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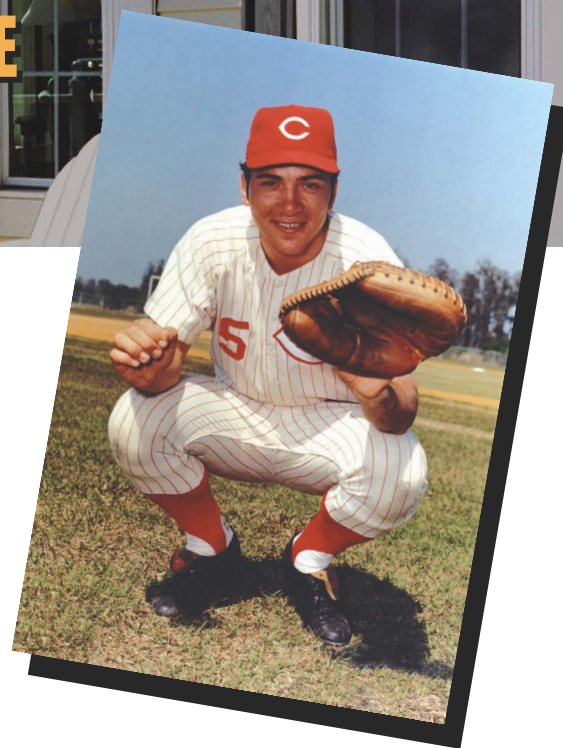


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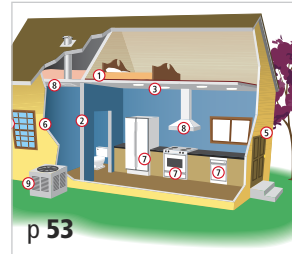
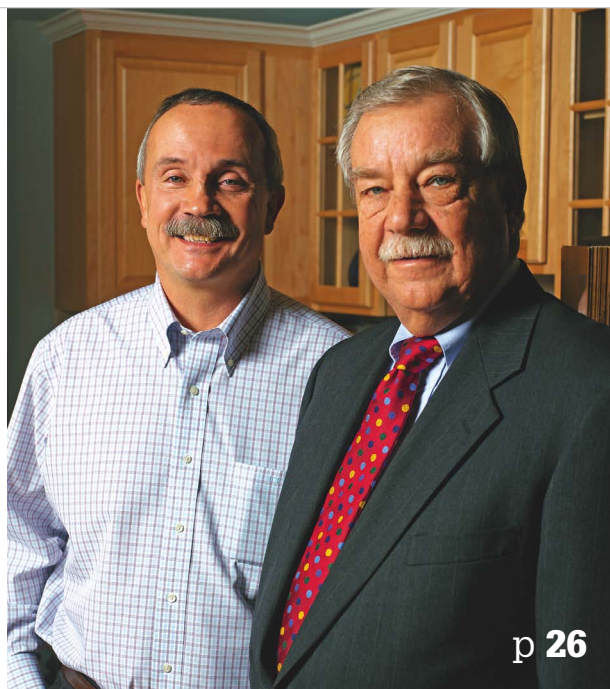
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ON THE COVER:

**John Fiderio, owner of
Fiderio & Sons.**

Photo by Dave Bradley Photography



www.ProRemodeler.com

New Look for *Professional Remodeler* Online!

Visit www.ProRemodeler.com to see the new look of *Professional Remodeler* online.

Your Opinion Counts

See page 68 for this month's poll. Post your response at our new Web site, www.ProRemodeler.com.

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I get several trade magazines

and look over each issue for...useful articles.
Your magazine is one of the better ones.

Curbless construction

On page 18 of the universal design article in your November issue, you show a picture of a curbless shower. Our firm has been contracted to create such a shower. We would appreciate it if you have any further information or could point us in the right direction to obtain more information on how to design and construct such a unit.

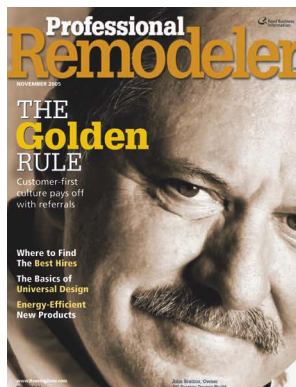
Bob Harris

*Harris & Harris Professionals
Queens, N.Y.*

The editors reply: North Carolina State University's Center for Universal Design offers the booklet "Curbless Showers: An Installation Guide." It is available for download as a PDF file on their Web site, www.design.ncsu.edu/cud.

You say remodeler, I say remodeler

I've been in the business for almost 30 years and enjoy your magazine. I have



a spelling question regarding your column ("Editor's Notebook") in the September issue. The "Twin Cities"...Remodelers Showcase" and the "Home Builders Association of Greater Chicago Remodelers Council" are spelled with "or" at the end instead of "er." I am not familiar with this spelling and wondered, what's up? Please clarify, as I write about remodeling.

Rick MacKay

Author

Psychotic Remodeling

The editors reply:

Remodeler is a trademark that identifies NAHB members who are active in

residential and commercial remodeling and members of the Remodelers Council.

More news on lead

Thanks for your informative article in the recent *Professional Remodeler* (November) regarding lead-safe work practices. I was not able to find the info at www.nahb.org.

If you can send me the link, I would appreciate it. I am very interested in this topic in light of the fact that we do about \$1 million a year in gross sales almost exclusively as remodelers.

I get several trade magazines and look over each issue for interesting and useful articles. Your magazine is one of the better ones.

Dave Greenetz

*Dave Greenetz Construction
Yuba City, Calif.*

The editors reply: For more information on lead-safe work practices, contact Gary Suskauer at 800/369-5242, ext. 8327.

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Introducing ProRemodeler.com

Beginning January 3, *Professional Remodeler* launched its new home page – www.ProRemodeler.com – the place to go for in-depth articles, information and advice on innovative best practices and solutions in all areas of your business. Log on and cast your vote in our first ever online reader poll (see page 68). Look for more changes in the coming months, as we unveil a new design and improved content to serve you better.

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Changing Channels

If you're paying attention to us as much as we are you, you'll notice that there are some changes in this month's issue. After studying the results of this year's readership survey, we discovered three important themes that led us to reorganize



Michael Morris

Editor in Chief

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our editorial content in 2006.

Based on your survey responses, we have created three distinct channels of content – Best Practices, Solutions and Innovations. During this process of reorganization, it became apparent that most of the content that we feature every month could fall under any or all of the three channels.

As an editor, it was also very rewarding to discover that the three channels of information most important to you were well represented in what we were already doing. The difficult part was deciding which channel would be the best fit for which departments. Believe me, it wasn't easy.

Remodelers' Exchange is the perfect example of what I'm talking about. Every month the discussion uncovers two successful remodeling companies' best practices, business solutions and innovative ideas and processes.

The same can be said for three of our other staples: Construct, Portfolio and Spotlight.

In essence, this process has produced a mission statement at *Professional Remodeler*: "to deliver innovative best practices and solutions for the business

leaders of the professional remodeling industry."

But we didn't just stop at a simple reorganization of our content.

You should notice as you read our articles this year, that our approach is more focused around innovative best practices and solutions you can use in your business. We will make a conscious effort to report on every topic with this mission top of mind.

So as you read this issue, and the next few that arrive on your desk, I ask you – no, I challenge you – to get involved in this mission with us. Pick up the phone and call me, or write an e-mail, and tell me about the systems, philosophies and processes that make your business great.

When I challenged our editorial advisory board with this mission at the Remodeling Show in Baltimore a couple months ago, the discussion revealed many great ideas, including one that led to us changing 5-Minute *Manager* to 5-Minute *Update* with a greater emphasis on industry news and issues of importance to all remodelers.

You may find, like many of them did, that by sharing, you can learn. **PR**

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Choose the Right Turf

Sales approaches differ between the home and the office

Making a sales presentation in a prospect's house allows the homeowner to be at ease and to envision the remodel on site. Getting the homeowner into your office might be a harder task, but once in the office, the prospect has fewer distractions and can see more products in person. Both approaches have advantages; Jud Mot-

senbocker asks remodelers John Murphy, Robert Frazier and Phil Underwood which they prefer and why.

Jud: *What percentage of your sales are done in the clients' home versus your office and/or showroom? Robert or Phil?*

Robert: At least 75 to 80 percent is in the showroom.

Phil: Our larger jobs, the additions and the add-a-levels, 90 percent of those are done in the showroom. We emphasize that we are a full-service company and we offer service to customers that nobody else does. We want the people to come in and see our campus. We want to show them our showroom, our finance department, our construction department, our zoning department, our permit department, talk about the process and how we give them full service with no pain.

If Mr. Jones refuses to come into the showroom, I will go out to the customer's home, do my presentation with my pitch book, then hopefully they will follow us back to the showroom or make an appointment at the showroom.

John: On design/build projects, we do a first interview in their home, and the second interview is in our office. We usually ask for a design check in the first interview. If that doesn't happen, that second interview in the office is usually about getting a design check.

The average job size on the Case side, on contract sales, is around \$7,000, and that typically is a one-call, in-the-home close. Hopefully at the height of emotion during the sales presentation you are able to get them to agree that you got a good solution. You generate the estimate and produce a contract right there.

Jud: *Give me a description of your show-*

room. Does it have kitchen displays and siding displays and bathroom displays? How is it set up?

Robert: We have a couple bathrooms which we did very nicely for our own use that we use as displays. We sell everything in the showroom: siding, windows...

Phil: It has roofing samples, siding and floor samples, construction material, beams, microlams, hangers, windows, everything is there to give the customer.

Robert: Blueprints. Pictures.

Phil: We let our customers know we are in the construction business, not in the accessory business, but because we have associations with all the suppliers, they're going to get the builders' price on anything they need to complete their project. We have samples of all the items – the tile, the flooring, the kitchen cabinet brochures, brochures of vanities – but we do not do any of the kitchens here. We send them directly to the kitchen designer with the plans and they pay for it directly with them.

Jud: *John, what does your showroom look like?*

John: Our showroom is not that involved. It's more of a conference room setting. We use the picture projector and the Internet a lot. We can go on the Web to pull up a sample or something. We have basic siding, roofing, hardware, some basic kitchen cabinet stuff. We do our own kitchen design. We're actually a Crystal Cabinet Works dealer.

Jud: *How does your approach to sales differ in the house compared to in the office?*

John: In the house is where we give the presentation to get them excited and come up with a solution. We need pretty skilled sales staff in that situation. They have to have some construction



John Murphy, President, CEO
**Murphy Brothers Designers
& Remodelers**

Design/build remodeling forms the core of Murphy's business, but the company also includes a paint department and a Case Handyman & Remodeling franchise. In 2005, Murphy Brothers did 42 design/build projects, 200 paint jobs and 600 small jobs for total revenue just under \$5 million.

Located in Blaine, Minn., just outside the Twin Cities, the 22-year-old firm does not have a showroom, although Murphy plans to remodel the conference room and office space. *Photo by Steve Voit*



Jud Motsenbocker
Contributing Editor

knowledge to propose a solution. We have a computer construction estimating program they use in the house, so they have the numbers, but they still have to understand how it goes together and which menu items to put in the estimate. The pricing is pretty accurate in terms of our margins and we don't deviate too much.

When people come in, most of the time we already have that retainer. Usually our design retainer is in the 2 to 5 percent range, depending on the size of the job.

Jud: *Is your closing rate in the office high compared to in the home?*

John: Once they come in the office and we've already done a presentation, it's probably more like 80 to 85 percent. On average, the in-home, one-call close ratio is about 30 percent.

