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**President Dale Nikula
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Photo by Dave Bradley Photography



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Your Opinion Counts

See page 50 for this month's poll question. Post your response on our Web site: www.proremodeler.com

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Our fourth Business Results Study suggests that remodelers are modifying their strategies to combat costs and promote profits.

By Kimberly Sweet.

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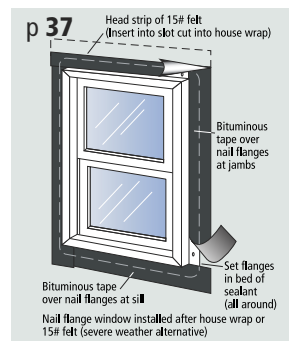
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An 1870s shack is rebuilt and reborn with 21st-century materials.

By Wendy A Jordan.

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Greener Pastures



Michael Morris

Editor in Chief

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If you think green building and remodeling practices are a fad, try to remember what it was like when cellphones were first introduced. I recall a lot of people saying they were too expensive and nothing more than a fad for yuppies.

And yet, just a few short years later, everyone I know owns a cellphone. In fact, many of us don't even have landlines in our homes anymore.

Energy-efficient furnaces, water heaters, windows and insulation – some of the basic elements of green building practices – are no more a fad than cellphones. They are in fact the future of remodeling and, in many instances, the present. Early adopters, such as Renewal Construction Inc., in Decatur, Ga., have based their business model on it and are enjoying great success. Renewal, which has been in business just five years and is projected to hit \$2.7 million in revenue in 2006, targets an upper-middle income, well-educated, professional consumer who lives within a 5-mile radius of its office.

Renewal was named 2005 Renovator of the Year by EarthCraft House, a voluntary green building program run by Southface Energy Institute in cooperation with the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association. Renewal founder and CEO Peter Michelson, and president David Michelson, his brother, have found clients more interested than ever in energy-efficient, conservation-

minded materials and systems for their homes. Being an EarthCraft contractor, in fact, has become a key point of differentiation for Renewal that sets it apart from competitors.

"We don't have to sell people on it," says Peter, a former educator. "Soaring energy prices and people's utility bills sell the program. Our involvement with EarthCraft is one of the benefits you get when you choose Renewal. We can make your house more economical in the long run, more energy-efficient, and greener and healthier for you as well."

While consumers are less of an obstacle in a move to greener pastures, there are still many architects, designers and, yes, contractors that remain uneducated, or just plain stubborn, about adopting green building practices.

The Michelsons met with an architect recently, and when they said they were going to "seal up" the house with Icynene, he was flabbergasted.

"His comment to Peter was, 'We went through all this energy-efficient stuff back in the '70s. It's irrelevant. It's just another fad.'" recalls David.

He couldn't have been more wrong. Green building is here to stay. **PR**

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A Whole Different Animal

Smaller jobs require more business skill, not less

For many remodelers, increased job sizes seem like a natural part of business growth. Big jobs with higher price tags feel more like showcase projects and keep them busy for a longer time. Yet consumers need more small improvements than large projects. Do you have to pick one or the other? Can you do both? Tom Swartz asks remodelers Larry Murr and Scott Mosby how they balance big-ticket design/build jobs with repair and replacement work.

Tom: *Let's talk about strategies for large jobs versus small jobs. Do you approach them differently?*

Scott: It is a different delivery system.



Larry Murr, CGR, Owner
Lawrence Murr Remodeling

Located in Jacksonville, Fla., this \$2.3 million firm does design/build remodeling and builds custom homes. It also handles small jobs for existing clients and repair jobs for a large builder. Murr employs four office staff and seven in the field.

Photo by Kelly LaDuke

The larger jobs are design/build with an average size of \$109,000. We have two licensed architects and a team of eight within Mosby Building Arts.

We also have Total Home jobs. We evaluate the home and tell them what they need to do for the next five or 10 years: The roof is eight years old; you can expect it to be \$7,000 to \$9,000 in today's numbers. For 2006, we are getting into home energy audits. We are licensed as an Energy Star contractor.

Larry: We advertise a handyman service. We started that to service our clients. Our client base was starting to grow, so we wanted to be the person they call all the time.

The past couple of years we've gotten involved with a large builder here in Jacksonville. We started to do a lot of their major repairs as far as damage caused by water intrusion. We're probably going to close out that section of our business at a little over \$300,000. We treat those homeowners just like we would our regular clients. We had about 112 small jobs in 2005. Of those, 79 were less than \$1,000. The range will go anywhere from \$106 to \$21,000.

Tom: *It sounds like not much design in the smaller jobs.*

Scott: That's how we define it. The average size for our smaller jobs is above \$20,000, because the more data we get the more we find out what's broken about a house. We don't even count the jobs below \$1,000 – they all go into one job. They're too overhead-heavy to count independently, at least on our work-in-progress sheet. It's all service with a little bit of construction.

Tom: *The folks at our office are trying to get me to commit to putting the real small jobs into one job and quit costing out all of them and I've resisted that.*

Larry: The overhead that goes into a small job is more extensive. Having someone entering all your accounting data for one small job takes almost as much time as it would for a large job. We track our small jobs separately. The builder we're working for has his own series of job numbers.

Our small jobs are almost a separate department. The gentleman who's been scheduling and managing these jobs is retired and works three days a week. If somebody needs to be there on a day he's not working, he'll work that out with my other project manager.

Tom: *Do you actually go out and estimate and give them a set price on the small jobs?*

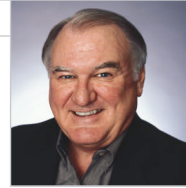
Larry: We sometimes do. We've worked with the builder for so long that we're doing those on time and materials. If we have a customer call in, we'll talk to them about the job over the phone. We'll come out and do an estimate but we'll charge for that time. If we do the job we'll give it back to them or include it within the cost of the job.

Tom: *Scott, do you always do a written estimate on all the work you do?*

Scott: When the estimating becomes virtually impossible, that's when we'll go to time and materials. Our policy is \$1,000 or less. Our financial success on T&M jobs is abysmal.

Tom: *You're saying don't do time and materials, right?*

Scott: Our Total Home program is predictive maintenance to avoid going out to fix one doorknob, where I can't possibly charge enough to cover my costs. All I do is make my client mad and chase away an existing relationship. What we're doing with predictive maintenance is: let us survey your house, make a list and do 10 things when we show up. We can purchase



Tom Swartz
Contributing Editor

ahead of time, plan ahead of time, staff ahead of time. When we get there, we hit the ground running and we'll be efficient with your money.

Tom: *When you get a call, who goes out to the house? Is it a salesperson, a technician?*

Scott: It's our past production manager. He was a field person and is fully technically competent. He is in charge of Total Home. He will run out and do the sales call. Total Home was the brainchild of our current general manager and our past production manager. They figured that in six months, we referred out \$500,000 to \$1 million worth of work. We were fully employing two or three handyman services.

There are three salespeople at Mosby. When we're out on a call, somebody may not want to put on a room addition. We ask if there's anything else, and we perform a Total Home evaluation. This is a way to have another product to sell and to keep that relationship going.

Tom: *Larry, when you do time and materials, do you charge a higher rate per hour?*

Larry: We use an hourly rate and that hourly rate will depend upon how long that job's going to be. If our guy is only going to be there for half a day it's more than if he's going to be there for three weeks. Then we put a contractor fee on top of that. We include the cost of our labor in the cost of the entire job, which includes subs, materials, etc. Then we put a contractor fee on top of that.

Tom: *Does the percentage on material and subs change depending on the size and material portion of it?*

Larry: Right. It does.

Tom: *And Scott, how do you do time and materials?*

Scott: Our estimating systems for project planning and Total Home use the

same units per hour, dollars per hour. We charge like an auto dealership – they have a shop charge for miscellaneous nuts and bolts. We will charge an above-line cost of so many dollars or so much percent. The idea is you pay for what we perform; however, much of what we perform may be not on the job site.

Appointments are time consuming. I hear you describe a "trip charge." You will pay us for the time we spend and only the time we spend, but we don't call it an hourly rate.

Tom: *You charge the customer for not only the carpenter who's on the job, but also any other people involved even if they never go to the jobsite. Do they keep an hourly time that gets charged to that job?*

Scott: Yes and no. We have a really wizard estimator who's gone back to figure out what the average rate is per \$1,000 of work. We charge for that time one way or another.

Tom: *Scott, you have an hourly rate for your craftsman on the job, plus a percentage you add to the materials that you buy. Plus a percentage that you put on for the subcontractor if there is one. Plus what Larry is calling a contractor fee and you call a shop charge. Is that correct?*

Scott: Yes.

Tom: *Do you shoot for higher gross margins on small jobs or about the same gross margins as your larger jobs?*

Scott: Small jobs need a higher gross margin because most of those off-site hours are not individually job-costed. They show up as indirect costs or overhead. The way we do pricing and estimating, small jobs are about 10 points higher on gross margins.

