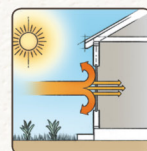


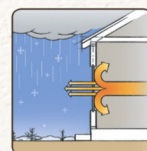
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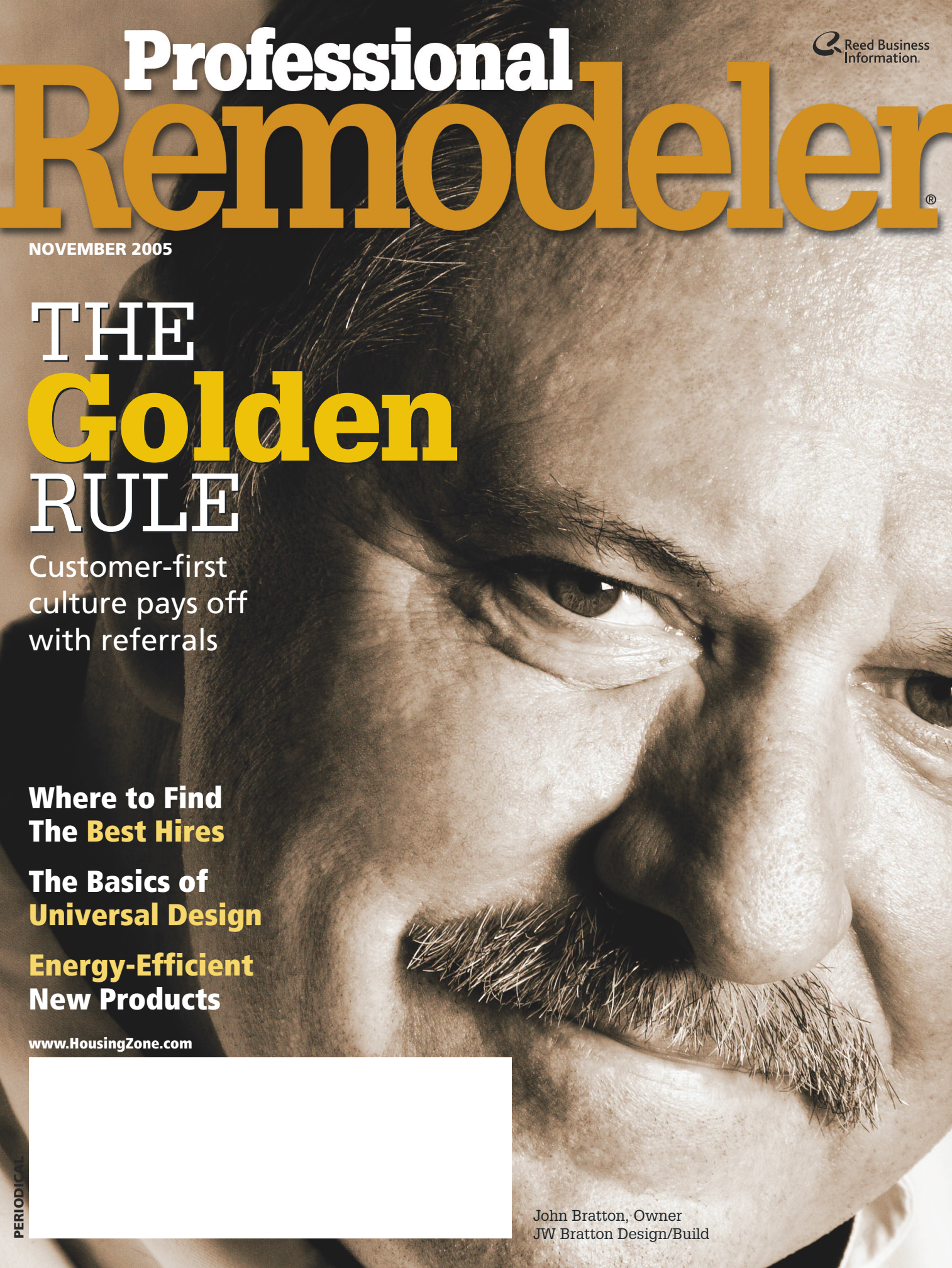
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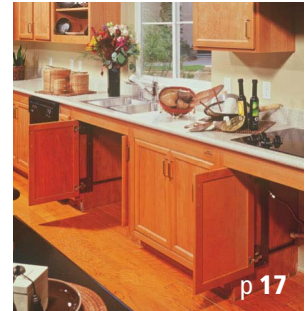
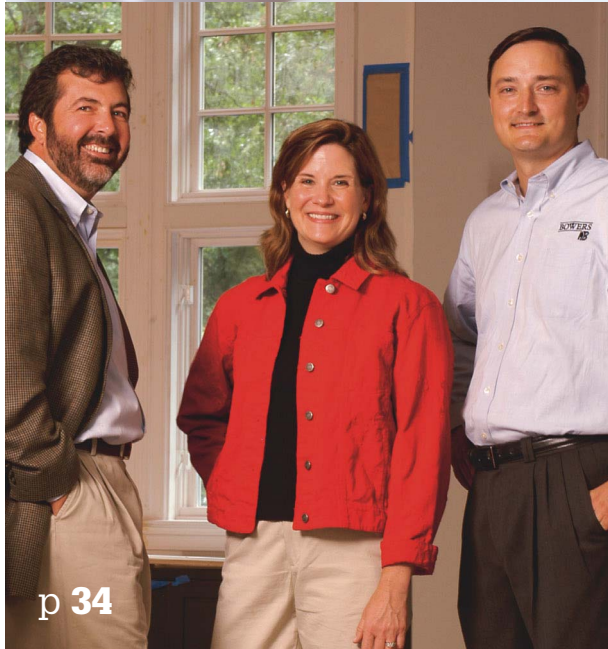
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COVER STORY:

John Bratton's company, JW Bratton Design/Build, won the 2005 NRS Customer Satisfaction Diamond Award (top). Bowers Design Build, run by owners Bruce and Wilma Bowers and vice president John Coburn (bottom), won the Excellence Award.

*Cover and top photo by Brian Smale
Bottom photo by William Geiger*



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Having a customer-first company culture helps remodelers provide great service and gain more referrals. *By Kimberly Sweet.*

best in class

Winners Offer Competitive Advantage p 43

Product makers strive to give remodelers what they want, but are they succeeding? *By Cheryl Dangel Cullen.*

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Getting the lead out

I'm not usually the type of person who worries until there's actually something tangible to worry about. When I started to investigate what all the fuss was about concerning the EPA's impending rule regarding lead-safe work practices, I was of the



Michael Morris

Editor in Chief

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opinion that this would probably end up being much ado about nothing.

It's still entirely possible that the net effect of what the EPA intends to impose on contractors in January or February will be minimal. But I've come to believe, after talking to NAHB policy analyst Gary Suskauer, that the EPA's ruling has potential to land a devastatingly costly blow to the industry.

And that's obviously why the NAHB Remodelers Council is in the early stages of putting together a study of remodeling jobs where lead particles are present in the air — to prove that the current voluntary lead-abatement practices are sufficient.

If the EPA does impose stricter rules regarding lead abatement to homes built prior to 1978 (which accounts for approximately 68 percent of the existing housing stock in the U.S.), it is estimated to cost the remodeling industry between \$2 billion and \$4 billion annually. That estimate, however, is six years old and is certain to be substantially higher now.

In relative terms, remodelers could end up being saddled with lead-abatement practices that would easily double

the cost of certain renovation jobs.

"I hesitate to give you a number off the top of my head, but from conversations we've had with other people, we're talking several hundred percent," says Suskauer. "It would depend upon the scope of the project, obviously. But from what we understand, it could be several times the cost of what the project would have been initially."

And that won't be a very palatable selling point to a potential client who wants to renovate their older home but also has the option of selling that home and moving into a newer one instead. That's where the impact on remodelers would be felt the most.

Which makes this study extremely important to you if your business is located in an area of the country with a lot of homes more than 30 years old.

It's not too late to get involved. Suskauer and Remodelers Council Executive Director Therese Crahan are currently looking for potential projects for the study, so contact them at 800/369-5242 if you think you've got a project that should be considered. Or to learn more about this issue online, log on to www.nahb.org. **PR**

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Leave No Stone Unturned

Great employees may be found in the unlikely places

Putting a help-wanted ad in the newspaper is one of the first ideas to come to mind when you need to fill an open position. So is asking employees, colleagues, subcontractors, suppliers and educators if they know any good prospects. Placing online ads at association and government Web sites has begun to pan out more often, too. Above all, say Craig Plekkenpol and Paul Bauscher, go about hiring the way you go about get-

ting new business — seek referrals constantly and keep the pipeline full.

Jud: *Craig, you got an opening out in the field — where are you going to go?*

Craig: Thirty years ago I could put an ad in the paper about a line long and I'd have 100 people at my door the next morning. That was a whole lot easier. Today we need to get deeply involved and be able to handpick people coming out of the trade schools in the spring and put them into a training program. It's an annual process for us for the most part.

We try to put in a new crop of apprentices in the spring. The trade school has a program where they start working Fridays in about February. So we get to try to test-drive them a couple of months before we put them on board. We have to plan for what our growth is going to be, what attrition's going to be, who might get promoted. You have to juggle all of those numbers early in the year so we know what kind of a crop of apprentices to put on.

Jud: *Paul, where are you going to go?*

Paul: The first place I go is to my existing guys because they tend to know a lot of people in the trades that might be worthwhile. Assuming that your existing employees are decent individuals, they probably associate with decent individuals. We've not had a lot of success with our local trade school.

As far as field employees go, we are always looking. That doesn't mean we always need someone. But I will look at and talk to almost every person who calls, every person who stops in, every person who fills out an application, because you just don't know where you're going to find that next great employee. Part of it depends on what the need is. Am I trying to hire a lead

carpenter? A journeyman? A laborer? Each approach is a little different.

We try not to hire a lead carpenter from outside our organization. We like to get guys at a helper level or maybe a journeyman level, where we can then indoctrinate them into our systems and how we like things done.

We've actually had good success with our local newspaper advertising. It's accepted in our area as the place to go to find a job. We've also gotten to the point where we don't want every person in the city to call us.

You have to be artful about the ad writing. Understanding what you need up front helps with that. We used to get 100 phone calls from ads. One day I just said, "Well, there's no way I can answer 100 phone calls." So we ran the same ad the following week and at the end we put, "Drug testing and background check required." We received something in the neighborhood of 27 calls.

Jud: *Reduced it real quick, didn't you?*

Paul: Yeah, it narrowed it down to the people we felt were serious about working for a company that was serious.

Craig: You said you didn't have much luck with trade schools. We participate in a number of programs. Some are high-school level programs where they bring kids along that might want to go into the construction trades as opposed to college. We spent many fruitless years approaching those avenues until we got our "in." It's not a simple task. We've had employees on advisory boards to all of the trade schools. We've been on committees through the Builders Association. We participate in planning sessions with the instructors at the school. We finally got to the point where it is now, where we look at it like it's the draft. We make first-round picks.



Craig Plekkenpol, President
Plekkenpol Builders Inc.

Founded in the early 1970s, Plekkenpol Builders is a design/build residential and commercial remodeling firm in Bloomington, Minn., near the Twin Cities. Employees include carpenters at multiple skill levels, designers and draftspeople, estimators, salespeople, project supervisors, and multiple office staff members.

Photo by Steve Woit



Jud Motsenbocker
Contributing Editor

Jud: *Craig, do you do anything with universities or colleges?*

Craig: We do, but that doesn't really provide us with a whole lot of field people. Once in a while it will.

Jud: *There's a place called Vincennes University in Indiana. They're turning out some very good students, and a lot of times those kids are willing to move. They go real quick, that's for sure.*

Paul: We have tried colleges, but that has had more limited success than the high schools. There's a program here that focuses on the last two years of high school. They take kids who have determined that they are probably not going to college. They can get their English and other credits and spend the rest of their time learning their trade in their last two years of high school.

Craig is probably correct in that it's a matter of being persistent. I've actually had the program director tell me, "You don't want my kids because all of the good ones are already taken and the rest of them are only here because they don't want to go to college."

Jud: *Have you had any luck with finding the one-man operation that's just tired of fighting and wants to give it up?*

Paul: One of our best sources for good hires has been people who are on their own: the one-man guy, or the two-man show working out of their truck. Those guys are good craftsman, have a little management skill and understand what it means to run a business, but they've decided that they are tired of working and bidding all night. We will send letters out to them that say, "Are you tired of working too much?" We have gotten calls back from those and actually hired people from that.

My two top lead carpenters both were in business for themselves.

They've worked out wonderfully for us. It's amazing how some of these young guys go out and work their tail off. All of a sudden they get married and have a baby and they realize the value of benefits. Suddenly they become very ripe pickings for good employees.

Craig: We have a few employees that have come down that road. Those people have been through the trenches and yes, there are benefits that come with that. But you have to be very careful not to take it for granted that because this guy has a lot of experience we don't have to put any investment into training. Our company has its own standards and processes. You have to plan for and implement that training.

