



Professional Remodeler

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Information

JUNE 2006

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**Pros & Cons
of House Tours**

**Special Report:
Bath Trends**

**Best New Products
for Outdoor Living**

SALES Strategies

Five great ways to increase
your company's market share

Dan Bawden, President
Legal Eagle Contractors

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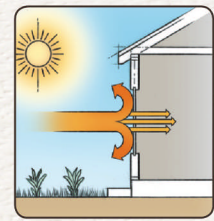


Premium Vinyl Single-Hung
Windows with Premium
Wood French Door

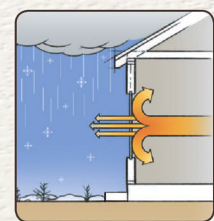


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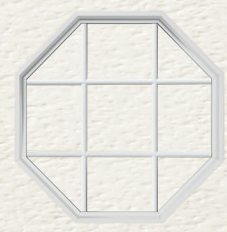
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ON THE COVER

Dan Bawden, president of Legal Eagle Contractors in Houston, built a design idea center to help increase sales of larger projects.

Photo by Charles Edwards



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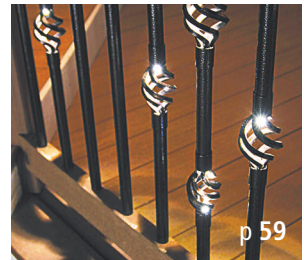
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Consumer demand for spa-like sanctuaries drives the market.

By Meghan Haynes, Contributing Editor



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The diversity of interest in sustainable building practices was staggering. ... These are exciting times.

Going Green

I too agree that sustainable practices are here to stay (Editor's Letter, February 2006), a time that is well overdue! We just launched a new non-profit in Des Moines called the Center On Sustainable Communities, where we had everyone from production builders to remodelers attend. The audience included designers, architects, city officials and state government administrators. The diversity of interest in sustainable building practices was staggering, and this enthusiasm was reinforced in a two-day workshop for green certification that followed the launch, which nearly 65 people attended. These are exciting times. I look forward to watching the industry mature as the shades of green change!

Chaden Halfhill

Silent Rivers Inc.

Urbandale, Iowa

Good Marketing

Interesting article – “Marketing: To Survive or Thrive?” – in the February issue of Professional Remodeler. Enjoyed it.

Paul Seelsi

Air Vent

Dallas, Texas

HousingZone.com

I tried printing Alan Hanbury's article on 25 business metrics (“Benchmarking: Setting Standards for the Industry”) from *HousingZone.com*. For some reason it did not print; only his picture printed. Could you please e-mail me a copy of

his articles? The writing was insightful and educational.

Shawn Kumar

We Build Corp.

Brea, Calif.

Editors reply: To print our online content (www.proremodeler.com or www.housingzone.com), click on “Printer-Friendly Version” in the upper right corner. It will open the article as a new page without any pictures. Click the print icon or choose the print command from your File menu.

Aging in Place

I received my copy of the May 2006 issue of *Professional Remodeler*. Remodelers' Exchange was a great opportunity to talk about Universal Design and Aging in Place practices in a discussion format.

FYI, I am currently on committee at the Lehigh Career & Technical Institute in Allentown, Pa. The high school students are building the first Universal Design single-family home in the country built solely by the students. It will be finished in spring 2007. The home will be open to the public before it is sold to raise funds to build the next house. It's a great opportunity to educate the public while training future contractors, designers and trade students on Universal Design practices.

Again thank you for the opportunity to educate remodelers on Aging in Place.

Patricia Numan, CKBR, CKD, CAPS

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Clientmares

The phone rings. You answer.

"Hello, Mrs. Jones. Yes, Mrs. Jones? No, Mrs. Jones. He did whaaat?"

It's every large remodeling firm owner's worst nightmare. Your company's success has allowed you to grow the business to the point that you've outgrown

your ability to monitor closely what's happening in the field. But because you still rely heavily on the raving reviews and referrals your clients have so willingly supplied in the past for your future leads, the relationship with your customers is just as important as ever.

"No, Mrs. Jones, of course we don't condone such behavior. Are you certain it was one of my guys?"

How well do you know "your guys?" If you've been on a hiring spree for field workers lately, or worse yet if you use strictly subcontractors and/or one of the many temporary manpower labor providers popular across the country, you're at risk.

Two recent surveys conducted by Opinion Research Corp. on behalf of Kimberly-Clark Professional polled home improvement professionals and their customers about their relationship and the situations that cause concern for both.

Here are a few highlights of the results of the research, which included a national telephone survey of homeowners who had a contractor work in their home in the last three years and an Internet survey of residential remodeling contractors, handymen and others.

Worst nightmares: Forty percent of homeowners point to poor workmanship as their top concern, edging out contractors who make romantic advances or use the bathroom without flushing.

Selecting a contractor: Sixty-four percent of clients cited a personal recommendation from someone they trust as the reason for selecting their contractor, trumping good looks, although two percent of customers said they'd base their choice of a contractor on their looks.

A small number of contractors begged to differ, asserting that customers chose them because they're "hot and everyone knows it."

Bathroom privileges: While 70 percent of customers said they had no problem letting contractors use their bathrooms, 15 percent said they would allow it but were secretly hoping they didn't take them up on the offer. Ten percent said they changed the towels and cleaned the toilet after a contractor used it. Only one percent would not allow contractors to use their bathroom. When contractors are working outside, 74 percent of customers said they would let workers inside to use the bathroom, but 11 percent would say yes and immediately regret it. Eight percent would "just say no."

Contractors who work outdoors claimed a variety of methods for dealing with this issue: 44 percent ask their client to use the bathroom. Eleven percent said they answered the call of nature by going behind the nearest tree.

"I'm very sorry, Mrs. Jones. Your late husband planted that tree on your wedding day? I don't know what to say. I'll be right over, Mrs. Jones."

What is your code of conduct policy for field workers? Do you even have one? One uncomfortable pre-emptive conversation with your field employees sure beats an even more uncomfortable one with Mrs. Jones any day of the week. **PR**



Michael R. Morris

Editor in Chief

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To Tour or Not to Tour?

The pros and cons of offering house tours

What better way to showcase your work and market to future clients than to let them visit some of your success stories. Home tours can accomplish that and more. Jud Motsenbocker talks with Jill Liptow and Laura Calfayan to learn about the pros and cons of tours.

Jud: *The subject today is the pros and cons*



Laura Calfayan, President
Calfayan Construction Associates
Mostly a residential remodeling company located about 30 minutes north of Philadelphia, this design/build company handles additions that include kitchens, master bedrooms and master bedroom suites. "We joke and say that a lot of our jobs are head-scratchers" Calfayan says. "Our work tends to be challenging but the outcome is fulfilling because they're beautiful." The company has about 4 to 6 carpenters in the field and subcontracts electric, plumbing and other specialty work.

Photograph by Ed Wheeler

of house tours. How do you decide to go into a tour?