Larry: We do the same thing.

Tom: *On the handyman jobs, how do you get paid? Is it different from the large jobs?*

Larry: We'll establish a working budget

and then we'll ask for 50 percent of that, typically. We recently had a larger repair job – we were estimating it to be around \$50,000 – so we got a \$10,000 deposit and we billed out biweekly. Some we'll bill out on a weekly basis.

We always get a deposit ahead of time so we're working against their money. It's the same on time and materials jobs. If it's small, like \$500, it might be half before we start and half when we're done.

Scott: Within Total Home projects, there are two tiers according to size. A time and materials job, we'll give them a range of what we expect it to be and then it's per hour. Although I'd like to



Scott Mosby, President
Mosby Building Arts Ltd.

In addition to large design/build jobs, this 59-year-old Kirkwood, Mo., company does what it calls Total Home jobs. These smaller jobs focus on home performance and preventive maintenance. In 2005, the firm sold \$6.8 million in revenue with 45 employees.

Photo by Mark Berlow

say we get paid up front on those, we don't. We don't have a contract. We have an understanding of budget and when we're done, we hope we get paid.

Tom: *Do you ever get paid by credit card?*

Scott: Not yet but it's inevitable.

Larry: We haven't. We don't always get money up front. If we're going out to do a job for a previous client, we already have a payment history on them, we'll go out and do the job and bill them out once we're done.

Tom: *Some remodelers say, "We've got to do the small jobs. From the small jobs, I'm going to get the larger jobs." Is that true?*

Larry: Occasionally it happens. I don't think that should be a reason why you do small jobs.

think you can be successful running a handyman or small jobs division as part of your overall remodeling business.

Tom: *On small jobs that are mostly subcontracted, how do you charge, by the hour or by the job?*

Scott: We charge for supervision and communication time above the line. The owners buy Mosby. They expect a Mosby person to be there taking care of the job. What we bring to the table is all that soft-side management and that's direct cost. We just consider that a cost of construction, and we charge by the hour. But anything that has a sub or trade contractor involved will be an estimated job.

Tom: *So you'll get an estimate from the*

trade contractor bill your customer direct. Do you ever do that?

Scott: Not consciously. If customers are willing to pay us the time it takes us to supervise a job, then by golly we better bring something to the table for it. If I let a sub bill directly, it might be at the end of a job, mostly on a design/build. If part of the project is wiring for the future patio lights, when it comes time to install those lights, feel free to call the trade contractors we trust.

Tom: *If you were to give the readers advice on large jobs versus small jobs, pro and con, what would that be?*

Scott: Two points: Small jobs – yes, if you do it extraordinarily right to where it becomes a positive relationship build-

Small jobs are going to cost you more to do and price accordingly.

Scott: Small jobs, well done in a professional, equitable way, lead to large jobs.

Tom: *And conversely, a small job done poorly...*

Scott: Yeah, how many times do you hear a complaint from a consumer on a television station for poor quality? Most everybody does a pretty good job from a technical standpoint – the customer satisfaction is why we either had to get in or get out of small jobs. It's very communication heavy, setting the expectations, showing up on time. Our Total Home people are polite, courteous, respectful and communicative, and they are at a lead carpenter level skill.

That's the cost of it – opportunity costs. They could put on a \$100,000 addition. We choose to put them in a different type of job. They really have to be some pretty stellar employees to send them out by themselves.

Larry: I agree. Not only do they have to be technically skilled and socially skilled, they also have to be business smart. Finding that particular type of employee is difficult. When you do, I

trade contractor and mark it up appropriately, then add the time that you're going to have for production management.

Scott: We're holding hands tightly enough with our trade partners that they rather we estimate for them. We're sticks and bricks both for large jobs and small jobs.

Tom: *Larry, what do you do with subcontractors on small jobs?*

Larry: We have subcontractors we've worked with for years. Depending on what the call is about, we may just send them out. If it's a past client and it doesn't make sense for us to be involved with it, we'll tell them to go ahead and bill them directly. For the most part that subcontractor has already been out to that job and is familiar with the client. If they want us to handle it, or if it's a particular subcontractor that we feel we need to oversee, then we charge a supervision fee. We have a project coordination line, too, not for being on-site viewing that job but when it's setting everything up. We charge for that time.

Tom: *Scott, let's talk about having your*

ing experience. If it's something just to keep your guys busy, stay out because the harm will exceed the benefit for both client and company.

The second thing is, we've learned over the last few years that sales responsibility is to decline working for the wrong clients. Anybody who tells us what to do and how to do it is the wrong client. If they're going to tell us what and how, then they're better off with a carpenter to come do whatever they say.

Tom: *Larry, what advice would you have?*

Larry: Well, I think small jobs can be very beneficial. But you have to look at it realistically. Small jobs are going to cost you more to do and price accordingly. If you don't have the manpower to do that and if you don't have the time to follow through and do it right, then you shouldn't get involved. It can be a very profitable part of your business if you handle it well. **PR**

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Doug Dwyer
Contributing Editor

Marketing: To Survive or Thrive?

The economy continues to fluctuate because of concerns about the war; natural disasters in the southern part of the United States; the cost of gas, oil and

related products; concerns about the government and bankruptcies of large corporations around the country. If you're a consumer and read the news on a bad day, that can be depressing!

Most remodelers have not felt the impact of these concerns to date. That's the good news. The not-so-good news is that all things have a natural cycle. Is your business ready to handle the down part of this cycle when it eventually comes?

Let me share a story of a Midwest remodeling company in the year following Sept. 11. Many markets and remodeling businesses felt the negative effect of that challenging time. This particular company had planned for 30 percent growth for that year and was disappointed they were only experiencing 3 to 5 percent growth. Yet I knew of another company in his market that was down 30 percent. There were several other local companies contemplating closing down.

Though the one remodeler didn't grow as much as planned, at least his business wasn't shrinking or sinking. He had a full-blown marketing plan with average job size in dollars, how many leads he needed and how he was going to generate those leads. He used newspaper ads, home shows, magazine ads, award contests, yard signs, decal vans and direct mail.

With a proactive marketing plan, you can not only survive but thrive through the tough times. Many remodel-

ers I have spoken with during the last 10 years are very proud that 80 to 90 percent of their customers come from referrals. On one hand, this is a great accomplishment. Your company has a great reputation for producing quality work. The downside is that when the economy shifts, you're really going to feel the effects.

It's not a question of whether or not referrals are a great lead source. They are. It's having them as your only lead source that is dangerous.

The solution to thrive is to use five to eight proactive marketing techniques at the same time. This is over and above reactive referrals, phone book ads and

doing and investigate regional differences. Then, make sure the quality and content of your marketing pieces, brochures, ads and commercials are strong. It is well worth hiring a consultant to get some opinions. You can survey people or hold focus groups of people who are the age and income of your typical clients. Maybe ask a past client. You don't want to do things that won't perform; this will help ensure greater levels of success.

One concern you might have is what happens if you generate too many leads. This is a great challenge to have. Why? Most remodeling companies should raise their pricing 10 percent or more to achieve a fair profit and salary for the owners. Having more qualified leads creates a safe opportunity to make the transition.

It takes extra effort and an investment to produce consistent, sustained

With a proactive marketing plan,
you can not only survive but thrive
through the tough times.

vehicles with company decals. These additional tactics might include home shows, newspaper ads, magazine ads, direct mail, television ads, billboards or radio spots.