Paul: We have an unwritten rule that a person has to work for us for a year before we trust them to take on any project where they are in charge to give us an opportunity to feel out their standards. We have to be sure that employee is somebody we trust with our client.

Jud: *Do you have job descriptions for these jobs out there in the field?*

Paul: We do, yes. We give that to people who apply so they are clear on what they are applying for. Another thing we do is use a behavioral survey, the McQuaig Word Survey. It tells us how people like to behave. It also lets us develop what kind of behavior traits a particular job is going to require. We use that in all positions whether administrative or sales or estimating or field. We've seen a huge drop in our turnover since we started using that to place the right people in the right place.

Jud: *Craig, you ever do any testing like that?*

Craig: I could pretty much say ditto. We've got ourselves structured in a different way. We have close to 20 different positions in the field, with different

job descriptions every step of the way. Defining those provides you with a road map to not only put the right people in the right job but then to mentor and train and counsel them.

Jud: *Have you seen subcontractors that you have brought into the employee ranks?*

Craig: Yeah, we have. For 30-something years we've been in the carpentry trade, but a few years back we started branching out into other trades. We took a couple of small subcontractors



Paul Bauscher, President
Bauscher Construction & Remodeling Inc.

Located in Loveland, Ohio, in the Cincinnati metro area, this 33-year-old firm does residential remodeling and some custom building. Bauscher employs in-house carpenters and a project manager as well as salespeople, but works with outside designers and architects.

Photo by O'Neil Arnold

and put them in as employees.

Paul: You still have to do all of the checking that you do on everyone else, but I think hiring subcontractors is probably a very good place to find good people.

Jud: *Did you find hiring subcontractors as employees to be successful?*

Paul: It works great for certain levels, if you're looking for someone who's more experienced and more adept at handling themselves independently.

The thing you have to be cautious with is that sometimes you get guys who have been busy, and all of a sudden they are not busy. We saw this after 9-11. There have been people who I've had in my office talking, and I can tell

to the conclusion, "Why are you beating yourself over the head trying to take care of insurance and this and that and the other thing on your evenings and weekends? Why don't you come over here and enjoy good wages and benefits and leave some of the headaches to somebody else?"

Jud: *What about a bonus program if an employee brings you somebody?*

Craig: We've got a recruiting bonus program here that probably is the most prevalent way of finding somebody at midyear. We started that back in the '90s when labor got really tight. Commercial was strong, new housing was going great guns, they had a couple of big storms go through the area, and

Job Corps? That's another group of people that we've found to be very successful. Have either one of you used headhunters?

Craig: We have from time to time, not so much for the field people. In real estate they say "location, location, location." In hiring, I would say "network, network, network." I guess headhunters are just another part of the network but we're not very high on them.

Paul: We have not used them, and I think I would ditto Craig's comment that we're just not very high on that.

Jud: *What's the position that's most difficult to fill?*

Paul: I'd have to say sales. When you are hiring people you are trying to duplicate your own values, morally and

We have a cash bonus based on someone getting hired, and then after a six-month time period in the company, that person gets another cash bonus.

that they are just looking for a place to stay for a month or two until that next job comes down the pike.

Jud: *Have either one of you had success going to a supplier?*

Paul: No. Not from the standpoint of a field operator. We are currently looking for someone to be a selections coordinator for us, and I can say that we are looking pretty hard at some of our plumbing suppliers and our lighting suppliers. They have inside salespeople who are very adept and know the products well.

Craig: We have never ever put a field person on that came through a supplier. We've tried that avenue but I never got anywhere with it.

I want to make a distinction in regards to hiring from the subcontractor ranks. It's always been a subcontractor who had done a lot of work for us in the past. We became their biggest account and had a good working relationship for a period of time and came

remodeling has gone full bore. If an employee brings in a candidate that's a successful hire, they get a cash bonus when that person's hired. And they get additional cash bonuses if they remain with the company for a period of time.

Paul: We started doing the same thing. That goes back to the first place we go is to our employees when we are looking for new help. We have a cash bonus based on someone actually getting hired, and then after a six-month time period in the company, that person gets another cash bonus.

Jud: *Cool. That's an interesting concept.*

Paul: During the first 90 days, we analyze if this new hire is going to stay or go, and of course the new hire is analyzing your company. It's not the old days where everybody was begging the corporate monsters to give them a job. Now it has to be a successful marriage. After six months we are pretty darn sure that person is fitting into the team.

Jud: *Have either one of you hired from the*

from a quality standpoint, a customer service standpoint and professionalism. A salesperson is that first representative of your company. It goes back to pride in your business. It's difficult to find people with the spit and polish for sales that also have the knowledge of construction and problem-solving abilities to be able to sell complicated projects.

Cincinnati is a conservative town and if you're a "salesperson," people don't like it. It's difficult to get someone who can sell without selling, if you will.

Jud: *Craig, where are you going to look for a salesman?*

Craig: First off, a traditional ad and online posting. We normally get a reasonable response rate out of that kind of thing. We're actively involved in every association you can think of where we network and get to know people. Just as importantly, they know us, so when there's an opening in our company, we've already made an impression and they'll come and apply.

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Jud: *Paul, where are you going to go?*

Paul: First, internally. In the past few years we've hired people in administration or the field with the intent of making them salespeople. What they are doing right now is getting the technical education they need to be able to sell the projects. They're people we feel have the education, professionalism, and the ability to manage relationships.

Second, we've done a little bit of advertising in our Homebuilders Association newsletter. That seems to be a decent place to find office staff quality people. And then you do the normal newspaper and online postings.

The happier your current employees are, the easier it is to find new ones

interviewed, and turned out to be a good person for the position. A lot of people might think, "If you don't see it in the newspaper, you're not going to see it online," but online you might catch that guy who's coming from another state or another community who's looking for a job in your area.

Jud: *I had that experience. I advertised in the newspaper. The state called me and asked if they could put my ad on their Web site. The production manager that I hired saw it on the state Web site, not in our local newspaper.*

Paul: People can go to our Web site and download the application and survey off our Web site in order to apply for a job. We don't put job postings on our site because we figure the people on

right at the get-go. Entry-level field people pick it up as they work. Anytime you get above that, we'd like them to show up with some knowledge. I would say it would be about 70 percent when I hire them. It's very time consuming to bring somebody from nothing to something. That's not to say we wouldn't do it for the right person. We are much better off hiring the right person and teaching them than we are hiring someone who is technically skilled but just is not the right person.

Craig: There is a significant difference between the field people and everybody else. In the field, we have pretty strongly committed to this program where we build them from the ground

**In real estate they say "location, location, location."
In hiring, I would say "network, network, network."**

because word travels. You get that guy that's working somewhere else but going, "Hey, guys, let me know when your company's hiring because I want to come to work there." We've had that happen. People should keep that in mind as they're contemplating ways to keep their employees happy. That's another benefit to it.

Jud: *How successful has online advertising been for you?*

Craig: A few years back it wasn't such a hot deal, but as each year ticks by it produces more and more results. You've got your local and state and national trade associations, and there's your own Web site. There's just oodles of places that you can go beyond just strictly employment Web sites.

Paul: I had more success advertising online as opposed to going through sites looking for people. For instance, I hired an estimator a few months back. He was moving here from Florida. He saw our online posting, flew up and

our Web site aren't looking for jobs.

Jud: *Do you look somewhere different for administration people or somebody in the front office?*

Craig: Not really. We use pretty much the same approach, same avenues. We have a smaller number of people there and the hires aren't as many or as often, but we've got people that have come via business colleges. I've got people who've come via networking and some via traditional sources.

Paul: We might look at people who are working for our suppliers who already possess some knowledge of the building industry. Having general knowledge of what goes on in the remodeling and building industry seems to help administrative people a bit.

Jud: *Whether you're looking for someone in the field, sales or office, you are looking for somebody who has some knowledge, but will train them yourself.*

Paul: For most of our positions, we don't want someone who is really green

up, and that's a five-year process. It means that come next February I've got to pick out this group that in 2010 are going to be my star performers.

Jud: *Do you have any final comments as to where you're going to find this best hire?*

Craig: Just one final thought on the job description and testing: along with that is training. You ought to have a training manual in place for any position before you even start looking for somebody.

Paul: I would stress knowing what you are looking for before you start running an ad. I really believe that there are a lot of decent people out there getting hired into the wrong jobs. Be aware if you have other positions to hire for at the time you are interviewing. I hired a project manager once when I was looking for a carpenter because the guy was just the right guy. Always have your eyes open. **PR**

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The Basics of Universal Design

Simple home modifications for an aging consumer base

By Scott T. Shepherd

PATH Partners

Whether it's a kitchen, a bathroom or an entire home, universal design improves the living space for everyone: the young, disabled, aging or – the rarest of people – perfectly average. In the meantime, you will also tap into an emerging market.

“People still think universal design is for older people and handicapped accessibility, but slowly we are educating them that it involves every single member of the family, every age, every physical ability, every size,” says Bryce Jacob, a universal design specialist with Dave Fox Remodeling of Columbus, Ohio.

“Compared to 15 years ago, there is a lot more awareness of the issue and the possibilities, thanks to a lot of industry publications and programs,” says Richard Duncan, senior project manager with the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University.

According to Susan Mack, president of Homes for Easy Living, a California-based consulting firm, consumers are seeing many elements of universal design as beneficial to everyone, with just a handful of options applied only in special situations.

Many universal design features require only additional planning, not different materials, so cost is often not an issue.

“Unless you have someone with very specific needs, the cost is minimal when we are talking about simple things that make life a little easier,” says Glen Borkowski of Kraftwerks Remodeling Inc. in Tinley Park, Ill. “Over the course of a renovation, that may project



These semi-custom universal cabinets maintain the appearance of standard cabinets, but they also can adapt to accommodate users who want or need to sit while working. Photo by Susan Mack



Curbless or roll-in showers allow easy access for everyone in the home, especially those who are unable to move from a wheelchair.

Photo by Susan Mack

out to 2 or 3 percent” of the total remodeling budget.

Rooms for everyone

Universal design features can be incorporated into nearly every room in the home. Here are a few of the major features to consider.

Lighting: Eyesight worsens with age, making lighting one of the easiest features to sell. Think long-term to ensure consistent light through the room while reducing glare and decreasing shadows. Make sure you include enough switches for the convenience of occupants with restricted movement. Also, maintain flexibility in the lighting system so it can grow and change with the occupants.

“One of the things we really empha-

size a lot is lighting,” Borkowski says. “If the homeowners are worried [there will be too much light], we can put them on a dimmer. But 10 or 20 years from now, they are going to be glad we gave them the capacity for more lighting.”

For safety reasons, improved lighting is especially important in stairways, hallways and entryways, regardless of the clients’ age or vision.

Doors and entryways: Wider doors (at least 32 inches, but preferably 36 inches) that accommodate walkers and wheelchairs are becoming so popular that they may one day be standard for front entrances. Some clients also appreciate lever handles instead of doorknobs, as levers are easier for arthritis sufferers to use.

Consider replacing the front steps with a ramp that makes the home more accessible not only to the elderly but also to baby strollers, heavy luggage, furniture dollies, crutches and wheelchairs. These ramps don’t have to be institutional looking. Jacob designs ramps that are very gradual and are often built of brick or stone to accent a beautifully landscaped yard.

Bathrooms: For a universal bathroom, install a grab bar in the shower or tub. Replace shower door tracks, which restrict movement in and out of the tub, with a trackless system. In the case of a stand-up shower, remodelers can also install a curbless or roll-in entry to allow easier access for those with less mobility.

Another option is a “transfer” shower, which easily accommodates both the able-bodied and those in wheelchairs. This type of shower can be built from individual components or purchased as a complete module with a seat, grab bars and controls. Integral or fold-up seats may be helpful. Threshold-less designs allow easy access.

You may also advise homeowners to install a high-rise or “comfort-height” toilet. An 18-inch high commode can

Seven Principles of Universal Design

To help develop a better definition and guidelines for universal design, the Center for Universal Design advocates seven principles:

- 1. Equitable Use:** The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.
- 2. Flexibility in Use:** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- 3. Simple and Intuitive:** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level.
- 4. Perceptible Information:** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.
- 5. Tolerance for Error:** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- 6. Low Physical Effort:** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
- 7. Size and Space for Approach and Use:** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation and use regardless of user’s body size, posture or mobility.

easily accommodate someone transferring from a wheelchair or an average height person, but keep in mind that it may not be right for shorter residents.



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Kitchens: Adjustable cabinets allow under-counter kneespace for people in wheelchairs or those who need to be seated because of back or leg problems. Similar benefits are obtained with pull-out shelves, which provide accessible work surfaces and storage for all household members. Some adjustable cabinet systems are expensive compared to fixed models. However, moderately priced styles are available, and the investment can make the home appealing to many homeowners, adding value and marketability.