Jud: *Robert, Phil, what is your closing rate for in-house compared to in the office?*

Phil: The ratio on the showroom close is extremely higher than the in-house close. I would say somewhere around 80 percent in the showroom, between 30 to 35 percent in the house.

Robert: When someone comes in the office, we have a retainer agreement. Our closing ratio for a retainer agreement is probably 80 percent. We get at least a \$1,500 retainer on a credit card or in a check, and at that point we go forward with our own draftsman.

I have three outside architects. I don't let the outside architects do the preliminary plans anymore because they were bogging us down. Our turnaround for prelims on a whole add-a-level with three or four different looks is a couple of days. We get them back in the office, they pick out the prelims, and we close the deal. We just closed an add-a-level from the time they came in,

to the retainer agreement, to the preliminary plan and all the documentation – we get about twelve sets of paperwork – in five days.

Jud: *Do you have different people that do in-house sales compared to in-office sales?*

Robert: I want all the salespeople to learn to sell in the home as well as to sell in the office. Most of the people we get to come in our office. We're selling bigger jobs now. I'd say our average deal is now about \$130,000. So it's a whole different approach, it's not like the tin man where you hammer people and get them to sign up that night.

John: We're divided more by job size. Our design/build staff is more design-oriented on the bigger projects. The smaller job staff, the guys that do the in-house, one-call closes, they're more production-oriented because they have to know the solution and offer it and sell it right there, right then.

Robert: I would say a guy going out to a house has to be a little stronger. I don't think that's ever going to change. If you want to go out to a house and walk in with your briefcase and samples and pictures and do a full presentation, you have to ask for the order.

Jud: *You're saying a guy who goes outside needs a little extra sales strength.*

Robert: Yeah, and be a better closer.

Jud: *What can we blame that on, more support in the office?*

Robert: When someone comes to your office – when they pull into your parking lot – right then and there, you have the edge. When they walk into your showroom and you do your full presentation, it's just an easier type of sell. We qualify people on the phone naturally. We tell them what they need to bring in. We need pictures of their house and their property survey. Then

we can do the measurements and we can eyeball it. They're sitting at our table with all our pictures and awards and service records.

I was brought up canvassing door-to-door. Most of my selling was in-house. I was taught if you walked out of the house without the deal, that was it. When I went into my own business,



Robert Frazier, President
Robert's Home Designs Inc.

This 15-year-old firm in Randolph, N.J., specializes in add-a-levels but does a full range of residential remodeling and improvements. In 2004, Robert's Home Designs did 110 jobs for a total of \$10.3 million in revenue. President Robert Frazier and sales manager Phil Underwood grew the business in 2005 and are planning for 200 jobs and \$30 million over the coming year.

As part of the firm's growth, they will begin putting an addition on the existing showroom in spring.

Photo by Jeff Klein

I changed that theory because I did get call-backs. People do call you back if you do make a full presentation out there. But you always have the edge in the showroom, I don't care how strong a sales force you have outside.

Jud: John, is there anything in particular about your showroom that you think makes it stronger than selling in-house?

John: Well, we don't have a lot of samples. But for probably eight years, I've been sitting people down in front of the computer, doing a 3-D walk-through and things on the LCD projector. That's been a differentiator. It turns a lot of people on that they can actually visualize their project before it's done.

Jud: You're using technology to help sell. Talk to me about that more.

John: Right. They can walk through and change the furniture, change the color of the walls, the species of wood on the cabinets or whatever.

Jud: Robert and Phil, what do you guys do? Do you use technology?

Phil: We have models of ranches and Cape Cods. You can take the roof off and actually look down inside the house on different floor layouts. And we also use existing floor plans and blueprints. Every job we do, the customer has to sign off on the prelims. They have to sign off on the blueprints and those blueprints become part of our home improvement contract.

Jud: Do you use any kind of laptop computers or LCD projectors for your design and selling?

complete your end project.

Jud: We're finding that having a Power-Point presentation as a presentation book type of thing is selling the company. Then going ahead and showing, "Here's your home and what we've designed for you is this room or second story. Let me show you what it's going to look like from the outside." It gives you the shock, gets the adrenaline going so that it works.

Robert: We get our customers enthused. We all know that if there's no enthusiasm on the salesman's part, you're not going to sell the deal.

Jud: When you put these leads up, who determines whether they're going to the showroom or they're going to the house?

Phil: Robert tries to get everyone in the showroom. If we can't get them into the

When someone comes to your office — when they pull into your parking lot — right then and there, you have the edge.

John: On the projector, we'll try to do a couple of floor plans to give people some different perspectives. We can edit the plan right in place, show them something a little different. That usually engages them, gets their creativity flowing, and they get into the process. Then we can explain to them the pros and cons of different layouts. They'll ask for something we know doesn't work; once they see it they understand why it doesn't work. It leads to a greater level of trust and improves our ability to give them a product or project that satisfies what they're looking for.

We do that after we get a design retainer. It's more of a closing tool. If we're going to go out to do a home measure up, we're not going to do it without some level of commitment by them.

Jud: So you can put that room addition or second story on this house and they can physically see what it's going to look like on the screen. Can they walk through their home and see their project completed?

Robert: No, we have not. Most homes in our area don't vary that much. It's either a Cape, a ranch or a bungalow. When we qualify a lead, we pull blueprints from a house very similar to it. We have thousands of sets of blueprints. We use those blueprints in our presentation, and we give them different looks.

We do give them three or four different preliminary drawings. We have an excellent draftsman and they pick from that during the close.

Jud: John, do you put something like your presentation book on the screen?

John: No. In our presentation book, we have some renderings and drawings, some before pictures, a blueprint, and then a CAD treatment and the finished project so we can show them how they can view it and how it's going to unfold. That's part of what we're selling: When you engage us for the design, here's the process you're going to go through, here's how we're going to get to what we're showing you and

showroom, then we go to the home.

Jud: Who asks that? The salesman or the person who takes the lead?

Phil: The person who takes the lead. "Come to our showroom. We have appointments available tomorrow at 10 or 4, how does that sound?" And then get the appointment.

John: When the leads come in right now, anything that's significant in size, I get them and I'm tracking. Then they get some more information about the client and the project so they're prepared for that appointment.

Jud: OK, but you do it by project size. You know whether it's a Case Handyman thing or whether it's going to be a design/build.

John: If it's a Case lead or a small job lead, I've got a client coordinator. She takes it and books and sets an appointment with one of the reps in the home. She puts it on her calendar. They get a lead sheet and a brief job description. Even in those cases they confirm and do a little warm-up so they can come with



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enough brochures and materials so they can close it in-house. It can vary from job to job what they can bring for back-up.

Jud: *In your marketing, do you advertise to "come to our showroom"?*

Robert: Absolutely. We push that and we push it all the time. We want the people to come in here.

Jud: *John, are you pushing that in your marketing?*

John: We don't really push to come in other than it's part of our presentation. We try to create separation in our professionalism, in our full-service capacity, in our design ability.

Jud: *Do either one of you have open houses or parties where past clients come into your showrooms?*

We have a building next door that happens to be our lawyer's. His two tenants moved out, and we took over the whole building downstairs. That's our construction department. We have another small, separate building behind it, and that's our variance, zoning and permit department. We walk the people around. It's the Robert's Home Designs campus. It works.

Jud: *John, how about you?*

John: We're more sample-oriented right now but over this winter we're going to create more of a living-room atmosphere and put in some soffits and indirect lighting. It'll have a lot in it — it'll be kind of busy but hopefully create some ambience that we really don't

for the kids.

Jud: *Do you have a kid's corner for them to play in while their parents are talking to you guys?*

Robert: Yes, we do. We have two different areas. When we add the new building on, we're going to have another area so we can get the kids away from the parents so there's no interruption to the presentation and the close.

Jud: *John, do you have anything for the kids?*

John: We do, not quite that formal. We've got Legos and coloring books and sometimes the kids, depending on age, sit on the corner of the table and color. Other times I'll have somebody else in the office distract the kids in the

They'll ask for something we know doesn't work;
 once they see it on the screen, they understand why it doesn't work.

Robert: No, we have not done that yet.

John: We haven't done that in our office. We've done a couple in conjunction with owners in their newly remodeled home.

Jud: *Do samples differ in the showroom compared to in-house?*

Robert: The samples are larger in the showroom.

Jud: *Because you can handle them better.*

John: I agree with that. We have a little bigger samples, windows and cabinets in our showroom.

Jud: *How much credence do you put in the quality of your showroom? Is that a vital part as far as you're concerned?*

Robert: Absolutely! I don't think there's anyone else in our area with a showroom. They're operating out of their trucks. Everyone's heard the horror stories, and we really push that. This is our building; we own it. We just got a permit to put another two stories on. We'll be starting in the spring. We show them the plans, how we're expanding.

have right now.

Robert: We have all the indirect lighting, the bells and whistles.

Phil: And marble flooring and beautiful bathrooms. Crown molding and space molding. It really is a beautiful showroom.

Jud: *So what you're saying is that when somebody walks in there you want them to say "Wow." Then you have a system in place to sell the company, not the product.*

Phil: That's correct. We are salespeople. Sell the company first.

Jud: *John, you're basically in the same boat. You're selling your company and you want them to be impressed when they walk in the door.*

John: Right, right. Our focus has been on facilitating the best answers for their home.

Jud: *When clients walk in the front door are their names on a bulletin board or something welcoming them?*

Phil: No, but the warm-up and welcome is the handshake, coffee, tea, beverage, crayons and coloring books

next room, depending on whether the parents are able to focus or not.

Jud: *Is there a huge advantage when you get prospects into your showroom and they're not distracted by the things in the home?*

John: That's why we get them in on the second appointment, it's to get them out of their environment and get them into an area where they can see some things and get excited. If it gets to be toward dinner time or the kids are in the environment, that can be very distracting in terms of getting both husband and wife on the same page to make a major decision. Anytime you can remove the distractions you have a better chance of closing a deal.

Robert: I've had it happen where the phone rings, or the neighbor knocks on the door. You give them the high sign and you're hoping they leave, and they don't. We are pushing the showroom, we are investing a lot of money in this large addition we're doing next year. We feel that's the way to go in the future and that's the way we're going. **PR**

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Doug Dwyer
Contributing Editor

The Power of Written Values

Everyone has values that they hold sacred to running a moral and ethical business. Why? They can be motivated by deep personal conviction. Others may

look at values as a best business practice. Either way, if you put them in writing and integrate them into your company culture, they will produce tremendous results. Values help to establish a consistent message to your team and thus, your customers. This leads to building a long-lasting, positive reputation for your company.

What are some of the other benefits? It simplifies your own decision-making process, guides your staff on how to make good decisions, and creates something stable that employees can count on in an ever-changing business environment.

For example, our company code of values includes the statement: "We believe success is the result of clear, cooperative thinking." People with negative attitudes can kill momentum in a company. By having this written into our code of values and reviewing them with the team often, we educate the staff and set the expectation that it will take a positive attitude to succeed. What I have found surprising is that some carpenters have never actually heard that before!

We once had two team members confront a new hire after a couple of weeks on the job. They wanted to make sure their peer understood that we believe in a positive attitude, and that this person's negative attitude was hurting the team. When we can build a culture that starts to manage itself, it makes everyone's job easier. As the leaders,

we can't do it all – it takes a team.