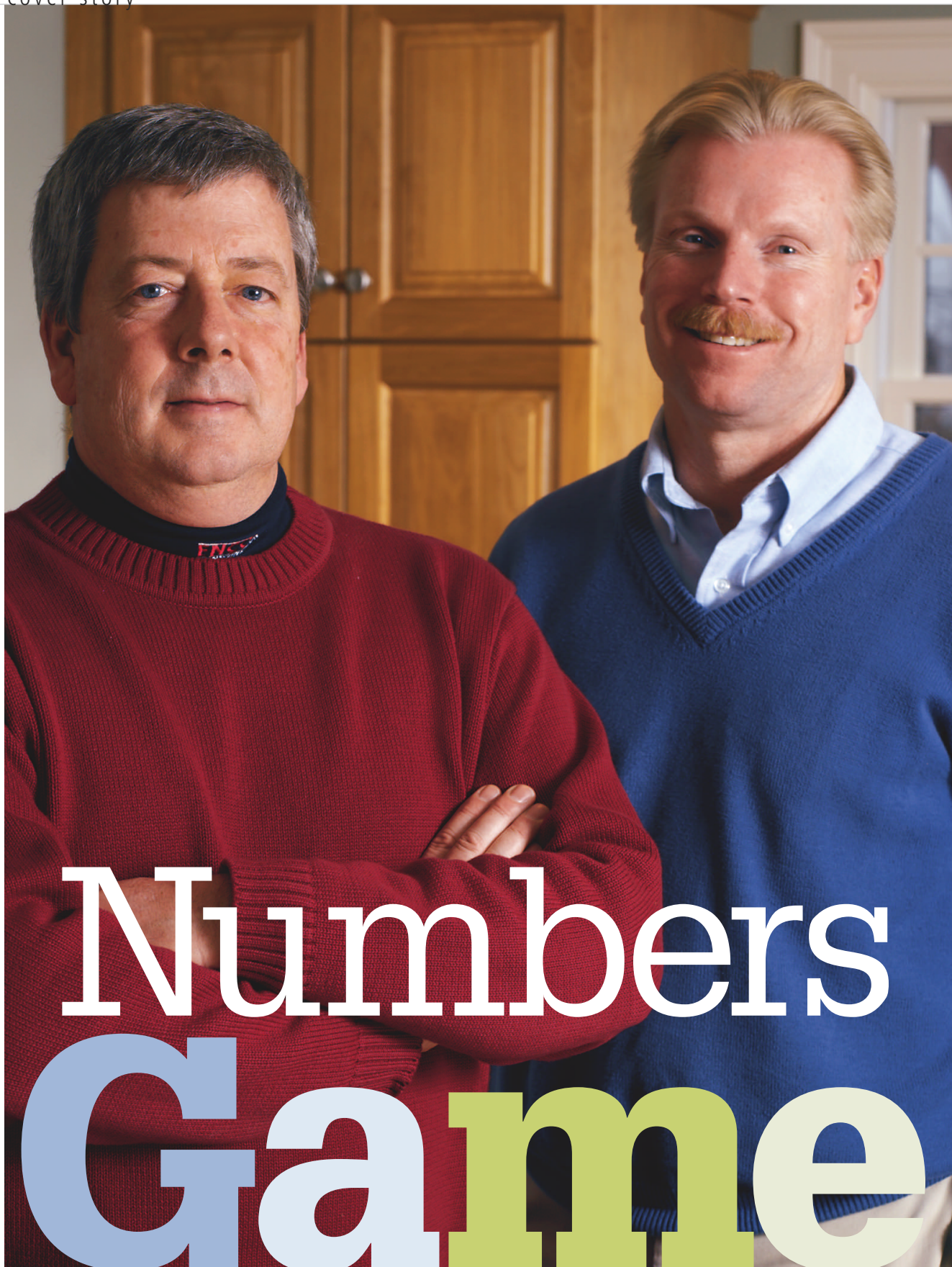
If you develop a comprehensive marketing plan that includes advertising, you have positioned your company to survive and thrive when the economy negatively shifts.

One note of caution is to do your homework on what marketing techniques really work for our industry. Look at what other remodelers are

growth. I like the old saying about physical health: "You either take time out to be healthy or you will have to take time out to be sick." Take the time — you will be happy you did. Be a thriver, not just a survivor! **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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Numbers Game

Our fourth Business Results Study suggests that remodelers are modifying their strategies to combat costs and promote profits

By Kimberly Sweet
Editor

The past six years have been good to Dale Nikula and his company, Encore Construction, located in Dennisport, Mass., on Cape Cod. Annual volume has risen from \$1 million to more than \$6 million. Encore employs 22 people in addition to Nikula, and completes three or four new homes a year in addition to kitchen remodels, large design/build projects, additions and whole-house renovations. For existing clients, Encore will take on small remodels, including repairs and replacements. The home page of Encore's Web site (www.encoreconstructionco.com) says that the company is known for completing projects on time and on budget, with a zero punchlist.

"Our jobs run from 2 to 3 percent under budget," says Nikula, CAPS. "If you're doing \$6.5 million a year, that's quite a bit of savings."

Rising costs, however, have him looking for ways to improve efficiency and value to remain competitive.

"Labor costs preceded some of the material bump-ups here," says Nikula. "In terms of our roofing and siding labor, costs have probably gone up 50 to 60 percent. That started happening about two years ago." Since then, he has seen concrete prices rise 30 percent. Plywood, steel and asphalt-based products cost more, too.

Knowing that contractors across the country face similar challenges, *Professional Remodeler* editors were pleasantly surprised to find the respondents of our fourth Business Results Study reported increased gross profits.

Does this mean that more remodelers are charging what they're worth, or that those that don't are going out of business? Perhaps both. Check out the survey results to find out how your business compares to industry averages.

Production manager Craig McConchie and president Dale Nikula have found that increasing production planning time on a job increases profits. Photo by Dave Bradley Photography

An "average" remodeling firm

Years in business	18
Full-time employees (besides owner)	10
Part-time employees	3
Total annual installed volume	\$3,361,000
Total residential remodeling installed volume	\$1,255,000
Total commercial remodeling installed volume	\$930,000
Total new home building installed volume	\$1,175,000
Residential remodeling jobs	35
Residential remodeling job size	\$101,000
Commercial remodeling jobs	8
Commercial remodeling job size	\$176,000
New homes	5
New home price	\$416,000

Averages based on respondents who do at least 10 percent of their volume in residential remodeling (147); commercial remodeling (113); and/or home building (92). Responses applied only to work in that area.

A typical remodeler?

Of the survey's 163 respondents, 90 percent did at least 10 percent of their 2004 volume in residential remodeling, while 69 percent earned one-tenth or more of their volume in commercial remodeling and 56 percent did so in new home building.

Despite the diversified nature of most of these businesses, only 66 percent said they offered full-service remodeling, down from 70 percent in 2002 and 2003. The number of remodelers who reported doing kitchen and bath remodeling and exterior contracting, however, grew

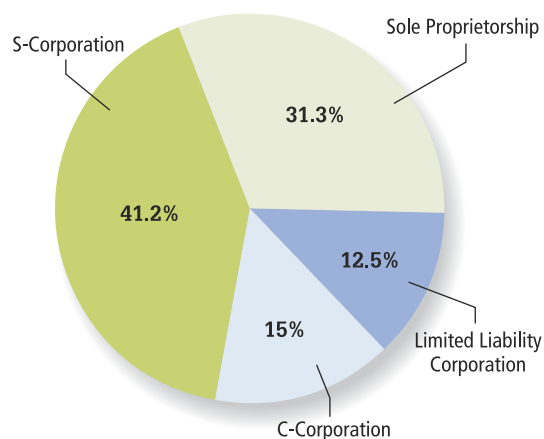
Methodology:

In late 2005, *Professional Remodeler* conducted the Business Results Study to gather business performance and financial information about companies in the remodeling industry. The 2005 study was conducted by canvassing a random sample of *Professional Remodeler* readers. Results are based on 163 responses.

Good Sources of Business

2005 Rank	2003 Rank	Top Marketing Strategies	All Responses	Residential Remodeling	Commercial Remodeling	New Home Building
1	2	Client referrals	89%	90%	71%	79%
2	1	Repeat business	88%	87%	78%	69%
3	3	Referrals from suppliers/subs/architects	64%	64%	46%	49%
4	7	Job signs or trucks	50%	51%	36%	43%
5	11	Company Web site	33%	31%	21%	27%
6	6	Organization or community networking	32%	32%	19%	18%
7	5	Phone book	28%	29%	21%	19%
8	4	Print advertising	28%	27%	15%	21%
9	9	Home shows/parade of homes	24%	25%	8%	16%
10	12	Outdoor advertising	21%	21%	10%	9%
11	8	Online referral services	19%	18%	7%	9%
12	10	Direct mail	18%	16%	6%	6%
13	13	TV radio/advertising	11%	11%	5%	4%

Company Structure



The S-corporation is nearly twice as popular as it was in 2002, while C-corporations have decreased. The percentage of sole proprietorships remains constant.

substantially. More than half now make these two areas part of their work focus.

In terms of employees, remodeling firms, like many other businesses, have made do with fewer. The average number of full-time employees dropped from 18 in 2002 to 12 in 2003 to 10 in 2005. They hired fewer part-timers, too, with the average dropping from 7 to 6 to 3. In fact, 12 percent of firms had no full-time employees besides the owner, and 38 percent of firms had no part-timers at all. Remodelers, like home builders, may be subcontracting more labor.

Increasing Specialization

Specialty	2005	2003
Full-service remodeling	66%	70%
Kitchen/bath	55%	41%
Exterior contracting	53%	38%
Design/build	48%	45%
Single-line/specialty contracting	24%	17%

Respondents were asked to check all categories that applied to their business.

Volume and job sizes returned to 2002 levels after a drop-off in 2003. Respondents averaged \$3.4 million in total annual installed volume, with an average remodeling job size of \$101,000. Regional disparities turned up here, with higher annual volumes in the Northeast and Midwest, but 50 percent larger job sizes in the South and West. The predicted increase in remodeling as Sunbelt housing stock hit 30-plus years of age has definitely hit.

To market, to market

What tactics and methods resulted in business for remodelers? As in past surveys, repeat business and referrals from former clients dominate the top two spots, with referrals from suppliers, subcontractors and architects coming in third.