The Ezyfold door control unit, essentially a specialty hinge, allows bifold base-cabinet doors to open fully, maximizing clear kneespace. Häfele offers hardware that, via remote control or manual crank, adjusts the height of wall cabinets and/or countertops. AD-AS has a modular system of base cabinet segments, countertops and wall cabinets mounted on vertical tracks that can

the right and left.

Not all technologies are meant for all clients, however. "Some universal design features should only be viewed as options, depending on the clients," Mack warns. "For example, if you have an 85-year-old frail lady sitting on the edge of a high-rise toilet and her feet don't reach the ground, then you have done the wrong thing."

Today, tomorrow, and beyond

Some homeowners associate universal design features with aging, and are reluctant to acknowledge their own frailty. Manufacturers are helping remodelers to remove the stigma of universal design by improving product appearance.

"The people who manufacture the products have done a really good job in the last five years of making them a lot more decorative," Borkowski says.

After years of producing cold, steel

we always incorporate small items to keep an eye toward today, as well as 10 or 20 years down the road."

Some consumers are approaching remodelers about universal design projects thanks to the outreach efforts of the American Association of Retired Persons and the NAHB Remodelers Council Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) designation program.

"We get a lot of phone calls from AARP people, and most of them do not have serious physical limitations requiring specific remodeling," Borkowski says. "They are just aware of the fact that it's going to make their life a little easier, and it will allow them to stay in their home as long as they can."

In part, the growth of universal design is simply due to the aging population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 59 million people were 55 years or older in 2000, and more than 34 million of those were 65

Manufacturers are helping remodelers to remove the stigma of universal design by improving product appearance.

be manually adjusted or motorized.

Countertop heights can be varied, with lower sections allowing children to help or allowing adults to sit while preparing meals. For this, the best height is 28 inches to 32 inches, with seated areas about 16 inches. Contrasting counter colors and surface textures will help distinguish different areas of the kitchen for the visually impaired, while raised edges can be added to prevent spills.

A side-by-side refrigerator and a stove with front-mounted controls allow great access for those in a wheelchair or with limited mobility. Place microwaves or wall ovens 31 inches off the floor, within easy reach. Elevate dishwashers 6 to 8 inches off the floor and make them accessible from both

equipment that looks like it belongs in a hospital, manufacturers are producing items that catch a homeowner's eye for their warmth and creativity.

"It used to be there were very few manufacturers that I could select from," Mack says, "but now I have more options. If you design something to be beautiful, it's going to be very marketable."

Borkowski says almost all his clients, few of whom are elderly, request some kind of universal design features

"The average age person we work for is probably mid-40s to late 50s. They are empty nesters, and they've got some money because the kids are gone. Their attitude is 'It's about me now,'" he says. "In the general course of remodeling kitchens and bathrooms,

or older. Those numbers are expected to swell over the next decade as the baby boomers become seniors.

Because of high housing costs in many parts of the country, many baby boomers are choosing to adapt their homes for future use rather than move. As a result, what has been considered a niche market has the potential to be a very big market.

"We are sort of at the early-adopter stage of universal design," Jacob says, "but it seems like we are about to cross that chasm to get into the mainstream because more and more people are seeing it does make their lives easier." **PR**

The Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH, www.pathnet.org), is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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Doug Dwyer
Contributing Editor

Secrets to Recruiting “A” Players

Hiring new employees is not the same as recruiting. You can *hire* anyone. *Recruiting* is going out and finding the best person for the pay, benefits, culture and

opportunity your company provides.

Think about a professional baseball recruiter. His job is to find a great pitcher to be the starter. He knows he has to find someone who has the skills for the job, experience, a successful track record, and the desire to make a change. Where does he look for this kind of guy?

He first looks at the people who are playing ball (observation prospecting). Then, he asks around for recommendations (referral prospecting). Lastly, he talks to other agents and gets the official word out in writing (advertising and agency prospecting).

When does he start this process? Typically months – if not years – out, because he is predicting future needs of the team. Once the recruiter identifies potential candidates, the team takes them through a detailed interview process. Then management chooses the best match for the profile of whom the team needed.

One of the first secrets to recruiting is to know exactly for whom you are looking. I recommend that you write a profile for each position in your company that lists the qualities, characteristics, skills and experience needed for that position. Then, and only then, can you recruit like a professional.

The second secret to recruiting is to start looking before you need to fill the position. This will give you more people to choose from and give you the

ability to compare strengths and weaknesses, providing the best results. Create a file for each position. For every key position, put names, resumes and a target list to go after into the file.

The third secret to recruiting is to have a detailed interviewing system that enables you to identify who is a right match for the position and team. There are many books written on this subject that you can use as resources.

The fourth secret to recruiting is to have a company culture that attracts candidates and makes them want to join your team over your competitors. This not only helps recruiting, but does wonders for retaining “A” players.

One of the first secrets

to recruiting is to know exactly for whom you are looking.

Once you get it going, “like attracts like,” as one of my old managers said. One of the hardest things to do is to get positive momentum going in a company. A good recruiting system helps create it.

Let me share some personal experiences that I have had with the three primary ways to find A players.

Observation prospecting

I was attending a NARI event during a time that I needed to add support managers. I started to ask around for referrals, and one of the guys I asked ended up

being the guy that I hired. It’s just like hiring in baseball: Go where the people are.

Referral prospecting

I was attending the International Franchisee Association breakfast and sat beside a guy who is a consultant and trainer. I shared with him my need to fill another position because of our growth. He gave me a referral that turned out to be the right match.

Advertising or agency prospecting

I went to an agency and gave them the detailed profile for a marketing director position that I needed to fill. They gave me four resumes and pre-interview assessments to review. Three prospects matched what we were willing to pay and possessed some of the skills and experience. The fourth one matched the qualities, characteristics, skills and experience, but would cost 50 percent

more than what was budgeted for the position. We hired her, and she has helped take us and the marketing department to the next level with minimal time and effort on my part.

Remember, hiring is only part of the recruiting process. As I’ve mentioned before, you must price for profit to afford A players. **PR**

Doug Dwyer is president and chief stewarding officer of DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen by Worldwide, one of the nation’s largest remodeling franchises. He can be reached at doug.dwyer@dwyergroup.com.

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Alan Hanbury Jr.
Contributing Editor



Last in a Series on Benchmarking

Bring the Business Plan to Life

Over the course of nine columns, we have talked about some 25 business metrics that one can track and benchmark against. After we collect them for a

period of time, they begin to have a “normal” range. We can then apply these numbers to make better predictions and to make better decisions when things don’t go as we hoped they would in our original plan.

You want your business to look like something specific in terms of revenue, margin, employees, net profit, dividends, pension benefits, etc. If you have business hopes, you need to write them down, so they can be considered a plan, not a wish list. Budgeting puts the meat on the business plan and tells us if it is too aggressive, not realistic, requires hiring or firing, or if we need to search for funds.

Develop pro forma statements

When a company – yes, the owner, but also key employees and production staff – meets to formulate next year’s business plan, many of the items that go into making it a living document are financial in nature or can be reduced to their financial impact: asset needs, human productivity issues, or marketing costs. Budgets for marketing, personnel, capital purchases and sales, margin and net profit all need to be calculated “pro forma” – before they happen – to see what the plan looks like a year or more away. This is best done with any spreadsheet software, no matter how simplistic.

After you have entered all the financial changes that next year’s business

plan might create, run the numbers in the spreadsheet as if they actually happened. For example, you can run a pro forma income statement to see if you make money at that volume and level of expenses; if you can move up some longer term goals into this year’s business plan; or if you are going to get hammered if you follow through on the plan as envisioned. By tweaking volume goals, raising margins, or changing work focus (for example, residential versus commercial remodeling), you can often still make the plan work.

The key here is that we need to know this before we start, not in September 2006 or on April 15 the year after. Most accountants simply come in and bayonet the wounded. They need to provide armor and be the early warning systems for our business success. If your financial professional does not give you managerial advice, tools or benchmarks, he or she is merely a bookkeeper who keeps your tax liability accurate.

Variance analysis

After the first quarter of 2006, you can compare your assumptions to what actually happened. Enter the actual numbers in a column to the right of the pro forma column, and see how far off you were on each line item, on groups of items, margins, operating expenses, net profit, you name it.

This variance analysis allows you to have nine months to find solutions to

any shortfalls, to implement strategies to make your business profitable, and to not burn up too much cash trying to make plan at all costs. The sooner you find shortcomings in your pro forma, the quicker you can formulate a strategy to mitigate that negative trend.

Budgeting for sales

We can predict sales by looking at our human assets (sales per field, sales or total management employees). We can use total assets (sales to assets): cash, inventory, investments, tools, trucks and technology. We can use company net worth (sales to equity). We can use leads received, qualified or closed. We can use inflation or a multiplier based on market conditions.

We can also use the cost of goods sold from the previous year and apply an increased markup to it, thus producing more revenue without doing one more job. Your pro forma revenue and overhead spreadsheet will tell you if that tactic will work.

With five or six predictions of what sales might be, it is a lot easier to see the one or two that represent reality. There are several reality checks to help determine the most accurate prediction.

Factor in hours available for sales calls, commission or sales wages, and marketing costs. You may find that the extra marketing expense required to grow sales would eat up most of the margin produced by those extra jobs. Don’t assume that there are not diminishing returns on your expenditures.

Now, how much working capital do you have? If your working capital is negative, you should get your house in order before planning any growth. If

Often, much of what we do can be done by people earning \$15 an hour instead of our own \$100 per hour rate.

not, multiply the dollar amount by 10. This is the maximum increase in sales that can safely be added. If your plan figure exceeds this figure, it is time to get a line of credit or plan for other funding should your pro forma not go exactly to plan.

Next take a look at the production side and see if you can produce that much work given your present staff makeup and skill set. Say you have a field crew of six historically producing \$375,000 per person. Can you expect to squeeze \$2.5 million out of them next year? Not likely. You would have to hire one more field staff. If you plan to increase your sales to \$3 million, you could enter a growth-related death spiral thanks to training, communication and management issues.

Overhead and personal balance

Things like the owner's compensation and benefits, travel, entertainment, training, networking and giving back to your community need to be in the plan. Track overhead before owner's compensation so you can identify costs that need to be undertaken whether or not you are having a good year. Look at net profit before owner's compensation for similar reasons. We need to take care of what it takes to run the business first and then we can be flexible with how much the owner will get.

Now comes the hard part – breaking the budget down by month. Assuming you pay weekly, remember that four months will have five payrolls instead of four. They will skew overhead expense for wages, benefits, taxes and any accruals attached to pay. Some expenses occur only once a year, so you will only enter them in that month. This is important for doing cash-flow statements, which every remodeler should.

Knowing your cash flow can be the difference between making payroll or making a trip to the loan officer when a loan repayment, insurance deposit or annual payment is due.

We cannot accurately predict net profit because so much depends on last-minute, end-of-year accounts payable and receivable. Stock sales, depreciation, profit sharing and other choices that can be made at year-end can radically affect the final net profit tally.

We suggest 10 percent of sales for younger companies so they can build a nest egg. For a more mature firm, lowering net profit targets and raising owner's compensation or benefits or pension planning might be the more prudent use of dollars.

A target for retirement benefits is a must these days, because we can't depend on Social Security. You should put away 10 percent of owner's comp each year, whether via the company or individual savings. Don't overlook your employees, your most valuable asset.

Make sure education and training are budgeted for your staff. Education is an investment. Balance profits with growth and employee retention might just not be an issue. Train so delegation of responsibility is possible and time off will be less stressful.

Look at the amount of time you take for personal time, family and pleasure. Will your plan end your marriage while saving your business? Will it cost you time that would have been spent with friends, in a sport you love, or with young people who need your time? Are your hours going up but the results no better? You probably are not being efficient, or are so tired at the end of a day or week that those extra hours are wasted going through the motions. A hire, part time at first, might be the

answer to keep your sanity and your business. The budget will tell you how much you can afford to spend; your time card tells you how much they have to do in hours. Often, much of what we do can be done by people earning \$15 an hour instead of our own \$100 per hour rate.

Now let's look at the balance sheet. Knowing our revenue and our target accounts payable and receivable turns, we can propose acceptable ranges for accounts payable and receivable at year-end, quarter-end or week's-end. We want to keep working capital at a level that will sustain revenue growth. We can then figure out how much of our assets should be kept liquid, and how much can be spent on trucks, real estate and computer equipment. We can predict what our long-term liabilities will be from how much we will pay down our past balances. Although predicting balance sheet items is hard, it is important to do some major account predictions and leave the small stuff for monthly assessments.

Mid-year adjustments

If you need to change some assumptions because of poor market conditions, you can easily see how much you would save if you cut out a purchase or benefit: The dollars simply fall to the bottom line. Using your markup and gross profit formulas, you can also determine how much more volume and what pricing strategy you need to pay for any new purchase, program or person. So spending decisions during a year can all be quantified by knowing your produced gross profit margin percent. **PR**

Alan Hanbury Jr., CGR, CAPS, co-owns House of Hanbury Builders in Newington, Conn. For Alan's budgeting spreadsheet, visit www.housingzone.com/hanbury.

