Home networks for integrating lighting and heating schemes are a rapidly emerging technology. Firms such as Legrand, Lutron, CentraLite and Square D have come up with home automation systems that are the beginnings of true "smart" houses. Researchers at the University of California-Berkeley developed automated lighting, automated shades, Venetian blind systems, sensors and power measurement. With the University's software, homeowners can control their overhead lights and motorized blinds by internet.

The team is working with two ballast manufacturers who have already decided to use the university's technology to embed the ballast interface in a network connector to control lighting schemes remotely. Another firm would put the team's technology in occupancy sensors and daylight control photosensors.

Operating Cost Comparison

INCANDESCENT	CFL	LIFETIME SAVINGS
30/40 watt	11 watt	$17
50 watt	13 watt	$22
60 watt	15 watt	$28
75 watt	20 watt	$33
100 watt	25 watt	$51
120 watt	30 watt	$56

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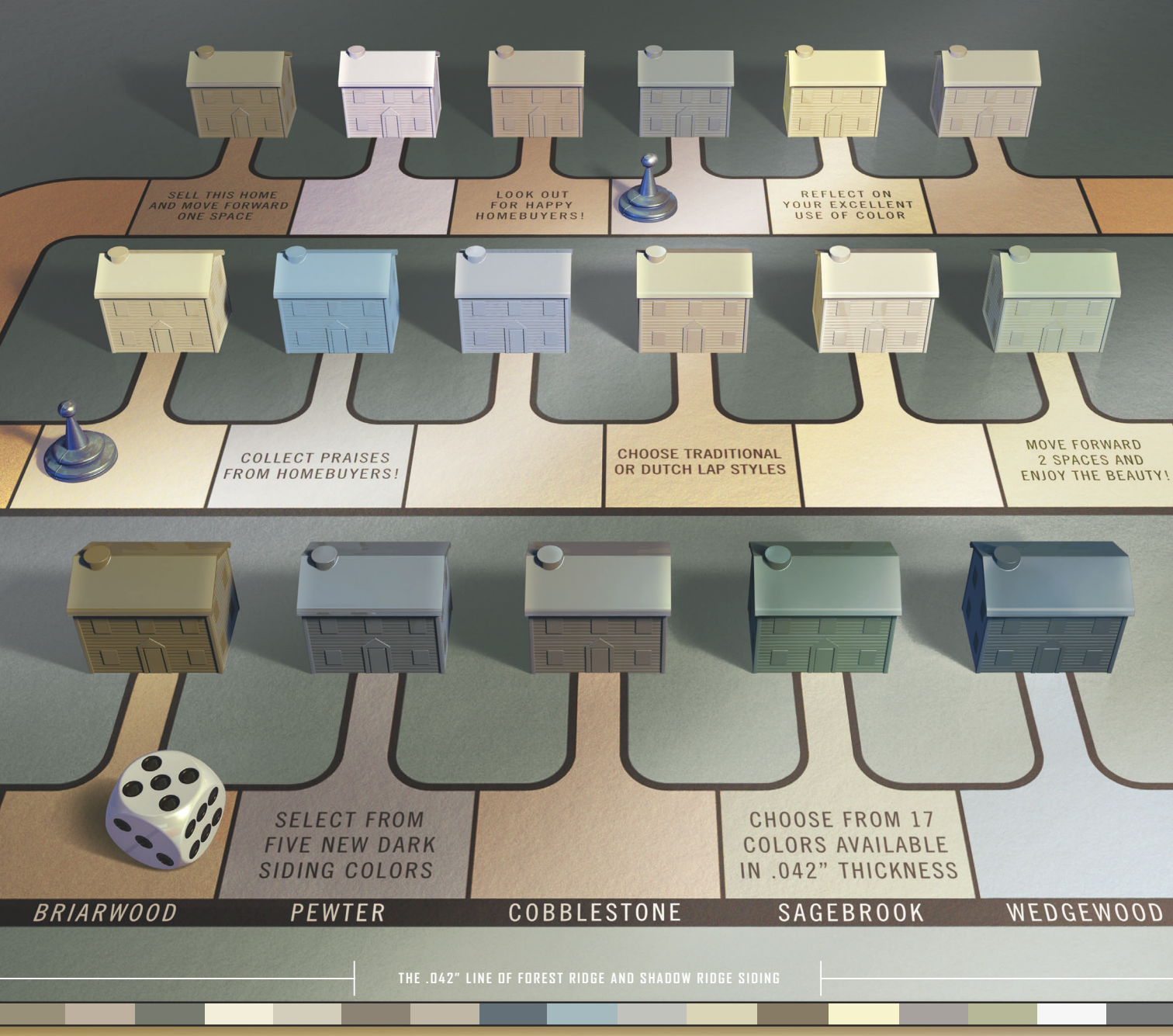

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>> BY **NICK BAJZEK,** *PRODUCTS EDITOR*

APPLICATIONS

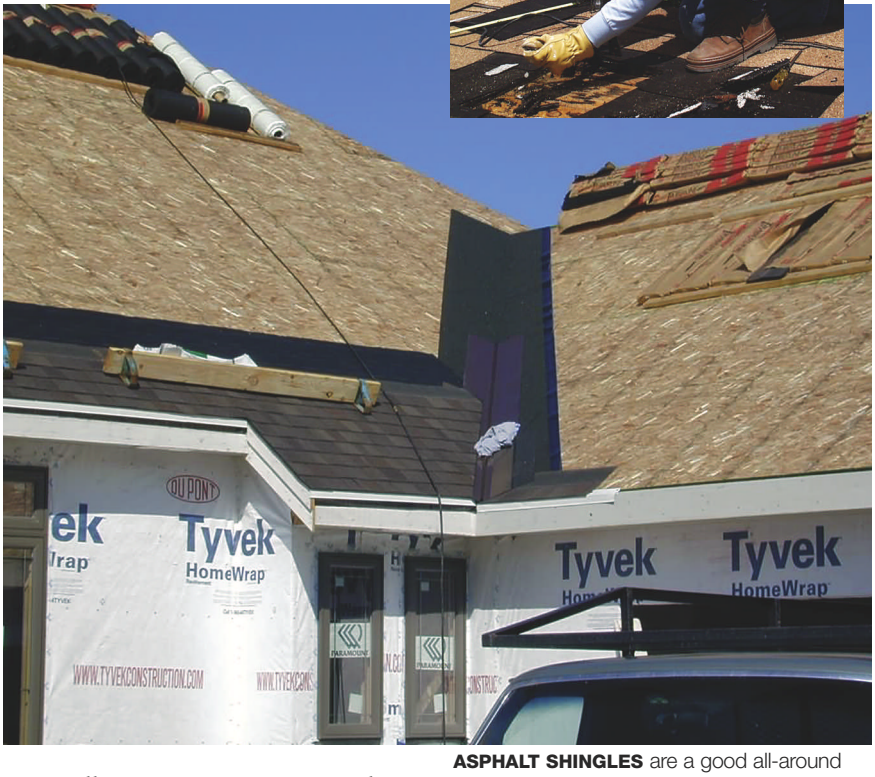
Choose the Right Roofing

Climate, slope and cost play a huge part in selection.