Traditional methods of marketing – print ads and a listing in the phone book – lost ground. Remodelers instead turned to branding – job signs and vehicles with company logos and contact information – and to the Internet, with nearly one-third of respondents claiming their Web site as a major source of business. Television and radio advertis-



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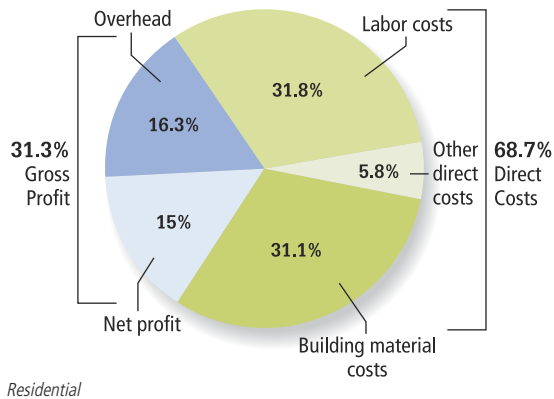
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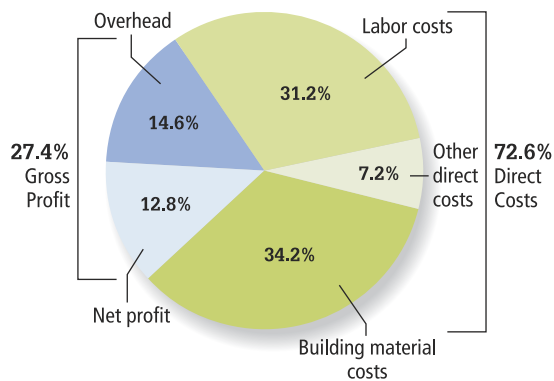
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Remodeling Profit-and-Loss Statement



New Home Profit-and-Loss Statement



Remodelers reported higher material and other direct costs on new homes. Despite more overhead on remodels, those jobs realized higher gross and net profits. Net profit includes owner salary.

ing and direct mail proved to be least popular.

While Nikula hasn't necessarily noticed more of his leads coming from the Encore Web site, he does know that technology has changed the remodeling business as he used to know it.

"We're dealing with people who are accustomed to getting things quickly," he says. "It started with McDonald's and evolved into the Internet." Now, Encore's Web site has a password-protected area where clients – especially those having work done on a second home – can view job photos and the schedule, updated weekly. Encore's tech-savvy helps sell the company, adds Nikula, especially the Microsoft Project schedules included in each proposal.

"Clients are becoming more and more sophisticated,"

Financial Definitions

Gross profit: sales volume/sale price - direct costs

Net profit: gross profit - overhead

Overhead: indirect construction costs + sales and marketing expenses + general and administrative expenses

• **Indirect construction costs:** construction costs NOT charged to a particular job, such as small tools and equipment, construction vehicles, mileage reimbursements, callbacks and warranty

• **Sales and marketing expenses:** sales manager compensation, sales staff compensation and commissions, estimating personnel compensation and marketing

• **General and administrative expenses:** owner compensation; production management salaries; design personnel salaries not directly charged to a job; office and clerical salaries; payroll taxes and benefits; retirement pension and profit sharing; bonuses; general office expense; rent and utilities; office communications; computers; vehicles; liability; property taxes; licenses and state fees; and professional services

Direct costs: labor costs + building material costs + other direct costs

• **Labor costs:** direct labor, burden and subcontractors

• **Building material costs:** all products used in a project

• **Other direct costs:** rental equipment, small tools and professional design fees for a specific job

Markup: the percentage added to total direct costs to arrive at the sale price

he says. "To present a schedule with a proposal makes us very professional."

Remodelers reported an average lead-to-sales conversion rate of 54 percent in 2005. This represents an increase from 41 percent in 2003 and 37 percent in 2002. Conversion rates fluctuated by region, reflecting the local economy. Remodelers in the West averaged a conversion rate of 63 percent, nine points higher, while those in the Midwest did three points under the national average.

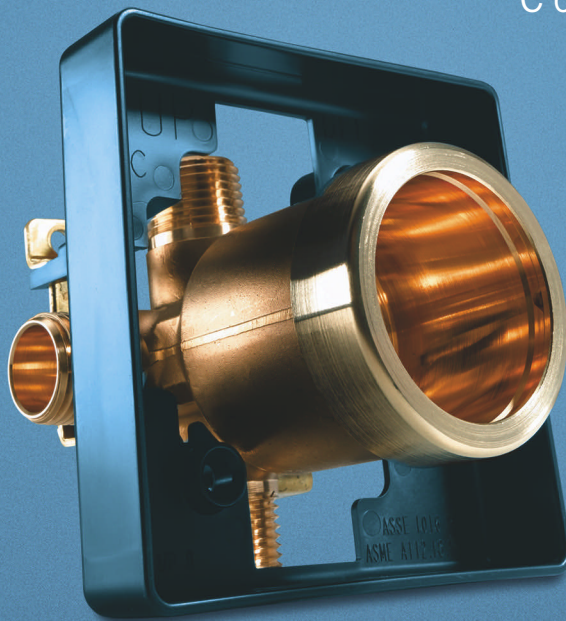
Construction quality

Although 11 percent of respondents claimed to average 0 punchlist items upon walk-through with the client at a job's close, 14 percent said they averaged 10 to 15 items and another 7 percent said they averaged more than 15 punchlist items. Overall, remodelers averaged 5.7, up slightly from 5.5 in 2003.

One of consumers' biggest complaints against contractors is not finishing the job, or leaving a lot of little things to be done that they don't get back to complete without a

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Labor Costs Add Up in West

	Residential remodeling	Commercial remodeling	New home building
Northeast	32%	33%	29%
Midwest	31%	33%	31%
South	31%	31%	30%
West	35%	38%	39%

Labor costs expressed as a percentage of total annual installed dollar volume.

lot of phone calls. Bringing down this punchlist average would do a lot to improve customer satisfaction and consumer perception of the industry.

Thirty-four percent of remodelers said they typically don't have any open warranty requests. Another 30 percent said they averaged only one, and another 17 percent said they averaged two open warranty items. Average time to complete a warranty request: 5.8 days, an improvement over 6.3 days in 2003 and 7.8 days in 2002. Seven percent of respondents said they completed warranty work within one day.

Profits and costs

After reporting gross profits between 27 and 28 percent in our last two surveys, residential remodelers reported an average gross profit of 31.3 percent. On the new home side, that figure jumped from 23 to 27.4 percent. Commercial remodeling increased from 24 to 31 percent. Costs, too, resembled residential remodeling. As in the past, to create consistency the survey provided definitions of financial terms (see "Financial Definitions," page 24), using the same standards as the NAHB Builder 20 and Remodeler 20 clubs.

It's important that remodelers who build custom homes recognize the need to price the jobs differently, putting a higher markup on remodels.

"In remodeling you have a lot more unknowns, so there's a higher

risk," explains Nikula. "You're dealing with an existing structure and don't know exactly how it was built. Secondly, remodeling is just a lot more labor intensive. Everything takes longer to do because you're trying to tie into existing systems."

Gross profit *target* and *actual* gross profit can be two very different numbers. Respondents report only 71 percent of residential remodeling jobs closing within 3 percent of gross profit target. That number slips to 69 percent for commercial remodeling and 68 percent for new homes. It's a safe bet that most of the other jobs cost more than expected rather than upping profits.

Here's where Encore Construction excels. Nikula passes along cost increases to his customers rather than reduce his markup and profits. Also, he increased planning to reduce surprise costs. Before the sales/production turnover meeting and the pre-construction client meeting, Encore inserted an on-site meeting where the estimator, project lead and project manager try to discover as many potential problems as possible before the job starts. Nikula estimates that this added step in the process saves Encore about 5 or 6 percent of a job.

Reviews after every job allow the team to uncover recurring gaps between estimated and actual costs and schedule. Updating prices and time frames regularly prevents Encore from being hit with a big loss at the end of the year.

It's never too late to start benchmarking — and improving — your business results. **PR**

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As Good as Old

An 1870s shack is rebuilt and reborn with 21st-century materials

By Wendy A. Jordan
Senior Contributing Editor

Rundown and riddled with code violations, a ramshackle rental cottage in Columbus, Ohio, seemed like a dump to the former owner. The occupant had stopped paying utilities as well as rent, forcing him to pick up the tab. To unload this headache property quickly, he put the 650-square-foot house on the market for just \$45,000 in 2000.

Rob Wagner, also a rental-property owner, drove by for a look and recognized a sleeper of a deal in the sorry-looking shack. The house was on a double lot, rare in the old, close-in neighborhood. It dated from the 1870s, possessing historical appeal, and was a block from the site of a planned 400-acre subdivision of pricey vintage-look homes.



Ketron Custom Builders demolished the original shack and rebuilt it with look-alike materials, custom milled trim pieces and a period color scheme.

