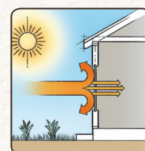


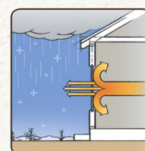
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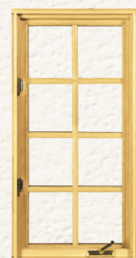


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VOLUME 9 NUMBER 12

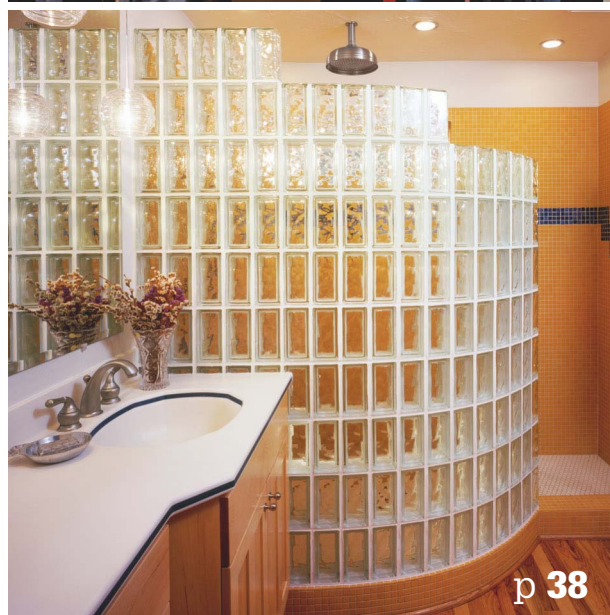
ON THE COVER:

**Company president Sal Ferro
of 2005 Remodeler of the Year
Alure Home Improvements Inc.**

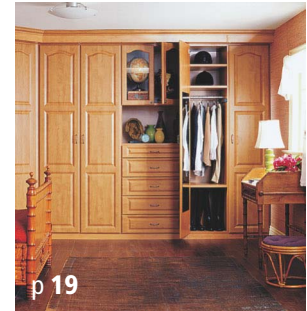
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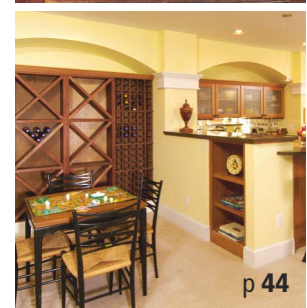
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Alure's emphasis on hiring quality employees allows for controlled, sustainable growth. *By Michael R. Morris.*

spotlight

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Anticipating the worst allows Olsen Homes & Renovation to plan for the best. *By Wendy A. Jordan.*

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Your article put into words

what our company has been
pursuing since its inception.

Defining gross profit

Up until almost two years ago, I would give lump-sum bids and not account for if I brought in some part-time labor. I work mainly by myself. I sub out electrical and plumbing. Anyway, I was encouraged by another tradesman that cost-plus is the best way to go — it is fairer for you and the client. And it has worked. I charge \$35 per hour plus 18 percent of total job cost.

In your article ("Pricing for Profit and Growth," September/2005), you mention 33 to 40 percent gross profit margin. What do you mean by that?

Mike McKay

*Mike McKay, Contractor
Lubbock, Texas*

Doug Dwyer replies: To produce a 33 to 40 percent gross profit margin you would have to mark up your material, labor and subs by 50 to 67 percent.

Let's say your total cost of labor, materials and subs for a job is \$10,000. You mark it up by 50 percent, or \$5,000. The sales price to the customer would be \$15,000.

Sales price: \$15,000

Cost of goods sold (material, labor and sub-contractor costs): \$10,000

Gross profit dollars: \$5,000

Gross profit margin: 33 percent of the sales price (\$5,000 divided by \$15,000)

A book I would recommend that covers this topic is "Professional Remodeling Management" by Walter W. Stoeppelwerth. You can order this book by calling HomeTech Information Systems at 800/638-8292.

The editors add: We also suggest "Markup & Profit: A Contractor's Guide," by Michael C. Stone, and Alan

Hanbury's online archive of columns at www.HousingZone.com/hanbury.

Quality construction sites

Ienjoyed your cover story, "The Five Essentials of Consistent Construction Quality," in the September issue. These five aspects hit home. Your article put into words what our company has been pursuing since its inception in 1983 and prompted me to e-mail for advice.

I've been trying to put our Web site together. My dilemma is to express the concepts outlined in your article without sounding boastful or unrealistic. As a two-person office with 10 employees, I only have so much time and talent. We've hired Web designers, which turned out to be a fiasco.

We're working with a designer now who is helping us from the technical end only. It's up to us to supply the written content. We need to come up with some quality writing, and I'm not that person. Many of the professionals out there don't understand carpentry, construction or the contracting business. How do I find a writer I can work with within our budget who also understands the concepts you put forth in your article?

Sheila Silvernail

*Garfield Builders LLC
East Canaan, Conn.*

Correction

In the October 2005 issue, we published an incorrect photo for Eberle Remodeling's silver Best of the West Award. The correct kitchen is pictured in this month's Portfolio, pages 46 to 47.

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Hiring Done Right

One of the biggest concerns facing the remodeling industry as we close the books on 2005 and head into the new year is how to find, hire and retain top quality employees. In this issue, we explore several ways to help you strengthen your business in this area.

In this month's Remodelers' Exchange, we present some great strategies for compensating employees – from benefits to flexible schedules – that you might want to consider, especially if high turnover is a problem area for you. Our 5-Minute Manager page looks at team-building techniques. And our cover story on Remodeler of the Year Alure Home Improvements Inc., of Plainview, N.Y., shows how this company finds, hires and retains good employees that fit their people-oriented culture. Alure's turnover is low, partly because training and promoting from within is high on the list of management's priorities. Once an employee is hired, he or she is given ample opportunity to fit in.

"Our turnover in salespeople in the last year is one person," says Alure president Sal Ferro, whose sales team totals 36. "I tend to be a little slower on pulling the trigger on [firing] people. There's three people right now that if we had pulled the trigger, we wouldn't have them, and they're all doing pretty good this year. We've got a great training program in place, but we focus so much on the culture end of it that if you're somebody we like and you fit in, you're going to get a chance here."

Alure primes the hiring pump by offering a \$500 bounty to any employee who recommends someone who is subsequently hired. This helps produce quality candidates who have a high likelihood of fitting the Alure culture. In the last two years, at least 10 hires have been made as a result of this program.

Alure's director of marketing, Seth Selesnow, is a prime example of how the company's internal training and promotion process works. Selesnow was hired as a sales facilitator to imple-

ment a training program in December 2003. Within two months, after management recognized his skills and five years of experience working in a customer service call center, he was promoted to supervisor of Alure's customer service team. A few months later, he was promoted to director of marketing because of his organizational skills and ability to multi-task.

In fact, because the company is so committed to training and promoting from within, Alure has never hired a member of the upper management team from outside the company, Ferro says.

"It's been an incredibly rewarding and educational experience in my first two years," says Selesnow. "And the camaraderie throughout the company is unlike any I've seen anywhere else in my entire career. The management team is incredibly talented and committed and does everything possible to ensure success for all employees and to allow people to best utilize their skills."

Lead-safe work practices revisited

In last month's issue, I incorrectly stated that more information on the NAHB Remodelers Council's study on lead-safe work practices could be found on the NAHB Web site. Instead, please contact Gary Suskauer at 800/369-5242, ext. 8327. **PR**



Michael Morris

Editor in Chief

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The Total Package

Competitive compensation strategies include performance-based incentives

When you're trying to woo new employees or keep your current crew satisfied, don't start and stop with hourly wages and annual salaries. For some people, health benefits make or break an offer. For others, flexible hours may be a deciding factor. Offering monetary rewards based on performance rather than increasing the hourly rate may provide greater motivation.

The fact is, with good people hard to come by, business owners need to be creative when choosing the quantitative and qualitative elements that go into employees' total compensation pack-

age. Bill Brinkman and Jeff Russell share the full-service perspective, while Pete Fitzpatrick and Rick Stover offer replacement contractor insights.

Tom: *Talk to me about who is paid hourly at your company and who is paid salary.*

Bill: The people that work out of the office are paid salary and the people in the field are paid hourly. Right now we pay salespeople a base salary and then 1.5 percent of the gross sale amount in a commission. They get half when the job starts and then half when it's completed.

If we're profitable, there's a discretionary bonus so we share part of the profits with everybody.

Tom: *Is the discretionary bonus paid quarterly or yearly?*

Bill: It varies. At least yearly, and if there's cash and we're being profitable at the time, it can be as much as quarterly.

Tom: *Do you use any consistent formula to come up with your discretionary amount?*

Jeff: We don't have a consistent formula right now. We meet with the employees once a quarter and they get information on whether things are tracking profitably. We do job costing on every project and track it throughout so that they know how they're doing on individual projects as well. The reason we let it spread out is sometimes you'll have a bad quarter and then you'll have a good quarter.

Tom: *When you pay 1.5 percent of the price, is that guaranteed or does the job have to come in at a specific gross margin?*

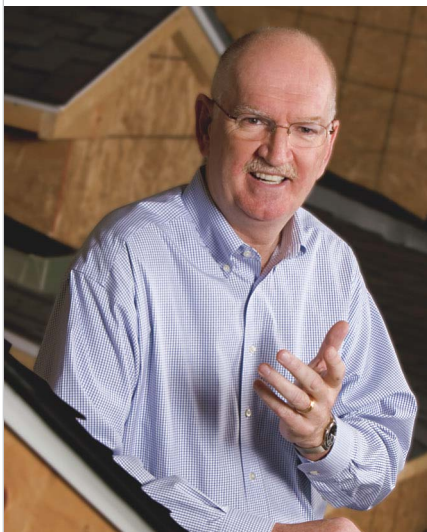
Bill: Right now it's guaranteed. We've only had salespeople other than myself for about 2½ years or so. We're considering having it tied to the gross margin but we haven't done that yet.

Tom: *Rick and Pete, who gets paid by the hour, salary and commission at your place?*

Rick: Our office folks are paid a salary. They have some monthly incentives that are tied to companywide revenue targets we set each month. Our carpenters and our warehouse staff – specifically our window and door installers – are paid hourly. They also have a monthly incentive. We set a revenue target, and if they hit it then they get a certain percentage of their pay in bonus.

Tom: *How often do they hit their monthly revenue target?*

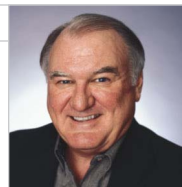
Rick: We're probably running at about 50 percent. We'd like it to be closer to 75 or 80 percent. Our siding and roof-



Pete Fitzpatrick, Owner, and Rick Stover, General Manager
P.J. Fitzpatrick Inc.

This specialty firm, owned by Pete Fitzpatrick, will install about \$17 million in roofing, siding, windows and doors this year. With locations in New Castle, Del., and Wilmington, Del., P.J. Fitzpatrick has about 65 full-time employees, including carpenters and window and door installers. About the same amount of people are regular subcontractors who install roofing and siding.

Photos by Ed Wheeler



Tom Swartz
Contributing Editor

ing folks get paid by the job. There is no incentive plan for them.