The first thing a real-estate agent will tell home buyers is "location, location, location." Location should be the first thing on a builder's mind, too, when it comes to choosing the correct roofing materials.

Builders need to look no further than last years' devastating hurricanes to see they must prepare for the elements -- and a home's first line of defense is a solid roof. Builders must find a balance between cost-effectiveness and functionality. Spanish tiles are lovely, but they're not going to put up much of a fight against a Category 4 hurricane or a Kansas twister. On the other hand, a shingled roof with a low slope isn't going to stand up well in mountainous areas after the first big snow.

According to the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing, builders should take several steps to prevent a roof from failing, especially in hurricane-prone areas. PATH recommends moderately pitched hipped rather than gabled roofs to better withstand strong winds, hurricane straps, baffled ridges and soffit vents, among other precautions, to minimize roof penetrations and water damage.



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ASPHALT SHINGLES are a good all-around performer, but they may not be the best choice in all cases.

Shingled Out

Builders will call asphalt shingles the most popular type of residential roof material for several reasons. "We use composition asphalt shingles. They are just less expensive to us and last long. You get more for your money," says Richard Huffman, president of Huffman Homes in Austin, Texas.

Asphalt shingles are relatively inexpensive and can be bought in large quantities. They are generally very easy to install, even in situations involving steep slopes and inclement weather. They come in two basic types, glass fiber and organic; are available in a variety of colors and styles; and are fairly durable and impact-resistant. Homeowners can maintain and repair the shingles in most situations.

Organic shingles, saturated with asphalt to make them waterproof, have approximately 40 percent more asphalt per square foot than their glass fiber counterparts, which makes them more durable. However, the more popular variety is the glass fiber, which uses asphalt and mineral fillers, making them cheaper and easier to manufacture than organic shingles and more cost-effective to builders.

Asphalt does have serious drawbacks. The lifespan of asphalt shingles depends highly upon the environment. Shingles in cooler climates such as the

northern United States seem to last longer than those installed in the warmer climates. Thermal shock, or rapidly changing ambient temperatures (like hot days and cold nights in the Southwestern U.S.) greatly affect the lifespan of asphalt roofs. The materials can't expand and contract to accommodate such a dramatic temperature change in such a short period of time, and cracks and splits are bound to occur, allowing water to seep in. Many roofing contractors and consultants that use asphalt advocate steeply-sloped roofs to shed water and reduce the possibility of water damage. "Asphalt is great, but it's just not amenable to rainwater," Huffman adds.

Still another factor affecting asphalt shingle roofs is attic ventilation. Proper roof ventilation extends the life of the roof and helps maintain heating and cooling costs. That's where tiles, such as Spanish-style, metal, clay and wood or wood-substitute shakes come in because they allow ventilation.

Especially popular recently are cedar shake roofs, which have twice the insulating value of standard asphalt shingles. Hail does not easily damage cedar shakes. When treated with certain chemicals, cedar shakes can be made permanently fire resistant. And unlike popular misconceptions, (especially with home buyers) when installed properly, they are extremely wind resistant.

Cedar shake roofs do require regular maintenance to maximize their useful life. Particularly harmful are sunlight and rainfall. Cedar shakes are treated with chemicals called extractives to preserve the wood and prevent mold and fungus. However, rainfall can leach these chemicals from the cedar shakes in less than 10 years.

UV rays actually cause the surface cells of the cedar to break down. This microscopic refuse is washed away with each rainfall. UV rays also cause very tiny cracks to develop, which allow water to drive deeper into the shakes. This accelerates the process of dissolving the extractive chemicals. To keep shakes from breaking down, they must be free of moss, fungus and tree debris. This often means calling a tree company to cut away branches from over the roof to provide proper air circulation.

Because of the relatively hefty introductory cost of real cedar shakes, many roofing manufacturers such as CertainTeed, Alcoa and Napco make materials that look like the real thing.

Stick With a Performer?

Though they represent a huge share in the game, shingles and shakes aren't the only players. While cedar shakes have become in vogue, the old-fashioned built-up roof is still sticking around. Built-up roofing — first known as composition roofing when it became popular back in the 1840s — is still one of the most reliable methods of installing a new roof. A built-up roof usually comprises either asphalt or tar and has a waterproofing layer, a reinforcing material and then a surfacing layer.

The materials used in a built-up roof generally consist of bitumen-saturated felt, coated felt, polyester felt or other fabrics. The materials facing the elements are normally asphalt-based, aggregates (gravel or slag), emulsions or a granule-surfaced cap sheet. Builders differ on what techniques are most effective, but geography and personal preferences normally dictate which materials will be used in the process. The base sheets are generally asphalt-based and either organic or glass fiber. Though they have been used for generations and are sturdy, durable and effective, built-up roofs have high amounts of odor and are more time consuming to put together than asphalt shingles.

Do you go with a good all-around performer such as asphalt tiles, use a hardy built-up roof or step it up with cedar? Weigh your options carefully. Though they aren't the only things to consider, never forget the big three: climate, slope and cost. **PB**

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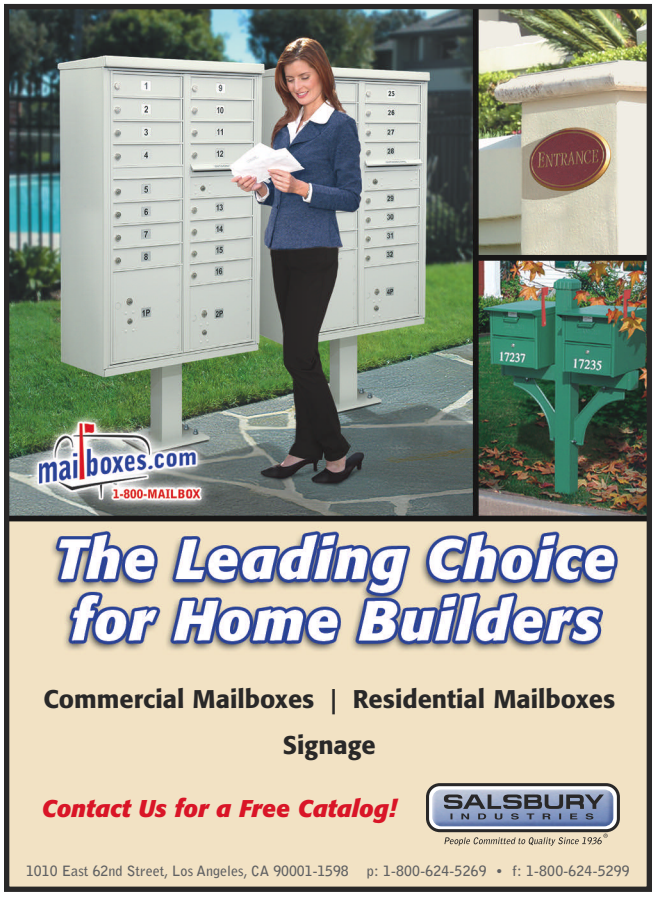

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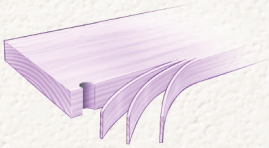
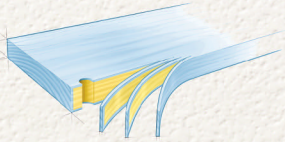


AuraLast® Wood

A unique vacuum/pressure process provides virtually 100 percent penetration of the protective ingredients from the surface to the core.