Too many business owners leave the values of their companies to chance or run them according to the latest fad of the day. It is very difficult to build great momentum if we change too often. My decision making is greatly simplified because there are only so many choices I can make to be congruent with my company's code of values.

After Enron and WorldCom, the NASDAQ market requires all companies listed with them to have a published code of ethics. That is a good start, but a piece of paper with words on it doesn't create integrity and a great company culture.

We must make our values a living, breathing philosophy in our compa-

purpose, not just get a paycheck.

Franchise Recruiters, a North American executive search firm, releases an annual business forecast and trend analysis based on a survey of franchise executives. In his 2005 report, Jerry Wilkerson, president of Franchise Recruiters, shared a comment from one of the survey respondents, who said: "I recently heard business authors Ken Blanchard and Rick Warren give a presentation. It took Blanchard twenty years to sell 10 million copies of "The One Minute Manager"... It took Warren 20 months to sell 20 million copies of "The Purpose Driven Life."

Blanchard stops at showing managers what to do; whereas, Warren shows people why they should be doing it and from where they should be doing it.

This is why your values must be put in writing and you must have a system to integrate them continually into your company culture. If you haven't done this, it is worth the investment.

We believe success is the result of clear, cooperative thinking. People with negative attitudes can kill momentum in a company.

nies. The biggest challenge: We must do our best to lead by example. Then, when we fail in one area, we must take responsibility even in front of our team. Notice, I said "when," not "if." As human beings, we are going to make mistakes. How we handle them dictates the degree of success and loyalty we will have from our team.

American citizens' outlook on life and business has shifted. People today want to be associated with a place of

If you would like to see our company code of values, visit our Web site at www.dreammaker-remodel.com, click on "About DreamMaker," then click on "Values." It may serve as a sample for you to put your own code of values into writing. **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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Contract

Is yours in good shape?

By Alicia Garceau
Contributing Editor

A contract is never complete. For remodelers, who are used to projects with a beginning and end, that can be a difficult concept to accept, says Tom Cooper, who teaches a contracts course for NAHB.

“Because situations change, laws change and because of things we haven’t thought about [yet], we continually revise these documents,” says Cooper, a professor emeritus of building science at Alabama’s Auburn University. “Document preparation is a process and not an event.”

John Fiderio, owner and operator of Meriden, Conn.-based Fiderio & Sons, agrees. As his full-service remodeling business evolves and market conditions fluctuate, he responds accordingly.

“We’ve been in business since 1983, so it’s something that we’ve added and modified as we’ve gone along based on things that have come up,” he says. “As a matter of fact, we’re in the process of doing a major rework on our contracts.”

After recently attending a seminar on contracts, Fiderio decided to create multiple contracts that would be scope-of-work specific.

“We’ll probably end up with three different contracts –

one for all the specialties, which would be the siding, windows, decks and sunrooms, one for kitchens and baths, and probably one for additions,” he explains.

At a minimum, remodelers should amend their contract as new laws are handed down and when language revisions become necessary. Paul Montelongo, an industry consultant and former remodeler from San Antonio, Texas, also advises an annual review of the contract to make sure the document is in top shape.

Where to begin?

Don’t start by looking in the business form aisle at the office supply store.

“I saw a guy a number of years ago who pulled a contract off the shelf at a stationery store and spent most of his time making the logo pretty so the contract looked nice,” says Van M. White, a Portland, Ore.-based attorney who practices construction law.

Unfortunately, it had some ugly language that came back to haunt the remodeler: For example, it said the contractor would build to the *complete* satisfaction of the property owner. That kind of talk can make for a mighty long punchlist and postpone closeout.



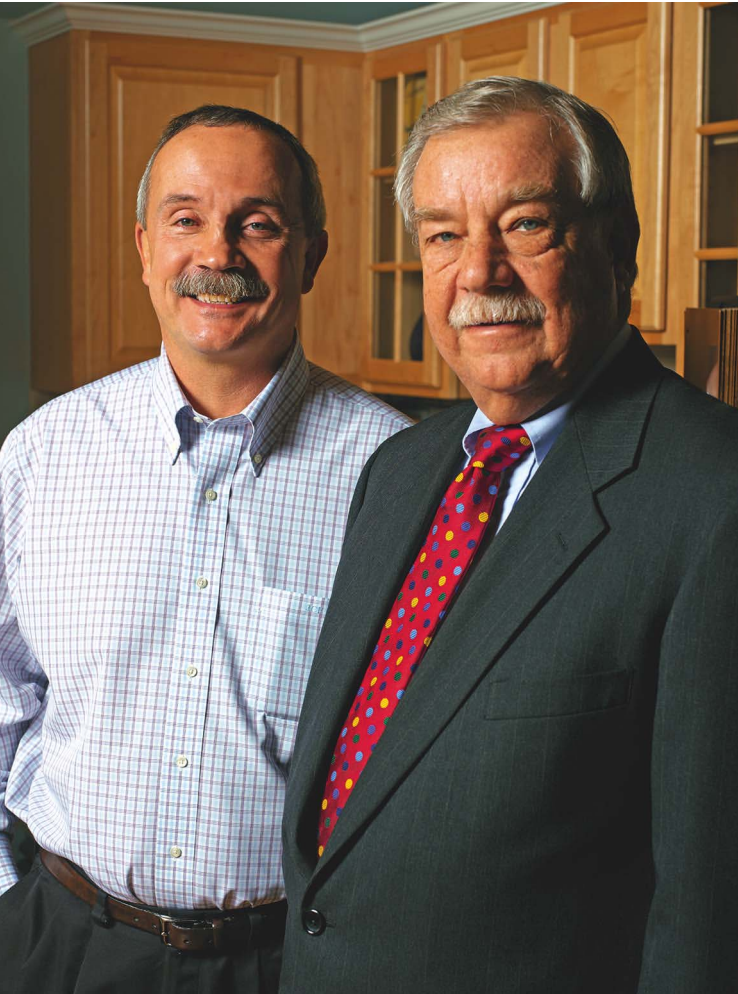
Check-Up

If you're using a boilerplate contract, these legal agreements may put you in an equally vulnerable position. So how do you ensure that your contract is rock solid?

First, hire an attorney – and probably not the same one that drew up your will. Whether the attorney will draft a new contract or review an existing document, this is not the time to hire just anyone with a legal degree. An attorney specializing in construction or real estate law, who is well versed in the industry, is better equipped to create a sound remodeling contract than a lawyer practicing general law.

It's also important to consult with a lawyer who is familiar with the state and local laws that govern a company's operating area, says Mike Weiss, CGR, CAPS, GMB, who teaches residential construction management seminars around the country. Where a remodeler does business will dictate some of the contract's provisions.

Professional associations also are good resources for applicable state and local laws. "If you're out there solo



Remodeler John Fiderio, left, works with two different attorneys: a Virginia construction contract specialist and Connecticut lawyer Joe Wiegman, who specializes in real estate, wills and estate planning. Photo by Dave Bradley Photography

and you're not involved with an association, it's very easy for this stuff to slip through the cracks," Montelongo says.

Cover the basics

Any contract worth more than the paper it's written on must have the following elements:

- **A written agreement.** Include the parties of the contract and description of the property.
- **The complete scope of the project.** This should contain complete, dated and signed plans and clear specifications for the project. A design/build remodeler may want to address ownership of the design.

The specifications should include a list of materials and products to be used. Fiderio & Sons includes information

"Some clients will drag you through a dozen punchlists and never allow the project to be finished."

— Paul Montelongo

on contracts in the FAQ section of the company's Web site. To prospective clients, Fiderio recommends: "Your contractor should detail a list of all materials for the project in your contract. This includes size, color, weight, model, brand name, quantity and product."

- **A site plan.** The plan needs to include footprint modifications, setbacks, limits of disturbance, staging areas, utility locations, drainage areas, parking areas, location for job site trailer or portable washroom facilities, and site signage for things like permits, plans and inspections.
- **Express limited warranty.** In addition to what is being warranted, include the limits of coverage. If anything is reused during a remodel, a sink for example, it should be expressly excluded from any warranty obligations.

Fiderio's Web site also suggests: "The name and address of the party who will honor the warranty (contractor, distributor or manufacturer) must be identified. Make sure the time period for which the warranty is offered is clearly specified."

- **Bid price and terms of payment.** Whether a company uses lump sum, fixed price or another method, make sure the amount and payment schedule are clearly outlined in the contract. For large jobs, White suggests periodic payments that aren't tied to project milestones to keep a project in the black. Final payment should be based on substantial completion.

- **Change order clause.** Construction contracts have to be designed for change. Customers change their minds. Specified materials may not be available. This clause allows the remodeler or homeowner to make changes without invalidating the contract.

- **Hidden conditions provision.** If crews run into a concealed or unknown situation (like mold, termites or wiring that's not up to code) during the progress of the job, the remodeler can decide how to best handle it and adjust the contract — and price — accordingly.

"The beauty of that from the contractor's point is they

don't have to eat the [cost of] unanticipated things that are encountered," says Cooper. "The beauty of that from the [homeowner's] point is the contractor doesn't put contingency money in there for things that he might encounter, and, if he doesn't encounter [anything], put that money in his pocket."

- **Assumptions and contingencies.** "There should be a provision in the contract that the homeowner will make electrical and water available for the construction. Usually we include a provision that there is going to have to be a Dumpster on sight [and] that there's going to be storage of materials on site," says construction attorney Gary Javore, who practices in San Antonio, Texas. "A lot of people don't have that expectation or don't think about that."

Fiderio recommends detailing how household goods will be protected and what sort of daily and/or end-of-job cleanup will be provided.

- **Sequential schedule of primary construction tasks.** Time frames and dates are optional, but remodelers need to build in language that offers protection from delays that are beyond their control such as a holdup due to product selection.

- **Written procedural list for close out.** How do you define when a project is complete? Spell it out. "Some clients will drag you through a dozen punchlists and never allow the project to be finished," says Montelongo.

- **Alternate dispute resolution.** Though most remodelers would like to think a customer wouldn't sue them, disagreements happen. This clause spells out how alternate methods such as arbitration and mediation must be attempted before jumping into a costly court battle.

- **Right to rescission.** Some states require a "cooling off" period during which the homeowner can legally cancel the agreement without risk or loss. This portion of the agreement is often required to be a separate part of the documents rather than being "buried" in the body of the agreement.

Lessons learned

In addition to the basic provisions, supplemental conditions should also be written into contracts.

"There are a lot of provisions in our contracts that come from the school of hard knocks," says Javore.

Chuck Breidenstein, a Madison Heights, Mich.-based arbitrator for the American Arbitrators Association and presenter for several state chapters of the Home Builders Association, knows firsthand that many remodelers learn the hard way about supplemental conditions.

- **The "Fluffy" clause.** In one of Breidenstein's examples, a remodeler was building a second-story addition for

Going Up: Should You Add a Price Escalation Clause?

Escalation clauses are nothing new to the building industry. Though many remodelers can remember back to double-digit inflation in the 1970s, material prices have been fairly stable for quite a number of years. But with a record-breaking 2005 hurricane season, including devastating Hurricane Katrina, material prices are on the rise.

"Anybody in the business knows that shingle, plywood, OSB, framing lumber and gypsum board prices are going through the roof," Tom Cooper says.

Industry consultant Mike Weiss used a contract with an escalation clause during his tenure at the helm of a Carmel, Ind.-based remodeling company. He invoked the clause, which held the customer responsible for price increases over 2 percent, only a few times over the course of 20 years in business.