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Dave Taraboletti
Contributing Editor



Searched and Found on the Web

Repeat and referral clients probably already have seen your company's Web site. If not, it's easy to send them the URL. Ditto for leads that come in

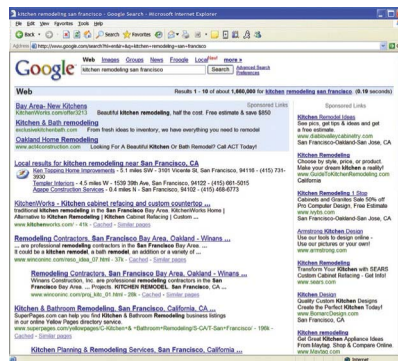
thanks to other marketing methods. Either your job signs and newsletters include the Web address, or else you can provide it to the people who are interested enough to call.

If you're growing your business by looking for new sources of leads, however, keep in mind that more homeowners are making the Internet an important part of their remodeling research, maybe even the starting point.

The likely place to begin online research is at an online search engine such as Google.com, Yahoo.com, or MSN.com. Imagine a homeowner living in San Francisco who is interested in having her kitchen remodeled. She sits down to her computer and uses the Internet to get some basic information. She starts by searching for a list of companies in her area who focus on kitchen remodels. She enters the phrase "Kitchen Remodeling San Francisco" into Google.

The result is a list of San Francisco-area companies that do kitchen renovations. Being well-positioned in search engines improves the odds of your company being selected from a search results page. The higher you appear on a results list, the better your odds of being selected.

You can submit your Web site to some search engines for free. Most of the time, however, where your site turns up depends on an ever-changing set of factors: the metatags and content



on your site, the number of hits your site receives, plus other factors beyond your control. It's a never-ending battle to stay on top.

Paid placement

All top search engines offer paid placement services, also called sponsored links, in which users essentially pay for premium search engine real estate.

Remember our San Francisco kitchen remodeling example? The results page includes sponsored links at the top and right side of the page, which are the most-read and most-clicked upon areas. In an effort to differentiate paid placement from non-paid placement, Google highlights its sponsored links with labels and different background colors (see screenshot).

The paid-for links are displayed based on a bidding system. You agree to pay for each lead you receive. An online lead is defined as a clickthrough. The user actually clicks on your spon-

sored link and visits your Web site. The more you bid for each lead, the higher your site is placed on the results list. Clickthrough rates for these "ads" are exceptional, and many Web users don't differentiate between paid and non-paid links.

Getting started

If you think you'd like to try paid placements, you can use a third party to manage the process for you or you can do it on your own. Start by reading up on the available services. Places to start include:

Google: adwords.google.com

MSN: advertising.msn.com/searchadv

Yahoo: searchmarketing.yahoo.com

You will be asked to submit your URL and enter a bid for a clickthrough price. You will also be prompted to enter key words to describe your company. In selecting these words, think about the services you offer and how potential clients may try to find you. What phrases or words would they type into a search engine to find you? Keep in mind that the order of the search phrase is important. Thus, "Kitchen Remodeling San Francisco" is different than "San Francisco Kitchen Remodeling."

Some search engines offer the ability to narrow your target market by selecting the cities in which you want your company to appear. Some offer you the ability to pay to be a sponsor, which provides you with a spot along the right-hand side of a search results page.

Clearly, there's more to Internet marketing than having a Web site. **PR**

Dave Taraboletti is chief operating officer of Montecito Property Company. Contact Dave at dtaraboletti@mooria.com.

The Golden Rule

Achieving excellence in service and referrals requires a customer-first culture

By Kimberly Sweet
Editor

Service is what separates the truly professional remodeler from the rest. Remodelers who not only get the job done but also answer questions, soothe fears, clean up, listen well and provide choices create true value for their clients.

Remodelers like this also create referrals for themselves. It's a lesson that the winners of this year's NRS Awards for customer satisfaction have taken to heart. JW Bratton Design/Build of Renton, Wash., and Bowers Design Build of McLean, Va., both have arrived at a level where 100 percent of their clients are willing to recommend them to family and friends.

For JW Bratton, a family-owned and -operated company, being in the remodeling business starts with customer satisfaction.

"If you're interested in working for me, you have a simple job description: It's to remodel your mother's kitchen every day," says owner John Bratton. "All we want to do is to treat our clients the way we would want ourselves and our families to be treated."

On the opposite end of the country, Bowers Design/Build has more employees and bigger projects, but the same values.

"One of the things everyone enjoys about working with this firm is that honesty and integrity is key," says Wilma Bowers, executive director of marketing and strategic planning. "We would not commit to anything unless we knew we could deliver." She adds: "We stress that this is a partnership in spirit, that we're going through this together."

Caring can't be taught, but it should be cultivated, because customers' impression of how much your firm cares might be the most important factor in what they think of it. (See "The Survey Says" sidebar.) A look inside both Bratton and Bowers reveals service-oriented practices that any firm can adapt to develop a customer-first culture.

Photo by Brian Smale



The Survey Says: **Genuine caring is the best measure of customer satisfaction**

If you're like most remodelers, you're always on the lookout for ways to improve your customer satisfaction. That's because you know that high satisfaction leads to lucrative referrals, which generate the vast majority of remodeling business.

Using a customer survey will help you to quantify your clients' level of satisfaction and pinpoint areas for improvement. The results of the fourth annual customer satisfaction study by NRS Corporation and *Professional Remodeler* provide a big-picture look at where remodelers do well keeping customers happy and where they fall short.

NRS asked the 2004 customers of the 241 remodeler and builder study participants a series of key questions, including:

- Would you recommend your remodeler to family and friends?
- How many actual recommendations have you made for your remodeler?
- To what degree did your remodeler care about you and building a quality home?

This was the first year we asked the "caring question," and we were shocked to discover how much the answer mattered to consumers. The higher the firm scored in terms of "genuine caring," the more actual recommendations its clients had made. High satisfaction with the remodeler's level of caring predicted recommendation levels better than any other question asked, from project value to sticking with the schedule.

Two remodeling companies rose to the top of the study, winning the 2005 NRS Awards recognizing excellence in customer satisfaction. Both of these remodelers had 100 percent of their customers stating that they felt their remodeler's staff cared about them and about doing a quality job.

Caring doesn't exist in a vacuum relative to the quality of the work you do; rather, caring is the sum of all that you do for your customers. Remodelers that give warm fuzzies without performing quality work ultimately will fail in customer satisfaction. However, remodelers that do great work but fail to convey caring toward the customer will also underperform.

The NRS survey measured customer satisfaction levels via a mailed questionnaire and an online survey. Winners were determined by adding their total customer satisfaction score with their recommend score to equal the NRS Index score. The NRS Award program announces only the winners in the award categories, and it holds in confidence the results for companies that subscribed to the study but did not win.

— Paul A. Cardis

Paul A. Cardis is president/CEO of NRS Corporation, a leading research and consulting firm serving the construction industry.



Treat People Right

By Kimberly Sweet
Editor

It's all personal for John Bratton, starting with the decision to put his name on the business. His wife, Lynne, and son Jim helped him start JW Bratton Design/Build in 1994. John met Lynne 20 years ago when he worked in new construction and built her house. The Brattons live in the same suburban Seattle community as their employees, subcontractors and clients. Their children and grandchildren go to school together. Most jobs are within 5 miles of the office. In fact, much of JW Bratton's work takes place in a neighborhood with a golf course; the regular players keep tabs on each project's progress.

"It's not unusual to be at a social occasion with 30 couples and have remodeled probably 75 percent of their homes," says John Bratton.

The survey shows that JW Bratton excels in some extraordinarily difficult areas: the number of items identified on the punchlist, the time taken to correct those items, project value for the price paid, and providing accurate answers to client questions during the sales process.

JW Bratton Design/Build NRS Diamond Award in Homeowner Satisfaction

NRS Index: 196.93

Clients willing to recommend: 100 percent

Clients who made 10 or more recommendations: 55.56 percent

Clients who experienced genuine caring: 100 percent

Type of company: design/build; 90 percent residential remodeling; 10 percent custom homes

2004 jobs: 14

Customer profile: upper-middle class customers with homes built during or after the 1960s

Mission statement: "Excellence can be obtained if you care more, risk more, dream more and expect more."

Lynne, John and Jim Bratton (truck, left to right) run the family business with a personal touch. Photo by Brian Smale

Don't be all things to all people

JW Bratton operates under a set of unwritten rules that allow the employees to focus their skills. Many of the customers are mid-level managers at Boeing who live in a country club subdivision. Given that John Bratton worked as a subcontractor for new home builders in the '80s and early '90s, he knows the layout and conditions he's likely to find in many of the residences he remodels.

"I price according to the fact that these are people that

want a really quality remodel but need to get value for it. They're not going to dig into the retirement account," explains John, who does all the selling. "If you can't sell quality and value, you might as well work out of a truck. I'm too old to work out of a truck."

To keep pricing under control in a high-cost, highly-regulated region, Bratton subcontracts design work under a personal services agreement. He uses several outside designers and architects, chosen based on job scope and their fit with the client. Clients cannot supply materials or labor. Bratton limits change orders as much as possible.

Hire the best subcontractors

Jim Bratton is the field production manager, joined by three in-house carpenters. Plumbing, electrical, drywall, painting and hard surfaces get subbed out, preferably to small companies that specialize in remodeling.

"Everybody is very comfortable with going into people's houses and geared to single-family remodels. All are either owner operated or run by owner employees. A lot of small, really good quality people," says John Bratton.

Jim Bratton began working with many of the subcontractors in his teens. "Somebody who's been a part of a team for a long time is willing to make a sacrifice, work harder," he says. "They'll do the extra thing because they know you're going to be ready. The first five minutes of meeting with a sub has nothing to do with work. It's a social atmosphere. A lot of our subs, we'll have them on multiple jobs at a time."

The camaraderie reassures clients that conflicts between trades won't arise on the job, says John Bratton.

Keep work in perspective

A cool head and a calm expression go a long way toward keeping a job running smoothly and convincing customers that they're in good hands.

"A problem is what we get paid to deal with," says John Bratton. "The only time we have an urgency is if there is blood involved."

Production meetings every Monday to review the past week and plan the week ahead help to minimize problems. These are followed by a secondary meeting on Tuesday to confirm and solidify the plan. The field employees provide daily updates to the office, while John and Jim do most of the communicating with the client, whether in person or via phone call or e-mail.

"If you say 'Wow,' you can always explain that as something good or as something bad," says John Bratton with a laugh. "But if you start screaming, then you've got a problem."

Understanding the Power of Wow

Many experts insist that customers don't really know what they want; they have to be told. They're wrong — dead wrong. Homeowners do know what they want; they're just not proficient at describing their needs. When you understand the three types of customer needs and how to reveal them, you'll be on your way to understanding your customers' needs as well as, or perhaps better than, they do.

We use the Kano Model of customer expectations, developed by Japanese researcher Noriaki Kano. He has identified three levels of what it takes to make a positive impact on customer satisfaction: the musts, the wants and the wows.

THE MUSTS: Entry-level expectations are the *must* qualities, properties or attributes. Fully satisfying the homeowner at this level simply gets a remodeler into the market. The musts are also known as the "dissatisfiers." By themselves they do not satisfy a homeowner; however, failure to provide them will cause dissatisfaction. The musts include assumptions and unspoken expectations, such as plumbing and air conditioning that work and a roof that doesn't leak. Missing a must kills the chance of a referral.

THE WANTS: These are the qualities, attributes and characteristics that *keep* a remodeler in the market. These higher-level expectations are also known as "satisfiers." Customers will specify them as though from a list. They can either satisfy or dissatisfy the customer depending on their presence or absence. The wants include any spoken customer expectations, such as extra-large cabinets and closets, a work warranty longer than one year, and returned phone calls.

THE WOWS: These are features and properties that make a remodeler a leader in the market and produce the highest levels of customer satisfaction. These expectations are "delighters" or "exciters" because they go beyond what the customer might imagine and ask for. Their absence does nothing to hurt satisfaction levels, but their presence improves the overall experience, sometimes significantly. Examples of wows include: guaranteed lower utility bills because of quality construction, gift baskets, frequent informative communications, active listening, lending a helping hand, and true caring for the buyer. Wows are key to achieving high referral rates.

Over time, unspoken wows become spoken wants and, finally, unspoken musts. Indoor plumbing is one obvious example. To get ahead and stay ahead, constantly monitor your prospects to identify the next wows. Providing your customers with the *best* wows, plenty of wants and *all* the musts is what it takes to be an industry leader.

— Jack B. ReVelle and Paul Cardis

Jack B. ReVelle, Ph.D., is the founder of ReVelle Solutions, Santa Ana, Calif.