Dip-Treated Wood

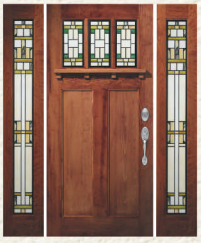
Dip-treated wood is only protected on the surface.

Colors are used for illustration purposes only. AuraLast wood has a clear pine color.

Throw everything you know about wood out the window.

Exterior Premium Pine Door 1863AP

Wood Radius Casement Window



Exterior Premium Pine Door 1871AP

Wood Double-Hung Window

AuraLast THE WORRY-FREE WOOD

20 YEAR WARRANTY

JELD-WEN® windows and doors with AuraLast® wood will stay beautiful and worry-free for years. AuraLast wood provides superior protection against decay, water absorption and termite infestation. Unlike dip-treated wood, AuraLast wood is protected to the core and comes with an exclusive 20-year warranty. That's added protection for any building project. To learn more about AuraLast wood and all our reliable windows and doors, call **1.800.877.9482** ext. **1014**, or go to **www.jeld-wen.com/1014**.

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BUCKLE UP

>> BY **SCOTT T. SHEPHERD,** *PATH PARTNERS*

TYPICAL CONSTRUCTION WASTE ESTIMATES FOR A 2,000-SQUARE-FOOT HOME

Material	Weight (in pounds)	Volume (in cubic yards)*
Solid Sawn Wood	1,600	6
Engineered Wood	1,400	5
Drywall	2,000	6
Cardboard (OCC)	600	20
Metals	150	1
Vinyl (PVC)**	150	1
Masonry***	1,000	1
Hazardous Materials	50	-
Other	1,050	11
Total	8,000	50

*Volumes are highly variable due to compressibility and captured air space in waste materials.
**Assuming three sides of exterior clad in vinyl siding
***Assuming a brick veneer on the home's front facade
Sources: NAHB Research Center; Toolbase.org

PATH REPORT

From Trash to Treasure

Managing waste can be a good investment.

For some builders, job site waste is an afterthought. Many just rent the dumpster, throw the waste in and forget about it.

The NAHB Research Center reports that the average builder pays $511 per house for waste disposal. The average construction job site is also reported to dispose of more than 8,000 pounds of material, or the equivalent of 50 cubic yards in volume (see table).

Know Your Garbage

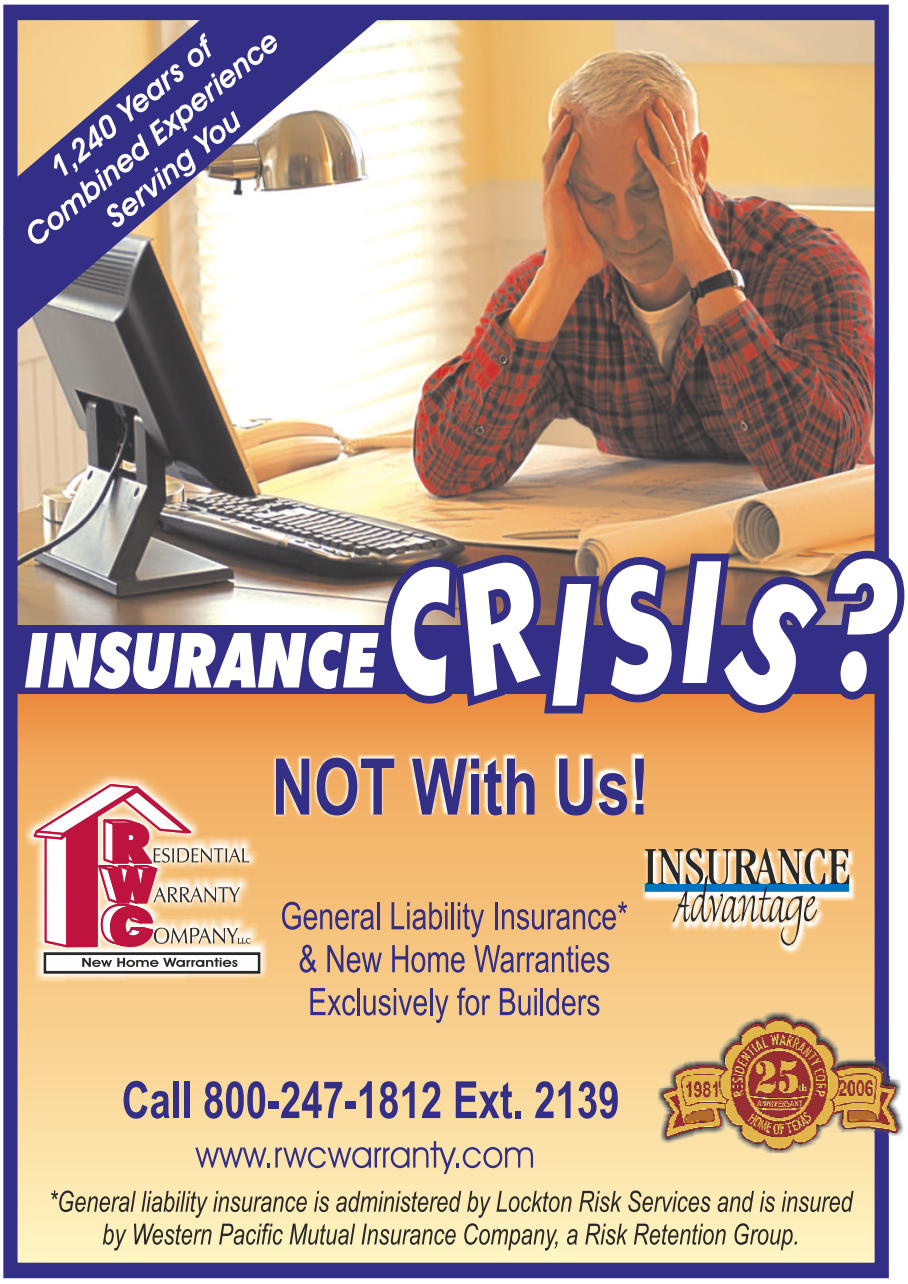
To understand the amount and type of waste your job sites generate, start by taking a good look in your dumpsters. By routinely reviewing your waste stream, you can spot which materials your crews could be using more efficiently.