Tom: *Are they subs?*

Rick: Yeah. They work pretty much per square, and we add some things in for difficulty. Their incentive is to get it done efficiently and to get paid at the end of the job so that they can move on to the next one.

Tom: *Are you salary and do you have an incentive?*

Rick: I'm the general manager and I'm in a similar bonus plan to the CFO and production manager. We set up quarterly net income goals for the management team. Let's say the goal is \$100,000. If we hit \$100,000, we all get a full bonus. If we do \$120,000, then we all get 150 percent of our bonus. If we come in just a little bit below the target, then we get 50 percent of our bonus.

Tom: *Pete, is this a partnership or a C corporation?*

Pete: No. It's a dictatorship.

Tom: *I know those; I love them. So as the owner, you sit down with Rick and other managers and set the net profit goal every quarter or set it up for the year?*

Pete: We set it up every quarter, and we adjust it periodically throughout the year. The key to these goals is that they are achievable. If people don't think they have a chance at hitting these goals, then it's a disincentive.

Rick: If you do it annually you lose focus. Quarterly also allows us to adjust them based on the cyclical nature of the business. Being quarterly you can have a bad month and still recover by having two good months. Also, we know the first quarter we're going to make less money than in the fourth quarter.

Tom: *Bill and Jeff, do you have a qualified profit-sharing plan?*

Jeff: We actually use a professional employment organization, a PEO, to

do our payroll and a lot of administrative things related to HR and payroll. It has allowed us to have a lot of benefits that aren't always available to small companies. We have a 401(k) plan that our employees can take part in, and we have a discretionary match. We can match 100 percent up to 5 percent of their income. They can put up to 15 percent in. It is based on our profitability at the end of the year. We're hoping to drive participation. Only a third to 50 percent of our employees participate right now.

Tom: *Pete and Rick, do you do a set profit sharing and 401(k)?*

Rick: We have a 401(k) that matches 50 cents on the dollar up to 6 percent of contributions. It's not discretionary at

all, it's set. We don't view the qualified plan as a reward for a good year. We really see it as purely a tool for them to build for their retirement. I'd say more than 85 percent are participating.

Tom: *Is there additional profit sharing at the end of the year or end of the quarter, other than the quarterly bonus you have?*

Rick: No, although we do have what I'd call a pseudo profit-sharing plan for our salesmen. Our salesmen are paid straight commission; they have no salary. We also have some incentives for them built around volume. If in a certain month they sell over a certain volume, they get a couple extra percent. But we do job costing, and if their jobs exceed a certain profitability level, then we let them share in some of that.



Bill Brinkman and Jeff Russell, Owners
Brinkman Russell Inc.

Founded in 1989 by Bill Brinkman as a home improvement company, Brinkman Russell now specializes in three areas: full-service remodeling, basement finishing and remediation of water damage. Jeff Russell has been a co-owner since 1990. Located in Oakdale, Minn., the firm employs 23 full-time people and 5 part-time people and will do about \$4 million worth of work in 2005.

Photos by Steve Wait

REMODELERS' EXCHANGE

Tom: *There's also a downside. We sometimes get finger pointing when the salesman can show that it should make a certain gross margin and it doesn't. Then they say production botched it.*

Pete: You're going to run into issues like that, but we still feel that it's a healthy way to run the program and keep the urgency on production. You need to have some accountability.

Tom: *I want to know what non-monetary benefits you have used.*

Bill: We give vacation pay for our field guys. The longer you're here, the more days you get. Six holidays a year, 401(k) plan, healthcare. We pay half of either single or family healthcare. That's always fun when it goes up 12 to 15 per-

Jeff: They own their own vehicles.

Tom: *What about uniforms?*

Bill: I've got a variety of different shirts. We've had jackets, caps.

Tom: *Rick and Pete, do you agree with these, don't agree with them or are there some other ones that you have tried?*

Rick: Most of what we do is similar – cell phones, company vehicles for all the sales guys and our in-house installers. So we pay for the car, we pay for the insurance, and we pay for their gas. We've got about 45 trucks.

Pete: We probably buy between five and 10 trucks a year. Our sales guys have the option of a company vehicle or an allowance, and it's about 50/50. All of our installers wear uniforms and

increasing their incentives or bonuses.

Pete: We feel that the higher the salary or hourly rate, the less incentivized they are. If they just show up and they're going to make \$20 an hour, there's not a lot of incentive to produce. We'd rather pay them \$15 an hour and have them really motivated to produce.

Jeff: We have set up some pay ranges based on position. There's a lot of flexibility within that for a supervisor and/or Bill and I to set the wage, and we do have incentives. When they complete NARI or NAHB training there is some incentive to their pay tied to that, usually in the form of an hourly wage raise.

Tom: *What incentive programs have you*

When the field employees complete NARI or NAHB training, there is some incentive to their pay tied to that, usually in the form of an hourly wage raise.

cent a year. We usually have to adjust the plan every year to keep costs in line. We pay long-term disability, and they have the ability to buy short-term disability. We have education reimbursement. We do a lot of safety training.

We do have flexible hours. If a guy has to take his kids to school every day, he has to come in at a certain time, it can't change every day. But if one guy gets there at 7:30 every day and one at 8:30, we work with that. We have flex spending plans for health issues and daycare, a life insurance plan, cell phones for all our guys. We'll pay for half of the cost of tools with a \$200 limit, but we're flexible depending on circumstances. We pay our field guys \$14 a day for mileage reimbursement.

Tom: *No matter if they drive 10 miles or 200 miles?*

Bill: We're fairly localized in what we do. We've done a study of how many miles they drive and used that as an average. They obviously don't get it on holidays and vacations.

they're all drug tested and background checked.

Tom: *I think a safe environment is a big non-monetary advantage. We implemented random drug checks about a year ago. At our Christmas gathering, several wives thanked us because they thought that their husbands were working in a safer environment.*

Bill: We'll do background checks but we don't do drug tests.

Pete: We did drug tests about eight or 10 years ago, and it really cleaned up our shop. All of a sudden we didn't get this unexplained absenteeism – no call, no show.

Tom: *Are pay increases related to inflation, performance review, acquiring new skills or responsibility or anything else?*

Pete: We review our people twice a year. One time is non-monetary and one is monetary. If they've done well and they've kept up their end of the bargain and were better, then they're going to get a raise. If they haven't, they've got things to work on.

Rick: We try to base their raises on

had that didn't work, and why?

Pete: When we first changed our sales program, we worked out a profit-sharing program. Say a job was priced at \$10,000 and they sold it for \$12,000, then they would share in that extra \$2,000. We did that for about six months and found that a lot of the jobs should have made money but didn't. So the company lost, and the salesman made out like a bandit. To keep the company from being thrown under a bus, we decided that the profit sharing part would be worked out from the job cost. If the job really did make an extra \$1,000 or \$2,000, we share that with them. They also share if the job loses \$1,000 or \$2,000. If you have three jobs that make \$1,000 and one job that loses \$1,000, \$2,000 is in the pool.

Tom: *If the job doesn't make money, do they make any money?*

Pete: If they priced it right, they'll get their commission. If it lost money, they need some good jobs to bring it up before they share in the profit.



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Rick: You've got to make incentives easy to measure. If they're tough to measure or people don't fully understand them, then they're just not effective. Then you say, "Why am I paying this money if it's upsetting them rather than motivating them?"

Tom: *Jeff, is there anything that you tried and you found out really wasn't the best way to do it?*

Jeff: One of our incentive plans we termed a gift, and that way they didn't see it tied directly. I think they felt like they couldn't measure it real well and so there was some frustration over whether it was fair or not.

Tom: *As you grow, you better have the processes in place because if you don't, a lit-*

our industry is more stable. With the other benefits we offer, the rates we're paying have gone up over the years.

Pete: We have to match top pay around this area. We want the best people. We may not start them out at top dollar; we make them prove themselves. We're not going to upset our current labor force. If they're not as good as our top guys, they're not going to get paid what our top guys do.

Bill: When Jeff does reviews, he gives them a breakdown of their hourly wages or salary and what the other benefits are worth, so there's a bottom line number that is bigger than their hourly rate. If they're out looking in the papers to see what other companies are pay-

hands on something like that it helps you to judge how you're rating against your competitors and how your benefits stack up.

Then when you have an employee who says, "I'm not making quite enough," you can say, "We're paying the top of the scale." You can feel good and have a strong position, not just guess that you're paying the best.

Tom: *Pete and Rick, your advice to the guy out there who's scratching his head and saying, "I just don't get it."*

Pete: A mistake hiring somebody can cost you a lot of money, so it's very important to keep people on the bench. Don't interview and hire only when you need somebody. That's when you

If incentives are tough to measure or people don't fully understand them, then they're just not effective.

tle problem at a little volume all of a sudden becomes a big problem at a bigger volume.

Pete: Absolutely. You're trying to make people more productive and at the same time have them make more money. If it's not working, we've got to change it. So we monitor things and change when we need to.

Bill: We've learned that when we have a year with real good profits, we may hire somebody at a higher rate than we would have in a year when we weren't making as much money. Try to be disciplined and know that the year is going to have ups and downs. Set that benefit package so that it's not going to hurt you when you're a little bit slower. Make sure it's the right number for the person and for the situation, the area.

Tom: *Are field people commanding higher rates as we're in a tougher labor force environment?*

Bill: A lot of our labor is guys that are coming out of other industries. They've had to take a cut in their pay but they've been willing to do it because they think

ing, it helps them remember that the benefits of being with Brinkman Russell are above and beyond what they're getting per hour.

Tom: *What do you want remodelers to take away when it comes to incentives?*

Bill: It's one thing to get the person into your company, but we use the incentives more to keep people once they're with us. It's part of our culture.

Jeff: I know the PEO is not an option in every state, but there are payroll services that can help you provide benefits that are more like a large company. EDP has it in some states. It's like employee leasing. We co-employ. Our employment organization is on the hook for the payroll taxes, for the workers' comp. They provide all those things in one package to us with our payroll service, including healthcare.

Here in the Twin Cities, NARI does a wage and benefit survey every year. We take part in that and then track how we're doing compared to other companies in the market. If you can get your

make wrong decisions.

Rick: If you don't have incentive plans, get them. Some of the major changes that we've made over the last couple years are putting in bonus plans that incent people for the behavior that we want and the results that we want. You can attribute our success to that as much as anything else. I think there's no better way to change the mindset of people, drive your business around being goal-oriented, and have everybody shooting for the same goals, than an incentive plan.

Pete: It's important when you're rolling a plan out to let people know the spirit of the plan so that they know the end result that we're looking for. The spirit of the plan is more important than the plan.

Rick: We stress to our people that we try to design these plans so that we win together. In other words, when the company wins, you win too. You can't have a situation where the employees all win, but the company loses. **PR**



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Closet Systems

More stuff requires more and better storage



By Kimberly Sweet
Editor

In a fall filled with hurricanes, Supreme Court nominations, avian flu warnings and war, both Time and Newsweek made room in their pages for an issue that affects all of us: closets. More specifically, homeowner demand for storage space, and how that translates into big business in custom and semi-custom closets.