By Kimberly Sweet
Editor

Bowers Design Build, a 15-year-old company in the Washington, D.C., area, takes a scientific approach to customer satisfaction. Which is not to say that the management team isn't concerned about the human touch. Rather, their experience has proven the value of documenting their processes, measuring and evaluating their results, and implementing careful change. Owners Bruce and Wilma Bowers and vice president John Coburn have even developed an "ideal customer experience" model so that everyone in the 30-person firm knows exactly what it takes to make a Bowers customer happy.

"We roll out our thoughts on how things operate," says Coburn, who handles 90 percent of the sales. "They all believe in the same things we do. They all understand our goal: the ideal customer experience."

The NRS survey showed that Bowers outstrips average remodeler performance in a number of areas, doing particularly well in: project value for the price paid, sticking to production schedule, sticking to budget and communicating price changes to the client.

Research what works

Drawing on lessons learned from her 19-year marketing career with Verizon Communications, Wilma Bowers implemented some market research when she officially joined Bowers Design Build four years ago. Detailed post-

Bowers Design Build Inc. **NRS Excellence Award** **in Homeowner Satisfaction**

NRS Index: 196.21

Clients willing to recommend: 100 percent

Clients who made 10 or more recommendations: 21.43 percent

Clients who experienced genuine caring: 100 percent

Type of company: design/build remodeling; kitchens, family rooms, additions, whole houses

2004 jobs: 14

Customer profile: Owners of single-family homes with annual household incomes of more than \$250,000. Houses must be worth at least \$500,000 and located within 5 miles of the office.

Mission statement: "To provide the *best* overall design/build experience in the towns where we choose to do business."

Adding a 5-person design team increased the company's employee roster but also, say Bruce (brown coat) and Wilma Bowers, is increasing customer satisfaction. Photo by William Geiger

construction surveys and client focus groups revealed a few areas for improvement:

- The design timeline. The firm used to work with outside designers. As one client of many, Bowers Design Build and its customers did not always take top priority with the outside designers.

As a result, the company decided to bring all design in house, a goal that was achieved in 2005.

“It’s a big milestone,” says Bruce Bowers. “We have three architects and two designers in house as part of that commitment.”

- Too many people contacting the customer. Clients were getting confused working with multiple employees throughout the course of a project.

Now, no matter how many employees are involved, all key project communication and decisions go through just three people: the salesperson – Coburn or Bruce Bowers – during the sales phase; Dean Cretsigner, the director of architecture, during design development; and the site manager, who is similar to a lead carpenter, once construction begins.

Partner with the right clients

By tracking leads, interviewing customers and assessing the competition, Bowers Design Build has narrowed its focus to the jobs most likely to yield strong profits and prospects most likely to appreciate its services.

“Number one, we do remodeling,” says Wilma Bowers. “We don’t do landscaping. We have done custom homes in the past, but we’ve gotten out of that. We focus on one thing, and we do it very well, and we have a proven business model.”

The firm’s “core” project is a major addition, including a new family room, kitchen and master suite as well as some interior reconfiguration. Staying within 5 miles of the office limits travel time and costs – and with plenty of old, high-priced single-family homes and wealthy homeowners in the region, there’s no shortage of remodeling prospects.

Coburn estimates the firm receives 250 calls a year, and of the leads that make it to an in-person meeting, half already know an existing client.

“We do a lot of brand building,” explains Wilma Bowers. “Seventy percent of our business is from word of mouth. In the past 12 to 16 months, about 30 percent were repeat clients.”

Bowers Design Build targets its customers by income level and home value as well as region. Ultimately, the homeowners who hire the company don’t just have money; they don’t mind spending it.

“We’re extremely fortunate that when you look at the three variables in a remodeling project – time, cost and quality – our client is the client who is looking for quality as the first prong, and then time and then cost,” says Bruce Bowers. “In order to provide the service that we do, we have to charge. Our clients want to pay for service. They’ve already made that decision before they call us.”

How Remodelers Satisfy on Average

Total Remodeler Satisfaction	92
Recommend Your Remodeler	92
Salesperson	95
Courtesy	96
Knowledge of remodeling	96
Knowledge of products	95
Availability	94
Accuracy of answers	94
Production Process	93
Availability/courtesy	95
Professional appearance	95
Accuracy of answers	94
Communication of progress	93
Timeliness of responses	93
Communication of price changes	91
Product Satisfaction	91
Design of your project	93
Quality of materials	93
Quality of workmanship	93
Cleanliness of work site	93
Adherence to production schedule	90
Adherence to budget	89
Price/value of project	87
Time taken to correct punchlist items	85
Number of punchlist items identified	73

Starting with the 2002 survey, courtesy and knowledge of remodeling during the sales process consistently have been among the top five areas of remodeler performance. Always at the bottom: price/value of project, adherence to production schedule and number of punchlist items identified.

Set internal and external expectations

Solid internal structure and systems allow the employees of Bowers Design Build to know what the firm can do and what it can’t. That keeps everybody on the same page with each other and with clients, especially when it comes to budget and schedule.

Using Excel estimating spreadsheets and Microsoft Project, the Bowers team works together to develop timelines and sales figures before presenting them to clients. The design process has its own schedule of four to 10 meetings, with next steps and expectations outlined for each. All selections must be made before construction begins.

Once construction begins, the site manager shares weekly updates with the Bowers team via e-mail. Although the site manager handles the bulk of client communication during this phase, the accounting department does send out e-mail reminders as payments come due.

“We actually do what we say we will do,” says Bruce Bowers. “Clients are shocked when we do it.” **PR**

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Winners Offer Competitive Advantage

Product makers strive to give remodelers what they want, but are they succeeding?

Cheryl Dangel Cullen
Contributing Editor

In today's competitive marketplace, building product manufacturers have to work hard at establishing relationships with remodelers in order to gain their business. That hard work doesn't go unnoticed. Remodelers appreciate the extra mile a product manufacturer is willing to go to ensure customer loyalty. Interestingly, however, what product manufacturers think sets them apart from the competition isn't necessarily what remodelers actually value.

What's in a name?

Virtually every product manufacturer that earned a Best in Class rating from remodeler respondents to our recent survey attributed their wins, in part, to the equity in their sterling reputations and to consumer preference for their brand names. Yet only 7 percent of remodelers reported that reputation and customer preference were important in choosing a manufacturer of exterior or interior products.

The general perception is that homeowners are most



familiar with highly visible consumer products that are touted in the decorating magazines: faucets, plumbing fixtures, doors and kitchen cabinetry. Yet, 12 percent of remodelers surveyed reported that manufacturer name brand and reputation were the most important factors when it came to behind-the-wall products.

"Georgia-Pacific is a highly respected name in the building products industry, as well as an innovator in the manufacture of plywood and OSB [oriented strand board]," says Jeff Key, senior communications manager for Georgia-Pacific, which was voted Best in Class by remodelers for both its OSB and plywood products. "When people mention those products, GP is

Overall Best in Class

Category	Manufacturer
Exterior Products	CertainTeed
Interior Products	Kohler
Behind-the-Wall Products	Owens Corning

Professional Remodeler Best-in-Class Survey Methodology

The survey for the Professional Remodeler Best-in-Class Study was conducted among 200 recipients of *Professional Remodeler*.

The sample was drawn at random

from the circulation of *Professional Remodeler* and is thus representative of the entire circulation.

All interviews were conducted by telephone during the late winter and

early spring of 2005.

The research was conducted, tabulated and reported by the Qume Group, Ltd., an independent market research company.

Exterior Products

Product category	Best in Class
Decking	Trex
Exterior Doors	Therma-Tru
Exterior Trim	Fypon
Garage Doors	Clopay
Housewrap	DuPont Tyvek
Manufactured Stone	Owens Corning Cultured Stone
Patio Doors	Pella
Roofing	Owens Corning
Siding: Fiber Cement	James Hardie
Siding: Vinyl	CertainTeed
Skylights	Velux
Waterproofing	Tremco
Windows: Composite	Andersen
Windows: Vinyl	Andersen
Windows: Wood	Andersen

Interior Products

Product category	Best in Class
Appliances, Kitchen	General Electric
Appliances, Laundry	General Electric
Cabinets	Merillat
Faucets, Bathroom	Delta
Faucets, Kitchen	Delta
Fireplaces	Heatilator
Glass Block	PPG
Interior Doors	Masonite
Interior Molding	Brasco
Lighting	Thomas Lighting
Locksets and Hardware	Schlage
Paints, Stains, Finishes	Sherwin-Williams
Plumbing Fixtures: Bathtubs and Sinks	Kohler
Plumbing Fixtures: Toilets	Kohler

usually the first company that comes to mind.”

“It is the ultimate compliment to be voted Best in Class by remodeling professionals,” says Peter Dackowski, president and CEO of CertainTeed Corporation, which was named the overall best manufacturer in exterior products, as well as the winner in the vinyl siding category. “We couldn’t be more pleased. CertainTeed has worked hard for more than a century to build a trusted name in the business.”

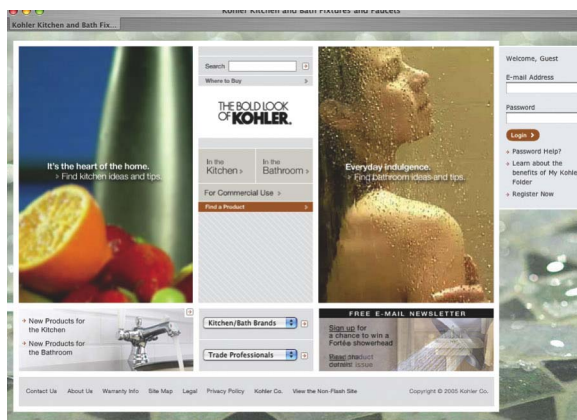
Ralph Howard, vice president of sales for Kohler, which remodelers voted Best in Class for its toilets and plumbing fixtures, agrees that a trusted name is key. “First and foremost, Kohler is an aspirational brand,” says Howard. “Consumers want Kohler. This has resulted from a strong commitment to bringing innovative, fresh designs to the market.”

Are product manufacturers mistaken about the weight their name brand carries? Why would only a handful of remodelers rank reputation and consumer preference as important in the decision-making process? This finding was just one of many intriguing aspects of the Best in Class survey. Let’s get into the specifics.

Quality is number one

Product quality, dependability, and performance consistently ranked as the most important attributes. Seventy percent of remodelers report that quality is important in choosing an exterior product; 74 percent for an interior product; and 67 percent for a behind-the-wall item.

Owens Corning, which remodelers voted Best in Class for insulation, focuses on providing customers innovative products with high reliability, comfort and safety. “We’re



From Kohler’s Web site, remodelers can find product information as well as tools, such as the Virtual Bath Planner, that they can use to enhance customers’ remodeling experience.

constantly reinventing our products and services to make sure we continue to be the number-one brand of insulation with remodelers,” says Bob Doyle, vice president and general manager of residential insulation for Owens Corning. “We couldn’t be more proud of this recognition, and we are committed to continuing to earn the reputation as the supplier of choice in the market.”

Another more subtle aspect of quality is product differentiation. “Remodelers prefer our brand for a variety of reasons, but two that come to mind are product differentiation and emotional branding,” explains Wes Co, corporate marketing manager for James Hardie Siding Products, which took Best in Class for its fiber-cement siding. “Product differentiation is critical,” he continues,

Behind-the-Wall Products

Product category	Best in Class
Caulks and Sealants	DAP
HVAC Systems	Carrier
Insulation, Fiberglass	Owens Corning
Insulation, Foam	Owens Corning
Insulation, Rigid	Owens Corning
Nails	Paslode
Oriented Strand Board (OSB)	Georgia-Pacific
Piping and Tubing	Vanguard
Plywood	Georgia-Pacific
Radiant Floor Heating	Uponor Wirsbo
Wallboard, Gypsum	U.S. Gypsum
Wallboard, Wet Area	U.S. Gypsum
Water Heaters	A.O. Smith

“because business-savvy replacement contractors realize that in a commodity economy, one of the most effective ways to differentiate your company from a commodity remodeler is by using superior building products that are timeless and enduring. Emotional branding is critical because replacement contractors understand that the Hardie brand aligns perfectly with consumer desires and

Miscellaneous Products & Services

Product category	Best in Class
Financing	Bank of America
Hand Tools	Stanley
Power Tools	DeWalt
Trucks	Ford
Vans	Ford

core values – to restore a sense of safety, security and character maintenance.”

Service

Customer service isn’t what it used to be. That could be why it is so highly valued among remodelers. This attribute came in second, with 47 percent of remodelers saying that service is most important in an exterior product and 41 percent in an interior product. In the behind-the-wall category, service was markedly less important, mentioned by only 28 percent of remodelers polled.

Service also encompasses product support, knowledgeable sales reps, a good warranty and timely delivery. All are key to product choice, say respondents. This is a category where the winning product manufacturers feel they really excel.

Merillat, named Best in Class for cabinetry, has adopted a proactive approach to understanding what consumers want. For example, the company recently conducted a research study, “Model Behavior: How people act, think and shop in a model home.” The study examined shoppers’ behaviors, as well as their likes and dislikes – especially related to the kitchen. It is something Merillat plans to continue doing to give remodelers a competitive edge. “Merillat discovered many

What Makes a Manufacturer “Best in Class”?