Wood accounts for 40 to 50 percent of residential construction waste. It also offers the most opportunities to reduce material waste and reuse the materials you previously threw away. Wood can be recycled for mulch and used in composting operations, animal bedding, landfill cover, some building products and as an industrial fuel source. In some instances, it may be less expensive for you to recycle wood than throw it away.

For many of these applications, the adhesive content of engineered wood products such as plywood, oriented strand board (OSB), or wood I-beams are a concern. Up to 50 percent of wood waste can be engineered wood product waste, so you need to ask local wood waste processors if they can take this type of wood off your hands. Wood treated to resist termites or moisture must also be handled and processed separately.

Drywall comprises another 15 percent of site waste. Ninety-five percent of new construction drywall waste can be recovered and turned into new wall-

board, according to the Washington State Department of Ecology. As a result, an increasing number of drywall manufacturers are installing technology for recycling. You will need to contact your drywall manufacturer to learn the recycling options available to you, but the onus will likely be on you to transport the gypsum to a recycling center or directly to the manufacturer. You also have the option to donate the drywall to a nonprofit recycling operation.



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Grinding It Out

Delany Rossetti Construction of Atlanta used ground up wood, drywall, cement and stone on a recent landscaping project.

"It's probably costing us a little less," says Jerome Rossetti, co-owner of Delany Rossetti. "It's a little bit more labor and you are renting the grinders, but you're going to pay even more for the dumpsters and hauling."

Before you start grinding material for landscaping, you will want to check with local authorities. Some require evidence that the soil and water will not be harmed. However, this is not necessarily an excessive burden. Some local environmental agencies may only ask for plans that the material will be pulverized into pieces that are a ½ square inch or smaller and spread evenly over soil in areas with adequate drainage.

To make small pieces, a low-speed, low-noise, mobile grinding unit is best suited for on-site service. In some areas, you can rent these units for as little as $50 per day, depending on the size of the unit and the amount and type of material you will grind.

You may also use the grinder on cardboard waste in this manner, which could significantly reduce your waste volume. Although cardboard may not contribute much to the weight, it can represent as much as 30 percent of the total volume.

Besides potential financial savings, this may help you receive green certifications on the property, including the developing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Homes certification through the U.S. Green Building Council.

Helping Hands

Sometimes, the best option is professional recyclers. John Rimondi, owner of Crestco, offers on-site recycling and

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environmental services to builders in the Atlanta area.

Construction waste recycling management companies can turn framing package waste into mulch; gypsum powder can be ground into a soil amendment; and bricks and blocks can be used as fill in driveways or as decorative rock.

Through regular visits, the waste recycling and management company reduces day-to-day waste on-site and improves its overall appearance. This has greater significance in high-density, infill situations where builders deal with close neighbors and tight-knit communities.

The cost of these services varies greatly depending on the community, but it's worth your time to check it out and see if recycling is a cost-effective alternative for you.

For help assessing potential recycling costs and finding local professionals and resources, contact:

- Your local waste haulers; recyclers; building product manufacturers; landfill operators and owners; and solid waste officials
- Your local home builder association
- Your local green building program

Use Not, Waste Not

The best way to manage your construction waste is to use less material up front. Panelized components, structural insulated panels and modular systems all generate less waste because they're prefabricated.

With stick framing, you can reduce waste through optimum value engineering, an approach to framing that optimizes the amount of lumber used. In addition to saving materials, OVE techniques reduce labor costs and improve the structure's energy performance. **PB**

The Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Recycling Resource

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Construction and Demolition Debris Web page (www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/debris-new/index.htm) includes a list of state and regional waste management programs.

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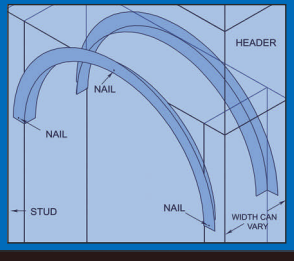

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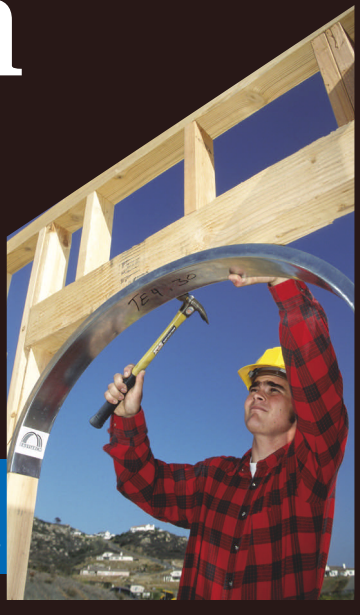

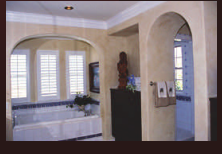

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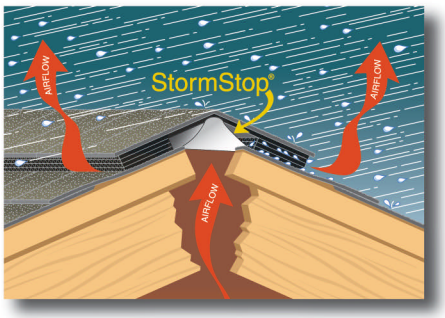
Trimline® Ridge Vents Set Users Apart from Competition

Quality Performance, Great Appearance and Quick Installation

Trimline® Ridge Vents provide superior ventilation by creating a balanced system that continuously releases hot, moist attic air while drawing fresh air through soffit vents. Creating a balanced, continuous ventilation system increases a home's total energy-efficiency while extending the life expectancy of its roof material – a great selling point for your customers.



Engineered from a unique corrugated plastic material, Trimline vents fit a variety of roof styles including shingle, cedar, tile and metal. Designed to vent at the ridge – the hottest point of the roof – the Trimline vent system has the added benefit of creating a smooth roofline, eliminating the unsightly louver vents commonly found on many homes.

Pat Woods from Cooper Mountain Roofing uses Trimline Ridge Vents on new construction homes.

Once a Builder Tries Trimline, They Never Stop Using It

Pat Woods, president of Cooper Mountain Roofing Inc in the Portland, Ore. area says Trimline's low profile originally attracted his team to the ridge vent system. "But we continue using Trimline because of the ease of installation." Cooper Mountain Roofing considers Trimline Ridge Vent a competitive advantage over other ridge vents. Woods says, "Roofing contractors have become more sophisticated in their presentations and adding Trimline Ridge Vents to the lineup can separate us from our competitors."

Trimline Adds Value to the Home

Woods says today's homes are being built tighter than ever. The installation of proper ventilation is critical to prevent damaging moisture build-up in the attic. Trimline Ridge Vents, placed at the roof's ridgeline, help move hot, moist air out of the attic. The builders who work with Woods know that Trimline Ridge Vents protect the owner's investment in the home and add value to the entire house.