"It's more germane today because back then I would get a commitment on holding the price for lumber for a lot longer than you do now," Weiss says. "Now they give you a quote on lumber, and you say, 'How long is my price good?' and they say, 'What time is it?'"

With spikes in gas prices as well as building material costs, attorney Van White says he sees legitimate reasons for including an escalation clause. One concerned contractor called him promptly after Hurricane Katrina to request that such a provision be added to his contract.



The cat experienced severe trauma that resulted in counseling at a pet psychiatric center — at the expense of the remodeler.

a customer. At the end of the first day, the existing roof had been removed and a new floor frame installed and sheathed. Unbeknownst to the contractor, the homeowner's pet cat had fallen asleep in the new floor frame and was effectively sealed in for the night. The cat was rescued the following day, but unfortunately experienced severe trauma that resulted in counseling at a pet psychiatric center — at the expense of the remodeler, of course. A "Fluffy" clause, which addressed the homeowner's responsibility to keep the work area clear of family pets and children, might have protected the remodeler in this case.

- **Dispute resolution.** Another remodeler, who had completed a major addition and renovation for a client, was notified that the home had developed a mold problem. The mold had rendered the property uninhabitable, according to the homeowner's attorney. The family, on the attorney's advice, vacated and boarded up the home, which exacerbated the problem. The remodeler was denied access to the property. Two years later, and several days into the court proceedings, the homeowner's attorney requested a settlement meeting before the defense began its rebuttal. The parties settled, but costs to the remodeler prior to settlement exceeded \$100,000. In this case, an alternate dispute resolution clause might have saved the remodeler substantial money.

- **Written performance guidelines.** In another case, a homeowner sued a contractor for spalling concrete on a driveway and non-structural, arguably drying, cracks in a basement foundation. The suit sought replacement of the entire 16- by 40-foot driveway even though the spalling was limited to an 8- by 12-foot area where the car sat, and compensation for the cost of the basement, even though the crack in the foundation was not structural and was not a path for active water movement. Initial findings were for the homeowner on both counts. A subsequent appeal reduced the total award to \$3,000. However, had the contractor included written performance guidelines within a limited warranty clause, he might have prevailed.

- **The non-transferable clause.** Breidenstein encountered one situation where a remodeled home was sold to a new buyer during the warranty period. The new homeowner then tried to sue the remodeler on "quality issues," alleging breach of contract on the transferred warranty. The court did rule in favor of the remodeler, but a non-transferable clause added to the warranty might have prevented the suit in the first place.

Breidenstein also cited an ongoing case involving a builder/remodeler of upscale residential properties who was in the habit of taking deposits and initiating construction without completed written construction documents. In the contractor's words, this was "due to the fact these buyers made frequent changes that made specifying nearly impossible." In this case, the homeowner gave the contractor \$500,000 and a directive to "get the foundations going" without a finalized written plan, specifications or agreement.

Three years after substantial completion and occupancy by the homeowner, the contractor is still working on punchlists and negotiating with the homeowner's attorneys to avoid court. The example proves that no matter how cumbersome it seems to document a detailed plan, operating without one can create a far more troubling situation.

Consumer education

A solid contract is just a starting point if a remodeler wants to avoid legal entanglements. Most disputes and subsequent lawsuits arise because clients don't have an understanding of what's going to happen during a project.

Although some remodelers may see a contract simply as a device used to drag people into court, the document can actually be used as a tool to ensure good customer experiences.

"You really are drafting the contract with an eye toward educating the consumer, so they don't have any nasty surprises at the backend. You're trying to set their expectations at the front end," Javore says.

In order to do that, a remodeler needs to be comfortable with his or her contract.

"It really needs to be tailored to you and done in such a way that you're not afraid to explain it to a client," Weiss says. "I have an awful lot of people who have what they feel is a really tough contract, but it's so tough that they feel really self-conscious when they have to explain it to somebody. If it looks too one-sided, it may be too one-sided and if it's too one-sided, a judge will throw it out. There's nothing wrong with a tough contract as long as it describes the work you're going to do and how it's going to be paid for and what the standard is." **PR**




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Show & Tell

Innovative new products at the International Builders' Show provide solutions to remodeler challenges and homeowner desires

Keeping consumers safe, warm and dry

is at the top of the residential construction industry's priority list right now. New types of housewrap, foundation wrap, vapor barriers, sealants and sheathing all tout their increased ability to keep out moisture and keep down homeowners' utility bills.

Nearly every window and door manufacturer is adding to or introducing an impact-resistant line of products. Safety features help to prevent intruder break-ins. Composite materials – in siding, fencing, roofing and decking, plus windows and doors – help protect against water intrusion.

Which is not to say that anybody is ignoring good looks. Consumers will have richer, broader color palettes to choose from in tiles, countertops and cabinetry finishes. Transitional-style fixtures and cabinets blend Old World looks with new school function.

Best of all, some of the new products will help you work smarter, sell more and save money. Many of the year's major innovations will be introduced January 11-14 at the International Builders' Show. We'll continue to feature the best throughout the year. Enjoy the show!



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Circle 125

Interior Products



Crossville introduces **Color Blox Mosaics**, 3-inch-square porcelain tiles that are 1/4-inch thick and dot-mounted. They come in 20 colors and were designed to coordinate with Color Blox, the company's large-unit tile. Color Blox is available in multiple sizes and trim pieces.

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Circle 126



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Circle 129

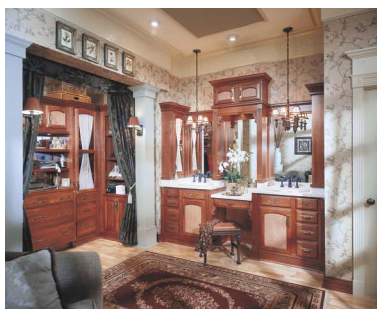


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www.showhouse.moen.com

Circle 127



As the eyebrow arch gains popularity, **Wellborn Cabinet** is introducing the **Madison Arch** door style, featuring detailed, door-and-drawer front edges with a solid wood, raised center panel. Shown in Espresso and Mocha Crème finishes, it is a full-overlay, maple door style and will be available in five standard and 17 specialty finishes in the Premier and WoodCraft Series.

256/354-7151

www.wellborn.com

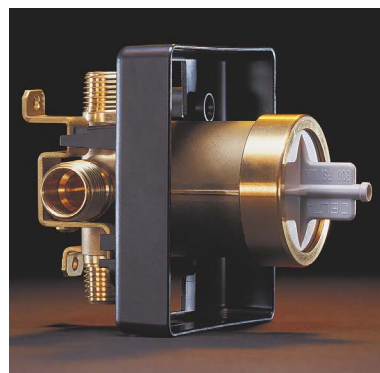
Circle 130



The **Merillat Classic Somerton Hill** door offers six glazed finishes. On maple wood: Artisan Bronze (brown/toffee), Venetian Fresco (brown/natural) and Blond Tuscany (white/toffee). On cherry wood: Frosted Café (white/cider), Spiced Cognac (brown/cider) and Ebony Mist (black/paprika).

www.merillatbusiness.com

Circle 128



The **MultiChoice Universal Valve** from **Delta Faucet** offers three function options: single-function pressure balance, dual-function pressure balance and a new dual-function thermostatic valve cartridge. The tub/shower valve works with existing Delta trim packages and makes upgrades easy.

800/345-DELTA

www.deltafaucet.com

Circle 131

Exterior Products



Artisan Roofing Products, a James Hardie company, introduces **Artisan Shake**, a lightweight concrete roofing product with a random wood grain pattern. When installed to manufacturer specifications, it is a Class A, noncombustible fire-rated material. It weighs less than 540 pounds per square, and carries a 30-year transferable warranty.

866/517-ROOF

www.artisanroof.com

Circle 132



Tendura's tongue-and-groove porch flooring now features a spacer bead on the plank's tongue, which automatically creates the required expansion joints. Available in both the **TenduraPlank Classic** and the **Solids Collection**, the beaded tongue eliminates the need to stop and add an expansion joint. The product comes in 8-, 10-, 12-, 14-, or 16-foot lengths and is pre-drilled 8 inches on center.

800/TENDURA

www.tendura.com

Circle 135



Fypon adds ten styles of urethane window **shutters** in pre-primed and wood grain stainable versions. Plank panel shutters (in two- and three-panel and diagonal V-styles) have been introduced in wood grain stainable versions. White louvered solid panel and louvered slatted shutters come in seven styles.

800/446-3040

www.fypon.com

Circle 133



Owens Corning Cultured Brick thin brick veneers now come in nine colors, including Horton Bay, High Desert, Bucks County and Chardonnay. The 1/2-inch-thick Cultured Brick can be installed indoors or out, without the expense of additional foundation support. The product is also noncombustible and can be used for fireplaces.

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Circle 136



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Circle 134



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Window and Doors



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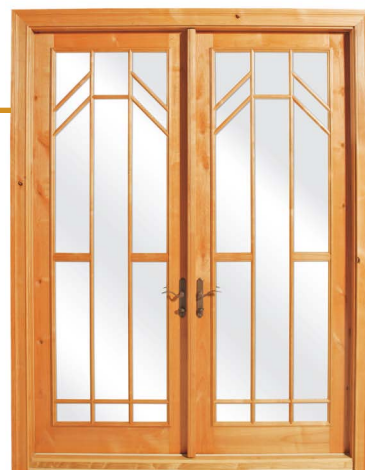


Vetter Windows & Doors introduces an aluminum-clad, full-radius-top **French patio door**.

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Mission Accomplished

A nightmare remodel — just begging to be bulldozed — turns into a dream come true thanks to the contractor's creative approach

By Wendy A. Jordan
Senior Contributing Editor

JG Development of Blue Mounds, Wis., builds and remodels timberframe, post-and-beam, panelized and log homes. It belongs to Wisconsin's Energy Star Homes program and has "grown to be the company out in this area that will do anything," no matter how daunting, says owner Jeff Grundahl.

"Usually I'm the first one to tell customers not to tear down," says Grundahl. The first time he recommended that someone "burn or bulldoze" their home was the day he set eyes on the Wolf-Saylor house in Mt. Horeb.

Built in 1982, the original 20- by 31-foot structure had never been sided. The prior owner — also the builder —



JG Development attached the new "skin" of the house to the reinforced frame, sandwiching insulation and house wrap between old and new exteriors. Grundahl removed two ugly bays — the homeowners called them "warts" — along the bedroom wing and replaced them with large picture windows.

had cobbled together uneven walls from mortar, cordwood and bottles. Exposure to the elements had caused them to deteriorate. The upright posts were not connected to the rafters and the loft, so the structure had started to shift and separate. The roof sagged. Many of the cedar roof shakes had rotted so badly they were moldy. Structural timbers and rafters were rotten. The wood windows had severely deteriorated jambs and sills.

It “was the worst condition building I’ve ever been in,” says Grundahl.

House of horrors

When Dave Wolf and Rhonda Saylor first saw the place, they thought it was a dream come true. Cooped up in an apartment, they had been searching for a country house with both acreage and charm. As they drove up to the house, the rustic log structure “seemed cozy,” says Saylor.

The old part of the residence housed the kitchen and a great room with a loft. A 21- by 38-foot bedroom wing with rough-sawn barn board siding had been added in 1993. An unfinished basement contributed another 1,400 square feet. The location – hard by a stream on 17 wooded acres – was fantastic.