Laura: I had been dreaming about it for some time. It made a lot of sense for us because we had six properties that were nearly within walking distance of each other in really lovely neighborhoods, and then we had an open-air pavilion that we built for a nonprofit art center in one of the towns that we do a lot of work in. So that was the perfect place to end the day with a little luncheon. I spoke about it with a marketing consultant that I was working with at the time and she encouraged me to bite the bullet and get it done. Each site was so close that I thought it was doable. I thought people would come because it would be easy.

Jud: *Was this a private tour — not with a large group like a home builders organization?*

Laura: It was a private tour — just Calfayan Construction.

Jud: *I want to get to that a little bit later then. Jill, why did you want to go into these?*

Jill: One of the reasons we are in them currently is that they are a great source of new leads for us as well as it assists us when we are in a design process — bringing a client through finished projects just to be able to see our workmanship. If they don't come through a referral, which the majority of our clients come through, this is really for new people looking at our company. I'm the second owner of the company so we started these tours even before I owned the company, and so it's become a custom for our company to be in these tours and our clients kind of expect it. We do get a lot of new work through them.

Jud: *Are you doing tours with just your company or are you doing it with an association?*

Jill: We are connected with an association. We do two tour projects a year;

one is through the National Association of the Remodeling industry, our local chapter which is Milwaukee, and I also chair the Remodelers Council for our local chapter of the NAHB, and so that would be the other tour that we're involved in.

Jud: *What are the benefits of having your own house tour versus participating with other remodelers in a larger one? We have both sides of the fence here so let's pursue that.*

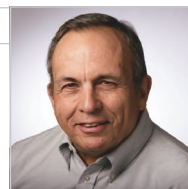
Laura: I did this home tour, like I said the circumstances were perfect for me — there is not another home tour established in our area. We are also very involved in NARI; our NARI chapter as of that date did not have an organized home tour. There is not a Remodelers Council in our area so there aren't any other opportunities.

Jud: *But you commented that you had a lot of them right there together. If you didn't have that situation and maybe had them scattered over a larger area, would you still do it?*

Laura: I'm considering it. I'm a little afraid of the marketing end of it and if I can get the wide-scale draw that I would need to get the project viewed by a large group of people. I don't want people to ignore one house because it's too far away. I'm not sure yet.

Jud: *Jill, what's your thought on doing your own tour compared to being involved.*

Jill: I think, like Laura said, she had the perfect situation. Typically we find that our projects aren't close together — there could be a 35 to 45 minute drive time in between projects, and I think that would put a burden on people coming to the tour to make that drive. The benefit to our local organizations offering a tour is that people coming to the tour would be able to see the projects and view other remodeling. A disadvantage is that you do put yourself in direct com-



Jud Motsenbocker
Contributing Editor

petition with the other projects on the tour, although I think there's plenty of work to go around. I think people pick the companies that they want to work with because of a particular feature or benefit of that company or maybe the personalities within that company work better with theirs. To me it's not a detriment – it's a disadvantage but it can also be an advantage. There is definitely some pooling of marketing dollars to be able to promote the tour, so more people get to know about the tour because of the advantage of more companies being involved and it being supported by NARI or NAHB. There's a bigger dollar amount for marketing the tour – getting more people to the tours – so that would be a great benefit. Also being that it's connected with a builder or remodeling organization puts on a little bit better professional level.

Laura: It would be a greater expense to me to try to reach that greater audience, whereas when I had this little hub of an area, I could target the direct neighbors in that one little area. I was able to afford to do that. If I was trying to reach out to a much broader neighborhood – well, it would be multi-county – it would break a reasonable marketing budget.

Jud: *What does it cost for you to produce and to participate in that house tour? Laura, can you relate to what it takes to put this together on an individual basis?*

Laura: I'm thinking it cost me about \$8,000. I would do it differently if I did it again.

Jud: *That included advertising and incidentals that you gave because of the people you were involved with. I'm going to ask you some questions about the homeowners themselves. What else would be covered in that \$8,000?*

Laura: I needed somebody to develop

the invitation – so that was an expense, the printing of the invitation, the postage. Yes, I did offer a little gift to the homeowners, and we had a luncheon. And then we had our employees at each location and I needed to pay them for that time. Any other kind of incidentals that I may have created for the day – I made up little binders for each job, for instance. I lied, it was about \$7,000.

Jud: *Jill, you do it on a bigger scale with the association.*

Jill: We gift our clients approximately one percent of their project up to a total of \$1,500 for letting us use their project on the tour. It's a two-day tour so they're usually displaced from their homes for essentially an entire weekend. So we do gift them that one percent to kind of ease the pain. The rest of it, we use our vendors and subcontractors to help co-op our advertising that we're required to sell – about \$1,000 or \$1,500 depending upon the tour. And then we have some small flyers where we do our own promotion of our tour project as well along with the other marketing that is done through the association. So we generally would spend anywhere from \$800 to \$2,000, depending upon the location of the project, the type of the project and so on.

Jud: *So that would be individually – your company.*

Jill: Right. We look at our expense per project – could be at most \$3,000 to \$4,000.

Jud: *Laura, you said you sent out invitations. Was this not open to the public?*

Laura: No, I did not advertise broadly in local newspapers. I think I would do that differently if I were to do it again.

Jud: *Where did you get your list of names for those invitations?*

Laura: I reverse-mail every location

that I work on and then I picked a few addresses that I happened to know also in the area and reverse-mailed those. I got a pretty dense covering.

Jud: *Jill, in your case, you did public advertising – newspaper, radio, whatever. Correct?*

Jill: Through our association, they probably have about a \$40,000 marketing expense through radio, TV and such.



Jill Liptow, Owner
RCI Remodeling Center

As a residential design/build company located in Pewaukee, Wis., RCI works with people who are looking for design expertise and construction experience. The company primarily works in large-scale remodeling: kitchens with an addition, master suites, lower levels with a kitchenette, spa bathrooms and whole-house remodeling. The company has its own carpentry crews but subcontracts for large-framing jobs. Everything else is subcontracted out.

Photograph by Marc Berlow

Jud: *On this tour?*

Jill: Yes.

Jud: *Did they charge you to be in the tour?*

Jill: Yes, that's the \$1,500, but we use our vendors to help us co-op that.

Jud: *And sponsors probably also.*

Jill: And then we sell advertising.

Jud: *How do you track leads from this?*

Jill: All of our leads are tracked. One of the things that we do with our tour projects is that we self-promote them, so if we have a client that's currently in design or we're courting for design for a project, we would invite them to our project. That's where we do some marketing aside from the other association marketing. So those particular people that we're courting, they may have come to us through another type of lead — a Web site or a direct mail or a referral of some sort. For tracking, we just have

so we know what money to spend on what type of marketing.