Trimline is so confident that builders everywhere will be satisfied with its ridge vents; it offers a limited lifetime warranty. Trimline is the most certified product in the industry, meeting all building code certification requirements for Miami-Dade County, ICBO, ICC, BOCA, TDI, and UL Class A or C.

Location:
Portland, Oregon

Roofing Contractor:
Cooper Mountain Roofing Inc. uses Trimline Ridge Vents on new construction projects for Lone Mountain and Cascade Housing Group

Builder:
Lone Mountain Construction and Cascade Housing Group

Product Used:
Trimline Ridge Vent

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The most impressionable art is behind the wall

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New Urban Communities

Carol Delonis
Purchasing Manager,
Delray Beach, Fla.

Toto Washlet C100 Toilet

www.totousa.com

Toto was the first to reinvent the humble toilet seat with its line of Washlets — the high-tech personal hygiene systems inspired by water. In the U.S., Toto offers four models of Washlets, including the introductory Washlet C100 (former marketing name, "Chloe"). Toto's line of Washlets transforms an ordinary toilet into a warm-water personal cleansing unit, reconfiguring the ordinary bathroom into a luxurious home spa. ***Circle 125 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-125***

In My Own Words

"When we start talking toilets, Toto reigns supreme. Once you have used a Toto, you'll never go back. At first glance, our customers appreciate the style and grace of a Toto toilet. Once they use it, Toto's superiority in the business shines. No other toilet flushes like a Toto. I have heard of customers moving on to a different home and commenting on how they miss their Toto toilets."

Hambro Composite Floor System

www.hambro.ws

The Hambro D500 composite floor system is an advanced, up-to-date answer to elevated, concrete-floor construction. Combining Hambro composite steel joists with poured concrete, the system comprises normal-weight, concrete/steel T-beams running in one direction and an integrated, continuous slab in the opposite direction. ***Circle 126 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-126***

In My Own Words

"To provide a spacious yet dense community, we build many three-story townhouses with Hambro composite floor systems exclusively. These townhouses are three floors of block construction with steel-reinforced concrete decking in between. Many Florida block homes use CBX construction (concrete block construction) only on the first floor. We feel that would be dishonest to our customers. If you are buying CBX construction, it should be in its entirety."

>>New Urban Communities cont'd

▼ Vulkem Sealant by Tremco

www.tremcosealants.com

Vulkem 116 Weatherproofing Sealant is a one-part moisture-curing, gun-grade polyurethane sealant. Durable and flexible, this general-purpose sealant is designed for both exterior and interior use in precast, masonry and window frame perimeters and similar types of moving construction joints. It withstands continual immersion in water. ***Circle 127 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-127***

In My Own Words

"Effective waterproofing is an important step to a quality, long-lasting house. The correct window caulking helps prevent water from damaging the substrate and entering the structure. All of our window and painting contracts require Vulkem Weatherproofing Sealant — no exceptions. Once this product is properly applied, we know that window is not going to leak, and we will not have to go back and recaulk after closing."

▲ Galvalume Roofing

www.galvalume.com

Galvalume by BIEC International is a 55 percent aluminum- and zinc-coated, sheet steel product that is ideally suited for most types of roofing applications. Galvalume offers versatility, aesthetics and long-term performance, and it's easy to use. ***Circle 129 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-129***

In My Own Words

"Galvalume sheet is a premium roofing material that can outlast galvanized sheet up to nine times. I think that we are all looking to become greener builders whenever it is feasible, and steel roofing is a step in that direction for us. Architecturally, bare steel roofing has a clean, industrial look that our customers seem to enjoy. Galvalume sheet also has good heat and sunlight reflectivity, which reduces cooling costs — a huge plus in South Florida."

▶ Mohawk Bamboo Flooring

www.mohawkflooring.com

Mohawk offers a vast assortment of hardwood flooring, and Pacific Bamboo is one of the styles in its American Heritage collection. Featuring a distinctive grain and exceptional hardness, this exotic hardwood product has all the beauty of bamboo. Pacific Bamboo is available in two popular colors with a 25-year finish warranty along with lifetime warranties for structure and moisture. ***Circle 128 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-128***

In My Own Words

"Although our included features are carpet and tile, we offer Mohawk bamboo flooring as an upgrade. We work with a very progressive flooring distributor who shares our value of environmentally friendly materials. As more consumers are looking for greener products, we are excited that we can offer them bamboo flooring. It is as hard as oak but regenerates itself in only five years. It is truly one of our most exquisite options."

www.masonite.com

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GPS

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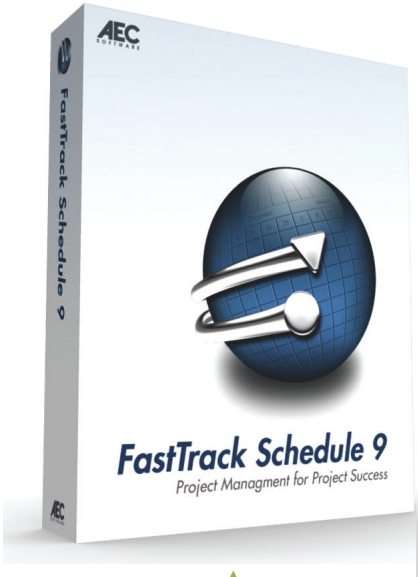
>> BY **NICK BAJZEK,** *BUILDINGPRODUCTS@REEDBUSINESS.COM*

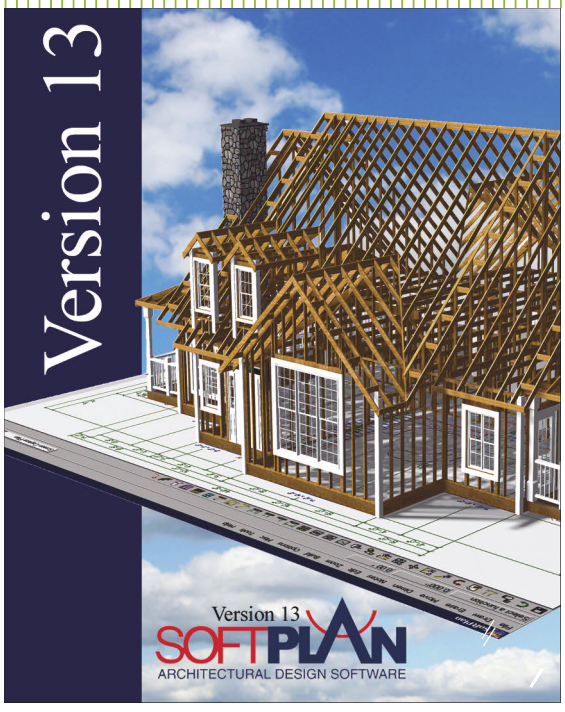
Business Solutions



AEC Software

Project management software FastTrack Schedule 9 from AEC Software enables users to schedule and report project information and goals. The redesigned interface can be directly integrated with Microsoft Project on both PCs and Macs. Cash flow and cost outlays can be predicted, and the software can track up to 25 home projects at one time, including the status of subcontractors.