She and Wolf knew the house needed to be exterminated and that the original structure required siding. “The inspector said [the house] needed work,” recalls Saylor. It seemed manageable, though. The report stated that the roof and basement didn’t leak, and made no mention of rot or boiler problems. They paid \$273,000 and became homeowners in February 2003.

Their happy homeowner honeymoon ended the first night in the house.

“We could see light through the log walls,” says Saylor. “The house had essentially no insulation.”

More trouble followed. The boiler was shot and needed to be replaced. When it rained, water poured into the house. Gallon jugs under the bay windows “filled up in no time,” she says. The skylights were almost as bad.

“It was kind of a nightmare,” says Saylor. “One night there was a tornado warning, and we were thinking it would be cool if it hit.”

Alas, it did not. Saylor and Wolf tried to sue the previous owner, but he had vanished. The inspector’s contract protected him. Calling a contractor remained the only course of action.



The cedar siding and decks were stained on site to obtain a better finish and to minimize touch-ups.

Enter the hero

Grundahl came out to take a look in spring 2003. The addition, he says, seemed basically OK. He recommended tearing down the older structure and rebuilding on the existing foundation to avoid zoning problems caused by

THE FINANCIALS

Jeff Grundahl budgets a 30 percent gross profit on most JG Development jobs, but he added another percent to cover the unexpected on the tricky Wolf-Saylor project.

“With more risk we will add a contingency to cover the risks,” explains Grundahl. The idea is “to increase the bottom line if it turns out that way, and if not to maintain our original margin.”

JG Development wants a minimum estimated net of 10 percent. “We seek to net in the 10 to 12 percent range on a real tough job,” Grundahl says.

Painstaking budget analysis keeps change orders to a minimum and protects the company’s margin. “We use an itemized estimator that shows all pertinent ‘projected’ costs on the job and includes our margins,” explains Grundahl. “It is done in a customer-friendly format, [so it can be used] in sales and negotiations.”

Despite its many challenges, the Wolf-Saylor project went mostly as planned. There were only two change orders, both due to new decisions by the homeowners.

The work, however, did take longer than Grundahl had estimated, and the added labor costs shaved 2 percent off the gross profit.

Budget History

Initial estimate:	\$43,503
Final estimate:	\$41,710
Change order - shingle balance of roof on front building:	\$3,000
Change order - stain existing cedar shake roof on bedroom wing, install chinking, other:	\$1,786
Final price of job:	\$46,496
Cost to produce:	\$32,973
Gross profit:	\$13,523
Budgeted gross profit:	31%
Actual gross profit:	29%



This wide angled stairway to the basement replaced a narrow, open, spiral stairway. The handrail and custom cast-iron railing at the head of the stairs also improved safety.

proximity to the stream. Good idea but, at an estimated \$92,000, too expensive for Saylor and Wolf.

They wanted to make it work, though. "Our gut reaction was that he was great," says Saylor. "He seemed honest, and told us the issues with the house. We decided to go with him and not call any other remodeling companies."

So Grundahl went into Mission Impossible mode. His brainstorm: "Frame a house around a house." In addition to wrapping a new exterior around the house, JG Development would finish the interior, rebuild the basement stairs, replace the existing decks and add a deck off the master bedroom to capture more views.

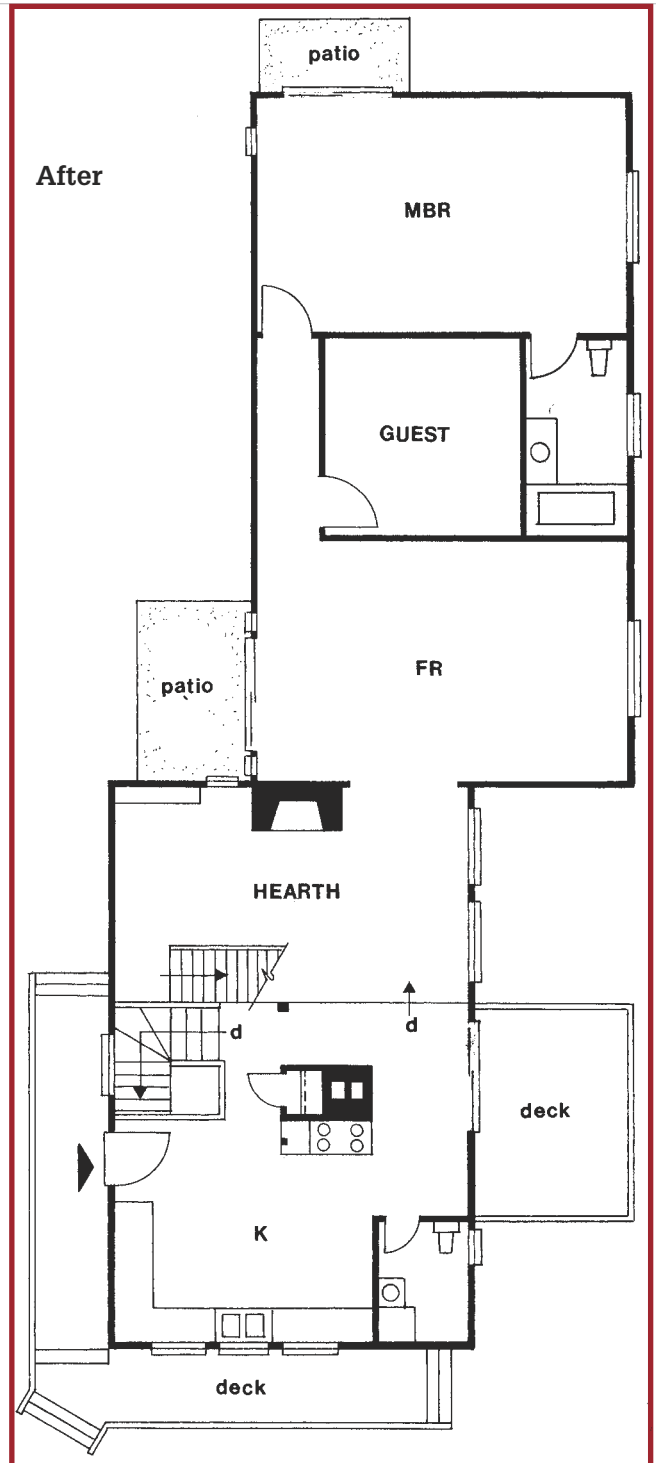
This approach would cost far less and still accomplish Saylor and Wolf's goals: making the house waterproof, vermin-free and energy-efficient (the first year's heating bill was \$4,000) while retaining its character and charm.

A dirty job

The seven-month job began in August 2003. From the start, the scope of the pest infestation nearly overwhelmed the crew. The raccoons vacated the attic when construction began, but the other critters persisted. The workers chased hordes of mice out of the roof, then continued to find dead rodents from the basement to the rafters.

The pounding of hammers eventually drove out some 150 bats. Grundahl's crew carried spray in their tool belts to combat the constantly swarming hornets. When the workers removed the ceiling, they discovered the source: a 2- by 5-foot hornets' nest pressed into the rafters.

While fending off the pests, Grundahl also faced significant construction challenges. The first was to stabilize



the mortise-and-tenon structure, as the builder had not used fasteners to secure the joints.

"The posts were starting to tilt," says Grundahl. He and his crew identified where the house was separating and attached heavy, custom-made structural steel brackets to the opposing sides. Then they framed over the structure and added insulation and sheathing.

"My experience told me that it would work," says



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A close look revealed nonexistent insulation, gaping cracks in the cordwood-and-bottle walls and large gable-end holes.

Grundahl, “but it was a liability issue, so I put in my contract that we were unable to guarantee the structural integrity of the home even after the work was completed.”

Next up: the roof. When the crew opened it, they discovered extensive rot, including rafters and a perimeter beam. Neither skylight had been installed properly – one was simply sitting on the roof – and there was no flashing around the chimney or roof connections. The crew replaced the rotten members, through-bolting a new beam and sistering new rafters onto inadequate old ones. JG Development eliminated the skylights and installed

new asphalt roofing shingles. As part of his plan to tighten the building envelope, Grundahl created a “hot roof” with rigid insulation.

Then he turned his attention to the walls, which were 2 to 3 inches out of level in each 8-foot span and bowed inward up to 8 inches from end to end.

“The biggest challenge was to make the building straight enough that it would not look horrible when it was done,” says Grundahl. The crew cut off the ends of the random-length cordwood logs to even them out, then they shot a laser line down the side

of the house to establish a constant. Even so, “it was a trick,” Grundahl says, to place the lap siding horizontally.

The next challenge was to fix the overhang soffit and fascia. “We had to work with the existing rafter ends,” says Grundahl, “scabbing on the rafters using string lines to make it uniform, all the while fighting bats and wasps.” Because the exterior was so crooked, the windowsills varied 2 to 3 inches end to end. Grundahl replaced many of the windows with insulated double-pane units and made custom, angled sills for every window opening.

He replaced the rotten entry door with an insulated steel unit, flashed around a wood chute that had allowed the basement to fill with water, and ran a custom-made strip of aluminum flashing around the base of the new walls “as a rodent proofer.” After his crew installed new windows in place of the bedroom bays, completed the interior finishes and built new decks, Grundahl’s mission was accomplished.

After such a bad start, “we feel very lucky,” Saylor says. “Instead of being a shack, [the house] is a unique, custom-made little place.” Even the mailman “can’t believe it’s the same house,” she quips. Tight and energy efficient, it now stays warm and dry; heating bills are less than a quarter of what they were that first year. Living in this cozy house in the woods “is like being on vacation,” says Saylor.

For insurance purposes “we had the house reappraised after the job,” she adds. “The appraiser said if we ever sold it, she would buy it.” **PR**

SNAPSHOT



Jeff Grundahl

JG Development Inc.

Location: Blue Mounds, Wis.

Type of company: Design/build remodeling and new home construction

Staff model: 5 office, 8 field

Years in business: 15

Sales history:

2001:	\$719,885
2002:	\$1,731,127
2003:	\$1,883,874
2004:	\$2,863,067
2005 (projected):	\$3,000,000

Annual jobs: 15 to 25

Average job size: \$125,000

Workweek: 40 to 55 hours

Software: ArchiCAD 9, QuickBooks Premier Contractor Edition 2004, Microsoft Office

Contact: jeff@jgdevelopment.com

PRODUCTS LIST

Cedar siding: Weyerhaeuser. **Deck spindles:** Deckorator. **Decking sealant:** TWP. **Doors:** Taylor. **House wrap:** DuPont Tyvek. **Insulation:** Dow Styrofoam. **Log sealant:** Perma-Chink. **Paint:** Hallman Lindsay. **Roofing:** GAF. **Soffit and fascia:** Rollex. **Storm doors and windows:** Larson. **Windows:** Andersen, Semco.

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basement

Parting Worlds

Bright colors bring playful innocence to a basement with a notorious past

In his time living in this home, infamous Depression-era political boss Tom Pendergast thought of the basement simply as an escape route. Fearing attempts on his life, he had a tunnel system built behind the walls.

The current homeowners sought a bold, bright, kid-friendly basement inspired by two cherished art pieces. Three years earlier, they hired Metzler Remodeling for a historical renovation on the rest of the home. For the basement, they wanted a clear departure from the cherry Shaker cabinets and soap-stone countertops of the upper levels.

Informed by his background in commercial design, Perry Quick, AIA, Metzler's in-house architect, assigned different colors to different materials and spaces rather than putting up walls to separate rooms. Brick is red, stone is

yellow, trim is silver, the bathroom is purple, and the closet is ochre.