After photos by Eclipse Studios

Wagner snapped up the property, intending either to fix up the house or to raze and replicate it, then add a two-story rear addition. He and partner Scott Klein fig-

ured they'd build a duplex on the remaining land and then sell all the buildings.

During four years of permit battles, design brainstorming and evolving building plans, the owners became so attached they moved into the redone cottage themselves. Its classic, good-as-new exterior hides 2,200 square feet of living space (1,100 square feet per floor), including a one-story addition and a new full basement.

Salvage or scrap

Wagner and Klein hired Urban Order, a Columbus architectural firm with experience working in historic districts, to design the project. Urban Order partner Steve Hurtt says it was clear that the old house was "very derelict" and that remodeling was not a practical option. He knew, however, that the owners would have to prove the structure was unsound and unsafe before the Italian Village Commission would approve a tear-down.

In spring 2003 the architects suggested three contractors with whom they work regularly that could both do a structural evaluation and build the project.

Travis Ketron of Ketron Custom Builders came out to the site and immediately distinguished himself. "He was a young go-getter; we were impressed," says Klein.

Ketron's approach plus his attention to detail and computer-generated documents — "some of the other estimates were hand-written on scratch paper," Ketron says — earned him the job.

Ketron did not mince words about the house. "It was bad," he says. "On the first walk-through I remember thinking, 'It's going to be hard to get drywall to look flat on these walls.'"

Some of the 2x4s were split almost in half. Termite damage was rampant. The floor had large holes and bounced because the main beams were weak. The roofing had decomposed, and snow and rain flooded in through the holes.

Ketron enlisted the help of an engineer, who determined that there was no real foundation. "A couple of large stones above the frost line — that was about it," says Ketron. "From a safety and structural standpoint, there was not much you could keep."

Nevertheless, the commission pushed for preservation of the cottage, asking Wagner and Klein to move the shack off the footprint, fix the foundation, then move the shack back. Eventually the group agreed to let the own-

ers tear it down, on one condition: They had to replicate the 19th-century exterior, reusing as much of the board and batten siding and other original materials as could be restored. The board also allowed a 450-square-foot addition at the rear of the building, but it had to retain the character of the original house.

Ketron took a half day to rack-brace the exterior before demolition in order to ensure the safety of his crew as they salvaged siding and trim pieces. So much original fabric was in bad condition that little was left. Restoring even that portion was questionable.

After another round of commission approvals, during which Ketron explained that patching in the remnant old materials with the new would look "off," the team got the

THE FINANCIALS

Most Ketron Custom Builders projects, including the Wagner/Klein one, are billed on a cost-plus basis "so when a project like this incurs \$150,000 in change orders nobody gets too excited," Ketron says. He uses a 30 percent markup, which yields a 23 percent gross profit.

Ketron says he bills as much labor as possible to individual jobs, reducing his overhead. His cost to produce includes a line item for billable labor with a separate markup.

"To protect the customer as well as ourselves in the land of the unknown," says Ketron, his line-item estimate always includes a reserve to cover unexpected expenses. The \$20,000 reserve on this job was enough to pay for the extra hauling and excavation needed to remove two cisterns found while digging the foundation. But it did not cover all of the time Ketron put into the project. "I bet I spent 60 to 80 hours meeting with the clients" planning all the upgrades, says Ketron. That time, plus hours Ketron spent overseeing installation of the custom upgrades, trimmed back his gross profit a bit.

Ketron doesn't regret the time spent. "This project was very custom, very detailed and a lot of work," he says, "but well worth the experience." He does almost no advertising, relying heavily on referrals. "The product has to work and you have to have a satisfied customer" to get those referrals, he says.

Budget History

Initial estimate	\$500,000
Final estimate	\$500,000
Change orders	\$150,000
Final price of job	\$650,000
Cost to produce	\$500,000
Gross profit	\$150,000
Budgeted gross profit	25%
Actual gross profit	23%

go-ahead to use all new materials on the exterior – but the exterior still had to look true to the original.

By this time, Wagner and Klein had decided to live in the house rather than rent or resell it right away. Instead of a two-story rear addition and adjacent duplex, they decided on a modest addition to retain the cozy character of the cottage. Since the house had to be “scraped off” the foundation, they’d gain extra living space by adding a full basement. Instead of a duplex, they would build a small carriage house with garage/entertaining space below and guest quarters above.

Look-alike exterior

The 14-month cottage reconstruction began in April 2003. Step number one was to excavate for the basement. During the dig, Ketron encountered two old cisterns filled with bricks and trash. Removing them took a full day.

To be on the safe side before moving on, “I met with a geo-tech guy,” says Ketron, “to verify that we had reached stable ground and to determine the correct type of fill to replace the void left by the cisterns.”

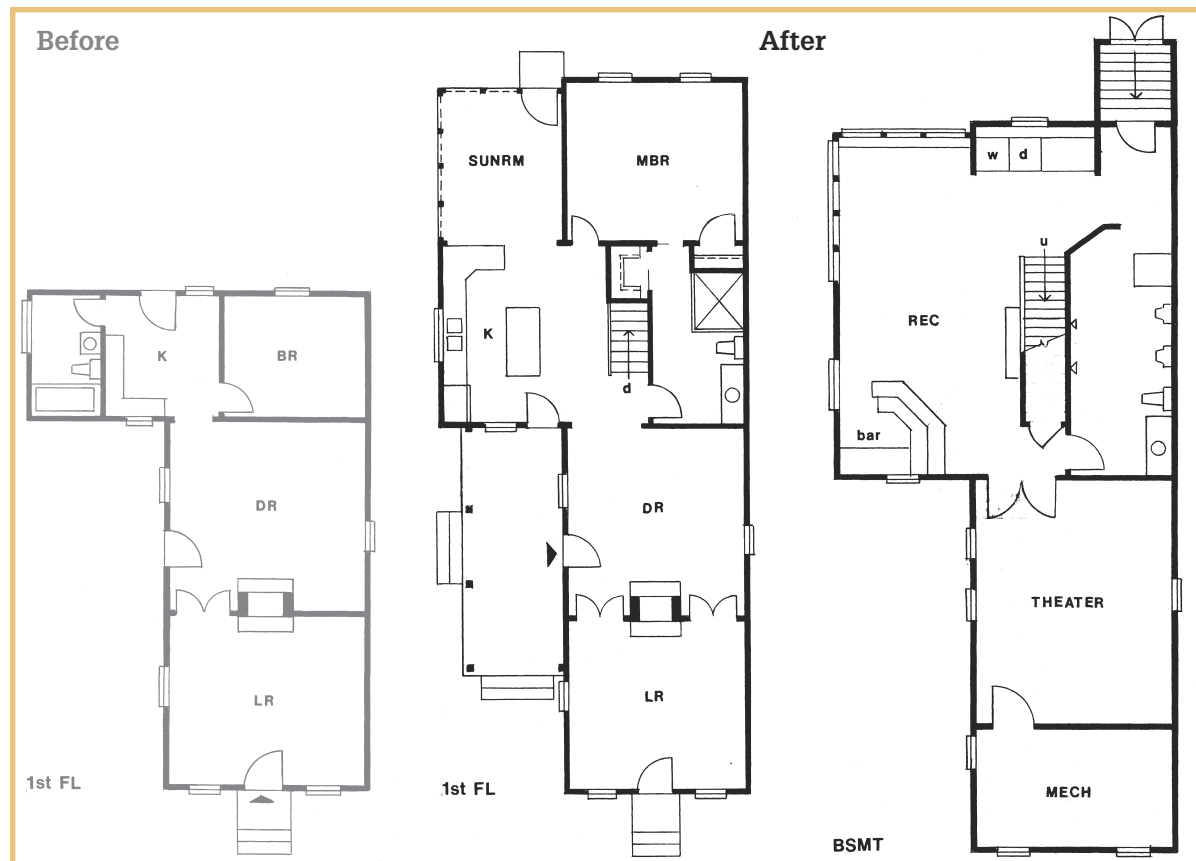
To recreate a Victorian Italianate cottage exterior,



Granite counters, stainless steel appliances, a high-arch faucet and stepped, clear-finish mahogany cabinets make a luxury statement in the kitchen.

Urban Order and Ketron looked for design clues in the cottage itself and in period architectural pattern books. When Ketron removed the asphalt siding, old paint borderlines revealed original board and batten size and spacing, profiles of old porch pieces and fascia, and the shape of the window trim.

Working from these clues, Ketron milled reproduction components. Instead of pine siding, he chose equally flat





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but more durable medium density overlay plywood in 4x10 sheets. The primed cedar he picked for battens, soffit and fascia mimics the originals but adds weather- and insect-resistance.

The tongue-and-groove flooring of the new side porch is a hardy composite that looks and feels old. The asphalt roofing looks like slate. Each of the four wood exterior doors displays a different vintage pattern, progressing from the formal, half-light front door to the more relaxed, full-light patio door in the rear. The simulated divided-light windows also reflect Victorian Italianate styling. Ketron built brick porch piers and installed 6-inch half-round copper gutters, both in the 19th-century tradition.