Percentage of remodeler respondents who rated various manufacturer performance factors as important to their choice of Best In Class

Attribute	Exterior products	Interior products	Behind-the-wall products
Product Quality	70%	74%	67%
Quality Products	65%	67%	56%
Product Performs Well	5%	3%	9%
Dependable	2%	7%	5%
Service	47%	41%	28%
Service	31%	27%	23%
Product Support	8%	12%	5%
Knowledgeable Sales Reps	5%	4%	0
Good Warranty Service	5%	7%	0
Timely Delivery	4%	4%	0
Broad Product Line	18%	16%	14%
Good Pricing	14%	15%	15%
Product Availability	11%	11%	21%
Durable Products	9%	9%	5%
Reputation/Customer Preference	7%	7%	12%
No Complaints or Problems	5%	4%	2%
One We Use a Lot	5%	3%	12%
Easy to Work With	0	5%	3%
Appearance/Design	0	4%	0



Andersen rates Best in Class with remodelers because quality is their top consideration when choosing a window vendor.

interesting and helpful insights, such as the percentage of shoppers ready to buy, overall time shoppers spend in the model home and the most-shopped cabinets within the home,” explains Merillat president Clay Kiefaber.

Remodeler respondents cited product support as an important part of service. As defined by product manufacturers, service comes in a wide variety of forms. But the most common form, however, is getting answers and technical help when it is needed.

CertainTeed’s sales support group’s 800 number is the front-line contact for all product inquiries. Nine employees staff phone lines from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. eastern time, five days a week. Providing technical support to both trades people and homeowners, they handle 130,000 calls a year, dealing with questions on R-values, melting points for vinyl siding, colors that are available and where the products can be purchased.

“We’ve gotten nothing but positive feedback on that group,” says Patti Rowland, director of building solutions and the sales support group. “Remodelers can be on a job site, yet get a question answered immediately.”

Another component of product support is training. Product manufacturers offer a diverse range of educational tools, including hands-on classes, online seminars and sales-training CDs.

Andersen Windows & Doors – voted Best in Class in all three window categories: composite, vinyl and wood – provides support through its dealer network. “The dealer is always key,” says Lisa Bien-Sinz, trade marketing manager for home improvement. “Dealers create a sense of community among remodelers. Builders are more competitive, while remodelers are more interested in information sharing: They want to understand best practices. Because they greatly value education and service, we empower the dealer to provide turnkey educational opportunities.”

Good warranties are yet another component of the service equation, and many manufacturers tout them as their strong suit: “It is all in our tagline,” CertainTeed’s Rowland says. “Quality made certain. Satisfaction guaranteed.”

When it comes to specifying behind-the-wall products, service is only slightly more important than product availability, which came in at 21 percent, versus 11 percent for both exterior and interior products.

Marketing support

Manufacturers are very generous in the area of marketing. For example, Georgia-Pacific has an extensive trade and consumer marketing campaign for its Plytanium Plywood that includes television, radio, direct mail and print



Merillat researches consumer likes and dislikes and transforms feedback into its products, such as its Classic Lariat Maple/Windmere Accent Collections.

and online advertising.

Online accessibility is another hot button with product manufacturers. “Our Web site provides additional tools for remodeling contractors to help simplify their jobs,” says Kohler’s Howard. “There, they can find just about any piece of information they need on our product – from a picture to specification information. There are also tools, such as My Folder and Virtual Bath Planner, that remodelers can leverage with their customers to provide an enhanced remodeling experience.”

Incentives

Manufacturers go a long way to provide incentives. Some of these programs cross-sell products or help pull through other items by providing a cash or travel incentive for volume purchases or for mixing and matching product lines. Most manufacturers prefer offering marketing help via Web links or marketing materials in lieu of financial rewards.

“We view it as a balanced approach,” explains Cameron Snyder, manager of brand public relations for Andersen Windows & Doors. “Certainly, there’s an incentive on pricing, but with Andersen you buy an entire package – service, product support, training – a multitude of things. You buy a product that is dependable, so you won’t have to worry about it.”

Wants vs. Needs

Remodelers and manufacturers agree that quality and service are important. Beyond that, their opinions diverge. Are product manufacturers really giving remodelers what they want – or only what the manufacturers think remodelers need? Do remodelers simply take the many programs manufacturers offer for granted?

The answer is probably somewhere in between. At the end of the day, if product quality and service aren’t there, the remodeler won’t buy – even from the most recognized names in the business. **PR**



BEST IN CLASS

Helping Remodelers Succeed

CONGRATULATIONS to all the great companies that won *Professional Remodeler's* Best in Class 2005. You can't buy an honor such as this — it can only be earned. The Best in Class winners who received this distinction represent those building product manufacturers that remodelers consider the finest in their categories. We hired an independent market research company to survey 200 remodelers chosen at random from our circulation, and when their votes were tallied, the Best in Class 2005 emerged.

These companies manufacture quality products, provide superior customer service, and consistently deliver on the high expectations of remodelers and their customers. In essence, they are truly helping remodelers succeed in their businesses.

Read on to learn more about some of the Best in Class winners and what they do to provide the industry's top remodeling firms with quality products and services.



Niles D. Crum
Publisher
630/288-8160

VOTED Best Skylights

VELUX SUN TUNNEL™ Skylights Brighten Your Profit Picture

Skylights can be one of the highest margin options you can offer your clients. And VELUX SUN TUNNEL skylights are among the easiest and fastest to install products in the industry — two to three hours max.

You can easily add natural light from above to places that aren't suitable for traditional skylights or that don't require a view to the outside world — closets, hallways, laundry rooms and second baths among others. VELUX SUN TUNNEL skylights are available with highly reflective rigid tubes or flexible tubes that can be installed quickly around attic obstructions. And the skylights can be a source of illumination at night with the addition of the optional light kit that installs inside the tunnel.



Flexible or rigid tunnels are available for fast installation with minimal time in the attic

VELUX SUN TUNNEL skylights are available in 10", 14" and 22" sizes. Everything needed for installation comes in one box, with additional tunnel available for longer runs. Impact models are available for hurricane-prone areas and the low profile dome design parallels the slope of the roof for an attractive appearance. The one-piece flashing design fits shingle/shake roofs and tile flashing is also available.

Encourage your clients to redecorate with natural light to save on energy bills and to give their homes a healthy, more inviting feel throughout the day. It's an inexpensive and easy way to add style, beauty and value to homes — and profit to your bottom line. Contact your local VELUX sales representative or visit www.veluxusa.com.



VELUX SUN TUNNEL skylights open confined spaces to the beauty and efficiency of natural light

*Light kits and impact models not available for 10" size

VELUX®
SKYLIGHTS



VOTED Best Kitchen & Bath Faucets

Delta Faucet Company: Innovation Through the Years

Over the last 50 years, Delta Faucet Company has been manufacturing products that enhance the look and functionality of kitchens and baths. From creating the first successful single-handle ball valve design in 1954, to the innovative e-Flow™ hands-free electronic bath faucet and popular Victorian® Collection, Delta Faucet Company has become known in the industry as a company that is always creating new solutions for everyone from plumbers and consumers to designers and remodelers.

Delta®, the company's flagship brand, offers customer-preferred designs that combine form with function. Through this brand, Delta Faucet Company leads the way in incorporating technology to benefit the needs of users and continues to be at the forefront of its product development.

This past year, Delta Faucet Company developed Delta® Simply PÜR in partnership with PÜR® Water Filtration Products, a division of Procter & Gamble (P&G). Simply PÜR is an all-inclusive water filtration system for the home, delivering bottled-quality water via a stylish filtration faucet. By removing 32 potentially harmful contaminants, Simply PÜR offers homeowners a less-expensive alternative to bottled-water as well as a variety of style, function and finish options to choose from.



Within the same year, the Company also launched its revolutionary H2Okinetic Technology™ which creates a warmer, more luxurious shower experience using less water. The technology enhances the user's shower experience by managing water droplet size and velocity, spray coverage and thermal dynamics — literally reshaping the water droplets. H2Okinetic Technology is available on the Delta Monitor® 1800 Jetted Shower Series and in the 1900 TempAssure™ Thermostatic Custom Shower Systems including The Michael Graves Collection™ and Victorian® Collection.

Products such as these prove that thoughtful innovation will continue to shape the future of Delta Faucet Company, enhancing the familiar and reinventing the experience users have with water.



DELTA

VOTED Best Exterior Trim

Fypon Precision-molded Urethane and Cellular PVC Products



Extensive Fypon urethane window and door trim add long-lasting beauty to this oceanfront home.

Whether remodeling a seaside home or an apartment complex in the mountains, contractors nationwide find that low maintenance Fypon® products are ideal exterior enhancements. Named the Best in Class product in the exterior trim category by readers of *Professional Remodeler* magazine, Fypon pieces gain their popularity based on their ease of installation and long-lasting beauty.

The impressive features of Fypon's precision-molded urethane products make them suitable to all climates and locations. Each piece resists rot, mildew, insect infestations, warping, decay and splintering. Their closed cell structure prevents water penetration and absorption, making it just as easy to maintain door and window trim in Florida as it is in California, Montana or Maine.

"I've used Fypon products for years on my homes," says Matt Pappas of Brandywine Developers. "I can go back to a home I put trim work on

five years ago and it still looks as good as the day I installed the trim. The product really holds up well over time. Best of all, each piece of Fypon we install has a consistent finish that paints up well without requiring sanding, priming or sealing. This means we save time and labor on the job site."

To enhance the exterior of a 4,500 square-foot oceanfront home in Avalon, N.J., Pappas used Fypon products to trim out dozens of windows and doors. "Using traditional wood moulding was out of the question for this project," says Pappas. "The constant attack of salt air and sea spray would have meant the homeowners spending most of their time scraping and repainting peeling wood trim. That problem is eliminated with Fypon's urethane products. There's no chance of rot, decay or harsh weather impacting the product."

Several states away in Florida, Rob Barnes made a similar decision to incorporate Fypon products on a home. Barnes took it a step further, using both Fypon's urethane and cellular PVC products. For his exterior, Barnes incorporated PVC Boards as the corners, window trim and frieze of the home. He wrapped beams and columns with PVC



PVC Boards from Fypon make up the corners, window trim and frieze of this home. Columns and beams were wrapped in PVC Sheets. Fypon PVC Beaded Boards accent porch ceilings.

Sheets and used Beaded Boards for porch ceilings in both the front and back of the home. Urethane window crossheads, louvers, trim and pilasters were also included on the exterior.

"Using Fypon urethane and PVC products together on an exterior is a perfect marriage for a remodeler," says Barnes. "Both products stand up to all types of weather, insects, rot and decay. Fabricating the PVC was simple. I found the consistency was terrific and easy to cut and shape. Wrapping the exterior columns with the PVC sheets was just as easy as installing the urethane window crossheads."

With a density similar to hickory and the working characteristics of white pine, Fypon Cellular PVC requires no special tooling. "I can't imagine an exterior trim package that's easier to work with and has more long-term benefits," says Barnes. "Even with the high humidity we experience in Florida, I know these products will never be affected by moisture, rot or insects."



Fypon PVC Boards and Sheets, along with urethane window trim, louvers and crossheads were used to enhance the exterior of this Florida home.

FYPON®

For more information, visit www.fypon.com or call 800-446-3040.



VOTED *Best Fireplaces*

Making a House a Home



Heatilator offers the industry's largest see-through gas fireplace. The 44" See Through model addresses the open floor plan trend by allowing remodelers to cast greater light and warmth between living areas.



Designed with a mind toward affordability and an eye toward beauty, Caliber™ gas fireplaces from Heatilator make it easier for remodelers to turn houses into inviting homes.

Remodelers rely on Heatilator® fireplaces more than any other brand. And with more than 75 years experience behind the Heatilator name, it's easy to see why:

- Heatilator provides remodelers a total hearth solution with mantels, surrounds and finishing materials
- Heatilator offers the widest product offering ranging from wood burning and gas fireplaces to electric fireplaces and fireplace inserts
- Heatilator fireplaces have the lowest service call rate in the industry. On average, less than .5% of products have reported warranty claims, a benchmark within the industry
- Heatilator is supported by the world's largest fireplace manufacturer, Hearth & Home Technologies, which provides a nationwide network for on-time installations and professional hearth service

Homeowners Know Heatilator

As the most recognized brand in the industry, homeowners look to Heatilator to make their house a home. Heatilator embraces this role with straightforward and dependable hearth products that provide a secure and comfortable home setting year after year.

By placing Heatilator brand fireplaces in the homes you remodel, you can confidently offer a comfortable hearth experience that's forged from more than 75 years of American ingenuity, hard work and an appreciation for the simple things in life.



1915 W. Saunders Street
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641
(800) 927-6841
www.heatilator.com

VOTED Best Locksets & Hardware

Schlage® Door Hardware

Finish the homes you build with a personal touch from Schlage, the signature name in quality and security.