Rather than hide electrical panels and piping behind wallboard or wood, he suggested using stained-and-polyurethaned medium-density fiberboard. These MDF structures create some of the rooms' most useful and interesting features, such as the built-in bench seat and under-stair cubbies.

To maintain the industrial look, Quick chose silver door and window trim, outlets and switch plates. Black cabinet screws with chrome washers or metal studs were used as fasteners for the MDF panels.

Quick says the most challenging part of the project was the demolition, which took close to two weeks.

"The ceiling was full of hundreds of years of electrical mess," he explains,

Remodeler and architect: Metzler Remodeling, Kansas City, Mo.

Project location: Kansas City, Mo.

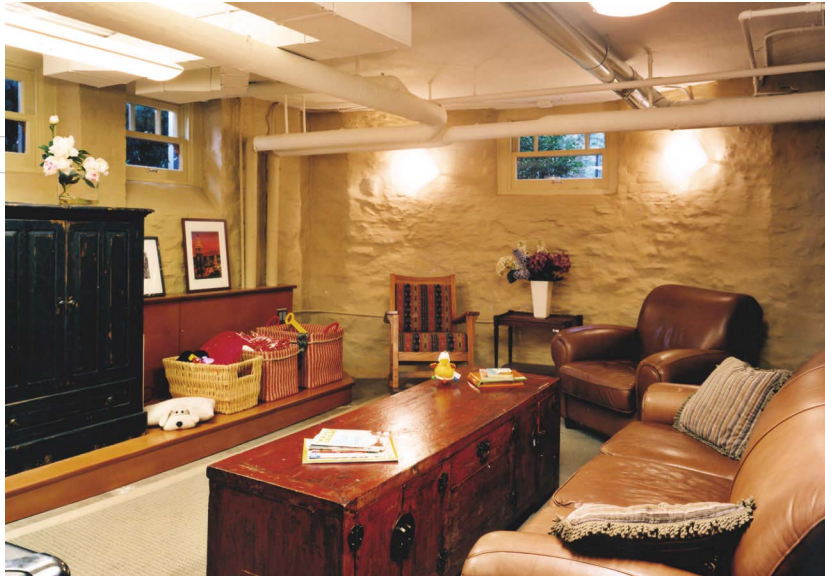
Age of home: 91 years

Scope of work: Creating recreational space, office space and storage solutions in a 700-square-foot basement

The "light wall," made of Plexiglas and MDF, creates the illusion of windows. It's backlit with track lighting that can be customized with colored gels.

including electrical, phone, doorbell and cable wires; old knob and tube wiring and Romex wiring. Galvanized pipes, gas pipes and copper lines added to the confusion. Says Quick: "It took us a week to simply figure out what was live."

After these wires were tested, cleaned up and housed (if live), Metzler workers repaired and repatched the plaster ceilings. They left the ductwork exposed in



The semi-finished basement had a loft-like quality. To reinforce that aesthetic, Metzler Remodeling left the space open — with the exception of added walls to configure an actual bathroom around the freestanding toilet and sink.



order to preserve ceiling height — which varied from 7 feet to 8 feet, 4 inches — and to keep the industrial style consistent from top to bottom.

Indirect fluorescent light fixtures give a uniform light level despite the varied ceiling heights and provide a commercial flair. The artwork that inspired the design hangs on the wall in the billiards room, accented by three hand-blown glass pendant fixtures above the pool table.

The \$65,000 project was completed in approximately 10 weeks. Quick esti-

mates that using MDF instead of wood saved the homeowners one-third of the material costs.

“Kansas City is a very traditional market, and to do something this outside-of-the-box in this neighborhood was really fun,” Quick says. “People think because a project is simple it’s not sophisticated, but there’s a lot of thought and detail that goes into simplicity to make it look simple. **PR**

— Meghan Haynes



Creating storage cubbyholes within structures, such as under the staircase, keeps the space clean and uncluttered. Upon removing an old vacuum system, the space at the back of the stairs became a closet.

PRODUCTS LIST

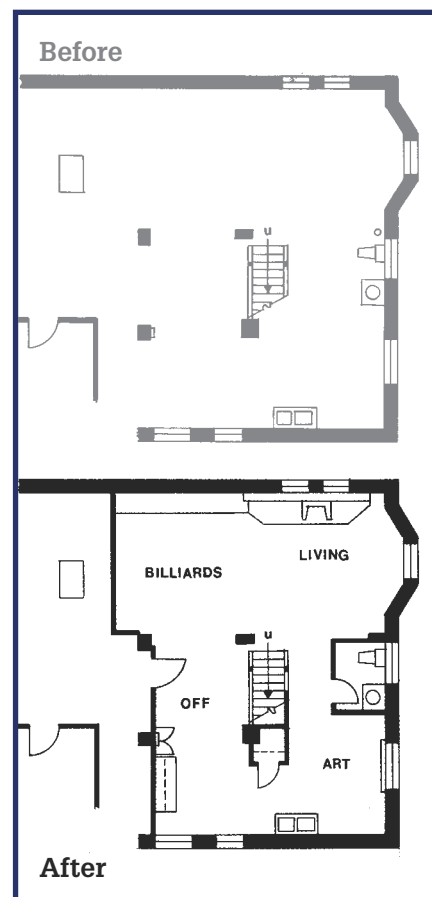
Bathroom fixtures: Chicago Faucet, Kohler. **Lights (fluorescent):** Metalux. **Lights (pendant):** Fusion. **Lights (track lighting on light wall):** Juno. **MDF board:** Plum Creek. **Paint:** Benjamin Moore. **Stain:** Woodsong. **Stone Wall Sealer:** Quick Crete

Preserving concrete and stone

The existing concrete floors and exposed stone walls lent this basement a raw quality. Preserving that created challenges. The concrete slab had heaved so badly in one area that Metzler Remodeling considered repouring it. However, once sealed, the color and grain of the new concrete most likely would not jibe with the rest.

Instead, the company built an “entertainment platform” on which the big-screen television sits. The platform not only hides the incongruity in the slab, it also transitions into the new bench seat, which is scribed to the stone wall, and shelving. Together, the platform and bench seat mask the water heater pipes along the baseline.

Metzler Remodeling considered power washing the stone walls and leaving them natural, but prior tuck pointing proved too shoddy to let the stone stand as it was. Metzler re-tuck pointed all the walls. Then, because the walls looked “too new” to remain exposed, Metzler sealed and painted the stone yellow, creating a nice contrast with the primary-red-painted brick.





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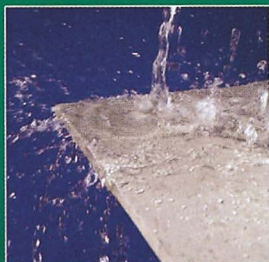


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Important Information on 2006 IRC Changes

Hardibacker® Cement Board with Moldblock™ Protection Meets International Residential Code Changes; Moisture-Resistant Gypsum Board (Greenboard) Does Not



With increasing consumer awareness of moisture and mold problems, builders and installers are taking notice. In response, the focus on better building practices has shifted from moisture-resistant wallboard (greenboard) to

cement board. This is a trend that's unlikely to change. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) already cautions against the use of greenboard in wet areas, as do several builders' associations and local building codes. Now, the International Residential Code (IRC) is making it official.

Effective January 2006, the IRC will no longer recognize the use of moisture-resistant gypsum backing board as a wall panel or as a tile backer substrate in wet areas (Section R702.4.2, 2004 Supplement to IRC). The International Residential Codes – written every three years – cover the design of and materials used in construction of detached single- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings not more than three stories in height. Forty-five states have already adopted all or part of the IRC, although it's up to state, local and municipal jurisdictions to adopt these codes as written or to make amendments.

Although greenboard is commonly used in wet areas, it's certainly not best practice. The paper facing serves as a perfect food source for mold and does not offer adequate moisture resistance. A new alternative on the market is paperless wallboard. However, paperless wallboard contains gypsum, which is known to disintegrate with continuous moisture exposure, so it addresses only part of the problem and doesn't provide a true solution.

Hardibacker® Cement Board with Moldblock™ Protection will continue to be recognized by the IRC for use in areas with direct exposure to water. Hardibacker board offers the ultimate in moisture and mold resistance and passes both industry mold tests – ASTM G21 and ASTM D3273 – with a perfect score. And unlike abrasive glass mesh boards, Hardibacker board's smooth surface may be painted or papered like drywall. Hardibacker board is also easy to install. It's the lightest 1/2" cement board on the market and cuts easily with a utility or scoring knife.

When the International Residential Code change takes effect in January, consider Hardibacker Cement Board with Moldblock Protection for your wet area walls and help protect your reputation and avoid costly callbacks. It's *the* paper- and gypsum-free alternative.



Silence is Golden

Strategies for absorbing, reducing and eliminating household noise

Susan Conbere and Glen Salas
PATH Partners

Your average house is a very noisy place to live. Forget crying babies and vocal teenagers; think of all the fans, blowers, pumps, HVAC equipment, washers, dryers, dishwashers, refrigerators, freezers – cycling on, cycling off, all day long. Home offices and media rooms add to both the noise level and the need for quiet. Apartment, condo and town-home residents, who share walls, floors

and ceilings with each other, end up knowing more than they care to about the family next door. Even in single-family homes, the trend toward smaller lots and infill housing brings the neighbors' noises inside.

You can't do much about the noisy kids, but you can do a lot to absorb, reduce or eliminate other indoor and outdoor noises that grate on your clients' nerves.

Happily, what makes a home quieter usually makes it more energy efficient – which makes it more comfortable and

affordable, too. The appliances, windows, HVAC, fans, insulation and air sealing methods you choose will make all the difference.

Prevent inside noises from traveling
Absorbent materials. If you're doing an interior remodel that involves little structural change, consider installing materials that absorb, rather than reflect, sound. That could mean putting down carpeting or cork flooring, or advising a client to consider an interior design solution such as moving or

Ideas for Reducing Noise

1. Install materials that absorb sound, such as a carpet and pad.
2. Insulate interior walls, add another piece of wallboard or use resilient channels.
3. Air seal at penetrations, such as around recessed lights.
4. Install double-pane windows with multiple glazing layers, gas fills and insulated frames.
5. Air seal around doors and windows.
6. Choose insulation appropriate to the client's climate and sound-reduction needs.
7. Install quiet appliances, which tend to be energy-efficient models.
8. Install quiet, low-sonic ventilation and exhaust fans and range hoods.
9. "Right-size" all heating and cooling equipment.



changing furniture or drapery. These techniques will reduce sound coming from a source within the room.

Keeping interior sound from traveling around a home or between multi-family units requires retrofitting or rebuilding walls and floors to improve their STC (sound transmission class) and IIC (impact isolation class) ratings. STC ratings measure airborne sound; IIC ratings measure structure-borne sound. Both indicate by how many decibel levels a building material or assembly reduces noise.

According to the National Institutes of Health, normal conversation ranges from 50 to 65 decibels, and prolonged

Floors. Installing a carpet and pad not only absorbs sound, it reduces impact noise and increases IIC ratings. For areas where carpeting isn't wanted, a floating floor with a sound-isolating mat under the finish floor does the job. Insulation and resilient channels are also options.

Air Sealing. Flanking paths are the routes by which sound travels. Walls with high STC ratings won't reduce sound as much as they should if the walls have unsealed penetrations.

Look for air leaks in and around doors, plumbing chases, electrical outlets, attic accesses and dropped ceilings.