Five years ago, an NAHB survey of customer preferences showed that 30 percent of homeowners thought that master bedroom closets did not provide enough storage, while 47 percent

said that secondary bedroom closets did not provide enough space. As a result, homeowners want to make the best possible use of the closet space they do have, or create bigger closets.

Forget the white-walled rectangle with single rods and wire shelves. In fact, forget the word “closet” – they’re storage solutions, and they have multiple functions, features and finishes. Job prices can range from several hundred dollars to more than \$30,000.

The storage industry, which includes manufacturers, retailers and installers of a wide range of products, is about \$2 billion annually, estimates Kristina Ferrigan of the National Closet Group. The

Furniture-look closet systems eliminate the need for a separate room and even for dressers.

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group represents about 50 independent closet companies with \$100 million in annual revenue.

Franchiser California Closets, with 27 years in business and 95 U.S. locations, brought in \$208 million in 2004 and projects \$239 million for 2005.

“Everybody I’ve talked to seems to be growing about 20 percent a year,” says Ferrigan, who is director of marketing for Closet Works, a National Closet Group member headquartered

in Elmhurst, Ill. Like many closet companies, the firm designs, manufactures and installs its own products, usually working directly with homeowners. Builders and remodelers, however, are a growing portion of the business.

If you want to hire a closet company as a subcontractor, keep in mind that it can be hard to get much of a markup unless you lump the cost into an overall fixed sum contract for a large project. "It's like homeowners can sense the

Before you build that closet...

Designing a closet system can be as complicated as designing kitchen cabinetry, but with a separate set of rules. "There are design rules that are almost gospel for us that cabinet designers and architects don't know," says Kristina Ferrigan of Closet Works. Remodelers should know these guidelines and potential pitfalls:

Reach-in or wall closet dimensions

- Reach-in closets should be at least 24 inches deep.

"On average, a suit or jacket is 21 to 24 inches on the hanger," says Lisa Lennard of California Closets. "You don't want clothing rubbing up against the wall. It requires less ironing and it doesn't get damaged."

Remodeler Jim Edgar of Starcraft Custom Builders recommends 26 to 28 inches for coat closets, noting that heavy outerwear takes up more space.

- Return walls (from door jamb to side wall) should be no more than 18 inches. "When it's deeper than 18 inches, it gets into accessibility," explains Ferrigan. "With a 2-foot return, you can't reach back there."

Walk-in closet dimensions

- Walk-in closet sizes vary. Ideally, a designer first helps the homeowners inventory their closets and evaluate their needs.

Architect Doug Walter, of Doug Walter Architects in Denver, says 6 feet by 6 feet is a fairly common size but doesn't allow many bells and whistles. As a rule of thumb in remodels, he sug-

gests giving people half again as much closet space as they currently have.

Closet Works recommends a minimum depth of 5 feet to allow the door to swing inward and leave room for clothes to hang on the back wall. With a center island, the company suggests a minimum width of 11 feet.

- Return walls should be at least 24 inches to allow hanging on side walls.
- With a sloped ceiling, create at least a 4-foot-high knee wall. This is the minimum height needed to hang shirts, blouses, trousers or skirts.
- High or vaulted ceilings create room for three hanging rows. The right extension hardware (Walter and Edgar both recommend fittings from Häfele) makes the top row accessible.

Windows and skylights

- Think twice before installing either one in a closet. They look nice, but sunlight fades clothing. Plus, says Ferrigan, they're hard to design storage around.

If you do install a window or skylight, remember the following:

- Glass should have ultraviolet coating to prevent clothes from fading.
- Built-in blinds protect the clothes and provide privacy in closets that double as dressing rooms.
- Use space under the window for storage or a window seat if possible.

Lighting and mechanicals

- Put the light switch outside the closet. "You lose space, and people want to put the light on before they



Shelving should take up to 1/3 of the closet space, according to Closet Works. The typical double hang height is about 84 inches.

Photos courtesy of Closet Works

walk in," says Lennard.

- In a reach-in closet, mount the overhead light on the header, not the ceiling, to allow full use of the top shelf.
- In a walk-in closet, think multiple lighting fixtures. "Usually there's not enough lighting," says Lennard. "Consider what it's going to be like to tell the navy blue from the black socks."
- Locate vents, ducts, breaker boxes and access panels elsewhere. "It's usually in the secondary closets," says Lennard, "which are the smallest and hardest to get everything into."

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markup in there,” says Ferrigan. “They tend to go and do it after market.”

Another option is to have clients work directly with a closet specialist. Lisa Lennard, corporate program development manager for California Closets, says that she used to quote retail price to the homeowner but bill the contractor at a 10 percent discount, in essence providing a referral fee.

Owners of design/build firms may choose to keep the entire project in house, especially if they employ finish carpenters and use different materials. For example, Jim Edgar, owner of Starcraft Custom Builders in Lincoln, Neb., builds his closets with solid wood rather than particleboard or plywood. **PR**



A three-way mirror, multiple lighting fixtures and lots of shoe storage turn this Colorado closet into a dressing room. Photo by Don Riley Photography

What's cool in closets

Many of the trends in closet design follow what we've seen in recent years with bath and kitchen cabinetry. The most popular ideas include:

- White laminate, melamine or MDF remains the standard, but wood veneer is growing in popularity, according to Kristina Ferrigan of Closet Works.

“Wood veneer is almost always for a walk-in closet,” she adds.

- In a large master suite, some homeowners are turning the closet into a dressing room, including a floor-length or three-way mirror; a bench to sit down; and a dresser that doubles as an island.

“At the upper end, closets take on more of a feel of a dressing room or upscale clothing store with elegant wood built-ins, everything behind closed doors,” says architect Doug Walters.

These dressing room closets tend to be sited between the master bath and master bedroom, easily accessible from either room. The closets may

have doors, but they're not always wanted or necessary, depending on the elegance of the built-ins.

- The furniture look goes hand-in-hand with the popularity of wood and of dressing rooms.

Jim Edgar of Starcraft Custom Builders encourages his clients to opt for what he calls a “storage wall,” especially when he's remodeling a bedroom with reach-in closets and bifold doors.

“You've got a space 2 feet deep and 8 feet tall; let's fill that up with cabinets and drawers,” he says. “You don't need a door if you have a drawer.”

Going this route may also eliminate the client's need for dressers, armoires or wardrobes, leaving more space in the bedroom for a seating area or other needs.

- Homeowners want to customize the closet with accessories that use space wisely. Examples include baskets, jewelry drawer inserts, pull-out mirrors, drawer dividers, shoe shelves and belt, tie and scarf racks. For someone with a large collection of shoes,

ties or handbags, this may be the most important aspect of the closet.

“The more you can specialize accessories to the need, the better off you are,” says Lisa Lennard of California Closets. “It makes it more personalized.”

- Eliminate last-minute morning fumbling with a valet rod, which Ferrigan classifies as a “can't live without” item for Closet Works' clients. Mounted to one side, these retractable rods come in varying lengths and are used to hold dry cleaning, tomorrow's outfit or a garment bag for travel.

Edgar goes a step further, building “five-day cubbies” into his closets. Professional clients like them, he says, because it allows them to coordinate all their clothes for the week ahead.

“It's a selling point for these homes,” he says.

- To keep dirty clothes from ending up on the floor, design a laundry hamper or two into the closet. Most closet specialists offer this as a system accessory. Walters suggests incorporating an ironing center as well.



Doug Dwyer
Contributing Editor

Franchising: Is It for You?

A franchised business is not right for everyone, and not everyone is right to be a franchisee. Why? Let me share two stories that I believe will help you

determine the difference.

The first story is about a guy named Joe Committed. (OK, that's not his real name.) Joe purchased a franchise that provides remodeling services. Before awarding Joe the franchise, his franchisor identified Joe as a high-integrity individual with the desire to take his business to a new level of success and to focus on a niche versus being everything to everyone. The franchisor made sure Joe had the financial ability to set the business up for success. Joe agreed to follow the proven system, was willing to get out of his comfort zone to grow personally and professionally, and promised to attend their ongoing training programs to master the systems and skills needed for the next level of success.

After two years, Joe doubled his salary, maxed out his 401(k) benefits and recouped his initial investments out of company profits. Joe was better than average, but he still had not implemented all the systems and programs. With such strong results, he still had room for even greater success.

Franchising is not about perfection. It is about focusing on the right things that produce the desired tangible results. It must be mutually beneficial or it is not worth it for either party.

The second story is about "Stan Status Quo." Stan was awarded a franchise under similar terms with a couple of differences. Stan was a little tight on his

investment capital and didn't seem to be as motivated to take his business to the next level. He resisted following the system, did not often venture out of his comfort zone and only occasionally attended ongoing training needed for success. Needless to say, franchising did not work for Stan, nor did he become a good franchisee.

Joe and Stan had the same brand, system, coaching and training available. One excelled, the other failed. The benefit of a good franchise company is you typically can produce greater results in a shorter period of time and have a better exit strategy for retirement. The two main reasons we see someone invest in a franchise is they

a proven franchise system, you must work smart to produce great results. The best of the best in any field, from sports to business, hire consultants and coaching and invest in systems to go to the next level. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 representing peak performance, it is harder to go from a 9 to a 9.5 than it is from a 4 to a 6.

My recommendation is based on more than 20 years of experience in the franchise business. Don't do it unless you are 100 percent committed. To learn more, go to the International Franchise Association Web site, www.franchise.org and type in a search for "ABCs of Franchising."

Companies like Paul David Restoration and Four Season Sunrooms are exceeding \$200 million in annual revenues, along with kitchen, bath, handyman, siding and basement franchises. We live in a brand-name driven society. Think about the clothes you buy and

The question for anyone considering a franchise is, are you willing to make an investment and commitment?

say, "There has got to be a better way," or they feel they already have a great business but want to open a new division and don't have the time to reinvent the wheel. The question for anyone considering a franchise is, are you willing to make an investment and commitment as Joe did or would you resist following someone else's system and coaching as Stan did?

Whether you expand by reinventing your own business, by opening a new division on your own or by leveraging

the store you buy them from. Or the tools you buy and where you buy them. It is almost always a national brand product sold in a national brand store. As a friend once said with me, "We didn't invent it, but we better take it into consideration in our strategic planning." **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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Mike Gorman
Contributing Editor

Perfect Strangers

My wife loves to entertain; the more the merrier. She can make fettuccine Alfredo with one hand while preparing flan with the other. An intimate dinner at our

house may mean 10 people in the dining room or 20 on the deck. My wife is always as cool as the ceviche, even when the event is spontaneous or the guests have never been to our home before.

However, many people find having a guest in their home unnerving, an invasion of their space. Especially when the guest is a stranger.

What do potential clients experience when they invite a contractor into their home? If you've never thought about this, here's a little exercise: Next week, call a specialist from the Yellow Pages and inquire about remodeling your master bathroom. If you think of this as a blind date, you're pretty close.

Pay attention. Observe what it feels like to be standing in your client's shoes. Was your telephone call received professionally? Did you feel at ease from first contact? If not, are you any better when interacting with prospects?

Maybe you'll get lucky, and the *perfect* stranger will show up at your door. If so, he or she would inquire about slipping off their shoes once in the home. After introductions were completed, he or she would politely suggest that the kitchen table would be the best place to settle. The kitchen is a friendlier place than the living room.