Jud: *How many annual jobs do you get from these house tours? A percentage would probably be a bigger help to us.*

Jill: Since we use ours as a courting tool, it's a harder percentage to come up with because it's something we look at pretty intensely. I would say we do 30 jobs a year; I would say three of those projects come from what would be a new lead to the show, somebody who didn't know about us and came through one of the organization's marketing. But I would say a good five to six come from our using that project to court them further.

Laura: I can't report that same type of success. We did one — we did have an immediate contract signed right after the home tour. She called us because

marketing items?

Jill: This is actually less.

Jud: *Laura, what did you find?*

Laura: Well, because I did one, I didn't exactly have the results I had hoped for. Not that I can say that I'm disappointed necessarily. I appreciate Jill's distinction between who she's marketing to. She is marketing toward new clients. What we did on the invitation is that we included names of the architects that we worked with — four different architects. I did not ask them for a contribution but I would if I were to do it again. They pushed up quite a few notches. They respected what we did. I think they saw us differently and we continued to work with the architects. They all came, they were all incredibly supportive and remain supportive and that's also important.

Jill: And that's harder to track.

It seems the design agreement to construction goes a lot quicker when you're able to take them through a project.

a database for tracking where the leads come from. We do use our tours as a courting technique as well.

Jud: *Laura, how do you track your leads from this?*

Laura: We also have a tracking system. It's one of the first questions we ask. A couple of weeks ago we received three calls within days and every one of them remembered that we had done a home tour. One of them attended and the other two did not but they remembered us and when they had a need, called.

Jud: *Do you keep the leads from your tour separate from your other leads?*

Laura: I do. I have a database of who those invitees and attendees were. If one of those people move into my other database, then I duplicate them so that I know they were at least on that mailing list and whether or not they attended.

Jill: We do the same thing — keep them separate. Our leads are very well tracked

she received the invitation, and we had a very nice project with her. I'm unsure that the home tour resulted in any other sales for that year.

Jud: *Compared to other types of marketing that you do, how does this compare in terms of return on investment?*

Jill: We continually are in them because we do find them to be beneficial. I think the biggest thing is we're looking to have growth in our business. This is one way for us to tap into new clients. We don't look at this as marketing to past clients. That's a very different type of marketing that you're going after because in order to have some additional growth, you can tap into your existing client base, and we really pride ourselves on the amount of referral work we get. But this gives us a new source of leads outside our referrals.

Jud: *But dollar-wise return on investment per lead cost; is this in line with your other*

Jud: *What suggestions do you have for others considering a house tour?*

Laura: The biggest thing that I would do differently, I would have acquired the co-op from my vendors and subcontractors so that I could have afforded to advertise in the local papers. And my tour was done very quickly. I would not do a tour that quickly again. I would be sure there was ample advertising time, and I would make sure there is somebody in the office who has the time to manage the organization. I did it myself and found it overwhelming (if you're doing it yourself). You have to make sure there's somebody prepared to take on the task of managing the tour.

Jud: *If it was the right association, Laura, would you go with an association?*

Laura: Our association right now is in the midst of trying to launch its first home tour. My hesitation is our territory is huge and if the majority of the



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participants are an hour away from me, I'm not so sure I would be as interested in participating. It just happens to be because of the size of the territory. If there were a few of us down here, I'd do it, but if I were the only one, I probably wouldn't. I'm not fearful about the competition – I think it would come down to making sure that project is the perfect project because all of our companies are so similar. I would need to really consider which project is going to appeal to my potential client.

I would probably be a little competitive about what they are putting out there and weighing my chances against what the other companies are going to present.

Jud: *Jill, what suggestions do you have if you're considering a house tour – good or bad?*

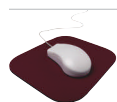
Jill: If you are in a tour put on by an association, I would not rely just on the association for marketing to get people to your tour project. We do direct mail to our past clients and to the neighborhood around our project to get them to our project and to get them to our project first. If there is a sponsor of the tour, one of the things I have the luxury of is that I have the certainty that most of the projects on the tour are going to be beautiful projects to look at. I would be more wary of a tour where the consistency of work or the type of contractors would be very varied. I have the luxury in my market area that there is definite consistency – there's the same contractors year after year with a couple of new companies coming in and out.

Jud: *You're both saying that you would want to make sure that the right people are involved in this. Could be a situation where there's not the right mix of contractors.*

Jill: I would not want to be on a home tour where my project would be seen where at the same time a project would be seen that would have inferior carpentry – quality of work wouldn't be up to par.

Laura: It speaks to the whole value of the tour if there's sub-par work. That's one of my hesitations. I would hesitate to participate until I saw it running proficiently, professionally and until I experienced it from a potential client's point of view. I would do the tour, and I would make sure that the other sites would complement mine.

Jill: Then the other thing that I would recommend is that there's a lot of variety on the tour. The variety of the types of projects is exciting to potential clients to see. We've always found that the more projects that are on an association's tour, the greater the attendance. The more projects closer together, more attendees. **PR**



For the rest of the discussion on house tours and more **Best Practices**, visit www.ProRemodeler.com/bestpractices

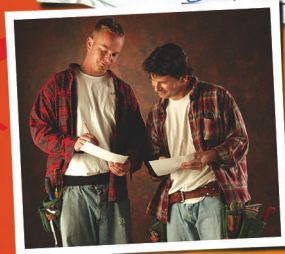
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NAME: Bill Kemp DATES: 12-16

DAY	START	LUNCH	END	JOB SITE	WORK DONE	HOURS
MON	7:00	1/2	3:30	Walby		8
TUE			3:30			8
WED			4:00			8 1/2
THU			4:00			8 1/2
FRI			4:00			8 1/2

Employee Signature: Bill Kemp TOTAL HOURS: 41 1/2



Reality?



Bill Kemp

Employee Report

Jobsite Name: Walby Property		Date Range: 6/12/2006 through 6/16/2006	
Day	Start	End	Activity
Mon 6/12	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Framing 4:57 hours
	12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Framing 2:41 hours 7:38 hours
Tue 6/13	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Framing 4:55 hours
	12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Framing 2:40 hours 7:35 hours
Wed 6/14	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Framing 4:50 hours
	12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Framing 3:03 hours 7:53 hours
Thu 6/15	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Drywall 5:02 hours
	12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Drywall 2:56 hours 7:58 hours
Fri 6/16	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Drywall 4:54 hours
	12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Drywall 2:55 hours 7:49 hours

Signature: Bill Kemp Bill Kemp

Employee total **38:53 hours**

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Doug Dwyer
Contributing Editor



Selling is About Being Prepared

Most sales training you will attend will discuss techniques and steps of selling. There are many great systems you can invest in, and it is critical to have a system.

Being involved in sales for more than 20 years now, I have found one thing that is often overlooked: being mentally and emotionally prepared for making a sales call. More specifically, are you personally convinced your work is worth the money you are charging?

Your answer may be “yes.” The next question is, is that good news? That’s a strange question, you may be thinking – or is it? Most remodelers underprice

and be convinced you are worth it? First, generate enough leads so that it doesn’t matter as much if someone says “no,” because you have more qualified leads to call on.