Schlage's easily installed, flawlessly engineered products will leave a lasting impression for your customers and all of their guests. Your customers will be reminded of the quality and care you took while building their home every time they open a door.

Schlage® offers the perfect door hardware for your customers, who know the security, quality and reputation of Schlage. Our door hardware's enduring quality and exacting craftsmanship will ensure complete homeowner satisfaction, enhancing the reputation you work so hard to build everyday.

Schlage, reinforcing consumer choice in builders for more than 80 years.



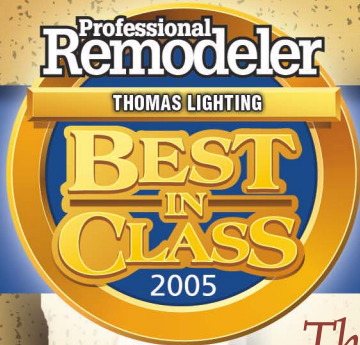
For more information regarding Schlage and our product line, please visit www.schlage.com or www.schlagelock.com.



The Schlage product line of interior and exterior door hardware allows you to enhance the security of your customer's home and coordinate other door entrances leading throughout the home.



Schlage offers a wide range of matching styles, designs and finishes to put the final touches on every room you remodel.



VOTED *Best Lighting*

Thomas Lighting is the brand most preferred by the large volume builders surveyed by Professional Remodeler.



Builders/remodelers know that when they buy Thomas, they will get excellent product, excellent representation and excellent service and support.

"We cover a broad range of lighting styles, original designs and price points," says Terry Fraser, General Manager.

"Builders/remodelers enjoy that they can get everything from a base selection of product up to high-end fixtures from the same local distributors and sales professionals."



Thomas Lighting works with builders/remodelers to define individualized lighting style and price point packages.

A national network of distributors and dedicated local lighting professionals assist in the product selections, help develop basic

lighting packages and upgrade programs, provide training and marketing assistance, as well as forecast and maintain builders'/remodelers' inventory requirements.

"We don't go to market with a standard program," explains Fraser. "Instead, we develop individualized packages for specific builders/remodelers and we structure our programs to highlight the services and support that they need." This



might include marketing or advertising support, brochures, literature, special rebate programs, design center or model home assistance.

Thomas' broad product families, such as the elegant Palazzo line shown here, include lighting products for rooms and areas throughout the home. As an additional value to customers, Thomas offers a distinct qualitative benefit as compared to competitive lighting products. Amongst the benefits are higher wattage ratings on many fixtures, more substantial glass, ample wire and chain, extra reinforcement welds on bound glass pieces, and Thomas' patented Easy Hanger feature for outdoor products. Fixtures are basically pre-assembled to speed installation. With products packaged in family groupings, it's easy for consumers to select upgrades and for builders to increase option sales.

VOTED *Best Decking*



"Best in Class" Award from Professional Remodeler

Trex Company has the widest range of composite decking and railing products, offering you and your clients unlimited design possibilities. It's just one way Trex Company helps you create the deck of their dreams. When asked who delivers the quality products and services to help sell and satisfy clients, more readers chose Trex Company over any other composite brand. We're proud to be recognized as "Best in Class" in the decking category.

Help create your clients' space with a choice of three unique finishes in six rich colors. Choose Trex Brasilia™ for the distinctive beauty of tropical hardwoods, Trex Accents® for a rich, woodgrain appearance, or Trex Origins™ for a smooth, contemporary look. For the ultimate finishing touch, new Trex Artisan Series Railing™ comes in Classic White, capturing the elegant look of painted wood.

Trex® decking and railing is known for its ease of installation and unparalleled workability. There's no need for pre-drilling, and Trex decking cuts and routs beautifully, curving where other decking can't. What's more, Trex products won't rot, splinter, crack or warp like wood, reducing call-back issues.



As the original composite manufacturer, Trex Company backs its products with an industry-leading guarantee. Plus there's the peace of mind you get from working with the brand leader you know and trust.

Trex Company doesn't stop at building superior composite products. We also work hard to make your business more successful through extensive training and contractor programs. The Trex home builder program supports you with showroom merchandising, model home benefits and other features. We also train and certify installers to become TrexPros®, ensuring the best possible workmanship. As a TrexPro, you'll receive quality referrals and leads from our extensive, national marketing campaign. Whatever your business focus, you'll be supported by the largest network of dealers and dedicated sales representatives in the country.

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Trex®

Create Your Space.™



VOTED Best Wet-Area Wallboard

*Are your
bathrooms
aqua-tough?*

Most residential remodelers back tile in tub and shower surrounds with water-resistant gypsum panels — “green board.” But remodelers, always at the vanguard of industry advances, are using something better. In a recent USG survey, more than 70% said they specify high-performance tile backers such as FIBEROCK® Brand AQUA-TOUGH™ Interior Panels from USG for wet areas. To understand why, consider the many advantages of this versatile, high-strength panel.



Superior mold resistance:

Scores a 10, the highest rating, when tested according to ASTM D 3273.

Reduced tile callbacks:

Will not warp, shrink or swell when exposed to moisture. Features a 20-year transferable manufacturer warranty.

Efficient installation:

Available in large 4'x8' panel sizes. Accepts multiple finishes including tile, paint and wallpaper.

Sustainability:

Contains 95% recycled material.

To learn more about building aqua-tough, contact USG.



Technical support: 800 USG.4YOU

Literature: 888 874.2450

Web: www.usg.com/fiberock

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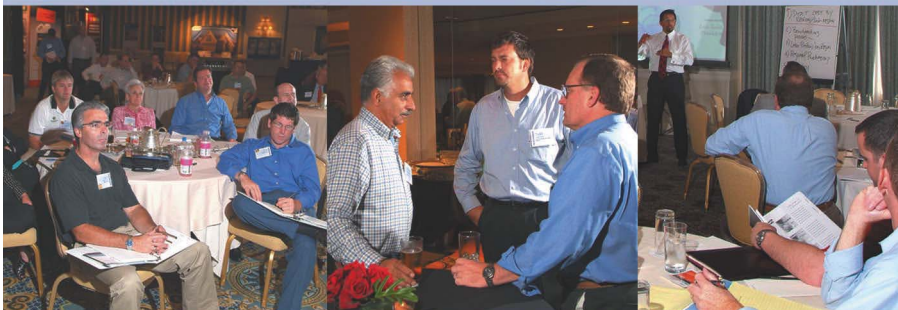
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VOTED *Best in Residential Plumbing Systems*

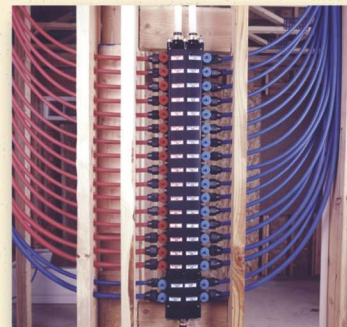
Vanex® Ultra PEX and the MANABLOC®

Vanguard's VANEX ULTRA multi-layer PEX offers enhanced flexibility, superb chlorine resistance and proven UV resistance. This combination of long term performance as well as the energy and water efficiency of the MANABLOC is an unbeatable choice for homebuilders.

Vanguard brings a UV-protected PEX into the market — a PEX product which has proven, documented performance in chlorinated, potable water systems after extended UV exposure. Tests show that after minimal exposure to sunlight, many PEX products which

have been promoted as "UV resistant" or "UV protected" experience dramatic reductions in chlorine resistance. Vanguard's ULTRA was one of the first and is still one of the few to obtain the NSF P-171 recirculation chlorine resistance rating even after 6 months of exposure to sunlight.

Vanguard consistently provides the highest quality in PEX Plumbing Systems available to the market ensuring long term performance for installers, builders and homeowners.



For FREE information circle 18



whole house

Self-Expression Showcase

Architect-homeowners put forth their own modern designs to renovate a personal display case

When the owners of this 1920s home moved from San Diego to the Berkeley area, they needed to make a statement. Architects deep into the modernist tradition, Rene Davids and Christine Killory set out to purchase a fixer-upper to showcase their design talents.

Their palette was a 2½-story, 2,700-square-foot home situated on a beautiful hillside in an older neighborhood. The dilapidated home had been foreclosed and vacant for almost six months, and the gradually moving hillside had cracked the foundation.

After consulting with their architectural colleagues, the owners brought in Alward Construction to do the remodeling. Alward retrofitted the foundation, installing drilled piers to stabilize the area. A 600-square-foot bumpout to

Aluminum fiberglass panels accent the red stucco exterior. The ground floor is a covered porch with steel columns that support the deck above.

the backyard added space to the kitchen and back entryway.

For the exterior, Killory and Davids wanted a color that would resonate with the redwood trees on the lot. They decided on a red oxide that was mixed directly into the stucco. Second- and third-floor aluminum decks and new horizontal windows take advantage of a direct view of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Inside, Alward removed the walls dividing the dining area, living room and foyer and shimmed all floor surfaces throughout the house to level.

“The project took about a year and a half, and with the owners living on site,



Before

Remodeler: Alward Construction Co., Berkeley, Calif.

Architect: Davids Killory Architects

Project location: Berkeley, Calif.

Age of home: 90 years

Scope of project: 600-square-foot addition; strengthening the structure; upgrading plumbing, heating, ventilation, electrical and security systems; gutting interior and replacing load bearing elements with massive beams; updating all fixtures, surfaces and cladding



To stabilize the third-floor pony wall, Keith Alward decided to add a stainless steel barn door with a stabilizing steel rod. The sliding door also closes off the master bedroom to the rest of the house. Installing the fireplace flush with the wall and without a mantel adds to the sleek design.

the job changed a lot over that time,” says Keith Alward. “But we were able to step up to the plate and serve our customer as real partners.”

For example, an inspector determined that the fireplace floor did not have the proper fire rating and that the slate the

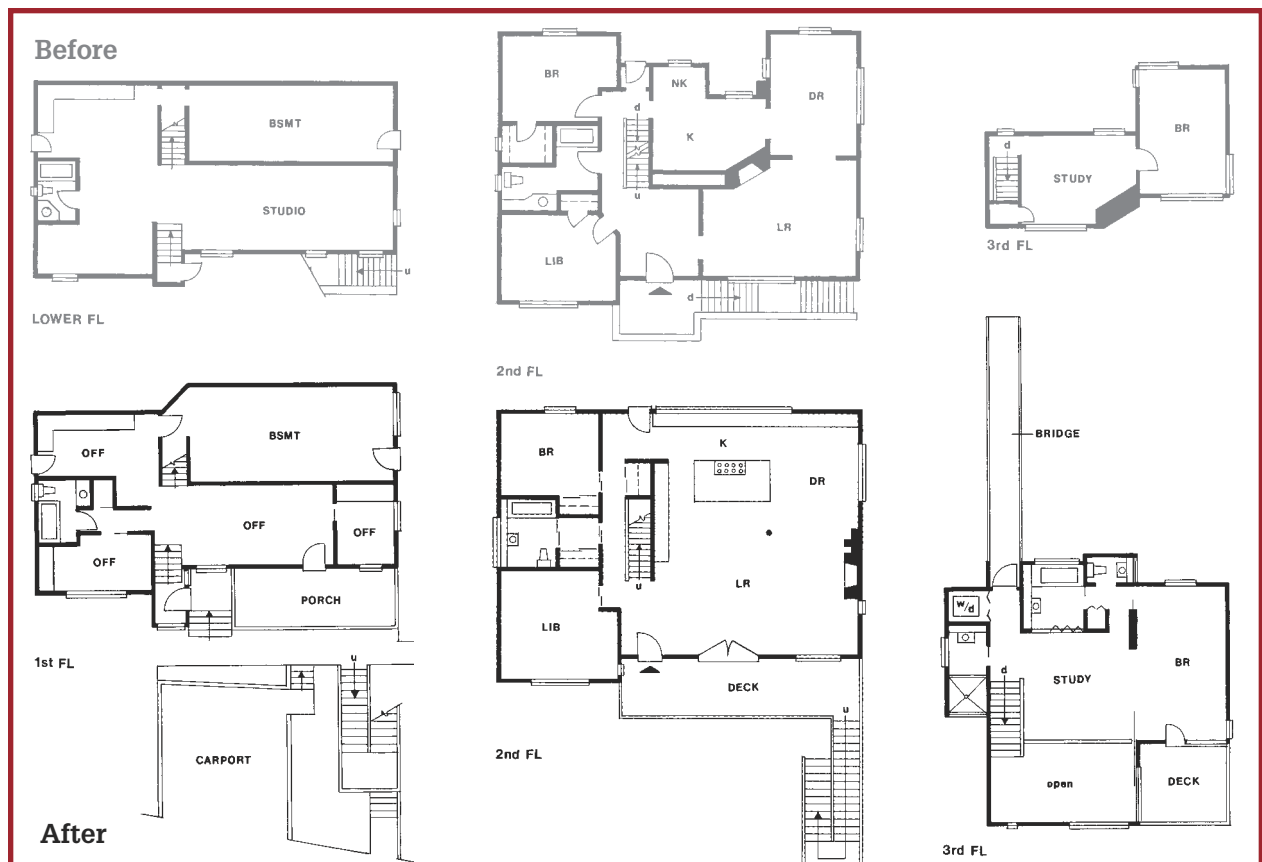
owners wanted must be removed. “Instead of just replacing the slate with a different material, we went underneath the fireplace and added the necessary fire-rated materials, and it passed,” says Alward. “This demonstrated to the owners our loyalty to their design.”