The conversation would be skillfully guided to create an ambience of comfort and trust by effortlessly uncovering what this perfect stranger has in common with you. Once trust has been

established, you may be surprised to see how comfortably you will share intimate details of your life.

Only when trust is evident will the perfect stranger turn the talk toward remodeling. He or she will review the information collected during the phone call before educating you about all the things you need to know to make a wise choice of contractor. Then he or she might ask about your motivation for this blind date: "You mentioned when you

Maybe you'll get lucky, and the perfect stranger will show up at your door.

called that you need to remodel your master bathroom: Why are you remodeling?" Follow-up questions demonstrate continued interest and get you to think about the subject in new ways:

How long have you been thinking about this project?

What new products have caught your eye?

What do you like best about them?

What would you like to accomplish with your new master bathroom?

How have your needs changed since you bought the house?

Have you remodeled before?

If you were doing it again, how would you improve the process?

Your guest might produce samples of tiles or other appropriate materials to engage your senses and help you to

develop and share opinions. At times your replies will be noted or repeated by your guest, strengthening your feeling that he or she is truly interested. By the end of this conversation, you begin to feel perfectly comfortable showing this stranger through your home. Your guest will comment about art, photographs or collectibles in the home to learn more about you, taking key measurements of the space along the way.

After a thorough examination of your home, this stranger will lead you back to the kitchen table. He or she might sketch a floor plan, ask about fixture placement or show you photos of prior remodels and product choices. Depending on the extent of your

remodel, this might be when the contractor prepares an estimate, promises to call or return with a detailed estimate, or asks if you need more information to make a decision.

Soon your guest will share the price with you and maybe talk about such intimate details as financing in an effort to make it easier for you to buy. The remodeling process is loaded with intimacy between perfect strangers. Whoever educates best and earns the most trust wins the most business. **PR**

Former remodeler Mike Gorman delivers seminars and provides coaching on sales, marketing, estimating and business systems to remodelers and custom home builders. He can be contacted at: mgbok@aol.com, 800/218-5149 or www.techknowledgeonline.net.

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A photograph of two men in dark suits and light-colored shirts standing in a room filled with various tile samples on display. The man on the left is seated, and the man on the right is standing with his hand on the seated man's shoulder. The background shows shelves and walls covered in different tile patterns and colors, including solid colors and geometric designs.

Culture of Success



Alure vice president Bob Hyman, president Sal Ferro and CEO Carl Hyman (left to right).

Photography by Matt Peyton

Alure's emphasis on hiring quality employees allows for controlled, sustainable growth

By Michael R. Morris
Editor in Chief

When Sal Ferro, president of Plainview, N.Y.-based Alure Home Improvements Inc., sits down to interview a prospective salesperson, he has three things on his mind. Ferro, who still meets with every employee personally before they are hired, asks himself these same three questions about each and every candidate for a sales position.

"First, 'Would I buy from this person?'" says Ferro. "Second, 'Would my wife buy from this person?' And really what I'm saying is, 'Would a woman buy from this person?' And the third question I ask myself is, 'Would I mind if that person lived next door?' And I'll tell you, I've turned people away because I felt I wouldn't want them as my neighbor.

"They're simple, stupid, basic things, but it's really about reading people. In the end you have to have a gut instinct that says, 'This person fits what we're doing here.'"

It is this family-oriented approach to hiring that is the foundation upon which this \$38 million, 83-employee residential remodeling firm has achieved nearly 300 percent growth since 2000 while increasing its net profit to almost 12 percent. It is also one of numerous reasons – including its marketing strategies, sales techniques and business systems – that Alure has been named *Professional Remodeler's* 2005 Remodeler of the Year.

Family-oriented business model

Creating a culture where people are top priority is at the core of Alure's enormous success.



The management team at Alure is the driving force behind the company's customer-focused approach.

"It was a good culture when I got here, but it just continued to evolve," says Ferro, now a part-owner who was hired by Carl Hyman in 1988 as an assistant production manager. "I've always focused on people. Even when I was young, it was all about people. I came from a large family and Carl happened to like what I was doing.

"But I felt that in order for this company to succeed, we had to maintain a culture where it was people first – employees first – where they felt that there was an environment where they could grow or they could operate."

Alure pays a bounty of \$500 to any employee who refers a candidate who gets hired – \$250 when they start and \$250 after three months. In the last two years, at least 10 hires have been made as a result of an employee referral, says Ferro.

"That process ensures that you're recruiting people with character that will fit in to your culture," he says.

Alure's focus on creating a positive company culture is appreciated by its employees, whose survey responses have helped the company make *Professional Remodeler's* list of the Best Companies to Work For in the remodeling industry the past two years.

"The environment here is unbelievable," says director of marketing Seth Selesnow. "Ownership has done a great job bringing in the right people, team players only, and keeping those team players focused on the same goal, which is part of our vision statement: Provide Great Prod-

ucts, with No Hassles and Superior Results. Working at Alure is really like working with one big family."

Capitalizing on emerging markets

Alure was founded as a paperhanging and painting business in 1946 by Sol Hyman, who hired his oldest son, Carl, in 1971 and his youngest son, Bob, in 1976. After existing primarily as an interior decorating retail store and service company until the late 1970s, Alure added exterior painting, siding, roofing and windows to the mix.

But it wasn't until 1991, when Carl decided to close the retail decorating store because of increased competition from Home Depot and others, that Alure turned its sole attention to remodeling, including the burgeoning middle market kitchen and bath business.

"Back then the kitchen and bath department was focused on helping people design, sell and install kitchens in the middle market, which basically didn't exist back then," Hyman recalls. "Back then, the kitchen and bath dealers only wanted to do high end [remodels]. The attitude was, 'If you're not going to spend a lot on the kitchen, get the hell outta here.' That was the attitude of the kitchen and bath dealers, so it was a very ripe market, the middle market. And the upper-middle market was also being underserved.

"We made no money on it at first, but we learned a lot. I was running the business and Sal was the technical

hands-on guy – and an organized son of a gun.”

In 1997, Owens Corning introduced its basement finishing system and approached Hyman about test marketing it. Hyman saw the prefinished, insulated wall system as another opportunity for expansion, and he agreed to make Alure the country’s first franchise for the system. Alure estimates its Owens Corning basement franchise will do more than 400 jobs and \$16 million in sales in 2005. The company has been named the Owens Corning Franchise of the Year four years in a row (2001-2004).

In 2004, Alure began installing Temo Sunrooms, and in 2005 it added the Owens Corning aboveground room finishing system. Alure currently operates as three departments: Alure Designs (kitchens and baths), Alure Home Improvements (siding, roofing, windows and sunrooms) and Alure Basements (basements, attics and garages).

“The foundation of our growth was seeing markets and knowing when to get in and get out,” says Ferro. “We got into basements, and we started to hit on all cylinders. We had this team that had gelled and we were thinking, ‘Now we can get more out of this team exponentially,’ as opposed to getting this much from the team you can get this much more because things are starting to click.”

Each department has its own dedicated sales force, production department and service team, which allows each to operate with the efficiency of a specialty contractor, but with the wealth of resources of a large company.

“As we’ve grown, I’ve always used the word department and not division, which sounds like we’re divided,” says Hyman. “In the case of basements, if I had just added that as an additional product that everybody could sell, it never would have taken off. It’s under the same corporate umbrella, the same culture, the same structure, but we set up a dedicated sales team, production team, installers and so on. Without that, it wouldn’t have worked. We put people in place and invested in each of the businesses early on. We put somebody in charge of each them rather than saying, ‘Just add it to the mix.’ That’s absolutely vital.”

“What I’m most proud of personally is that I was able to recognize markets and know when to get in them and when to get out. We made a lot of money doing pressure washing and steam carpet cleaning and spray painting homes and selling paint and wallpaper, but we have transitioned this company in the last 10, 12, 15 years into what it is today.”

Leveraging the existing customer base

Another key to Alure’s growth mechanism has been the way in which they launched each new business from the customers of the existing businesses. Alure concentrates

Snapshot

Alure Home Improvements Inc.

Corporate headquarters: Plainview, N.Y.

Type of company: Residential remodeling

Cientele: Mainly middle-income families, but varies depending on product and services

Years in Business: 60

Departments: Alure Designs (kitchens and baths); Alure Home Improvements (siding, roofing, windows and sunrooms); Alure Basements (includes basements, attics and garages)

Sales history (total installed revenue):

2000 \$12,921,540

2001 \$15,075,327

2002 \$17,523,643

2003 \$21,243,670

2004 \$29,103,630

2005 \$38,000,000 (estimated)

Full-time employees: 83

Staff model: 3 executives, 9 department managers, 1 information technology, 2 marketing, 36 sales (12 kitchen and bath, 15 basement and 9 home improvements), production 17 (8 kitchen and bath, 5 basements, 4 home improvements), 4 service, 4 warehouse, 5 administrative/accounting, 5 sales support

its marketing on past customers for referrals and repeat business, which generates better quality leads and higher closing rates.

“Most companies that are selling \$42 million in volume, they need about 50 or 60 salespeople,” says Ferro. “We have 36 salespeople. Our average salesperson sells about \$1.2 million.”

Two of Alure’s core departments, Alure Designs and Alure Home Improvements, have a 68 percent repeat and referral rate, says Ferro. And although Alure Basements has just a 20 percent repeat and referral rate (mainly because it is concentrated in the newer territories of Westchester County and New Jersey), Ferro says that is still the highest in the Owens Corning franchise network.

“We’re a classic example of how to leverage your existing customer base,” says Ferro. “By leveraging the existing customer base, we could get into a new business rather quickly but also solidly. We were never these incredible marketers when it came to going out there and generating new business; we were incredible marketers in generating referral business and repeat business.

“It just allows you to be able to do so much more than somebody who’s gotta start from scratch. But, you know what, everybody can’t do it, because with that concept,



Alure's design imaging specialist Paul Schmidt shows a couple some different design possibilities for their exterior on the plasma screen located in the showroom.

you have to have something else to make it work. You've got to create raving fans. In order for you to leverage your existing customer base, if you haven't created raving fans out of your clients, you cannot count on them to refer you and repeat and continue to use you."

Perhaps the most important part of Alure's growth equation – in addition to capitalizing on hot markets and leveraging existing customers, – is providing quality customer service to the point where they exceed their clients' expectations on a regular basis. Alure provides a three-year warranty on all labor and materials, and each of its departments has a dedicated customer care staff in the office and in the field so callbacks are handled in an efficient and timely manner.

The payoff comes in its referral and repeat customers. Alure surveys all its clients internally and has a 90 percent "thrill rate." The company also has received the Owens Corning Excellence in Customer Satisfaction Award every year it has been given (2003, 2004, 2005).

"We don't want to just satisfy people, we want to thrill them on a regular basis," says Ferro. "We want to create a raving fan. Our goal is to create a raving fan of every client that we have. We consider ourselves a company that is very sales and marketing driven, while staying customer service focused.

"We're getting into a high volume area where when you start to get to the numbers that we're getting to you worry about starting to lose some of the quality and some of the customer service for the sake of numbers. We don't want to do that. That's so important to us, and we haven't lost sight of the importance of customer service."