Second, know your numbers. If you have a grasp on them, then you will know that you have marked up your work at those rates to build a business. What I mean by building a business is one that can pay you a fair wage for all

because you use a systematic approach or your taking care of the job from beginning to end equaling peace of mind, or whatever benefit you can or now deliver over and above the physical product.

Let me give you an example. Even though Sears has a mixed reputation in remodeling, they are able to sell at 200 to 400 percent markup. Why? Because people, for the most part, trust Sears to deliver. I spoke with a contractor in Massachusetts that bid a siding job at \$11,000 while Sears came in at \$22,000 – and got the job. Then, by chance, they called him to be the subcontractor to install it.

Back to the question, but stated a little differently:
do you believe your work is worth a 50%, 67% or even 100% markup?

their work, so they are not really selling. Rather, they are taking orders based on being the lowest-priced company.

The point is not to stay lowest-priced too long. Most of the top consultation companies, such as Business Networks and Remodelers Advantage, teach that you must have at minimum, 50 to 67 percent markup, and with some specialty work, it should be at 100 percent to truly build a company that can operate without you someday – one that can produce the owner a nice salary and 10 percent or better net profit. I would have to agree with them.

Back to the question, but stated a little differently: do you believe your work is worth a 50 percent, 67 percent or even 100 percent markup? To say “yes” and to actually sell jobs at those rates is where the rubber meets the road.

How can you sell at margins like that

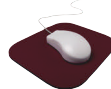
the work you do, afford you to hire “A” players to help grow your business, to consistently give world-class service, and to have a strong net profit. Most remodelers I know are good and hard-working people, and they don’t ever want to be accused of taking advantage of someone. The reality at these types of markups is that you are not taking advantage of anyone; you are charging what is necessary to grow a business with a fair net profit in the 10 percent range.

Third, make a list of all the features and benefits your company provides to your clients. Most companies and/or salespeople focus too much on features of the products or services and not enough time on the intangibles or benefits of doing business with your company: benefits like developing a trust in your relationship with them

So Sears didn’t have better installers, but they did provide peace of mind and trust. You can do the same – maybe not to the same degree, but yet at a competent degree to get the price you need and deserve.

If you have more than enough leads, then know why you need to charge with the appropriate markup and sell not only features, but benefits. Then you will sell more efficiently and profitably. Test it out and see it work for you. **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@dwyergrgroup.com.



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Sales Strategies

Five ways to increase your market share — you can start today

FIRST OF A TWO-PART SERIES

By Michael R. Morris

Editor in Chief

The remodeling market has exploded over the past 10 years, and that boom in business has put many of the best and most professional firms in position to take advantage by increasing their share of the local market.

To do this, however, two key areas of the business must undergo structural, philosophical and procedural change

to attract those clients that mere referrals and repeats cannot: sales and marketing.

In this first installment of *Professional Remodeler's* two-part series on sales and marketing strategies for increasing local market share, we focus on strengthening your sales strategies. Here are five tactics many remodelers are using to get better at turning new prospects into clients for life.

Dan Bawden's strategy for getting larger design/build jobs for Legal Eagle Contractors included building an idea center that doubles as the firm's offices. Photo by Charles Edwards

1. Build an Idea Center

When Dan Bawden, CGR, CAPS, GMB, drew up the 2006 business plan for design/build firm Legal Eagle Con-



Legal Eagle Contractor's idea center includes a plasma television screen where Bawden can use a laptop to manipulate project plans for his customers while they watch.

Photo by Bob Jackson

tractors in Houston, it called for an increase in revenue from \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million. It also was based on taking fewer jobs, which meant he needed to attract bigger jobs than in the past.

Bawden's strategy was to buy and renovate a 2,100-square-foot residence into an idea center that would house his offices and serve as a showcase of the company's work. Dan, the company's president, and his wife, Konne, vice president and CFO, bought the property for \$285,000 (\$80,000 below market value; it had been vacant for more than a year). They lease the home to Legal Eagle, which they own, so the firm covers all the costs, including the mortgage payment, maintenance, utilities and taxes. Because the upscale neighborhood has homes in the \$600,000 price range, Bawden anticipates being able to sell the property for a profit when that time comes.

"The core idea is to be able to show clients in a real house — not a strip mall, not a separate commercial building, but a real house — what they can do in their own home," says Bawden.

Bawden, who handles the company's sales and estimating, used to do his sales presentations at the client's home, bringing along a book of project pictures and showing them his Web site on the customer's home computer.

"I was limited to showing them pictures and discussing ideas from other locations," says Bawden. "This has given

me a much more professional presence that distinguishes me from my competition. It's an ideal situation to be able to get the husband and wife in here to walk through and take a tour first before I go to their home."

Bawden installed a plasma television connected to a laptop where he can create and/or modify plans on Chief Architect while the client watches on the big screen.

"It's immediate gratification, which baby boomers love," says Bawden. "And the plans take shape much more quickly because I can do them while they're sitting there. An architect might take three weeks to get back to them with plans. They start pointing and getting all excited: 'See that's what I told you it was gonna look like, honey.'"

The renovation cost about \$150,000 and took four months to complete. Bawden solicited manufacturers and suppliers for donated and discounted products to help defray about \$100,000 in additional materials costs.

Bawden held a weeklong grand opening from 4-7 p.m. daily that attracted 150 people. He promoted the event in several ways: putting a large "Coming Soon: Legal Eagle Contractor's Remodeling" banner on the main street side of the house 60 days before the opening; mentioning the event to all clients they met with during the construction; mailing letters to their top 200 clients and e-mailing invitations to 3,000 clients and prospects from their database.

Bawden also scheduled a ribbon-cutting event a week later with the chamber of commerce that attracted 25 more people and produced a published photograph that helped market the company.

"One of the hardest things to do is to find ways to separate yourself from your competition," says Bawden. "And having a place like this is part of what I use in my toolbox to set us apart. So once I get them here, I show them cool ideas they won't see anywhere else, and it's helped me separate myself from everybody else."

2. Charge an Estimate Fee

If window shoppers and tire kickers take up too much of your sales team's time, consider charging a non-refundable fee for estimates.

Damon Rumsch, CAPS, CGR, president of Coral Construction in Charlotte, N.C., has been charging \$1,000 for estimates since early in the company's existence. The strategy has all but eliminated his wasted time chasing dead-end leads. Rumsch has just one employee other than himself and sees the fee as a major reason he has been able to rapidly increase his sales from \$1 million to \$4 million per year in installed sales without adding a single sales person. Rumsch remains the company's sole salesman.

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“I want to go into it with the **understanding that my time is valuable and know that they’re willing to pay for that time.**” — Damon Rumsch

new home with an average job size of about \$250,000. His estimates are detailed and time-consuming, and he uses flat fee contracts with a markup of 26 percent.