"You probably couldn't tell it's not original, except that it is so clean," Ketron says.

Ground-breaking interior

Step inside, and you are propelled from vintage to avant-garde, from cottage to castle. The main floor has been transformed into a modern space with vaulted ceilings and deluxe features. The new basement doubles the size of the house.

"We got carried away," admits Wagner, "but we ended up with a spectacularly beautiful home."

The interior of the house grew grander as construction progressed. Urban Order signed off on product choices to ensure "cohesiveness," says Hurr, but Ketron took over



White walls, glass finishes, a vessel sink and a steam shower give the master bath a contemporary ambience.

as hands-on manager of the design process. "I'd meet with the clients for six or eight hours on many Saturdays" to look at samples and toss around ideas "and we'd just go to town," he says. One creative inspiration led to another, until the cost-plus project amassed \$150,000 in changes.

The homeowners retained the long, narrow living-dining room that had shaped the front of the tiny, one-story house. Departing from early plans, Ketron enlarged the kitchen, and integrated it with a four-season sunroom. A two-sided fireplace and custom art glass doors separate the living and dining rooms. Most of the other doors and floors on this level are elegant Brazilian cherry.

The lush, high-tech basement features a black granite bar with soda fountain and stamped, tinted concrete floor; a state-of-the-art theater room; and a European-style bath and shower room wrapped in tumbled marble. An integrated media system can project different music, movies, radio and television programs at each of seven total flat-screen and audio centers stationed upstairs and downstairs. Radiant heat is piped to both floors and powers a snow melt system under the exterior walkways. Ketron completed the main house in June 2004. **PR**

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SNAPSHOT



Travis Ketron

Ketron Custom Builders

Location: Granville, Ohio

Type of company: custom remodeler and builder

Staff model: 2 office, 4 field

Years in business: 7

Sales history (75% remodeling, 25% new construction)

2002:	\$400,500
2003:	\$800,000
2004:	\$500,000
2005:	\$725,000

Annual jobs: 4

Workweek: 40 hours

Software: Intuit Master Builder, SoftPlan

Contact: 740/587-4442, travis@ketroncustombuilders.com

PRODUCTS LIST

Bath fixtures, fittings: Kohler. **Dishwasher drawers:** Fisher & Paykel. **Doors:** Marvin. **Glass tile:** Walker Zanger. **Kitchen faucet:** Dornbracht. **Porch:** Tendura. **Radiant floor heat:** Watts. **Range:** Jenn-Air. **Refrigerator:** Sub-Zero. **Roofing:** GAF Slateline. **Shower fittings:** Grohe. **Windows:** Marvin.



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Windows of Opportunity

A replacement is only as good as its installation

By Scott T. Shepherd
PATH Partners

New windows offer the perfect opportunity to improve a home's aesthetics and energy efficiency, but too often this chance slips away with inadequate installation.

"Remodelers are very meticulous, and they really try to get it right," says Cordell Burton, a senior installation engineer at Pella Windows. "But in remodeling, every circumstance is unique and remodelers have to be able to adjust to the situation."

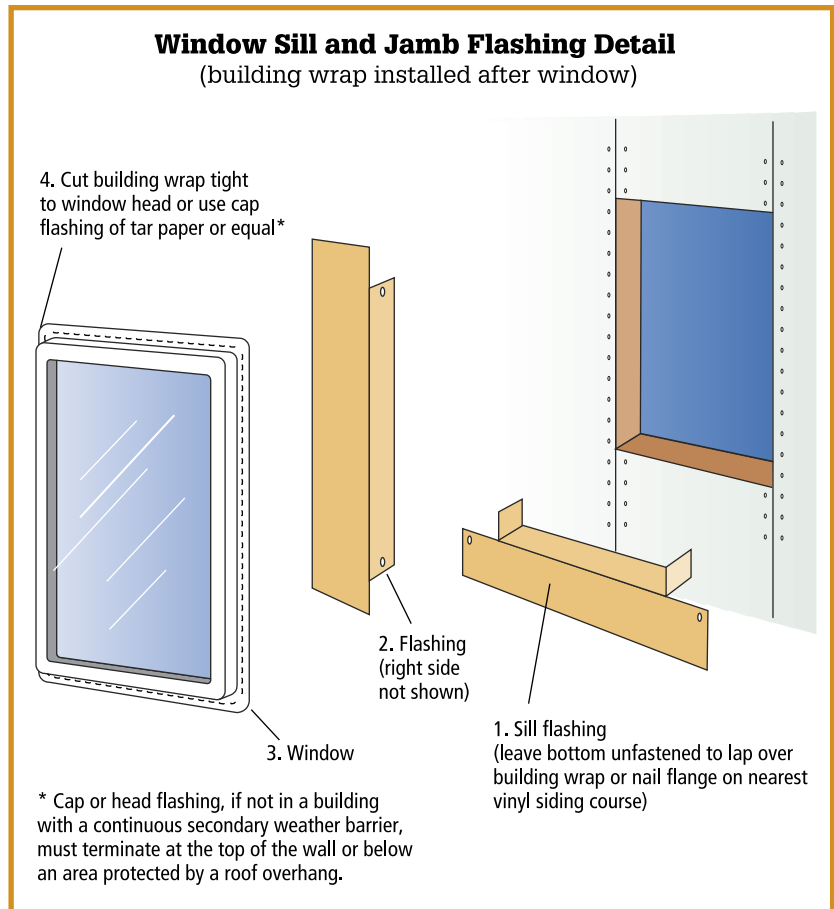
When replacing a window, consider the condition of the existing flashing, the frame and the surrounding wall.

Installation gyrations

With every installation, you'll need to determine how much of the window assembly to replace. If the window isn't too badly damaged or if the customer wants to upgrade to a more energy efficient one, you may be able to do a partial replacement. Keeping some of the original materials, including surrounding trim and surfaces, can save on material costs and may take a lot less work. (See "Window Repair Options" on page 38 for general guidelines.)

One popular option is replacing the window sash and track, which often come in a kit with a counterbalance mechanism and hardware. This is a good way to preserve existing components and reduce waste. However, the existing frame must be dry and in good condition with no rot and relatively square parallel jambs.

When installing a new window within an existing frame, you are actually placing a unit within a unit. Even if the



original frame is not square, the secondary frame may be able to accommodate that. However, this method reduces the size of the glass and the available opening, which may conflict with applicable building code egress requirements. Check your local code to be sure.

No partial replacement method will address air leakage at the existing frame's perimeter. Air leaks can lead to water damage. If there is a possibility or any evidence that the original frame is compromised, replace – or at least remove, investigate and rebuild – the original frame.

Rotten to the wall

If the original window was not properly sealed, flashed and maintained, the homeowner has a problem. It may be more serious than it first appears. Check carefully for damage to the frame, the sill and the surrounding wall.

If window damage is minor and limited to the wood frames, they can usually be repaired with epoxy products after the frames dry out thoroughly. Epoxy consolidants penetrate and bind with the wood fibers while preventing further deterioration. Consolidants cre-

Window Repair Options

	Replace window glass, sash, track and/or sill	Install new secondary window (which includes thin retrofit frame) within existing window frame	Completely replace existing window assembly including frame	Rebuild/repair wall surrounding window so that opening is structurally sound, plumb and square
Some window components are damaged, but frame and surrounding wall are undamaged, plumb and square				
Window components and frame are damaged, but surrounding wall undamaged, plumb and square				
Window components, frame and surrounding wall are damaged				

ate a surface that may be worked as wood after curing.

The windowsill is the most vulnerable part of the frame, so check the sill and the surrounding wall carefully. A deteriorated windowsill can ultimately compromise the entire wall by providing an avenue for greater water infiltration. Signs of interior water stains

below the window will indicate possible damage. Removing interior sill trim will also give you access to investigate water damage.

Replacement sills have been developed from materials such as wood composites and vinyl – and these will work if the damage stops at the sill. But if damage is more extensive, you should replace the whole unit.

The whole enchilada

Replacing the entire window assembly provides the best opportunities for investigating underlying problems, correcting damage and assuring proper installation. You can also improve the thermal performance of the frame.

Frame materials are a key consideration. The frame can affect not only a window's appearance, but also its energy efficiency. On the whole, fiberglass is one of the better performers among window frame materials because manufacturers can hollow out the frames and fill them with insulation without sacrificing their strength or integrity. Wood windows are also efficient and may best match an older home's existing style. Vinyl frames are most affordable, while metal frames allow the maximum amount of glass.

One strong and increasingly popular

option is composite frames, which combine two or more materials, such as a wood foundation with vinyl or aluminum cladding. Composite frames can look like wood and are about as efficient, but are more resistant to warping, fading, denting, moisture and decay.