Alure History

1946 Alure founded by Sol Hyman as paperhanging and painting company, with Hyman working in the field with two other employees.

1971 Sol's son and current CEO and co-owner Carl Hyman joins Alure full time.

1976 Alure opens full-service 6000-square-foot decorating center in Hicksville, N.Y.

1976 Sol's other son, current vice president and co-owner Bob Hyman joins Alure.

1988 Current president and co-owner Sal Ferro hired by Alure as assistant production manager.

1989 Alure purchases headquarters in East Meadow, N.Y., and builds showroom.

1990s Alure slowly withdraws from painting, paperhanging and decorating business to focus primarily on residential remodeling of siding, windows, roofing, kitchens and baths.

1997 Alure approached by Owens Corning to partner in development of sheetrock alternative basement finishing system.

1998 Alure automates its database and estimating system using CompuTool, a lead and job tracking software program it co-owns.

1998 Ferro becomes a co-owner after serving in roles of production manager, sales manager and general manager.

2001 Ferro appointed vice president/general manager of Alure Home Improvements Inc. and Alure Design Inc. and president of Alure Basements Inc.

2002 Ferro takes on role of president of Alure Home Improvements Inc.

2002 Alure expands basement department to include Westchester, N.Y.

2003 Alure expands basement department to include New Jersey.

2004 Alure launches new Owens Corning aboveground room finishing system designed primarily for attics and garages.

2004 A second showroom is added in Westchester.

2005 Alure purchases 31,000-square-foot building for new headquarters in Plainview, N.Y.

Sales and marketing strategies

The primer for Alure's referral and repeat business pump is the marketing machine now run by Hyman and Selesnow. Alure's entire client database receives a mailing at least every other month. The company's marketing pieces include semiannual newsletters, sales flyers, brochures and other direct mail pieces. Invitation-only



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Alure's Owens Corning Basement Finishing System franchise is estimated to do more than \$16 million in sales in 2005.

networking parties for past clients are held quarterly at the Alure showroom and include entertainment, hors d'oeuvres and cocktails.

Alure's ability to close sales benefits from its use of 20/20 Design software to create a 3-D model of a client's kitchen renovation, allowing them to visualize design early in the process. Alure also uses digital imaging on a plasma screen in its showroom to show its exterior remodel clients what their finished project will look like and help them choose colors and styles.

Bolstering Alure's marketing strategy is its unique Partner Points Program, which allows customers to earn all-expenses paid tickets for two to the company's annual Caribbean trip in the spring. In order to qualify, clients must reach 200,000 points. One point is earned for every dollar a client spends on a project with Alure and for every dollar spent on the first project booked by a referred customer of theirs. To date, 27 clients have earned vacations via this referral generating program.

Although not intended as part of its marketing plan, Alure's charitable work and community service is noteworthy for the attention it has garnered the company. These efforts include donations to breast cancer research, homeless and hunger centers and the Boy Scouts of America, among others. In December, Hyman will be honored by the Boy Scouts as its Distinguished Citizen of the Year.

The three projects Alure has completed for the ABC hit television show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" has gained the company great regional attention. Producers of the show first approached Alure in 2004 about doing a live 12-hour renovation of the apartment of two New York City firefighters. Ferro and Hyman were at first hesitant, but decided to give it a try. Three projects later,

Ferro is convinced it was the right thing to do, for more than just the marketing gain.

"We knew it was going to cost us some money," says Ferro. "And to be honest, the experience was mediocre. It wasn't incredibly fulfilling. But our team bonded like I'd never seen before, because it was one of the most challenging and emotional episodes I've ever gone through trying to get it done. It was an unreasonable amount of time to try and get it done, and it actually took us 24 hours to get it done."

When the producers asked Alure to participate in a second segment, Ferro was hesitant.

"At first, I said not really," Ferro recalls. "It wasn't nearly as fulfilling as some of the other charity work that we do. But the second time around we helped a family, Lucy Ali and her kids Paul and Kuran, and we changed their lives. I get chills when I think about it. It was an incredible experience for me personally, and emotionally I can't tell you what it was like to be a part of changing that family's life. It cost us a lot of money, but we got a lot of publicity out of it. It was a tremendous amount of publicity, but the money we spent on the show we could have spent to get that publicity. The valuable part was the bonding experience that our team gained from it. It was just an incredible experience for all of us."

Which gets right back to the main reason Alure has been so successful in the first place: its focus on people.

"Both Carl and I have been fortunate in life and we both have very generous mentalities to give back," says Ferro. "And you know what, it does come back to us."

To which Hyman chimes in, tongue firmly in cheek:

"And by the way, in his spare time he runs a home improvement company." **PR**

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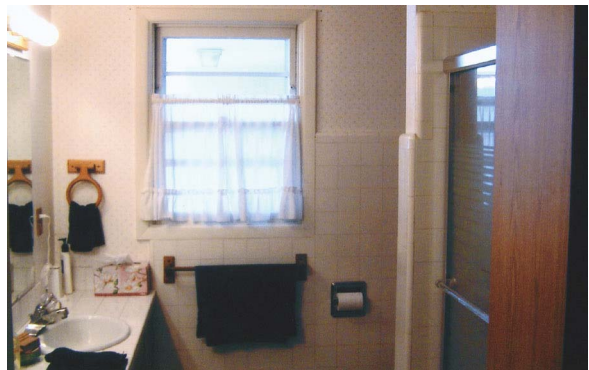


Improving the Odds

Anticipating the worst allows Olsen Homes & Renovation to plan for the best

By Wendy A. Jordan
Senior Contributing Editor

Jim Adams and his wife, Shirley Layne, are pretty easy to please, but remodelers were letting them down. The contractor who already had remodeled a secondary bathroom in their Salem, Ore., house was supposed to remodel their master bath, too. To their surprise, he never contacted them, either to check on the remodeled bathroom or to get started on the next project.



Before the remodel, a long counter filled one wall and the tub/shower hogged most of another. The tub liner was peeling off, and the homeowners found the aluminum-frame shower door hard to keep clean.

Removing the tub allowed Olsen to design a larger shower and give the sink more dedicated floor area so two people can use the room comfortably now. The new vanity is 36 inches high to accommodate the homeowner, who has a bad back, and features an integrated, larger sink.

After photography and head shots by EmeraldLight.com

A second contractor promised to bring over pictures from magazines to launch the design process. He never called, never came. Their expectations were on a downhill slide. Alex Olsen, of Olsen Homes & Renovation in Keizer, Ore., stopped that slide cold.

"After I met Alex I lost all interest in the other guys," recalls Adams. Among Olsen's selling points: a promise to get the job done on time or pay the homeowners \$200 for each day it ran over schedule.

"We set our own expectations with the owner," explains Olsen, "and hold ourselves to that standard." Risky business? No, just good planning. The way Olsen sees it, "Any surprise you come upon as a remodeler is probably your own fault."

He's only had to pay a client once.

Designed to please

Adams and Layne met Olsen in September 2003 at the Oregon Remodelers Association Remodelers Home Tour. They liked his work and liked him. A year later they met Olsen again, this time at the local home show. He explained the company's procedures for developing a design, preparing a reliable budget and schedule, holding weekly meetings with clients, and cleaning the job site at the end of each workday. Raring to go, the homeowners arranged to meet Olsen at their house soon after.

This meeting took place as scheduled. "When Alex said he'd do something, he did it," says Adams. Olsen used the meeting mainly to listen. Adams and Layne had some specific ideas, but needed design advice about others.

Top priority was to keep the room in the character of the 1950s ranch house. Other musts: Adding a walk-in shower with rain showerhead and a handheld shower on a slide bar. Replacing the existing window with a higher, horizontal one to offer more privacy. Finding a new place for the toilet that was out of center view from the doorway.

Enlarging the small room, which measures about 7½ feet deep by 8½ feet wide, was not an option. Still, the homeowners hoped Olsen

THE FINANCIALS

Launched 10 years ago, Olsen Homes & Renovation has seen dramatic revenue growth in the past two years. Little about the company, including growth, is unplanned. Alex Olsen ran the company solo until 2003 when his brother, Nick, came on board as a partner and they decided to grow the business.

The brothers wrote a new business plan featuring stepped-up marketing, a commitment to generate referrals by exceeding customer expectations, and precise planning of job costs and margins.

Estimating: After Olsen suggests a ballpark estimate that's usually within 5 to 10 percent of the final number for a given scope of work, the homeowners must sign a design contract.

On the Adams-Layne project, the homeowners paid a \$2,500 design fee, with 60 percent of the fee credited to the project upon signing the construction contract.

"If we can't earn their contract to go to business, we don't deserve it," says Olsen.

Olsen prepares the final budget for the contract once the homeowners have agreed on a design and selected major products.

Profitability: The Olsens typically budget for a 35 percent gross margin, often a little higher on smaller jobs. "We try to cost out every job so we are fairly close — within 1 to 2 percent," says Alex Olsen. "Wiggle room can prohibitively drive the cost up."

Gross profit for this job came in at 35 percent, hitting the standard but slightly under the 36.7 percent goal.

"We try to keep unforeseen costs, or 'educational costs' as we call them, under 5 percent," says Olsen. On this job, Olsen Homes & Renovation paid to replace the scratched mirror. "I couldn't certify that the scratch was the mirror company's fault," explains Olsen, "and I knew it wasn't Jim and Shirley's fault."

The floor, which had to be finished three times, accounted for the remainder of the slippage. The flooring contractor absorbed the cost of the first refinishing, because sawdust had accumulated under the finish. Olsen paid for a second refinishing to make the floor smoother.

"We try to make our margins, but not at the expense of customers," says Olsen.

Budget History

Initial estimate	\$28,000 to \$31,000
Final estimate	\$29,500
Final price of job	\$29,500
Cost to produce	\$19,175
Gross profit	\$10,325
Budgeted gross profit	36.7%
Actual gross profit	35%



Tucked behind the door for privacy, the toilet area includes a decorative wall niche and a cabinet that's wired to hold a nightlight.

could make it *feel* bigger and more luxurious. He scored points right away with several ideas to do just that.

Since the homeowners didn't take baths, he suggested

that they yank the tub entirely to make more room for the walk-in shower. To give the shower maximum space and create a dramatic first impression, he proposed moving it from the side wall to the wider back wall. This would also free a less conspicuous location for the toilet. And sculpting a shower enclosure with glass block would make the aesthetic contemporary yet compatible with the 1950s.

The homeowners' enthusiasm for these ideas "steered me to advise them on an overall budget of \$25,000 to \$31,000" for the gut remodel, says Olsen. They signed a contract on the spot for Olsen to develop a design and floor plans.

Problem prevention

After a few drafts, the plan located the vanity in the left front corner with the toilet opposite it. A glass-block wall scribes a roomy shower across the back of the room. Olsen planned the clearances with precision, assuring that the open door would not interfere with someone standing at the sink, and that the shower wall could curve gracefully and still allow a 2-foot entry opening.

Calculating the radius for the curved wall was the "most complicated" design challenge, he says. Literally placing 4- by 8-inch blocks on end to allow a more graduated arc, Olsen mapped out the wall and made a template. Guided by the template, he drew the curve on the floor, taking all guesswork out of making the curb.