“Because a lot of times my prices were coming in higher than my competition and I wasn’t getting very many of those jobs, and because I really don’t like doing estimates, and because we’re small, I decided to go ahead and charge \$1,000,” says Rumsch. “That takes care of the time that’s involved in doing a thorough estimate, but it also gets rid of the people that are just shopping.”

Rumsch tells all his prospects about the fee over the phone before meeting with them. He explains that it’s non-refundable, but that it will be applied to the cost of the job if they sign a contract to do the project with him.

“I want to go into it with the understanding that my time is valuable and know that they’re willing to pay for that time to get the numbers together and are seriously interested in working with us,” says Rumsch. “I just remember when we first started, Walt Stoeppelwerth was saying that you needed to expect to only get about 10 percent of the jobs you looked at. And that just seemed outrageous to me. There’s just so much time involved in estimating, it isn’t worth my time.”

Rumsch’s advice to other remodelers who operate with a small sales force in a competitive marketplace and doing quality, high-end work?

“I think a lot of remodelers are really scared to do it, but it’s the only way I could stay in business is to do it the way I do it,” says Rumsch. “It just eliminates all those people you’re going to lose to lower-priced contractors anyway.”

3. Use Audio-Visual Presentations

College City Remodeling in Lakeville, Minn., has undergone such tremendous growth in the last three years that general manager Bjorn Freudenthal, CAPS, felt the company needed to have greater control over the company’s sales message. College City has eight full-time employees,

but that includes three sales people where there previously was just one.

Freudenthal created an audio-visual slideshow in Microsoft PowerPoint, that all three sales people now use to deliver a consistent message on all client calls. College City started using the presentation in 2004 and promptly doubled its sales from \$1.1 million to \$2.2 million.

“We wanted to make sure that when we are in the marketplace we are delivering a consistent message,” says Freudenthal. “We’re not by any means a huge organization. We’ve got three people walking around and talking about who we are and what we do. So in an effort to make sure that we get to a platform where we’re speaking with the same tongue, that’s what we did.”

The presentation includes the company’s history, the type and volume of jobs it specializes in, certifications achieved on staff, involvement in industry associations, cost of typical projects versus value to the homeowner and awards the company has won.

The sales person uses a laptop for the presentation, but they also have a hard copy for the prospect to keep after the sales person has left.

College City also has produced a two-minute video to show clients projects the company featured in the Builders Association of the Twin Cities’ Parade of Homes.

“It’s a very short, two-minute deal that shows before-and-after pictures, what the objectives were, how we emerged victorious over the challenges with the solutions and how we got the end result,” says Freudenthal. “That’s something that’s helped us tremendously.”

4. Pay for Performance

Another key to the College City sales equation has been a pay-for-performance incentive plan for the sales team. College City’s sales staff receive a base salary plus commission based on three areas of performance: sales volume, profit margin and customer satisfaction.

“If you agree that those three things are important, you build a PFP that’s going to drive all of those behaviors and kind of put it on auto pilot because everybody gears their actions accordingly,” says Freudenthal. “We’ve been very successful in implementing that, just for the simple reason that it’s very hard to build a system that would take all the different things into consideration. You could build one on volume and get hurt on the profitability, for instance.”

Freudenthal emphasizes the importance of having a competitive base salary, however, because the company relies on the sales person to be a consistent representative to the client throughout the life of the project.

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“With the commission system, **we are very motivated to sell.** It’s incredible.”

— Donna Bade Shirey

acknowledge the fact that our sales people are not just sales people,” says Freudenthal. “They’re also the go-to person, the main responsible person throughout the project. So they have a vested interest because they also need a referral at the end of the day and want to get the next job and the next job.”

Donna Bade Shirey, CGR, CAPS, president of Shirey Contracting, in Issaquah, Wash., instituted a similar pay structure for its sales team this year and has seen immediate growth in its sales volume.

After selling \$135,000 in February and \$100,000 in March, the company sold \$469,000 in April and \$570,000 in May. April was the first month they used the commission-based pay.

Shirey’s three sales people, which includes herself, receive a salary plus commission based on gross profit.

“With the commission system, we are very motivated to sell,” says Shirey. “It has revolutionized things around here. It’s incredible.”

5. Provide Consistent Sales Training

In 1997, Shirey attended a Sandler Sales Institute seminar set up by her local Remodelers Council. She immediately started incorporating some of what she learned in the seminar into her strategic thinking, but it wasn’t until this year that Shirey signed up for a two-year training program with Sandler, which she estimates will cost the company roughly \$75,000 over two years.

The Sandler agreement includes weekly two-and-a-half hour phone conferences with the Shirey team, plus an in-person conference with the Sandler representative in Shirey’s office two days a month.

“It’s a huge commitment, not only monetarily but time-wise,” says Shirey. “But it teaches you how to screen clients, how to make sure you’re a fit and to always do an upfront contract. And it has made such a tremendous difference in our sales. We have everyone in the office in on this weekly sales call, because we feel everyone in the company is a sales-person, starting with the gal who answers the phone sitting at the front desk. She knows how

we want to approach clients and how to screen them.”

Shirey doesn’t just include the office and sales personnel in the monthly in-person conference; she incorporates the field staff for a half-day of training as well.

“We’re teaching them all about gross profit margin and how the work they do in the field affects the bottom line of the company,” says Shirey. “So we’re basically doing this open-book teaching to our staff. To me it’s a little bit revolutionary to let the guys in the field know this much information about a company, but we are a company that communicates.”

That open communication and training has paid off on the bottom line in a big way for the firm.

“Recently we have actually turned down a whole bunch of business, which really is hard for me,” says Shirey. “But sometimes there’s a good reason to turn down business, and we’re not afraid of that.”

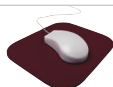
College City also has begun to emphasize regular sales training. The approach is more casual than Shirey’s, but no less effective in the results it brings.

“We just have the three salespeople come together and get an understanding of how each of them execute the sales presentation differently,” says Freudenthal. “We talk about the calls we’ve been on and develop some new ways or new angles or new words to put in to how you talk about each and every slide and how you talk about a different phase in our process.

“We are not talking about some high-profile sales trainer who comes in. We just have three guys humbly go to work and come back and say, ‘Here’s how I do my deal.’ And we look at how they differ; we work with them according to each of their styles. We’ve identified that we have an owl, we have a tiger and we have a lamb within our sales force. So what it boils down to is to put the presentation in a form for that particular person to go out and execute.”

Freudenthal also distributes the leads to the individual sales people based on their sales style and personality type to give them the best chance to communicate effectively with different client types.

“Typically about 95 percent of the leads come through me, and we talk about it openly as to who should go where,” says Freudenthal. “In the qualifying process, which is done over the phone, I pick out who should go meet this person. Do we do it 100 percent right every time? No. But what we try to do is at least identify that our different sales people align better with certain types of prospects. We do that on a daily basis.” **PR**



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Fitting the Bill



How one contractor shaved thousands off a remodel to work within a client's budget

By Wendy A. Jordan
Senior Contributing Editor

The last time Ron and Paula Myers remodeled their Cary, N.C., house, the project took five years. It was a sunroom they built themselves.