Carl Seville, an Atlanta remodeler

obvious ways for transportation noise and other obnoxious sounds to enter the home. The same features of windows that enhance their energy performance – multiple glazing layers, specialty gas fills and insulating frames – serve to dampen outdoor noise as well. Energy Star qualified windows will cost 5 to 15 percent more than the lower-performing alternatives, but they can also reduce home heating and cooling costs by \$125 to \$340 a year (depending on climate), compared to older single-pane windows. If you'd prefer to keep an older window because it's visually appealing, interior storm windows will provide an extra sound

Normal conversation ranges between 50 and 65 decibels. Prolonged exposure to any noise above 90 decibels can cause gradual hearing loss.

exposure to any noise above 90 decibels can cause gradual hearing loss. Sound requirements vary by code and by structure, but it's not uncommon for interior walls to have STC ratings of 15 to 35.

Walls. An uninsulated interior wall with 1/2-inch wallboard, framed with 2x4 wood studs 16 inches on center, has an STC rating in the low to mid 30s. Adding 3 1/2 inches of fiberglass batt insulation can bring that up to 38, according to the North American Insulation Manufacturers Association.

You can also increase the STC ratings by using 5/8-inch drywall or by using a double layer of wallboard on one or both sides of the wall. The disadvantage to this option is losing floor space.

Adding resilient channels in the walls or using double framing are still more effective methods, though more labor intensive.

Interior doors should have STC ratings near that of the walls. If your client has hollow-core doors, upgrading to a solid-core option is an obvious option for isolating sound.

turned green building consultant, has five specific recommendations:

- Around receptacles and switches, use foam gaskets under plates.
- At wall to floor connections, caulk between baseboard (or drywall) and floor. Pull back carpet, caulk and reinstall if needed.
- Use commercial products to seal around attic access hatches and stairs.
- Replace leaky recessed lights with airtight models and install airtight trim, or build a box over them and then cover with insulation.
- Also seal around HVAC registers and surface light fixtures.

Check the ducts themselves. Many duct layouts leak 10 to 20 percent of the conditioned air. Older ducts can leak as much as 50 percent, requiring the heater or air conditioner to work that much harder. Seal all ducts and plenum junctions with mastic or aerosol sealant.

Keep outside noises from entering Windows and doors. These openings in the building envelope are the most

and air barrier. Acoustical windows with laminated glass are your best bet.

Proper installation will prevent noise and the elements from entering the home. "Use proper flashing at the top, sides and bottom, and use caulk or low expansion spray foam insulation between the window and the framing to eliminate air leakage," says Seville.

Air sealing. Air seal the entire building envelope, not just around windows. In addition to being a source of noise, air infiltration can cause draftiness, moisture and dust problems and account for up to 30 percent of a building's heating and cooling costs.

Look for air leaks in and around windows, doors, chimneys, chases and other penetrations. Use caulk for sealing gaps of less than 1/2 inch. Spray foam can be used to fill small holes, as well as large cracks. You can even use expanding foam around windows if the product is designed specifically for this task. Use weatherstripping to seal areas with moveable components such as windows and doors.

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BATHROOM CULTURE

For larger areas, use housewrap or 15# felt paper to form an airtight seal over the exterior sheathing, and polyethylene plastic to seal complicated leakage areas that may be of irregular shape.

Insulation. When we think insulation, we think about keeping out unwanted heat and cold. But proper insulation and leak-proof construction also dramatically reduce the amount of noise that enters the home.

If using fiberglass insulation, don't cram it into corners or stuff it behind pipes. Batts must completely cover the wall before you hang the drywall. Thoroughly air seal before installation. Cotton batts, made from recycled blue

it's also likely to be inefficient.

Appliances. Older refrigerators, dishwashers and room air conditioners tend to be sonic offenders. By installing Energy Star-qualified appliances you'll eliminate a lot of the hum and whir that you find in nonqualified models.

Fans. Noise prevents many homeowners from using exhaust and ventilation fans. Ultra-quiet models are now widely available, and they often provide the best ventilation. Many furnaces have quiet variable speed fans. Some bathroom fans are virtually silent. Many kitchen range hoods are so inconspicuous, you need an indicator light to know they're running. Fans that

less frequently, producing less noise.

Radiant floor heating uses pipes buried in the floor to pump hot water and produce heat, avoiding all the blowers, ducts and banging baseboards of a conventional heating system.

The quietest home conditioning system is passive solar, which heats the home's walls and floors with solar radiation. Concrete and other dense walls, like stone and brick, store heat during the daytime for release at night. During the summer, nighttime ventilation cools the walls and reduces the need for daytime air conditioning. Passive solar homes also don't usually require noisy blowers, ducts and baseboards.

It takes energy to make noise, so if appliances, fans and HVAC equipment are loud, they're also likely to be inefficient.

jeans, make a slightly more effective noise barrier than fiberglass. Cellulose insulation, made of fire-treated recycled paper products blocks sound more effectively than fiberglass because of its greater density.

Spray foam insulation, though more expensive, is an even more effective sound and air block because it expands into tight areas before it dries. It saves time on the remodeling schedule by eliminating the separate air-sealing step. Closed-cell spray foam insulation has a higher R-value than open cell, but is more expensive and doesn't absorb moisture or allow water to pass through it. Don't use closed cell under a roofline, says Seville, where it could mask a leak.

Eliminate noise at the source

Kitchen and bath remodels, room additions and whole-house remodels offer the opportunity to replace loud appliances, fans and HVAC equipment with quieter options. It takes energy to make noise, so if one of these items is noisy,

produce under 1 sone, or unit of loudness, are very quiet.

Inline fans, where the fan is mounted along the exhaust duct, are also available. They are frequently quieter because the fan is further away from the bathroom or kitchen.

HVAC equipment. If you're installing a new HVAC system, you have several options for finding a quiet one. If you're looking for a quiet condenser, choose an Energy Star qualified system with a nominal sound level of 76 decibels or less. Locate the condensing unit where it will be the most unobtrusive. Make sure walls or landscaping features do not block airflow to the unit because that would reduce its efficiency.

Be sure that heating and air conditioning equipment, including blowers and ducts, is sized correctly. "Right-sized" units operate less frequently, more quietly and more efficiently. Use the Air Conditioning Contractors of America Manual J to determine the correct size. Properly sized, any system will turn on

If you've incorporated many of these features, you'll know that you've done your best to make your client's home as quiet as possible.

That is, unless you're willing to take the client's kids with you, too. **PR**

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

For More Information

The following resources provide more specifics, including construction detail drawings.

Sound Control, "Best Practices Guide to Residential Construction," by Steven Bliss, John Wiley & Sons.

"Noise Control Manual for Residential Buildings," by David A. Harris, McGraw-Hill.

"The Noise Guidebook," www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/energyenvironment/environment/resources/guidebooks/noise



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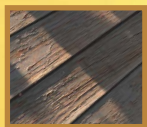
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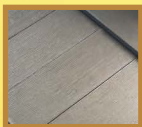


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Smart Vent automatic foundation flood vents protect homes from the destruction that a hurricane, flood or other natural disaster can cause. Designed to provide ventilation as well as flood protection, they are certified to meet FEMA and NFIP requirements for all homes or buildings located in a flood-

plain. All Smart Vent products are certified engineered openings, providing an automatic entry and exit of floodwaters that exert hydrostatic pressure on foundations during flooding. The vents have two patented floats that automatically release with rising water. Once released, the floats open the bi-

directional flood door, rotating it out of the path of the floodwaters. The vent then provides a completely unobstructed opening for flood water to enter and exit.

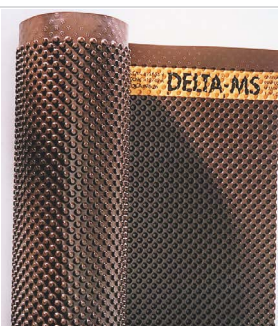
877/441-8368
www.smartvent.com
Circle 144



Charlotte Pipe and Foundry

The Quiet House System for residential drain, waste and vent systems from Charlotte Pipe and Foundry includes cast iron waste piping and plastic vent lines for a complete, high-performance system. The cast iron pipe uses shielded hubless couplings that are easy to install and easy to alter for future modification. The system fits in stud walls with no need to bypass living areas to reduce noise. Nailing plates are not required and furring strips are unnecessary.

800/438-6091
www.charlottepipe.com
Circle 145



Cosella Dörken

Delta-MS foundation wrap uses air-gap technology to protect basements against moisture. The heavy-duty polyethylene membrane has dimples that function as air pockets to provide an air gap that allows concrete walls to breathe and dry. To install, the wrap is rolled around the foundation, overlapped and sealed at the joints. Delta-MS functions even when cut or torn. The dimples allow any water that may enter to flow freely to the drain. Available in a variety of widths on a 65.6' roll.

888/4 DELTA 4
www.deltams.com
Circle 146



Simpson Strong-Tie

The Steel Strong-Wall is Simpson's latest addition to its Strong-Wall line. An engineered composite of steel and wood, it features loads between two and three times higher than the original Strong-Wall. The design resists distortion of the center section and results in sustained vertical load capacity. Includes pre-attached wood stud, two easily accessible anchor bolts, fewer top-of-wall screws and numerous pre-drilled holes.

800/999-5099
www.strongtie.com
Circle 147



Grace

The Grace Roof Detail Membrane is designed for waterproofing critical roof detail areas and preventing water damage. This flexible membrane conforms tightly to roof details, reducing the risk of water infiltration. Based on the Grace Ice & Water Shield technology, the membrane is applied to the roof deck prior to application of the finished roof covering, forming a weather-tight barrier against leaks caused by water backup.

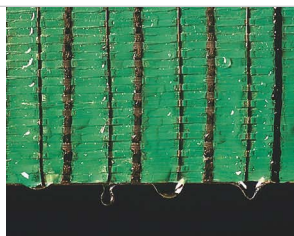
617/498-4994
www.graceconstruction.com
Circle 148



FlowGuard

The FlowGuard Gold plumbing system is constructed of durable post-chlorinated poly-vinyl chloride that maintains water quality because there is no leaching of metal. It does not require a torch to install. Pipes and joints are solvent welded and corrosion resistant. The CPVC provides insulation to reduce condensation and quieter operation. Available for connection to older metallic systems.

888/234-2436
www.flowguardgold.com
Circle 149



Pactiv

GreenGuard RainDrop is a woven housewrap with drainage channels that divert the water straight down to the base of the exterior wall. Includes vertical cords every few centimeters along the face, allowing moisture vapor to escape the wall cavity. May be used with most common exterior finishes. The drainage channels will not crush even when hard-backed siding is fastened over the housewrap.

Sizes: 9' x 100' and 9' x 150' rolls

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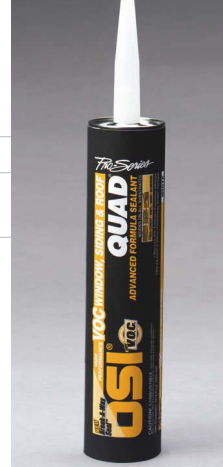


Dow

Styrofoam Duramate Plus is Dow's strongest extruded polystyrene sheathing. Lightweight and easy-to-use, it has an extra-tough plastic film on both sides for added strength and staple-holding power. Offers superior insulating power with an R-value of 3.0 per 1/2-inch and reduces thermal bridging and air infiltration. Recommended for wall sheathing over studs or over non-insulating sheathings.