After finalizing the plan, Olsen set aside a day to take the homeowners to showrooms. Once they chose their products, he presented a fixed-price construction contract for \$29,500.

"We never go into construction without the clients knowing exactly what they're paying and exactly what they're getting," says Olsen. Indeed, as with most Olsen projects that don't change in scope, this one had no change orders.

"The only reason we can offer an on-time guarantee," he says, "is that we do due diligence." Olsen analyzes the existing structure and makes sure all materials are in stock or ordered with delivery date before promising a completion date.

"We project the amount of time it will take us to do the job, and stick to it," says Olsen. "This doesn't mean we are necessarily the fastest," he adds. "Time is important to our owners, but not at the expense of a quality job."

The Adams-Layne bathroom remodel began on June 21, 2004, and was completed August 6, one day early. Project superintendent Leonard Brubaker made a commanding impression from day one, carpeting the work path with canvas mats and securely attaching dust-blocking zipper doors before doing demolition.

SNAPSHOT



Alex Olsen and Nick Olsen

Olsen Homes & Renovation

Location: Keizer, Ore.

Type of company: Design/build remodeling

Staff model: 4 office, 5 field

Sales history:

2001	\$400,000
2002	\$450,000
2003	\$600,000
2004	\$1.2 million
2005	\$2.6 million (projected)

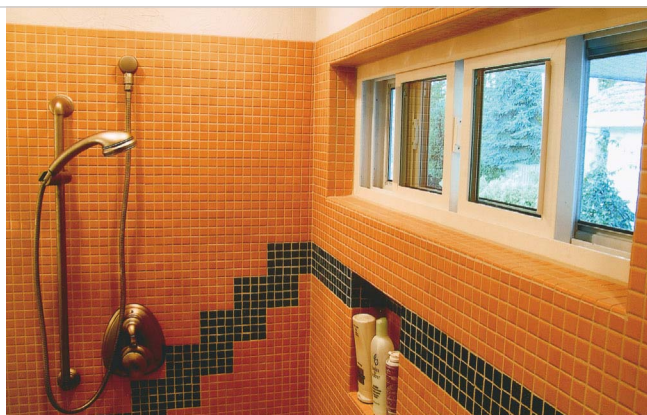
Annual jobs: 20 to 40

Workweek: 45 hours

Software: Microsoft Office, QuickBooks Premier Contractor Edition, Microsoft Project

Contact: 503/393-5067,
alex@olsenrenovation.com





Replacing a vertical window with a horizontal one offers more privacy while still allowing ventilation and light. Stepped up the shower wall, the blue-tile stripe accentuates the feeling of height and space. The handheld shower complements the in-ceiling rain shower.



Olsen had the new red oak floor finished three times to match the existing flooring.

“The first few days on the job set the tenor for the entire job,” Olsen explains. “If you’re there taking charge and mitigating problems at the start, the homeowners relax.”

Handling expectations

Even when there were occasional ripples in the road, “the

issues were somewhat minor,” says Adams, “and they just took care of them.”

Olsen planned for challenges and anticipated most of the problems. For example, the owners wanted the plaster on the bathroom walls and ceiling to match the unusual plaster texturing in the rest of the house. “I took close-up pictures of the walls in the house, e-mailed them to the plaster guy, and asked him to practice,” says Olsen.

Rot under the toilet? “Par for the course” with older houses, he says. “We tore it out and moved on.” (“If we lose a day due to rot, it’s likely we will pick up a day later in the job,” he adds. “If the rot was pervasive, we would have revised the completion date.”)

A jumble of old and new wiring? Cast-iron pipes? “We expected them,” says Olsen, and included updates in the scope of work.

Olsen set the bar high for quality control. The mirror was scratched, for example, so Olsen said it had to go before the homeowners had a chance to say anything.

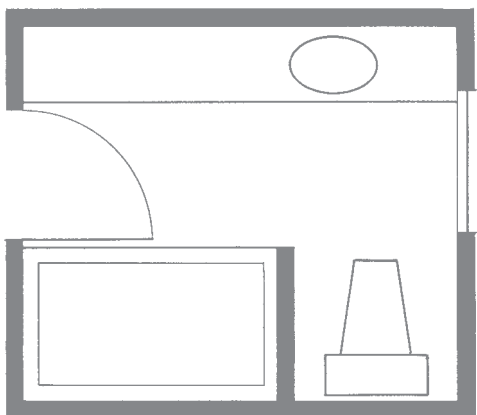
“I didn’t even complain,” says Adams, “Alex said, ‘This isn’t right’ and replaced it.”

The only problem that made Olsen nervous was the late arrival of a showerhead. “We were told we could have it in a couple of weeks,” he says. “Fortunately it showed up a few days before we were scheduled to be done.”

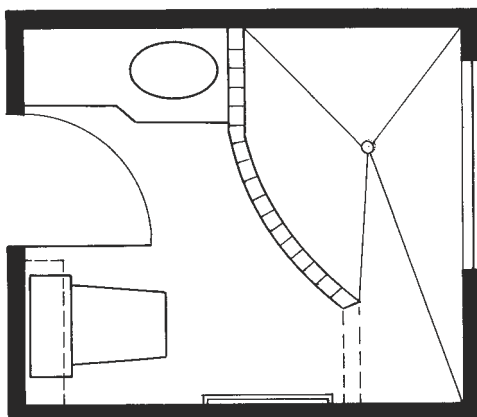
How do Adams and Layne like their remodeled bathroom? No surprise here. “It’s light, bright and fresh,” says Adams, and “seems twice as big as it was.”

Now Olsen’s getting started on a plum of a job – a total remodel of the couple’s kitchen. But that’s no surprise either. **PR**

Before



After



PRODUCTS LIST

Countertop and sink: DuPont Corian. Faucets: Moen.
Fixtures: American Standard. Flooring: Bruce. Fan: Broan-NuTone.
Insulation: CertainTeed. Lighting: Halo, W.A.C. Tile: Dal-Tile.
Window: Alside.

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basement

Light up the Lower Level



Transforming an unfinished basement into a bedroom suite and more

Two years after moving into their new 4,000-plus-square-foot Colonial home, these homeowners installed a backyard swimming pool. To make a direct route outdoors and create more recreation spaces for their family and many guests, they decided it was time to remodel the unfinished walkout basement.

"They did it right," says Craig Duroske, CR, president of Sun Design Remodeling Specialists. "They lived in their home for a few years to give themselves time to see how they wanted to use the house before diving into a large project."

Sun Design had already built a deck and cut a new doorway for these clients. Now, they charged the remodeler with designing a basement that reflected the look and feel of the upper floors as well

Glass-panel doors separate the exercise room, bathroom and bedroom from the living areas, providing privacy while allowing light to filter in and out of the space. The bedroom's curved glass-block wall serves the same purpose.

as the backyard. They also wanted the rooms of the relatively dark space to be filled with natural light.

The plan included a full bath and bedroom with walk-in closet for the couple's teenage daughter; an exercise studio with mirrored walls and a ceiling-mounted television; a kitchenette; a billiards room, including niches for storage and shelves for beverages and snacks; and a media area.

"Since the teenage daughter might soon leave for college, we conceptual-

Remodeler: Sun Design Remodeling Specialists Inc., Burke, Va.

Project location: Herndon, Va.

Age of home: Built in 2000

Scope of project: Finish a 2,630-square-foot basement, adding light and ensuring easy access to the backyard pool

ized the entire basement as serving in future years as an in-law's apartment or for use by someone who is limited to one-level living for an extended period," Duroske explains.

Columns, arches and distinctive ceiling elements not only reflect accents throughout the rest of the house, they also divide shared spaces and hide plumbing, mechanical and electrical.

"Our team is attuned to looking at problems as opportunities, which helps when communicating ideas to the clients," says Duroske.

The basement's existing 10-foot ceiling allowed Sun Design to use conceal-



The media area features a built-in entertainment center, a walk-in closet for games and storage, and surround sound with an in-wall speaker system that links to speakers throughout the basement. Each room has its own controls to regulate volume.



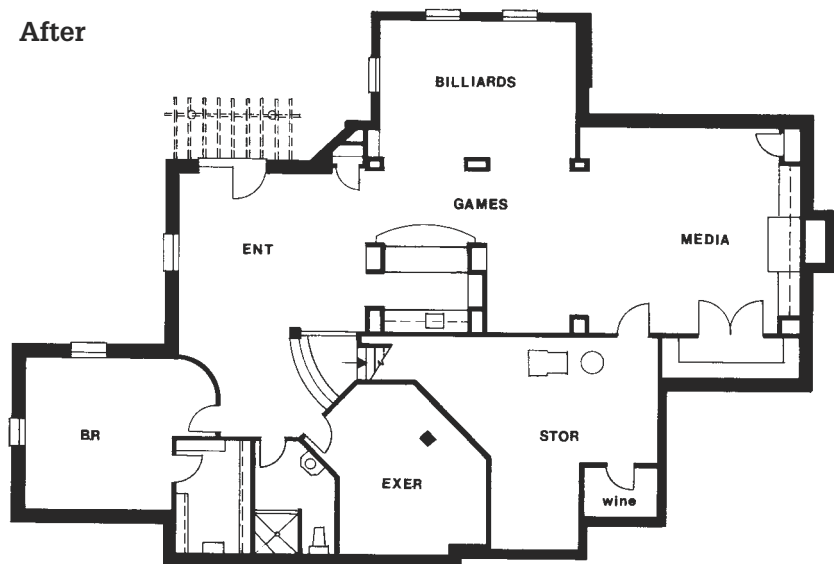
The kitchenette includes a sink, dishwasher, refrigerator, ice maker, wine chiller and built-in wine rack.

ing techniques such as a coffered ceiling without losing headroom. Arches in the kitchen and billiards room hide existing duct work and bulkheads. The curved shape is repeated in the stair landing, the kitchen counter, the glass-block bedroom wall and the tapered round columns at the foot of the stairs.

The lead carpenter transformed the existing steel support columns in the billiards room into columns that mimic those in other parts of the house. The theme continues out to the backyard, where Sun Design created an arched white arbor with columns at the sliding-glass door leading to the pool area. **PR**

— Renee Young

After



PRODUCTS LIST

Cabinets: Shiloh. **Ceiling Fan:** Emerson.
Countertops: Silestone. **Lighting:** Progress.
Plumbing Fixtures: Grohe, Kohler, Moen.
Tile: Magica

Spreading the Sunshine

Natural light topped the homeowners' wish list for the basement. Sun Design fulfilled their desire through clever use of exterior and interior glass. The home's lot, sloped from front to back, meant that the back half of the basement already had a few windows and a sliding glass door. Sun Design added a large window in the billiards room to provide a view of the swimming pool and add natural light.

To bring the sunlight as far as possible into the basement, Sun Design specified that all interior doors have special-ordered, semi-opaque glass inserts. Even when they're closed for privacy, light enters. To extend the theme, Sun

Design used the same glass in the doors of the upper kitchen cabinets.

When the sun goes down, 50 fluorescent recessed lights, plus pendant lighting over the bar and task lighting under the cabinetry, ensure that the basement remains brightly lit and user friendly. Using fluorescent bulbs increases energy efficiency and reduces heat generated by them.