When they decided to update their 1974 house with a master bedroom suite expansion and other projects, they wanted the remodel to go faster. So they hired a pro, David Mackowski of Quality Design & Construction in Raleigh, N.C.

They had a particular price in mind, too. "We had refinanced and hoped that \$90,000 would be enough" to cover almost everything, says Paula. But the Myerses' understanding of remodeling costs had fallen far behind the times. Mackowski delivered this bad news — and an estimate more than double what the Myerses planned — but, in the end, reworked the project to fit a price range the Myerses could afford.



Before

The old bedroom was cramped and claustrophobic. In the new bedroom, the patio door — set at an eye-catching angle in the bedroom extension — brings light into the enlarged room and provides access to a private deck. After photography by Strawbridge Photography

Reshaping the plan

The process began in January 2005, when the Myerses signed a design contract with Quality. Top priority for the Myerses was enlarging the master bedroom, closet and bath. Before the remodel, "We had a narrow, long bedroom, a very nar-

row closet, not even 5 by 8," and a bathroom so small, "I described it as a closet," says Paula. The only bathroom cabinet was a tiny unit under the single sink. The shower was an acrylic insert. "We put up with that for 25 years," she says. The Myerses were ready for a change.

Although the couple had their wish list, it took three rounds to finalize the plan. The first design included everything on the clients' wish list: a master bedroom extension and spacious master bathroom addition plus a new front porch, roof, electrical system, HVAC system, hot water tank, and siding and trim repairs. The price tag topped \$200,000. "I cut the estimate into pieces so they could pick and choose" what to do, Mackowski says.

The second plan deferred much of the miscellaneous work – a new front door and porch canopy, reframed storage shed, new roof and leaf-guard gutters – and trimmed costs to \$143,000. Eliminating the 3- by 17-foot bedroom extension and shrinking the master bathroom addition from 18 feet by 11 feet to 13 feet by 11 feet further reduced the price to \$117,282. About \$7,000 of that savings came because the septic tank and leech field would not have to be moved to make room for the bathroom addition.

In the third plan – a \$129,532 design they approved in June – Ron and Paula opted to add a 4- by 17-foot bedroom extension and deck back into the plan. They offset that \$11,950 expense with modifications that trimmed costs without compromising comfort and aesthetics.

Production began in mid-July. The bedroom extension Mackowski added broke open the narrow, boxy space. He used roof trusses to frame the roof over the extension, with girder trusses to support the tails of the trusses above the existing room; that saved 15 man hours. The hardwood flooring in the new section feathers into the existing bedroom flooring; an all new floor would have cost \$750 more. Set at an appealing angle, a patio door opens to a small, private deck. Mackowski used treated pine for the deck rather than a synthetic product, saving another \$740.

By relocating the bathroom to an addition, Mackowski was able to absorb the old bathroom space into a much larger, more functional master closet. Adding a laundry area in the closet was a wish list item that proved "cost prohibitive," says Paula, but

THE FINANCIALS

Quality Design & Construction's astute cost controls benefit the company as much as its clients. David Mackowski budgeted a 40 percent gross profit on the Myers remodel — the standard markup for Quality Design & Construction projects — and picked up a few extra points by job's end.

The main reason for the profit gain was that "some efficiencies developed," Mackowski says. To guard against labor cost overages, "we plan for more disruption when homeowners are involved" in a sweat equity role, he explains. Because Ron Myers kept close to schedule on his demolition and painting work, "we didn't have to keep setting up."

During production, Mackowski shares job cost reports with the crews. "We do a biweekly report to project teams, including lead carpenters and carpenters, on estimate versus actual project costs," he says. "If man-hour expenses show slippage, they know to pick up" the pace to bring costs back into line. On the Myerses' job, for example, exterior trim labor ran \$1,400 over budget, but efficiencies in interior trim "helped us catch this up a little."

Another cost-control strategy: Mackowski's books large allowance overages. Any product selections that run \$500 or more beyond the allowance figure, such as the granite counters and jetted tub in the Myerses' project, get written up as change orders. The benefits are twofold, says Mackowski: the clients confirm the buying decision, and Quality Design & Construction is compensated for the extra expense upfront. "Change orders are pay-as-you-go," he says. On most change orders (but not allowance selections), clients are assessed a \$50 processing fee plus an hourly rate of \$40 for working up the estimate. "This ensures that the clients are serious about the change order," Mackowski says.

Budget History

Initial estimate:	\$206,100
Contract price:	\$129,532
Add-ons:	\$9,296
Additional insulation:	\$2,124
Additional work (electrical, plumbing and drywall):	\$4,746
Upgrade allowance items: (wrote change order for granite and plumbing selections to show that they exceeded the allowance in the budget)	\$2,426
Total Credits:	\$19,337
Removing one window from plan and reducing size of picture window:	\$1,184
Demolition and exterior painting by homeowner:	\$4,148
Insulation installation and interior painting by homeowner:	\$4,220
Drop new HVAC system from plan:	\$8,101
Survey not requested by inspector:	\$350
Allowance credits:	\$1,334
Final price of job:	\$119,491
Cost to produce:	\$68,094
Gross profit:	\$51,397
Budgeted gross profit:	40%
Actual gross profit:	43%
Final estimate:	\$189,911
Initial estimate:	\$166,420
Changes:	\$24,491



The 1974 master suite was skimpy and narrow, but now a 4-foot-deep extension brings breathing room and outdoor access to the bedroom. The new bath, above, is almost double the size of the old one, and the enlarged closet multiplies the storage capacity.