In a flash

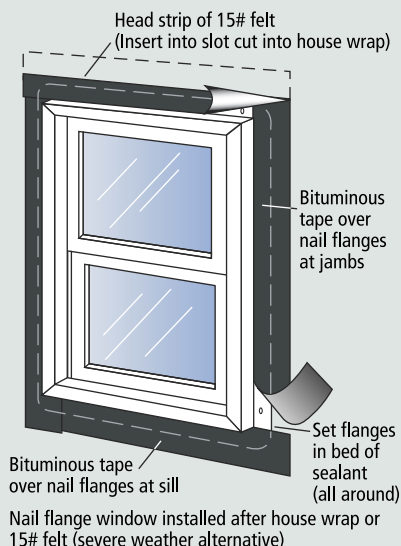
Avoiding water infiltration is key to proper window installation. Window openings often allow water infiltration because they interrupt the waterproofing of the outside wall. Most leakage problems are related to improper or insufficient flashing details or the absence of flashing.

“One of the biggest mistakes remodelers make is not getting the new window tied into the existing walls' water-resistive barrier system,” says Gary Mathes, Pella's residential architectural support services manager. “You have to get your flashing materials right. Make sure the head flashing is behind the water-resistive barrier and the sill flashing is lapped over the weather barrier to create a watershed effect.”

Don't emphasize speedy window installation at the expense of good flashing techniques. The resultant call-backs will cost more in the long run.

The PATH booklet *Durability by*

Window Flashing for Severe Weather (areas subject to frequent wind-driven rain)





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Don't assume you or your crews know how to install one type of window because you've installed other types before.

Design: A Guide for Residential Builders and Designers (available at www.pathnet.org, click on "Resources" and then "Publications") offers some important tips:

- Water runs downhill, so make sure flashing is appropriately layered with other flashings or the drainage plane material (i.e., tar, felt or housewrap).
- Water can be forced uphill by wind, so make sure that flashings have the recommended width overlap.
- Sometimes capillary action will draw water into joints between stepped

flashing that is unsatisfactorily lapped. At this point, there's nothing you can do but take it apart and redo it properly.

Windows with nailing flanges can help make the transition from the window to the wall, and provide a way to seal the window to the wall's water-resistant barrier using flashing tapes.

Caulks and sealants provide additional water and air barriers. However, not all joints are meant to be caulked. Some provide an exit for air or mois-

ture trapped within the wall assembly, so follow the window supplier's recommendations. No single product is suitable in all cases.

"It's a compatibility issue," says Larry Livermore, technical standards manager with the American Architectural Manufacturers Association. "The most expensive sealant might not be the right one either."

When in doubt, ask the manufacturer.

Manufacturer knows best

All windows require the same basic installation steps, but the specifics vary by type and manufacturer. Don't assume you or your crews know how to install one type of window because you've installed other types before.

Always refer to the manufacturer's installation instructions. If the situation is a little unusual, don't hesitate to give the manufacturer a call. Although a job's details may seem unique, odds are the window manufacturer has encountered something similar before. An extra 15 minutes on the phone now could save hours of repair time later.

"We've got a department that specializes in designing installations that are not covered in the standard guidelines," says Mathes.

Many manufacturers also offer installer assistance programs to help installers keep up with the rapidly changing window industry. **PR**

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

Upgrade the Window, Improve the Efficiency

Single-pane windows are one of the largest sources of heat loss in winter due to their low insulating ability and high air leakage rates. They're also a major source of unwanted heat gain in the summer. As a result, single-pane windows are significant net energy losers, responsible for 25 to 50 percent of the energy used to heat and cool homes.

Since single-pane windows have become dinosaurs, almost any window will be an improvement.

A safe bet is to select a window with an Energy Star label. The National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC) energy performance label will also help you compare windows based on five factors:

- *U-factor* measures how well a product prevents heat from escaping.
- *Solar heat gain coefficient* (SHGC) measures how well a product blocks heat caused by sunlight.
- *Visible transmittance* measures how much light comes through a product.
- *Air leakage* measures how much air will pass through cracks in the window assembly.
- *Condensation resistance* measures the ability to resist the formation of condensation on the interior surface.

The optimal combination of U-factor and SHGC depends on your climate zone. Products with the Energy Star label will include a map to help you determine the right window for your area.

In storm-prone regions and regions that require protection from flying debris, suggest an upgrade to impact-resistant windows. Impact-resistant assemblies have laminated glass and generally require longer screws (for deeper, more secure penetration) and more screws in more places (for added support). Check your local building code for requirements.

For more information, visit www.toolbase.org, www.energystar.gov and www.nfrc.org.

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Jeld-Wen

The IWP exterior folding door system provides light and outdoor views even when closed. Door sections slide on an overhead track and fold up against one another, accordion-style, to allow indoor or outdoor access. System sizes range from two doors up to 18 doors, each 3' wide. Special order options

include door heights up to 13'. Available in hardwood and IWP Aurora custom fiberglass, the complete system includes doors, hardware and the overhead track.

800/877-9482
www.jeld-wen.com
Circle 125



Kwikset

Baldwin has adapted some of its locks to match the K-Keyway design used by Kwikset. The combined hardware package operates on a single Baldwin key. Six Baldwin handleset designs are currently equipped with K-Keyway: Logan, Canterbury, Madison, Blakely, Stonegate and Manchester. Corresponding Kwikset products are available for consistency throughout the home: Laurel, Hancock, Pembroke, Commonwealth, Brooklane, Cameron, Tustin and Lido.

800/327-LOCK
www.Kwikset.com
www.Baldwinhardware.com
Circle 126



Amarr

Classica, Amarr's pinch-resistant steel door with carriage house design embossments, is now available in a "sandwich" version. This new model has a 24-gauge exterior skin, a 27-gauge interior, and polyurethane insulation that gives it an R-value of 13.35. The patterns on the Classica Collection are pressed into the steel without the use of overlays. Available in 33 design combinations, utilizing a closed square top, a closed arch top and seven decorative windows. All models are pre-painted in white but can be painted any color.

800/503-DOOR
www.amarr.com
Circle 127



Kolbe

This Heritage wood entrance system comes with optional K-Kron II Timberwolf finish. The series is made from western pine but woods such as mahogany, fir or walnut may be requested. Finishes include 20 standard colors and unlimited custom colors. Other options include architectural windows with decorative glass patterns, as well as sidelights and transoms in various sizes.

800/955-8177
www.kolbe-kolbe.com
Circle 128



Therma-Tru

Therma-Tru has expanded its Smooth-Star fiberglass entry doors with a new oval design, showcasing a three-panel embossment that features exclusive Smooth-Star decorative glass. The doors offer ready-to-paint surfaces that resist dents and rust and have the look of painted wood and the strength of steel. The new glass shapes fit traditional or contemporary home styles.

Glass styles: Crystalline, Sedona, concord and crystal diamonds (shown)

800/537-8827
www.thermatru.com
Circle 129



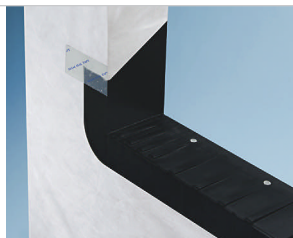
L.E. Johnson

L.E. Johnson's 2610F surface-mounted pocket door hardware set allows installation of an open, wall-mounted pocket door in situations where a typical pocket door won't work. The aluminum track is available in lengths up to 192". The hardware can be adapted to fit most installation situations and can support doors of up to 125 pounds.

800/837-5664

www.johnsonhardware.com

Circle 130



Marvin

SillGuard, a rigid, three-piece sill pan, helps to minimize the potential for moisture penetration and wall damage around doors and windows. Made from resilient polypropylene, SillGuard features sloping drainage channels and support ribs that drain moisture away before it makes contact with the door frame. The thermally non-conductive material resists cracking or shattering. The 48-inch center piece can be easily trimmed.

888/537-8266

www.marvin.com

Circle 131



Gorell

Gorell's deluxe sliding patio doors now offer interblinds, between-the-glass blinds that provide an alternative to traditional window treatments or mini-blinds. The blinds are permanently sealed between two panes of glass and never need to be cleaned or dusted. Homeowners can tilt the slats to a desired position or lift them to expand the viewing area. A durable two-way magnetic mechanism controls the movement of the blinds.

724/465-1800

www.gorell.com

Circle 132



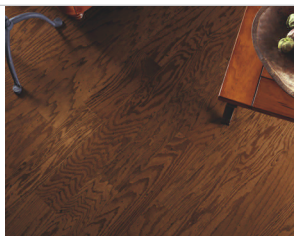
ODL

ODL introduces the Michael Graves Collection of decorative doorglass. The collection offers elegant, clean designs in three styles: the Acacia (shown), Vienna and Fleur-de-lis. The Acacia is available in several sizes, including 22" x 64", 22" x 80", 8" x 80" and a rectangular transom.

800/253-3900

www.odl.com

Circle 133



Bruce

American Originals has added the 3/8" thick engineered distressed oak collection, offered in 5" wide rustic planks with random lengths of up to 5'. The planks feature square edges and square ends for a clean appearance. Includes Permion commercial-grade, no-wax, low gloss finish and a 25-year residential finish and lifetime structural warranty.