Coordinating the electrical and sound wiring was one of the project's biggest challenges, says Duroske. "The full lighting and electrical design, especially on the lower level, is so important," he says. "We want to have all that decided before the project starts."

kitchen

Kitchen Conversion

How to get good looks for less



An arched ceiling-mounted range hood and cobalt pendant lighting provide architectural detail and visual pop over the peninsula, where cabinets once hung.

After photography by Izzy Schwartz Photography

Everything costs more in California, so doing a gut kitchen remodel for less than \$50,000 is more of a challenge than you might think. Kent Eberle, CR, CKBR, owner of Eberle Remodeling, had a few advantages when he designed this kitchen.

First, the homeowners wanted to keep the recently installed laminate flooring. They also wanted to stick to the existing footprint.

"They were fairly savvy; they had pictures and good ideas," says Eberle. The all-white kitchen had never been remodeled. Updating the look (and tying it into the floor and the maple hutch and dining set) was their primary goal. They also wanted to make it feel more spacious.

Eberle accomplished the latter objective through demolition, getting rid of the dropped ceiling, removing the

Remodeler: Eberle Remodeling, Sacramento, Calif.

Project location: Carmichael, Calif.

Age of home: Built in 1967

Scope of project: Update of 215-square-foot kitchen and eating nook

hanging cabinets separating the kitchen and nook, and taking out part of a wall.

A fresh appearance called for new materials and more color: stainless-steel appliances with black trim, black granite tile counters and a full slate backsplash with a patterned gray, white and black border fit the bill.

Using granite tiles for the counter instead of granite slab is just one of the ways Eberle managed project costs.

"We try to accommodate our clients' needs," he explains. "Usually I tell people not to scrimp on the cabinets, but



Before

countertops and floors can be more easily changed at a later date. We can still achieve the look and color they want."

He applied the same philosophy to creating a connection between the kitchen and family room. Making a

pass-through did the job and only entailed adding a 4 x 12 header. Removing the whole wall would have required time and expense.

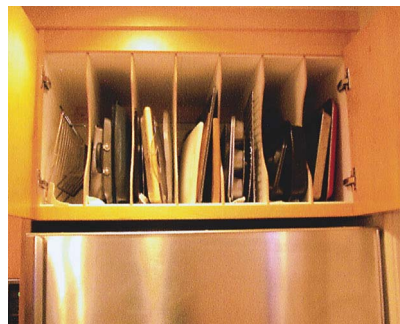
Eberle doesn't let clients buy their own products to keep costs down, except for appliances and plumbing fixtures. More often, though, his company purchases the appliances and fixtures, then adds 10 percent to the cost for installation. It's hard to apply a big markup to products that consumers can easily buy for less, but they understand the idea of having a professional integrate their installation with the rest of the remodel.

"We don't want to find out they have different installation requirements or pieces are missing," Eberle explains. "If we can't install it and have to pay the plumber to come back, then he's going to charge us for the service call. Most people seem to agree with that." **PR**

— Kimberly Sweet

PRODUCTS LIST

Cooktop: GE Monogram. **Faucets:** Grohe, Ladylux. **Microwave:** GE. **Oven:** GE Profile. **Refrigerator:** Amana. **Range hood:** GE Monogram. **Sink:** Blanco.



Rollouts in the base cabinets and tray dividers above the refrigerator maximize storage space. This custom cabinetry cost no more than stock cabinets, says Eberle.

New looks in lighting

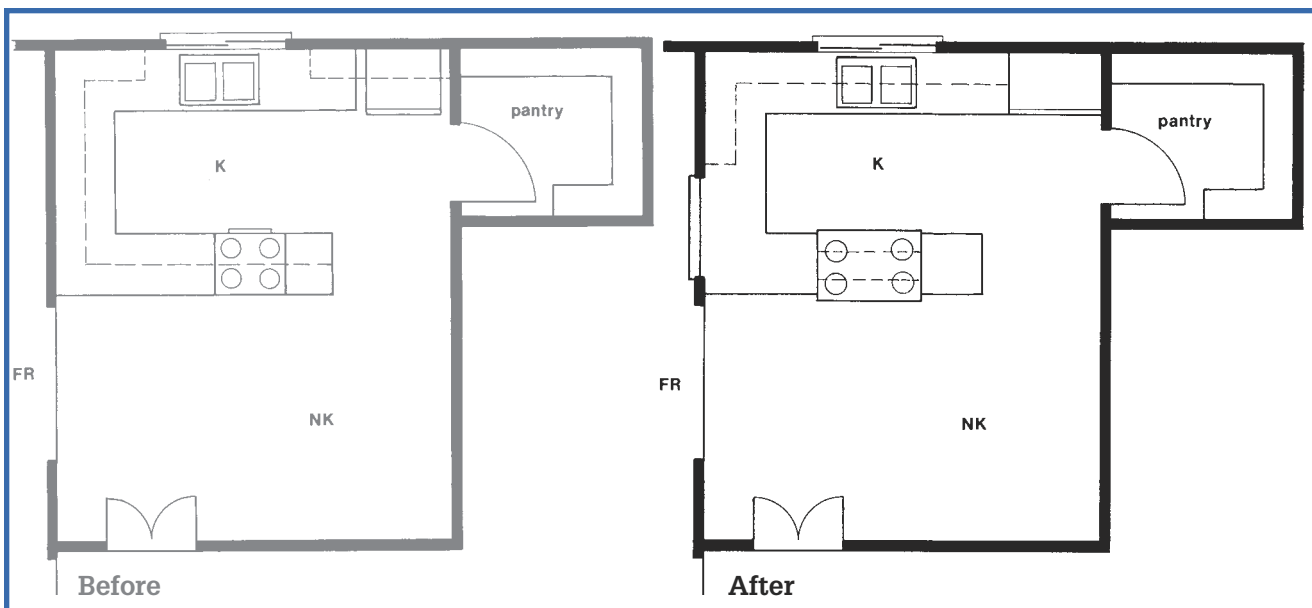
Many local homes built in the 1960s and 1970s sport dropped ceilings and fluorescent light boxes, says Kent Eberle.

"Getting rid of that was a big deal," he adds. His company's kitchen lighting plans often include recessed cans around the perimeter with small, low-voltage, halogen "hockey pucks" under the upper wall cabinets for accent lighting. For this project, he also used them on the maple wood window bridge.

Per the requirements of Title 24,

which regulates California energy-efficient building standards, Eberle needed to install one fluorescent fixture in the kitchen. (The standards became stricter as of October 2005.) He placed it over the top of the window bridge, where it would provide light but be hidden from view.

In Eberle's opinion, the spiral-shaped fluorescent bulbs used in most recessed can lights aren't attractive. As a result, he has begun using recessed fixtures with a lens inside to conceal the bulb.





Vinyl vs. Wood

There are numerous benefits to having a vinyl door. For starters, it provides the timeless beauty and elegance of a wood door without the worry or needless maintenance. No longer will you have to paint your doors annually, worry about warping or splitting of wood, or the possibilities of dry rot.

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Field Tools and Equipment

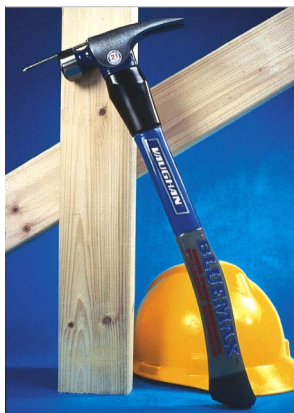
This is the time of the year for giving and getting gifts. Of course, it's also a good time of year to assess your firm's assets and inventory and see what needs to be replaced, restocked or supplemented. Either way, that means checking out the latest hand tools, power tools, toolboxes, ladders, truck and van accessories, vacuums, boots, personal protective equipment, fasteners and batteries.

Advanced technology, safety and environmental concerns play a large role in the innovations being introduced in these product categories. Lighter-weight tools have ergonomic grips designed to prevent wear and tear on the body. Other tools have attached dust collectors to minimize pollution in clients' homes and in your lungs.

At the same time, manufacturers are adding power, increasing durability,

and making tools more adjustable to improve functionality and your field employees' performance. New security features keep those precious tools from walking off the job.

So get out those markers, circle your favorite(s), and leave the magazine laying out on the table or desk. If there's more than one of you reading it, you might want to put your name next to your favorite. **PR**



Vaughan & Bushnell

Vaughn has added a curved fiberglass hammer to its line of Blue Max California framers. The curved design and shock-absorbing hollow core handle of this 21-ounce hammer allows a more natural alignment of the wrist and forearm to minimize fatigue and long-term risk of arm injury. All Blue Max hammers feature the Head-Start magnetic nailholder, an extra large, milled striking face and a high-impact overstrike guard for increased handle protection. The Blue Max series offers 11 framing hammers that range in length from 16 to 18 inches with head weights of 19 to 23 ounces.

www.vaughanmfg.com
Circle 125



Metabo

The BSZ 14.4V cordless drill/driver works for drilling, tapping, and driving screws in a range of applications. It has 20 torque settings and a drill setting with forward and reverse. This tool also comes with a two-speed gearbox, a keyless 1/2" chuck and an ergonomic, rubber-coated T-handle. The motor offers up to 487 inch pounds of torque and the onboard Variospeed electronics allow no-load speeds up to 1,400 rpm. The 4.6-pound tool comes with a battery and built-in case that holds two bits.

800/638-2264
www.metabousa.com
Circle 126



Earlex

The 800-Watt, two-stage turbine Earlex Spray Station 5000 is the newest in the line of HVLP (High Volume/Low Pressure) spraying systems. Lighter and quieter than buzz guns, the spray station applies a professional finish with less overspray and no visible brush marks. The adjustable gun nozzle allows for three spray patterns: round, horizontal and vertical. It comes with a 9.5-foot hose, a 5.6-foot main cable, two masks and weighs 12.3 pounds.

888/783-2612
www.earlex.com
Circle 127



Stanley

Stanley introduces the FatMax adjustable sawhorse which features four independently adjustable telescopic legs. The legs are adjustable between 32 and 39 inches and are able to carry up to 1,000 pounds. Rubberized grips on the feet maximize usability and increase stability on a variety of terrains and jobsites. Other features include an integrated pipe v-groove and two lumber slots to aid in various cutting, sanding and filing tasks and a folding tray to store tools and accessories. The 2 1/2" space-saving design folds for easy storage.

800/STANLEY
www.stanleyworks.com
Circle 128

Professional Remodeler

PRODUCT SHOWCASE



Paslode

Paslode's 8.5-pound positive placement nailer is ergonomically designed. It allows for accurate placement of fasteners in a variety of metal hardware applications. Features a 3/4" hardened probe that locates the hole in metal hardware while guiding the fastener and controlling penetration depth. The smart lever automatically adjusts to either 1 1/2" or 2 1/2" nail length to eliminate tool damage resulting from incorrect nail selection.

800/682-3428
www.paslode.com
Circle 129



Hitachi

Hitachi's 12" sliding dual compound miter saw has a patented laser marker and top-mounted digital LCD scale for cutting accuracy. Its compact slide system requires zero rear clearance. The sliding arm moves along fixed rails, enabling the saw to sit nearly flush against a wall on a bench without compromising the range of movement. The saw is powered by a 15-amp, belt-driven motor with 1,850 watts of power.