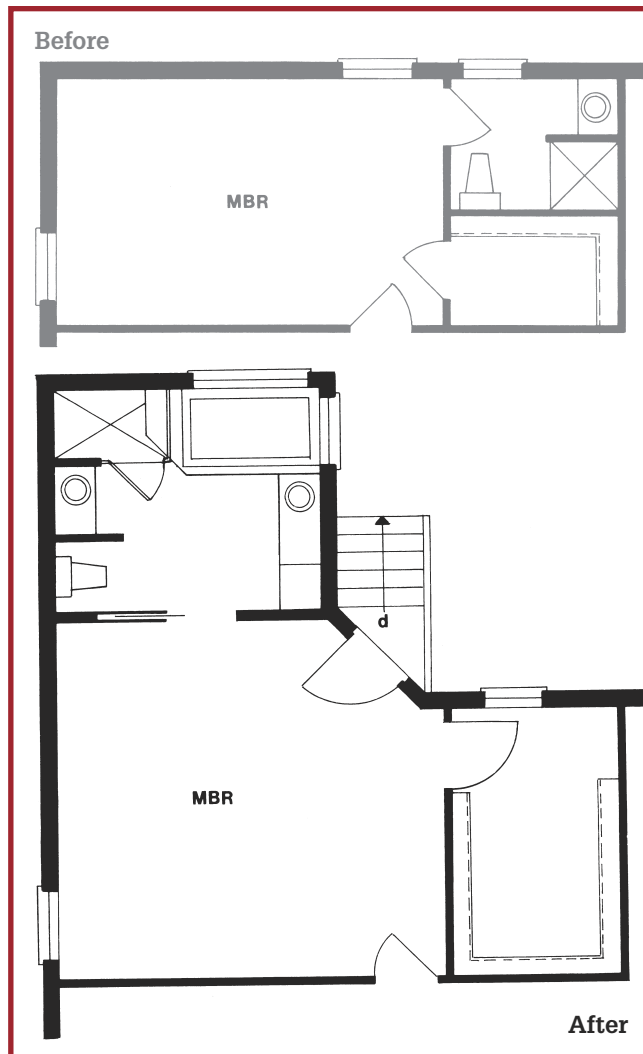
Mackowski installed the pipes and wiring behind the wall anyway. When the Myerses install a stacked washer/dryer later, it will be economical to hook up. “All they’ll have to do is run a dryer vent,” Mackowski says.

Budget balancing act

Putting together the bright, stylish new bathroom was a process of creative give-and-take. To make some expensive must-haves possible, Mackowski found ways to save money in other areas. Paula’s jetted tub was one of the big-ticket luxuries. “It cost a lot,” she says, “so we went with ceramic instead of porcelain tile” on the floor and wall, saving \$1,000. Switching to faucets that resemble expensive ones saved another \$1,300.

The other big-ticket indulgence was the granite counters. Paula had planned to use tile but couldn’t find any in the color she wanted. When she went to an open house at another Mackowski project and saw the granite counter there, “I really fell for it,” she says. The color was perfect, but the granite was an expensive grade.

Several decisions worked to offset that extra cost. Mackowski specified a simple pencil edge instead of a more ornate ogee edge on the granite, thus saving \$500



in production cost. He guided the Myerses toward maple cabinetry with a classy taupe stain and ivory glaze instead of cherry cabinets – a 5 percent savings in cabinetry. During the design phase he had already cut cabinetry costs by scaling back from a continuous run of cabinets to his and hers units at each sink, plus a linen closet.

The shower’s design cut costs too. Planned to be a 4-by-5-foot curbless shower when the room was going to be larger, Mackowski reduced the enclosure to 3 feet by 5 feet. He put in a curb so the floor system would not have to be changed to accommodate the drainage slope of a curbless unit. That saved 10 man hours. And instead of making the enclosure totally frameless, he butt-glazed the glass corner while framing the door and perimeter. Savings: \$1,600.

Ron wanted a hydraulically heated floor in the bath-

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room, but the house did not have the boiler system for it. Instead Mackowski installed an electrical radiant heat system, which was one third the cost. The couple compounded the savings by replacing the rusty water tank with a high-efficiency tankless water heater system.

A change in the window plan not only saved money but also “enhanced the room,” says Mackowski. Paula had wanted a circle-top window near the peak of the cathedral ceiling but changed her mind. “It looked out of place,” explains Mackowski. Instead, he enlarged the picture window by the tub, and the Myerses still saved \$1,200.

Smart sweat equity

Ron’s good work on the sunroom paid off in \$8,000 worth of sweat equity on the master suite. “I’m comfortable with homeowners doing some of the work when they show they can handle it,” says Mackowski. “I’ll write up a contract at full price but let them know what the cost savings are if they do the work themselves. I’ll suggest what I feel is available for the client to do.”

For Ron, it was demolition, insulation and interior and exterior painting. Quality’s crew took down the structural walls, but lead carpenter Brad Williams oversaw Ron’s demo and other work. “Brad would identify things I could do to stay ahead of [the crew] and not get in their way,” Ron says. “I took the brick and fascia off the bedroom



For 25 years, the Myerses made do with a tiny, scantily equipped bathroom. The new one, featuring his-and-her vanities, a linen closet, a jetted tub, a custom shower enclosure and large windows, is “very spa-like,” says Paula. Glass accent tiles add color and style.

before they started the job and demolished the closet while they were doing other things.”

To assure the quality of the painting, “we give homeowners painting specifications” that state “what their responsibilities are,” says Mackowski. This includes “making sure all nail holes are puttied, joints caulked, sheetrock defects identified” so Quality’s drywall contractor can fix them.

The insulation phase took three weekends – longer than expected – because the Myerses added foam board as well as fiberglass batts to boost R-values in the bedroom. “We had other jobs going on” though, says Williams, so the crew worked on those while the insulation was being done. “I told Mr. Myers, ‘Call me whenever you get it done,’” says Williams. “We stayed in touch. Mr. Myers did his work well,” says Williams. “He was a motivated individual.”

With Mackowski’s cost reductions and Ron’s sweat equity, the Myerses got a beautiful master suite, luxuries included, for only \$4,000 more than what they expected to pay, says Ron. Says Paula: “We’re ecstatic.” **PR**

SNAPSHOT



David J. Mackowski, president
Peggy Ann Mackowski, vice president
Quality Design & Construction

Location: Raleigh, N.C.

Type of Company: Design-build general contractor

Staff model: 4 office, 6 field

Years in Business: 12

Sales History:

2002	\$1,015,032
2003	\$1,140,605
2004	\$1,312,096
2005	\$1,180,319
2006* (projected)	\$1,400,000

Annual jobs: 24

Workweek: 40 hours

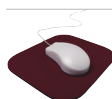
Software: 20/20, SoftPlan, Microsoft Office, QuickBooks Pro

Contact: 919/779-3964, www.qdcinc.com



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Special Report: 2006 Bath Design Trends

Homeowners covet slick spa-like sanctuaries

By Meghan Haynes
Contributing Editor

“Bathrooms in old homes were very small and utilitarian, but today, people want to make a personal style statement in their bathrooms,” says Mary Jo Peterson, CBD, owner of design firm Mary Jo Peterson Inc., in Brookfield, Conn. Today’s bathroom designs incorporate amenities much like those people find in spas, remodelers say, and their clients want bathrooms allowing them to relish and not rush. After a focus on kitchens the past couple of years, the design cycle points to bathrooms becoming the dream projects of choice in 2006.

Showers reign

Today’s showers have it all and then some – steam, multiple showers and sprays, even dry heat. Even while faced with space and/or existing plumbing restrictions, customers are choosing large, zero-clearance walk-ins with all the bells and whistles they can get, such as his-and-her showers with

“Color is back,” proclaims Ann Kennedy, kitchen and bath designer for Buschman Homes in Gurnee, Ill. She suggests choosing soothing colors and natural materials. **“A definite must-have is glass mosaic tiles used on an entire wall or as accent pieces,”** she says. *Photo courtesy of Buschman Homes*

two entrances, personalized settings and heated seating. Alan Hilsabeck, a CBD with Premier Kitchen & Baths who works in Flower Mound, Texas, only uses spa benches 24 inches high and 24 inches deep “because the greater depth allows people to sit longer and get drenched under those rainheads, if so desired.”