Colors: Durango (shown), Mojave, Blue Ridge, Cimarron, Dakota cherry and Rio Grande

800/233-3823

www.bruce.com

Circle 134



Kronopol

Sonic Floor is a sound-deadening laminate floating floor system. It is assembled without glue using a click and lock fastening system. The attached underpad is made of felt and rubber and will not compress or absorb moisture. Sonic Floor is made with wood from FSC-certified forests. The boards are 7.8 mm thick and 54" long. Available in wood-grain or embossed woodgrain finishes and many decorative wood choices.

888/KRON04U

www.kronopol.com

Circle 135



Mediterranea

This Tuscan travertine is designed in Italy and produced in Brazil with a stone-honed finish. The Valentino series combines natural colors and the variegation of satin-finished marble into a glazed porcelain that's easy to maintain. Valentino is available in 18" x 18" tiles suitable for floors and walls and features a matching 3" x 18" bullnose.

Colors: Ivory bianco, cream beige and champagne gold (shown)

305/444-3676

www.mediterranea-usa.com

Circle 136



Mannington

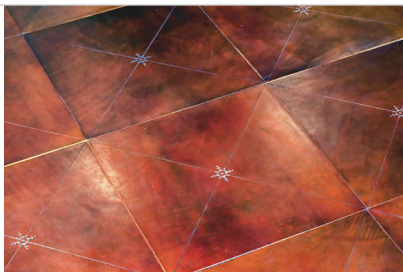
The new line of Adura Luxury Planks coordinates with the Adura Luxury Tile line. Planks measure 4" x 36" and offer the look of hardwood in a variety of colors and styles. Some of the patterns are registered embossed to enhance texture and realism.

Styles: Burma teak, Canadian maple, coolibah burlwood, country oak, Essex oak and spalted Georgian maple (shown)

865/935-3000

www.mannington.com

Circle 137



Ann Sacks

Ann Sacks expands its leather tile collection with a soft leather tile by designer Cowden Bell. These floor and wall tiles are offered in three patterns, Morocco, Tuscany and Crosshatch, and seven colors, buckskin, caramel, claret, ginger, marschino, espresso and licorice. Also available without a pattern. Over time, the

leather develops a patina similar to that of a well-worn saddle.

Available sizes: 2"x2", 2"x14", 8"x8", 12"x12", 14"x14" and 16"x16"

800/278-8453

www.annsacks.com

Circle 138



Marazzi

Jade, a glazed porcelain tile, combines vein patterns with color layers and blends that resemble slate. The finish retains the effect of distinct clefts and mineral deposits, yet the smooth surface is simple to clean. The tiles can be used for floors, walls, fireplace and shower surrounds.

Sizes: 20"x20" and 13"x13"

Colors: Chestnut, ochre, sage and taupe

972/226-0110

www.marazzitile.com

Circle 139



Domco

The Eloquence line, available in 12' widths, can be permanently installed without adhesives. It has a 15-mil urethane wearlayer and overall thickness of 85 mils. Fiberglass strands reinforce the felt backing. The no-wax finish resists scratching. The 24 patterns and colors offer looks from ceramic tile to vintage hardwood. (Tessera new penny shown.)

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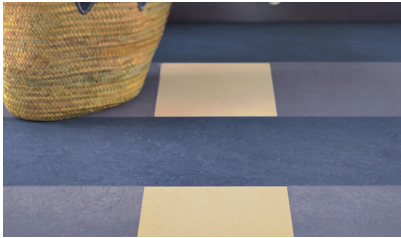
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Nafco-Tarkett

Nafco adds to the PermaStone line with PermaStone Modular. Seven tiles – two 16" x 16", three 8" x 7" and two 8" x 16" – are packaged as a single modular unit. The Better Living collection has natural slate, parchment and porcelain patterns, each in three colors. The Best Living collection has two patterns: Monostone in three colors and Brick in eight.

800/227-4662

www.nafco.com

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Armstrong

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Kahiki Colors: Black walnut, Havana gold, natural, Tuscan blond and velvet mahogany

877/ARMSTRONG

www.armstrong.com

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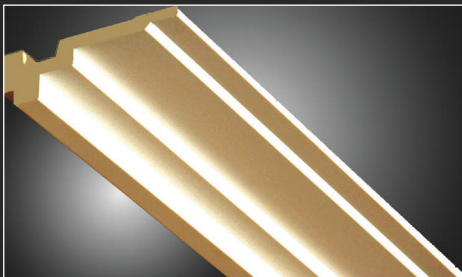
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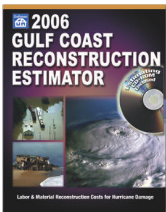


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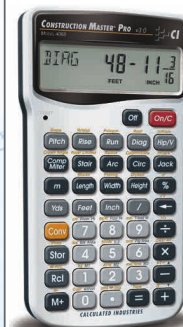
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Professional Remodeler (ISSN 1521-9135) (GST #123397457) Vol. 10, No.2 is published monthly by Reed Business Information, 8878 S. Barrons Blvd., Highlands Ranch, CO 80129-2345. Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier, is located at 360 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010. Tad Smith, CEO; John Poulin, Chief Financial Officer; Jeff Greisch, President, Chicago Division; Circulation records are maintained at Reed Business Information, 8878 S. Barrons Blvd., Highlands Ranch, CO 80129-2345. Periodicals Postage Paid at Littleton, CO 80126 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Professional Remodeler, P.O. Box 7500, Highlands Ranch, CO 80163-7500. Rates for nonqualified subscriptions: U.S.A., \$77.90 1-year, Canada, \$97.00 1-year; Foreign surface, \$128.50 1-year. Single copies are available for \$10 US and \$15 foreign. Please address all subscription mail to Professional Remodeler 8778 S. Barrons Blvd., Highlands Ranch, CO 80129-2345. Professional Remodeler is a registered trademark of Reed Elsevier Properties Inc., used under license. Printed in U.S.A. Reed Business Information does not assume and hereby disclaims any liability to any person for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in the material contained herein, regardless of whether such errors result from negligence, accident or any other cause whatsoever.

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High X-pectations

GenXers will drive future growth of remodeling market

Generation X has a higher homeownership rate and spends more on remodeling than baby boomers did at a similar age, according to Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

"Even though they're facing higher housing costs... when they do buy homes and when they do remodel their homes, they're still highly likely to purchase some high-quality items, selective luxuries," said Joint Center scholar William Apgar at the 2006 International Builders Show.

Generation X has a homeownership rate of 71 percent, while just 65 percent of boomers owned homes at that age. The Joint Center also reported that GenXers spend on average 20 percent more on home improve-



ments than boomers. That's great news for long-term remodeling growth. In 2006, remodelers can expect low-

to-mid single-digit growth, said Kermit Baker, director of the Joint Center's Remodeling Futures Program.

Lead-Safety Rules Proposed

The anticipated EPA ruling on lead-safe work practices was filed in the Federal Register on January 10, 2006 and is now in the midst of a 90-day comment period.

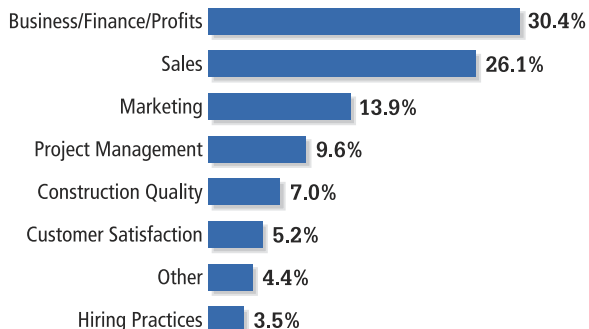
The rule, which will take effect two years after official enactment, applies to any renovation project that disturbs more than 2 square feet of a painted surface in pre-1960 housing with lead-based paint present. The EPA is proposing the use of inexpensive test kits to judge whether lead-based paint is present in the home rather than having more rigorous formal testing done by certified inspectors.

Design Awards

Professional Remodeler is accepting entries for the 2006 Best of the Best Design Awards program. Eligible projects must have been completed between January 1, 2005 and May 15, 2006. Projects are judged by region, with regional gold winners eligible for national awards. To enter any of the 21 categories, visit www.Housing-Zone.com/designawards, or call 630-288-8184. Entry deadline is May 15, 2006.

THE RESULTS

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



Results from January reader poll as of January 26, 2006.

THE POLL

Which type of remodeling job did your company do the most of in 2005?

1. Kitchen
2. Bath
3. Addition
4. Whole-house
5. Deck/patio
6. Basement
7. Exterior
8. Other interior

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



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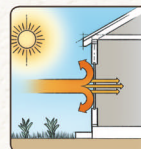
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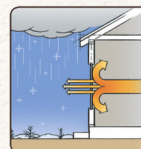
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