Circle 131 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-131



Softplan

Version 13 from Softplan is a building tool that allows architects and designers to fabricate a mock-up with building options such as adding false dormers, auto cabinet, room mode and sun studies, which measure the effects of sunlight and shadow on any given room. The Building Option feature allows management of bonus rooms, alternate bathroom plans and other variables. The Background Extraction tool allows the software to automatically update the 3-D model as the user makes changes during the design stages.

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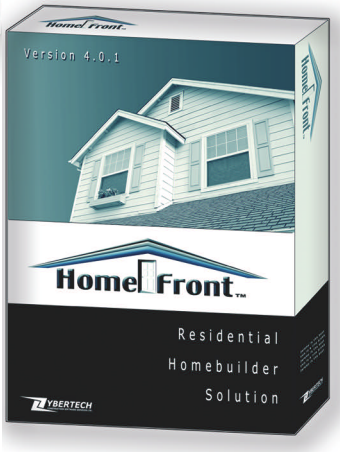

Zybertech

The HomeFront sales management system from Zybertech is a cross-department tracking software that keeps centralized price books of models and options as well as sales and documentation processes available for viewing in Microsoft Word and Crystal Reports. The secure software allows shoppers to see lot, model and option information, and partners can view the customer-chosen options and upgrades. The inbox/outbox allows managers to review the sales history of a home or see outstanding service orders.

Circle 132 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-132

Tech Ed Concepts

Able to make plan sets and blueprints, cost estimates and 3-D interior design models, Chief Architect Version 10 creates detailed floor plans, elevation views and cross-sections. The system has more than 18,000 library items, including CAD details and other elements from name-brand manufacturers. Cost estimating is done with the software's automatic material list generator, and basic design plans can be created with the automatic framing and roof generation tools

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Pivotal

The 5.9 CRM platform from Pivotal is a Blackberry-capable tool for sales teams. The Call Scripting function allows customer interactions to be automated, and the mobile capabilities allow sales teams to upload critical financial services, real-estate, legal and manufacturing data, as well as receive sales reports, dealer information, and branch and representative data in real-time.

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Builder Vision

Client Website

BuilderVision

Automated sales tool BuilderVision allows builders and customers to view exteriors, floor plans and material choices before the sale is closed. The software is a subscription service that also interfaces with the builder's personal Web site. The Image-Mapper tool lets the builder load their own images and the software's other functions permits sales teams, customers and accounting to track personalized selections such as countertops and floor tiles.

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Builder 1440

The Builder 1440 software includes a suite of applications like Sales 1440, which is an on-demand CRM tool that manages the sales process from the first Web site visit to home configuration, lot and floor plan selection, and contract generation. The SiteAuthor maintains the builder's Web site with inventory and pricing information for Internet marketing. Floor plans, photos and pricing can be instantly modified with the user-friendly interface. The G.1440 application provides IT consulting.

Circle 139 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-139

Corrigo

Warranty management software from Corrigo streamlines information flow with at-a-glance calendar-like views, dispatch boards and service management dashboards. The Mobile Manager function allows builders to remotely view and assign work orders and workloads. The software is Bluetooth-enabled, is compatible with Sprint, Verizon and Cingular wireless services and encrypting capabilities. The report generator provides users with hyperlinks, charts and graphs.

Circle 136 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-136

HomeSphere®
The Building Universe

HomeSphere

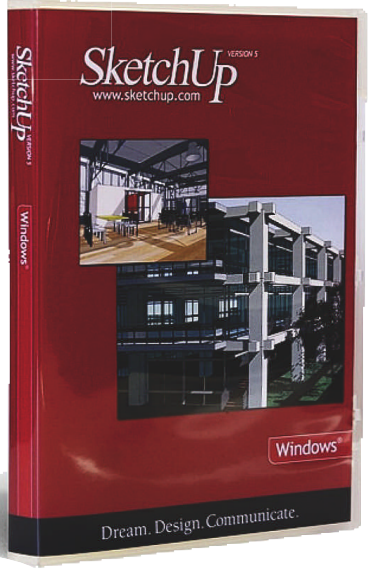
The Builder 360 version 3.29.1 from HomeSphere and Focus 360 is built on Microsoft's .NET architecture and tracks back-office procedures such as purchase orders and payroll tasks. As an integrated system, the software incorporates all data and acts as a repository to help plan and support intersecting options and replacement scenarios. It can be used in conjunction with other Focus 360 products such as the Virtual Model system.

Circle 137 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-137

@Last Software

Design tool SketchUp Pro5 from @Last Software is a 3-D architectural tool flexible enough for conceptual work. The software is interchangeable with CAD, 3-D modeling, illustration and animation applications. The push/pull tool enables users to click on a shape and change it to create the desired geometry. The rendering function softens drawings with effects like jitter lines, extended edges and dynamic profiles. Other elements, such as the surface area of materials, are available for quantity management and cost estimates. Users can also import a DWG/DXF site plan as a starting point for design, work up a quick model, then export back to DWG/DXF to create construction documents.

Circle 138 or go to http://pb.ims.ca/5212-138



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Our keynote speakers will address the essential success elements of leadership and team-building, providing the framework for executing the details. Then our nationally recognized builders will delve into six areas that are essential to develop for your company's future success: Leadership, Strategic Planning, Human Resources, Trade Relations, Performance Management and Construction Quality

Tuesday, September 26

12:00 – 5:00
Housing Tour - Mountain Edge Community

12:00 – 5:00
Golf Outing - Reflection Bay Golf Course

6:00 – 8:00
Welcome Cocktail Reception

Wednesday, September 27

8:00 – 9:30
Keynote on Leadership – Patrick Lencioni

Patrick Lencioni is the founder and president of The Table Group Inc., a specialized management-consulting firm focused on executive team-building and organizational health. He has been described by the One-Minute Manager's Ken Blanchard as "fast defining the next generation of business thinkers." Pat's passion for organizations and teams is reflected in his writing, speaking and consulting. He is the author of five business books, including *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, which was on the New York Times Best Sellers list. His new book, *Silos, Politics and Turf Wars*, came out in March 2006. Pat consults executives and speaks to world class organizations, addressing thousands of leaders. Prior to founding his firm, Pat worked for Sybase, Oracle and Bain & Company. He also served on the National Board of Directors for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America from 2000-2003.

9:45 – 11:00
Real-Estate Market Update – John Burns, President, John Burns Real Estate Consulting
GIANTS magazine columnist John Burns provides unique insight to the real-estate market. He will share the trends, opportunities and threats facing home builders in an increasingly difficult market.

11:00 – 11:45
Building Material Market Update – Barry Rutenberg, President, Barry Rutenberg and Associates
Barry Rutenberg has been a leading voice in understanding the impact building material issues have on builders. He will share his timely information on regulations, tariffs and other events affecting product supply.