800/829-4752
www.hitachipowertools.com
Circle 130



Milwaukee

Job Site Armor is Milwaukee's new line of heavy-duty safety equipment, including safety eyewear, work gloves, hearing protection and respiratory protection. Job Site Armor features lightweight materials, a high level of adjustability and over-molded contact points that meet or exceed standard industrial safety guidelines.

800/SAWDUST
www.milwaukeetool.com
Circle 131



Duo-Fast

The SureShot 18-gauge narrow crown stapler weighs just 4 pounds and is designed for applications such as cabinets, doors, windows and underlayment. Drives 18-gauge 1/4" crown staples and has a staple size up to 1 1/2" leg length. Features a bottom-load aluminum magazine and a fastener usage window that monitors staple volume in the magazine.

888/DUO-FAST
www.duo-fast.com
Circle 132



Klein Tools

Klein has introduced a line of insulated hand tools that protect users against shock from energized sources up to 1,000 volts. The handles are constructed of a flame-retardant, impact-resistant outer coating and a thick, high-dielectric inner coating bonded to the forged steel handle. Handles also feature Klein Cushion-Grip material for greater torque.

800/553-4647
www.kleintools.com
Circle 133



ProVent

ProVent's weather-proof code box stores plans and displays building permits on the job site. Available in two versions: one for posting permits and address numbers and the other a lockable version that stores plans in addition to posting permits. The combination lock eliminates keys and provides easy access for inspectors, architects, engineers and subcontractors.

866/782-8862
www.pro-vent.com
Circle 134



Makita

Makita's 1" rotary hammer features a built-in dust bag and enlarged fan. Equipped with a three-mode operation switch for rotation, hammering with rotation and hammering only and a 360-degree adjustable chuck with 40 different locking positions. This lightweight, 6.6-pound hammer has 6.7 amps and 1.6 foot pounds of impact energy with 0-1,000 rpm and 0-4,500 bpm.

800/4-MAKITA
www.makitatools.com
Circle 135



Highway Products

The Gorilla Slide provides a faster and easier way to load and unload heavy items in pickup trucks, vans, service bodies and fifth-wheel trailers. The heavy-duty slide-out tray glides on sealed roller bearings on a galvanized steel track and can be locked in place at six points at 10" increments. Made of heavy gauge 1/8" aluminum, it is rated to handle 1,200 pounds evenly distributed.

800/866-5269
www.800toolbox.com
Circle 136

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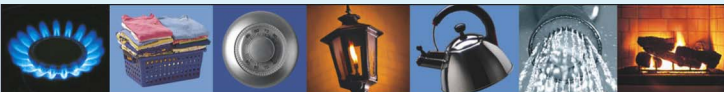
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Wolverine

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Colors: Black or aged bark

800/545-2425

www.wolverinebootsandshoes.com

Circle 137



McGill

McGill offers a line of portable ground fault circuit interrupters that safeguard power tool operators from shock and accidental start-ups. They can be used indoors or out with a wide variety of electrical devices to provide protection in 3-wire circuits. Available in 15- and 20-amp, 120 and 240V, 60Hz models, including an 11" cord set, tri-tap receptacles, inline GFCIs and a GFCI protected quad box.

888/832-0660

www.mcgillelectrical.com

Circle 138



Pamfast

Pam Fastening Technology's Copperhead line of wood screws are recommended for ACQ, CBA-A and CA-B treated lumber. Designed for use with Pam's P13 autofeed screwdriver system and available in collated strips of 50 screws. Copperhead screws use an anti-corrosion coating that withstands 1,500 hours of salt spray testing. Available in 2", 2½" and 3" sizes.

704/394-3141

www.pamfast.com

Circle 139



Starrett

The ProSite miter saw protractor allows you to achieve perfect miters without math. Made from durable, ¼" aluminum with a Teflon 'O' ring for smooth and precise operation. The red scale and arrow (miter cut) shows the exact miter saw setting for miter joints and the black scale and arrow (single cut) shows the setting for fitting a single workpiece to any angle. Available in 12" and 7" models (shown above).

843/797-2500

www.starrett.com

Circle 140



Bosch

Bosch BlueCore batteries provide up to 50 percent more cordless battery life, according to the manufacturer. The single and dual-bay chargers will charge the batteries within 30 minutes. BlueCore batteries are compatible with all Bosch cordless power tools. These NiCad batteries come in 9.6, 12, 14.4, 18 and 24 volts. The charger also charges older generation batteries.

877/BOSCH-99

www.boschtools.com

Circle 141



DeWalt

DeWalt's heavy-duty 12" double-bevel compound miter saw features a 15-amp, 3,600 rpm motor that provides extended power and durability. Includes adjustable miter detent plate with 11 positive stops. Sliding fences support crown molding up to 6⅝" nested and base molding up to 6½" vertically. Will bevel left and right 0-48 degrees with positive stops at 0, 33.9, 45 and 48 degrees by flipping the saw instead of the material.

800/433-9258

www.dewalt.com

Circle 142



Johnson

The new self-leveling multi-beam line generator projects four self-leveling cross lines plus one down-beam for precision measurements. Features 360-degree adjustment and a low-voltage indicator. Can be used with a laser detector, indoors or out. Includes a hardshell carrying case and locking mechanism to protect the inner pendulum during transport.

262/242-1161

www.johnsonlevel.com

Circle 143



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800/4-RIDGID
www.ridgid.com
 Circle 145



Hilti

Hilti's TPS Theft Protection System is available for many Hilti tools and can be customized to suit most needs. The system consists of a company card, activation key and electronic module inside the tool. After an initial code is set, the activation key electronically unlocks the tools. If the tool is stolen, it will lock after 20 minutes and cannot be restarted without the key. Also works with the Hilti serial number tracking system.

800/879-8000
www.us.hilti.com
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RotoZip

The RotoZip FS2

Flex Shaft attachment expands the diverse Spiral Saw system by converting the tool into a lightweight precision sanding, grinding, polishing, carving and detailing tool. FS2 quickly attaches to any new RotoZip spiral saw and works with a wide range of Dremel accessories as a solution for accessing hard-to-reach or tight work areas. A simple shaft lock button makes any 1/16" to 1/8" diameter accessory change quickly and easily.

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www.rototip.com
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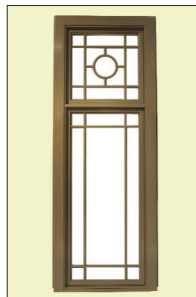
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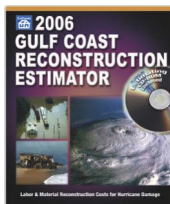


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This comprehensive guide to Gulf Coast reconstruction costs is based on the 2006 *National Renovation & Insurance Repair Estimator*, but with prices and area modifiers appropriate for repair work in the Katrina-Rita areas. The disk inside the back cover includes everything in the book as well as a program that makes it easy to use these costs to compile estimates. Most important, these costs are revised monthly during 2006 to reflect changes as they occur in coastal Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. 572 pages, 8½ x 11, \$59.00. Available 12/05. Online orders use Promo Code pr1105 and save 10%.

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Building Community

Volunteering unites and inspires employees

Bonding at home or Outward Bound?

Sure, falling backward off a platform and hoping to be caught creates trust, camaraderie and shared experiences that foster teamwork. A company fishing trip or holiday party can have the same impact.

Consider the value of a community service project. It offers the same benefits as these other techniques, costs less, proves commitment to the region in which you

work, demonstrates company vision and values in practice and makes life better for someone in need.

The employees of Alure Home Improvements Inc. volunteer individually and as a group for numerous charitable organizations. The congratulatory ads placed by Alure employees and subcontractors when the Interfaith Nutrition Network recognized President Sal Ferro for his contributions show their pride in being associated with a firm that gives back (see quote at right).

Your company may not be ready to tackle "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," but you can join forces with others via the national groups at left or local organizations that build ramps for the elderly or spruce up shelters.



"Your dedication and support of this worthy cause is an inspiration to us all. We are honored and proud to be part of your team."

— The installers, Alure Home Improvements Inc.

THE LIST

Groups that help provide shelter

Habitat for Humanity
www.habitat.org, 229/924-6935

Home Aid America
www.homeaid.org, 888/3HOMEAID

Rebuilding Together
www.rebuildingtogether.org,
800/4REHAB9

Communicate pride in your work

Doing good works is also a chance to generate goodwill and good publicity, even to differentiate your company from other remodelers. Making this part of your marketing strategy can be done simply and tactfully.

For example, Classic Homeworks, a Denver design/build firm, includes pictures and a description of each of its community service projects on the com-

pany Web site. A brief statement at the top of the page reads: "Here at Classic Homeworks, we are committed to being involved members of the community which has given us so much. In addition to providing our expertise and skill to our great clients, we feel it's important to also offer our services to those desperately in need of a home that fits their unique situations."

You also can send a press release or

make a phone call to the business or metro editor of your local newspaper if the company receives recognition for its service or completes a noteworthy housing-related project, such as volunteering labor and materials to make a disabled person's home accessible. Even a short mention is a chance to make a positive impression about your company's values and commitment to the community.

See us at Booth W1909
at the International
Builders' Show
Jan. 11-14.



Fiber-Classic® Patio Door System

Picture sliding patio doors made truly better.



Get the same superior design plus the smooth look of painted wood with our new Smooth-Star® Sliding Patio Door System.

Introducing our all-fiberglass Fiber-Classic® Sliding Patio Door System.

Now, the legendary quality and reliability of Therma-Tru entry doors comes to patio door systems. Our new Fiber-Classic® Sliding Patio Door System has all-fiberglass construction. It also features our new multi-point lock for truly better security, stylish handlesets, and Low-E insulated glass for increased energy efficiency.



Fiber-Classic® offers a rich, real wood look, but won't split, crack or rot like wood. Its system components are trouble-free and backed by a lifetime limited warranty. Design one of our truly better sliding patio door systems yourself, visit: www.thermatru.com/patioconfig

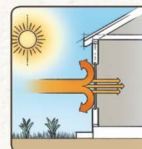
THERMA TRU
PATIO DOOR SYSTEMS

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JELD-WEN offers a wide range of windows and doors that include Low-E glass.



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



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

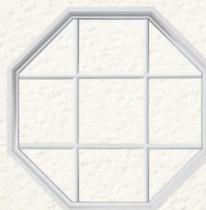
We were energy efficient before it was cool. Or hot.



Premium Wood French Door



Wood Casement Window



Vinyl Geometric Window



Courtyard Collection Steel Door

For years, homeowners have relied on JELD-WEN for energy efficient windows and doors. Now Low-E glass comes standard in our wood windows and patio doors, and in our Courtyard Collection steel doors. It's also an option in our vinyl or aluminum windows, and in our Premium Wood doors. Low-E is just one of a variety of energy-saving choices you can offer from a company that's been an ENERGY STAR® Partner since 1998. To learn more about any of our reliable windows and doors, call 1.800.877.9482 ext. 4315, or go to www.jeld-wen.com/4315.



RELIABILITY *for real life*®

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