Board sizes: 4' x 8' and 4' x 9'

866/583-2583
www.dowstyrofoam.com
Circle 151



OSI

The Pro-Series QUAD Advanced Formula Sealant now features a multi-polymer, low-VOC formula that meets new state and federal VOC regulations. Provides excellent stretch and movement capability, plus all-weather adhesion and easy extrusion – even through water and in temperatures below 20 degrees. When cured, QUAD is mildew-resistant and will not crack or yellow. Available in a variety of colors.

888/445-0208
www.osiproseries.com
Circle 152



QuickFlash

Quickflash plumbing and electrical panels are manufactured of polyethylene plastic and thermo plastic rubber. The boxes eliminate the need for caulking and/or sheet metal flashing around electrical boxes and PVC, copper or brass pipes. Designed for multiple finishes such as stucco, wood siding, brick and vinyl, they provide a moisture barrier that can reduce toxic mold and dry rot. Available in a variety of sizes and configurations.

800/963-6886
www.quickflashproducts.com
Circle 153



Tarco

Tarco's LeakBarrier Fast90 is a high-strength underlayment ideal for all roof tile and slate roof applications. Features a peel-and-stick, self-adhering bottom side with a 4-inch peel-and-stick selvage area. The granulated asphalt-coated top-side can withstand the weight and local stresses of the tiles and has no exposure limitations. No special tools are needed and no fumes or odors are released during installation.

Available colors: White and cedar blend

800/365-4506
www.tarcoroofing.com
Circle 154



Johns Manville

MR-Faced is a formaldehyde-free, lightweight thermal and acoustical fiberglass insulation that resists mold and mildew. The facing – treated with an EPA-registered preservative – serves as a vapor retarder and protects against potential fungi growth. Pre-cut batts are available in a variety of R-values, widths and lengths. Cuts easily with a utility knife and is flexible enough to form around corners and curved surfaces. Stapling tabs are provided for attachment to wood framing.

800/654-3103
www.jm.com
Circle 155



Huber Engineered Woods

ZIP System roof sheathing has a 30-year limited warranty against delamination. The Zip System features a 1/2-inch roof sheathing panel with built-in Precipitex moisture barrier plus ZIP System tape to seal the seams. Instant rough dry-in allows subs to rough in electrical and plumbing sooner, while the system also eliminates the need for felt and H-clips.

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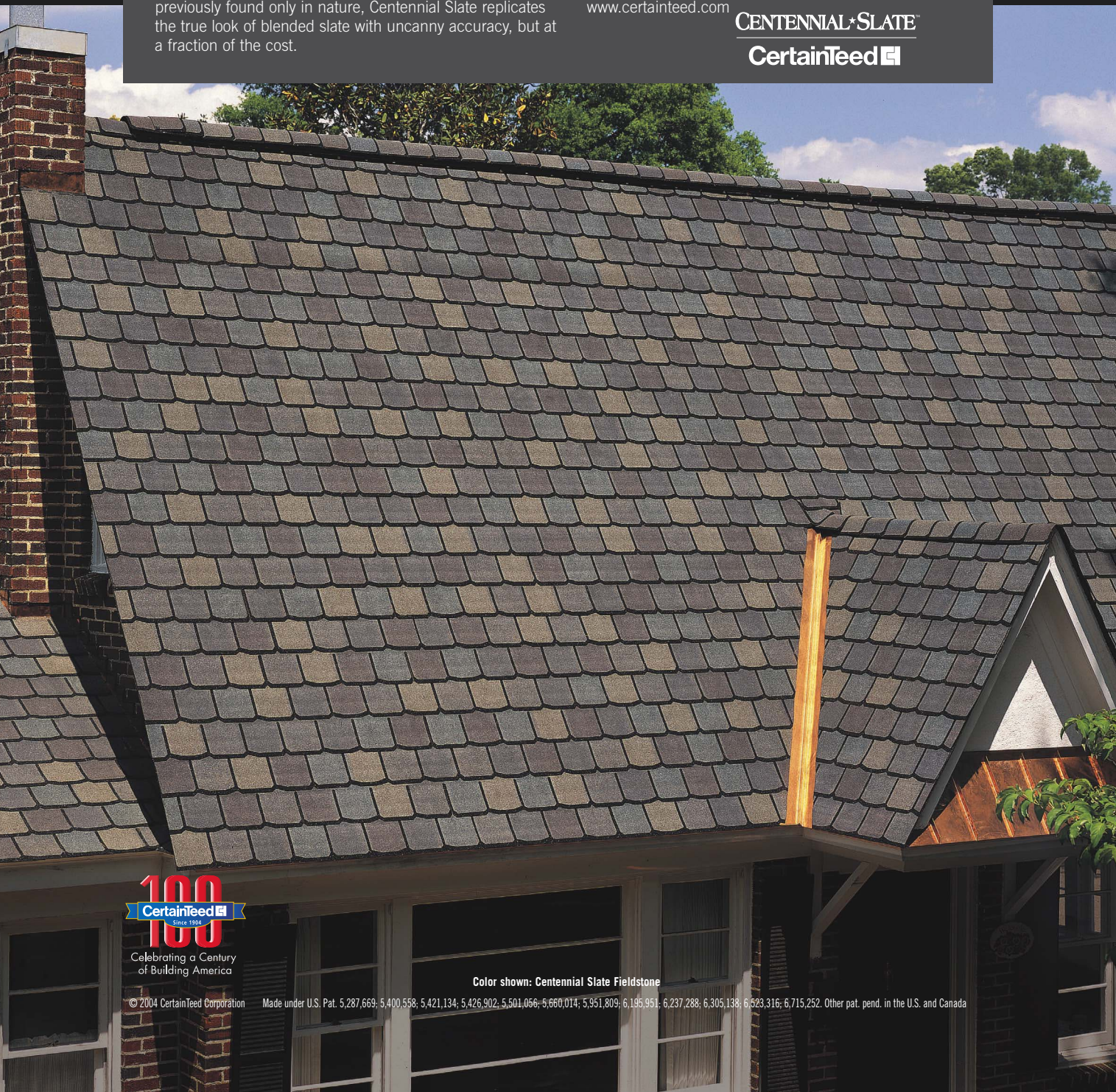
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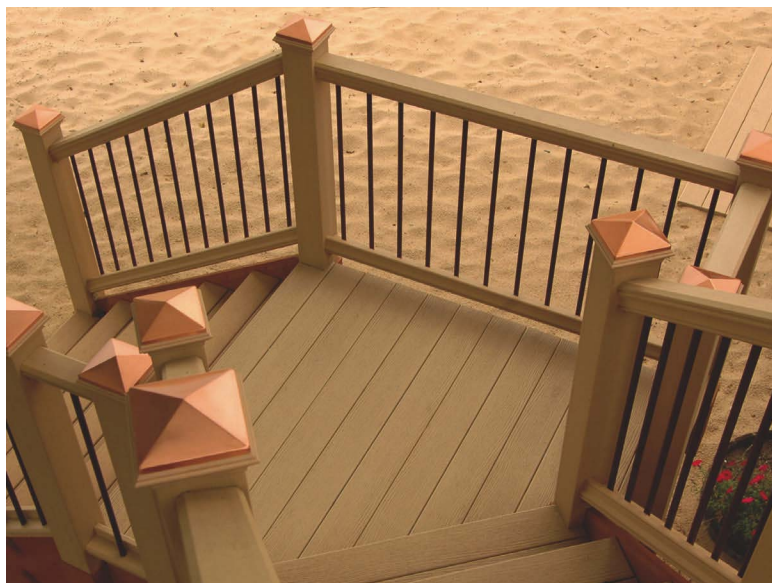
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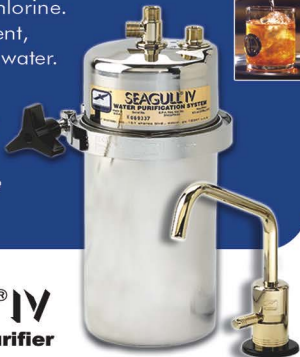
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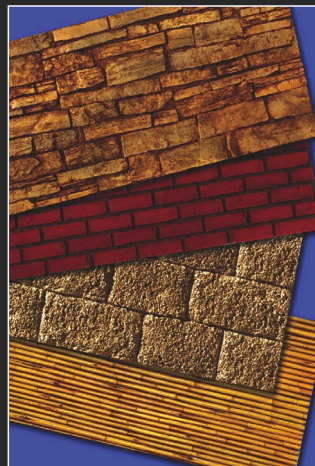
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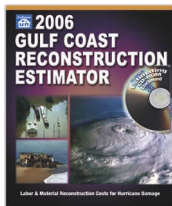


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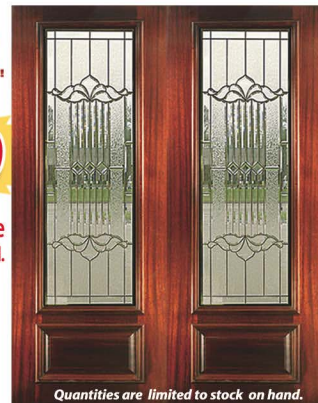
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2006 Economic Forecast

Hurricane Katrina's impact will still be felt in coming year



Building material prices are expected to remain high throughout 2006 as a result of the effects of Hurricane Katrina, according to the Association of General Contractors.

Widespread shortages of natural gas and crude oil following Katrina caused a 20 to 50 percent spike in the price of PVC piping, roofing and insulation, which is expected to remain near those levels in

2006. The cost of plywood, drywall, steel and concrete are also expected to remain 20 percent higher than pre-Katrina. Brick, glass, gypsum and wood will be 5 to 10 percent higher than before.

Your Opinion Matters to Us

Beginning this month, 5-Minute Update will feature a reader poll in every issue.

To cast your vote – and view the current results as they are tabulated – simply log on to our new *Professional Remodeler* Web site *ProRemodeler.com*. We'll publish the final results of this month's question in the February issue's 5-Minute Update.

If you'd like to suggest a topic for future poll questions, or if you have a comment or opinion regarding this month's topic, please contact Editor in Chief Mike Morris at 630/288-8057 or michael.morris@reedbusiness.com.

Update on lead-safe work practices

The Home Builders Association of Greater Chicagoland recently hosted a seminar on lead-safe work practices for its local Remodelers Council, and the news was both good and bad.

The NAHB's Gary Suskauer, on hand for the class, said the effects of the EPA's impending rule on lead safety for the renovation of pre-1978 housing likely wouldn't be felt by remodelers for at least two more years. The contractors in attendance, however, were less than thrilled upon learning some of the potential safeguards they would be forced to adopt in order to comply with stricter standards. Workers could be forced to wear hazmat suits and respirators, which will drive up costs and slow down production, in addition to using HEPA vacuums, spray bottles, plastic dropcloths and having to seal off the work area to contain airborne lead particles. Mandatory post-project clearance tests could also be instituted by the EPA to enforce compliance.

Suskauer said the NAHB will likely issue an update on its plan to test some applicable renovation jobs at the International Builders' Show in Orlando in January.

THE POLL

Which area of your business would you most like to improve heading into 2006?

1. Sales
2. Marketing
3. Customer Satisfaction
4. Project Management
5. Hiring Practices
6. Construction Quality
7. Business/Finance/Profits
8. Other

To cast your vote and view the results as they are tabulated, visit www.ProRemodeler.com



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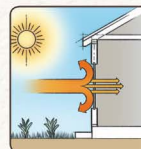
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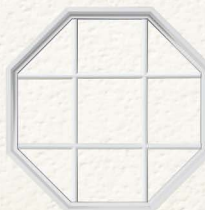
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