PRODUCTS LIST

Countertop: Sheldon Slate. **Doors and Windows:** Bonelli. **Exterior panels:** Panelite. **Fireplace:** Okells Fireplace. **Island:** Stainless Steel Kitchens. **Locksets:** Baldwin. **Plumbing fixtures:** Dornbracht. **Refrigerator/freezer:** Sub-Zero. **Siding:** ATAS International. **Trusses:** Trus Joist.

Through a salvage company, the owners found 60 large pieces of Vermont slate that had been used in a 1930s school as blackboards. The slate was installed as floor tile, countertops, a tub surround, a shower and walls in three bathrooms. Unable to find a slate cutter that fit their needs, Alward’s team did it themselves.

“I enjoyed participating with architect-owners, and I think that’s why we earn so many referrals from architects all over the Bay area,” says Alward. **PR**
— Renee Young and Jena Peterson



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of Southern Vinyl Manufacturing are
Setting the Standards.*

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Energy-Efficient Selections

With more and more people using more and more energy, we're in a high-cost energy cycle that's not going to end soon, if ever. So, it's time to help your customers curb those costs by offering them smart choices when you remodel their homes.

Energy-efficient choices can range from windows and solar glass to insulating sealants, ventilators and fans and

even alternative heating sources.

Although some of the solutions may be expensive in the beginning, they'll save money in the long run and be good for the environment.

The Consumer Federation of America recommends 10 ways people can cut their home energy costs. Some of their suggestions are: caulking and weather-stripping all leaky windows, making sure attic vents and ducts are

properly sealed, replacing traditional light bulbs and fixtures with compact fluorescents and looking for Energy Star qualified products and appliances. Energy Star products use less energy, help prevent air pollution and reduce energy costs in the home.

To view the complete list and find out more information on energy conservation, visit www.buyenergyefficient.org. **PR**



Tremco Barrier Solutions

The Horizon Foundation Finishing Systems include the Horizon Insulated System, a two-part insulation and coating combination, and the Horizon Coating System, a coating-only system. These systems provide moisture and thermal protection to the exposed foundation between the grade line and sill plate. Left unfinished, this exposed area can be responsible for as much as 40 percent of the potential energy loss from a home. The system eliminates the need for interior insulation draping, reducing the chance of condensation.

800/DRY-BSMT
www.tremcoinc.com
Circle 125



Abbaka

The Hy-Ex exterior, 1400 CFM ventilator produces no more than 60 decibels of ambient white noise and can be wall- or roof-mounted. To create an "architectural" design effect, the curved ventilator ranges just 7 to 9 inches above the surface to which it is attached. The permanently sealed ball bearings require no oiling. In case of thermal overload, the motor shuts off before damage and resets once the shutdown condition is cleared.

Finishes: Copper or bronze in metallic or matte finish; custom colors in powder-coated epoxy enamel

800/548-3932
www.abbaka.com
Circle 126



Integrity

Integrity Windows has enhanced its offering of polygon-shaped windows, expanding the maximum size by more than 60 percent. The windows are now available with a rough opening of up to 49 square feet, with lengths up to 110 inches on the window's longest side. Also available are polygon transoms that fit above all of Integrity's existing swinging and sliding doors, including three-panel doors up to 9 feet. The Low E windows qualify for the Energy Star rating.

Shapes: Octagon, pentagon, rectangle, trapezoid, isosceles and 90-degree triangle

888/537-8263
www.integritywindows.com
Circle 127



Reiker

The Reiker Room Conditioner is a heater and ceiling fan in one, distributing heated air throughout a room with no harsh heat or drafts. By mounting a conditioner in each room of a house, you can create a zoned home heating system without the mess or expense of changing the existing heating system. A remote control adjusts the heat, fan and light. The conditioner has a 54-inch blade circumference and provides 150 watts of illumination with only 30 watts of energy.

Colors: Swiss gold, textured white, brushed nickel, aged gold, Flemish pewter and ancient bronze.

866/473-4537
www.buyreiker.com
Circle 128



BASF

ZeroDraft one-component polyurethane foam sealants and two-component polyurethane insulating air sealants are used to seal and insulate hard-to-build areas such as windows, doors, penetrations, parapets and soffits. By sealing cracks, gaps, leaks and holes within the building, ZeroDraft foam sealants help lower energy demand and consumption in all types of buildings, prevent mold and mildew, and improve indoor air quality.

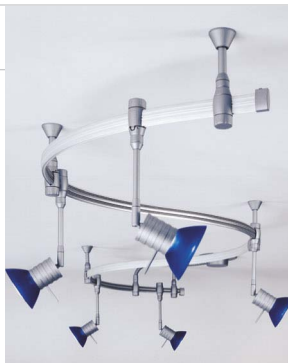
800/547-4004
www.basf.com/spray
Circle 129



Elk

Elk's Cool Color series of colored asphalt shingles feature 3M Cool Roofing Granules and meet Energy Star requirements. The Cool Color series offers earthy hues in both the Prestique line and in the Domain Winslow line (shown) of large-scale, wood-shake look shingles. These highly-reflective granules bounce back the sun's rays and slow heat buildup.

800/650-0355
www.elkcorp.com
Circle 130



Cooper

Halo offers the Lazer line-voltage flexible rail track lighting system, which includes 12 feet of flexible track accompanied by five directional halogen lampholders available in blue, amber and white. The energy-efficient line-voltage system requires no additional transformer. Five 50-watt MR16 line-voltage lamps are included.

770/486-4800
www.cooperlighting.com
Circle 131



Hy-Lite Products, Inc.

Hy-Lite's new Solar Block Plus acrylic block has a non-metallic, smoke-colored tint on the exterior half that helps block solar heat gain. Solar Block Plus meets the energy code requirements with a .40 solar heat gain coefficient (SHGC) when used in aluminum-framed windows. Window units meet the Energy Star requirements for the southern zone of the United States.

Frame options: Vinyl or aluminum

877/712-4013
www.Hy-Lite.com
Circle 132



Alkco

The Tabbi is a miniature surface-mounted linear fluorescent luminaire. A 120-degree rotatable light shield allows it to be used vertically or horizontally. It is especially good for situations where low heat is desired. Measuring 2 inches high and 2 1/4 inches deep, it uses 11- or 13-watt T2 linear fluorescent lamps with cool operating temperature, providing energy-efficiency and a long operating life.

Available in: White, brushed aluminum and chrome plated

866/50ALKCO
www.alkco.com
Circle 133



Panasonic

The WhisperGreen series of ceiling-mounted ventilation fans feature an improved DC motor that is at least 75 percent more energy-efficient than the minimum Energy Star requirements, the manufacturer says. The custom vent variable speed control delayed off timer allows the fan to run continuously at a preset lower level (30-110 CFM). The Smart Action Sensor will automatically activate whenever someone enters or leaves the room.

866/292-7292
www.panasonic.com
Circle 134



Whirlpool

This high-efficiency 24-inch front-load washer and dryer fit a variety of living spaces. With a compact size of 23 3/8-inch width, 33 1/4-inch height and 23 1/4-inch depth, they can be installed side-by-side, stacked or under-the-counter. Available with 90 feet of venting capability. The Energy Star qualified washer averages 14.2 gallons in the normal cycle and is rated for only 212 kWh annual energy usage.

800/253-3977
www.whirlpool.com
Circle 135

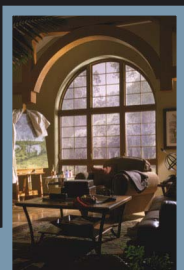


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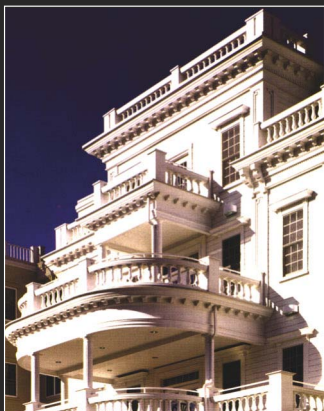
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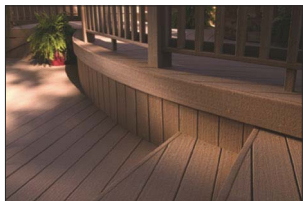
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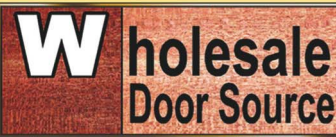
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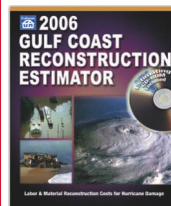
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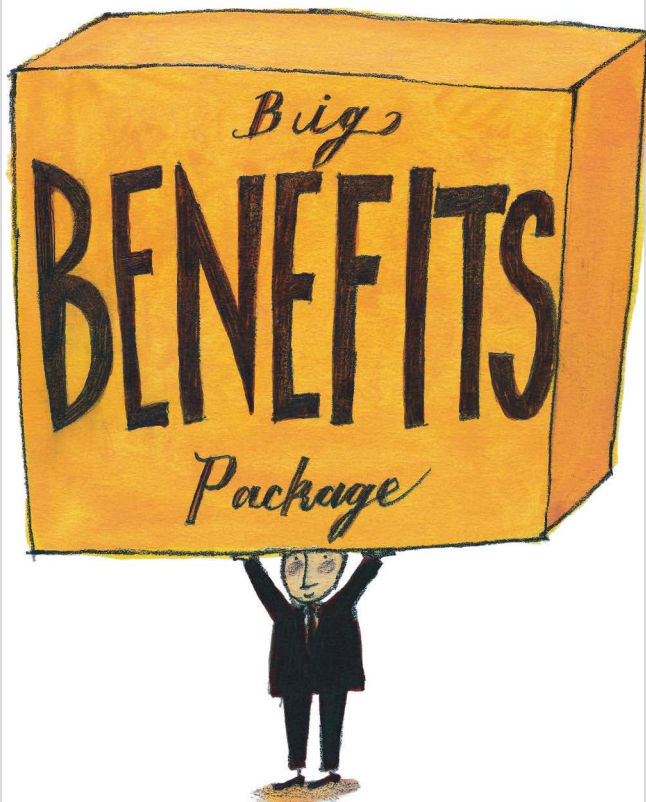
Treat your people well and you'll experience less turnover

Incentives 101

A great way to show your employees their hard work is appreciated is to implement a system of incentive-based rewards. Whether structured in the form of cash bonuses, merchandise or other types of perks, attaching them to performance communicates to your employees that results equal rewards.

Here are some keys to a well-structured system:

- Keep incentive pay separate from regular pay by issuing a separate check.
- Stay away from group incentives in favor of individual ones.
- Track performance daily or weekly to get employees to produce the greatest results.



Paid days off

Although you may be tempted to take a “bah humbug” attitude when it comes to providing your employees with paid holidays and vacation days, the benefit in your employees’ attitudes far outweigh the costs to your bottom line.

Even the smallest of remodeling companies are giving the big six – New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas – off with pay.

According to a survey by Hewitt Associates, a management consulting firm specializing in employee benefits, 28 percent of businesses provide 10 paid holidays per year. As for vacations, the standard is two weeks paid after one year of service, three weeks after five years and four weeks after 10 years.

Insurance woes hit California hardest

If you think you’ve been hit hard by rising insurance costs, wait until you hear what’s happened to remodeling contractors in California, says Louis Krokover of NewDay Development in Encino, Calif.

“Because of all the hurricanes, the earthquakes, the mudslides, the fires...all the losses against the insurance companies, the liability issue in California now is a nightmare,” says Krokover. “The governor bent over backwards and gave the underwriters the ability to basically change your premium in midstream. They’re literally forcing people to change how they do work and run their business.”

Krokover’s company has always subcontracted a lot of its labor, but because his insurance has risen so dramatically in the past year, he has gone from seven full-time employees to just three to save on everything from workers’ compensation to withholding taxes.

“This is the wave of the future because of what’s happening with insurance,” he says. “You can’t afford to have 10 or 15 employees in California anymore because you have to pay \$2,200 per employee on top of your normal premium. They’ve set the standard here in California and the other states are looking at this with open eyes. It’s going to go from the West Coast to the Northwest, and it will spread itself east.”

THE LIST

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Source: *Entrepreneur.com*

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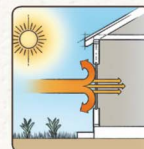
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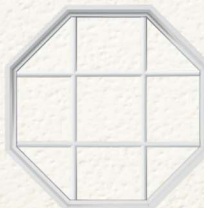
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