DETAILS

1:15 – 1:45
Leadership – Larry Webb, CEO, John Laing Homes
Establishing a culture of leadership in a company requires inspired direction and a strong plan. Hear from a recognized industry leader on successful methods for developing true leaders in your organization.

1:45 – 2:15
Strategic Planning – Mark Hodges, Senior Vice President, Corporate Operations, Hovnanian Enterprises
Leadership translated into action only comes from strategic planning. The future of Hovnanian Enterprises has been mapped by a clear plan. Learn about the methodology for strategic planning executed by one of the largest, most aggressive builders in the country.

2:15 – 2:45
Human Resources – Mark Upton, Executive Vice President – Western Region, Technical Olympic USA
The engine at the center of any successful home building company is fueled by quality employees. Technical Olympic's focus on supporting quality people with best practices points to the clear connection between recruitment/retention and superior operations.

3:00 – 5:00
Breakout Sessions – Leadership, Strategic Planning, Human Resources

6:00 – 10:00
NHQ Award Dinner

Thursday, September 28

8:00 – 9:30
Keynote on Performance – Keith Harrell

Known for his energetic, innovative presentations, Keith Harrell is a dynamic life coach who specializes in changing behaviors through a positive attitude. While growing up in Seattle, he aspired to become a professional basketball player. Although he never realized that dream, The Wall Street Journal says, "What sets him apart from less successful speakers is driving ambition and an attitude that refuses to flag." Through his company, Harrell Performance Systems, and his book, *Attitude is Everything: Ten Life Changing Steps to Turning Attitude into Action*, Keith specializes in helping companies achieve and maintain their goals. Harrell spent 14 years at IBM, where he was recognized as one of the top sales and training instructors. He is widely regarded as one of the country's best speakers.

9:45 – 11:45
Legendary Service at the Ritz
The Ritz-Carlton has earned a worldwide reputation for delivering customer services that set a standard for every business owner to emulate. How do they do it? Get the inside story on their methods to identify, hire, train and motivate employees to meet the demands of the most demanding customers.

11:45 – 1:15
NRS Satisfaction 1 Award Lunch

DETAILS

1:15 – 1:45
Trade Relations – Bryan Binney, Vice President of Operations, Shea Homes
Developing partners to support the future of your business is essential to mitigate the risk of home building. Trade partner relations mean sharing in each other's success. Executing that requires careful communication, attention to details and long-term commitments.

1:45 – 2:15
Performance Management – Bill Saint, CFO & Director, Simonini Builders
Every good company wants to improve performance. Establishing a foundation for performance management is essential. 2006 Builder of the Year Simonini Builders has created in-house methods that give the tools to its employees to meet enormous expectations from demanding clients.

2:15 – 2:45
Construction Quality – Charlie Scott, Executive Vice President, The Estridge Companies
Known for its superior customer service, The Estridge Companies starts the process through a program of superior construction quality. Learn the techniques this dynamic company uses to control, communicate and execute the craft of building every day.

3:00 – 5:00
Breakout Sessions – Trade Relations, Performance Management, Construction Quality

6:30 – 10:00
Networking outing – Nine Fine Irishmen Pub

Friday, September 29

9:00 – 12:00
Team-building Opportunities
After two days of hard work, bring your group together for fun and team-building exercises. Offered through the Ritz-Carlton, attendees will have access to hiking, biking, ATV riding and other outdoor activities in the beautiful Lake Las Vegas area. Also, take the opportunity to participate in team-building exercises such as a CSI Investigation or Building a Catapult.

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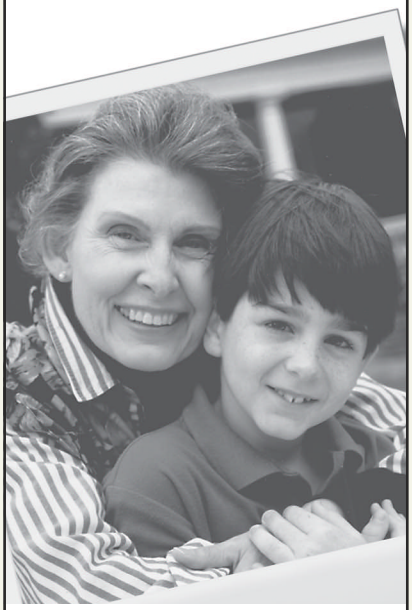

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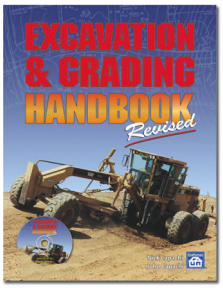

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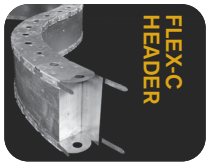

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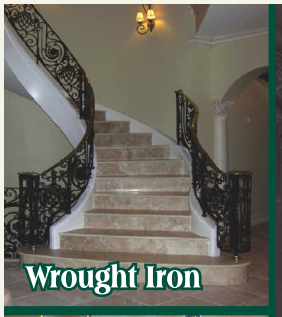

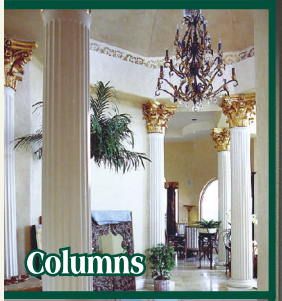

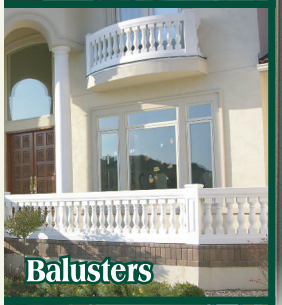

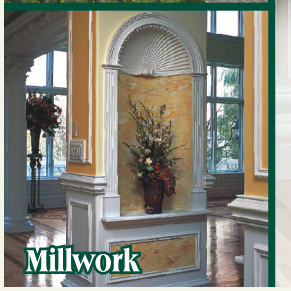

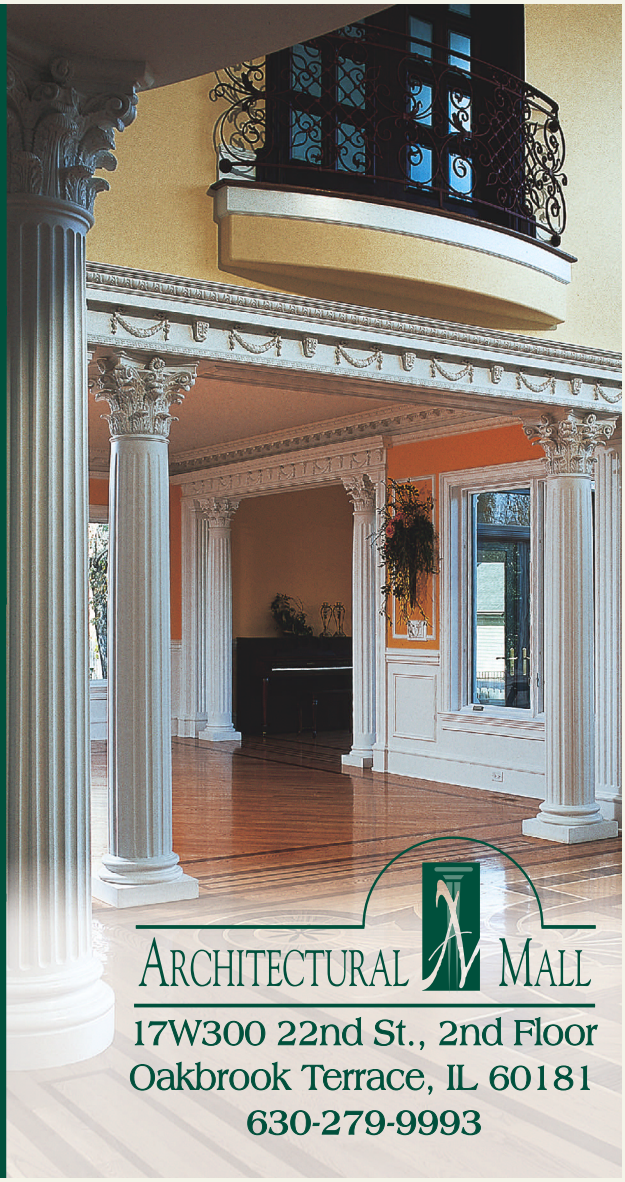

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Sell the Premium Upgrade that Doubles Your Gas Log Sales

Now Powered with Millivolt!

The First Electronic Damper for Gas Log Fireplaces

DESIGN FLEXIBILITY
With or Without Glass Doors or Panes

BUILDING CODE SOLUTION
Solves Open Damper Code Issues

ENERGY EFFICIENCY
Eliminates Drafts
Up to 30% Savings

Flue Sentinel tested and listed Electronic Damper for gas log fireplaces:

- Automatically opens just before gas logs ignite, automatically closes when logs are turned off
- Eliminates drafts, saves up to 30% on heating and air-conditioning
- Offers unlimited design options
- Removes the need for glass doors or panes
- Increases hearth size, enhances natural beauty
- Mounts at the top of the chimney
- Keeps entire flue at optimum temperature, facilitates proper airflow
- Easy to install
- One switch operation
- **Available in Millivolt & 24 VAC models**

What's New Is On The Flue!

Nearly all states mandate manual dampers be in the permanent open position or completely removed. ***That's like leaving a 48" window open year-round.***

FLUE SENTINEL

Go to: www.fluesentinel.com

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FINLANDIA Sauna

Since 1964, Finlandia Sauna has been nationally recognized as a manufacturer of Saunas without equal. We design and build custom, precut, and prefabricated rooms of any size and shape. Our pre-planning assistance and customer service is unmatched in the Sauna business.

Call 800-354-3342 for a free brochure or browse our web site www.finlandiasauna.com for complete information. Finlandia Sauna for your health!

Finlandia Sauna

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create a **watertight** shower

in less time with products from Noble Company

ProForm Niches and Curbs
Waterproof, lightweight and "tile ready".
Available in a variety of shapes & sizes.

PRO-SLOPE
Creates the slope required under the shower pan.

Chloraloy
Shower pan liner made from CPE. Guaranteed to last.

NobleSeal TS
Thin-set waterproofing for shower walls, drying areas, floors, etc.

Clamping Ring Drain
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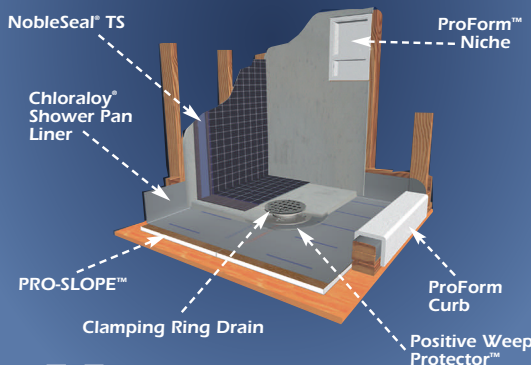

Noble Company

800-878-5788
www.noblecompany.com

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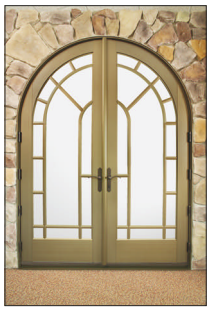
Weather Shield Rounds Out Door Offerings



Designed for those who refuse to compromise on design, Weather Shield® introduces the new aluminum-clad full radius hinged patio door. Unlike thin roll form cladding, the heavy-duty 060" extruded aluminum cladding on the frame and panels offers dent resistance. And the frames may be matched to the aluminum exterior panels in one of 55 standard and designer colors. Discover more at www.weathershield.com or call 1-800-477-6808.

Weather Shield Windows & Doors

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iLevel™ Trus Joist® TimberStrand® PSL

iLevel Trus Joist TimberStrand laminated strand lumber (LSL) is a high-quality engineered wood product available for a wide range of applications, including beams, rim board, treated sill plate, headers, columns and studs. Builders choose TimberStrand LSL because it is consistently strong, straight and true. www.iLevel.com; 1-888-iLevel8

iLevel by Weyerhaeuser

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Staron Quartz by Samsung

Staron Quartz by Samsung offers consumers beauty and functionality. Comprised of 93% natural quartz crystal, it provides durability and high scratch resistance. Unlike granite, Staron Quartz is non-porous and does not require sealing. The introductory line includes 14 colors ranging from warm neutrals to deep midnight blue and black. www.getstaron.com/qtzbld1; 1-800-795-7177 ext. 640

Samsung

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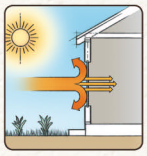
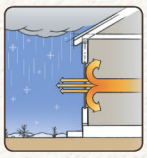
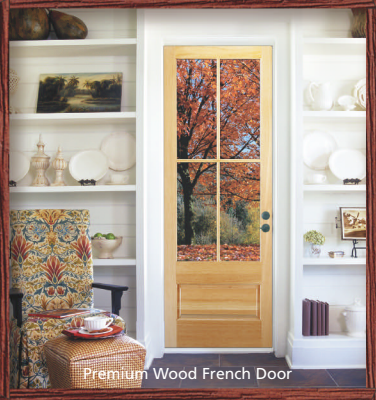


In warm weather, Low-E glass reflects the sun's energy and prevents it from entering the home.



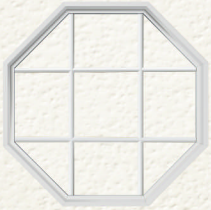
In cold weather, Low-E glass reduces the amount of heat loss by reflecting it back inside.

We were energy efficient before it was cool. Or hot.



Premium Wood French Door

Wood Casement Window



Vinyl Geometric Window

Courtyard Collection Steel Door

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