Several clients are choosing a soaking or freestanding tub rather than a whirlpool. “Many of our empty nester clients actually use the hall bathroom as their own space, and that’s where they put their tubs,” says Melissa Wilson, CBD, of Insignia Kitchen and Bath Design Group in Barrington, Ill. “They want all the amenities; we’ve actually moved a step further from bathrooms being spa-like to actually becoming a spa,” Wilson says, citing separate saunas and tubs that can be converted into massage tables.

Can the cans

Functional lighting can be more than fluorescent tubes, pinholes and cans; as customers aim to move beyond a bathroom’s mere function, so should the lighting evolve. Jim Vivrette, CBD, president of Altera Design & Remodeling in Walnut Creek, Calif., looks to attractive sconces and decorative ceiling fixtures to create layered lighting that’s viable in every price point. Wilson adds that task sconce lighting at that vanity eliminates shadows, and she also suggests creating personalized lighting based on use, such as a wall-mounted reading lamp near a tub or toilet. “People are paying more attention to lighting, but we’re also in a design cycle where decorative lighting is in. And with higher ceilings, it’s more pendant or drop lighting,” Peterson says.

“In today’s bathrooms, lighting should become part of a mood,” Hilsabeck says. “Lighting is an environmental design element and also accents features like art or televisions – there’s variety, no different from any other room in the home.”

Not your mother’s medicine cabinet

Bottles, gadgets and grooming products overflow from today’s bathrooms, and clients make storage a priority. The cabinets of old don’t cut it because they’re boxy and uninspired. “Furniture for storage is today’s look, and it’s also a necessary addition when you work in smaller bathrooms where you simply can’t add a lot of cabinetry” Vivrette says. To maximize storage possibilities, customers are eliminating knee-drawer spaces and installing drawer bases instead. Kitchen influences such as cutlery dividers, appliance hoods that become “changing stations,” or drawer warmers in lieu of warming racks use limited-recess spacing in the walls and the cabinets, leaving individual



Kohler’s luxury performance showering package includes 12 individual components and offers a multi-function showerhead, a handshower and slide bar as well as three innovative WaterTile bodysprays. Photo courtesy of Kohler

furniture to provide the bulk of storage. Furniture pieces are also used to house vanities and create a visual center point. “Your bathroom cabinets can be just as ornate as those in the kitchen: onlays, moldings, decorative items, etc.,” Wilson says. Open shelves and wall cabinets are also popular.

A natural order

When it comes to finishes, clients are looking at nature’s palette for both materials and color choices. “Glass is everywhere,” Peterson says. “It’s very durable, you can have iridescents and color and texture, and light comes through it, which gives it character other materials don’t have. I also think because it’s made through recycling it’s even more appealing.” This ‘green influence’ – also



The Grace 27 free-standing airbath from Oceania's Harmony collection offers 51 air massage jets around the bottom sides of the bath. *Photo courtesy of Oceania*

reflected in the prevalence of granite, stone, ceramic tile and even marble and wood as the choices for countertops, shower surrounds, backsplashes and flooring – comes with products such as cork flooring, which Wilson says can work well in wet areas and is an especially good choice for kids' bathrooms because it's soft.

Customers often opt for matte, satin or brush-finished fixtures for spaces that mimic the equilibrium of the four elements. They're choosing low-maintenance, natural products with minimal or no grout lines.

Protect the neck and back

Ergonomic concerns aren't limited just to your workspace, and when you think about the functional range in the bathroom – standing, sitting, bending – it's important to make the bathroom as comfortable as possible. Remodelers are steering their clients toward personalized or adult-height (36-inch) vanities, and comfort-height toilets are a standard request. In addition, the selection of decorative grab bars is expanding, and many designers are actually putting in the grab bar during the project even if the client doesn't require one yet. "Many of the new grab bars are so attractive they actually add to the space, and it's just more comfortable, convenient and safe," Peterson says.

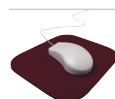
The big picture

"Where the bathroom starts and ends has faded away; the definition of bathroom has blended," Peterson says.

Perhaps the most noteworthy bathroom design trend is

the blurring of the line between the bathroom itself and its surrounding spaces. This is manifest in two ways: first with the emergence of transition spaces, such as morning kitchens, juice/wine bars or small supplemental laundry areas, which connect the wet and dry areas; and second, by creating seamless, door-less transitions between the bathroom and the master bedroom or closet. "People are tearing down the walls and making the whole space feel like a retreat," Hilsabeck says. "The bathroom is actually part of the master suite versus another room with a door." The introduction and evolution of technology – plasma screen and two-way mirror televisions, complex lighting control systems and auto-fill programmable tubs – further bridge the spaces. "I think the advancement and marriage of technology with bathroom features and functions will create some wonderful toys in the future," Hilsabeck adds.

Bathrooms are consistently in the top three most sought-after remodeling projects, and whether your clients are spending \$50,000 or \$100,000, they will want more than swap-and-updates. "The biggest change in bathroom design is really people's expectations and their desire to have very strong design," Vivrette says. "It used to be 'just make it look nice,' but now it needs to be a really unique, beautiful, well-designed space. It's not just the things, it's the look and how everything integrates, and this is true all the way down to the lower price-points." **PR**



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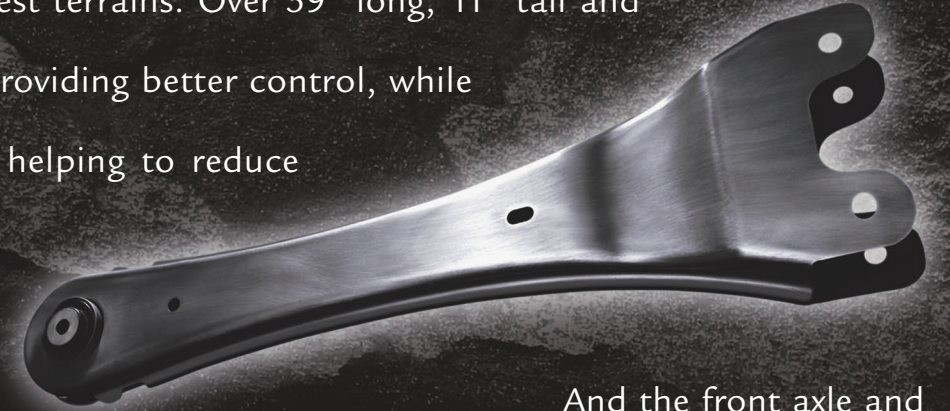
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master bathroom

Escape the Blues

A sapphire shag rug and aqua fixtures make way for neutral, natural materials

When Anderson-Moore Builders was enlisted to turn an outdated bathroom into a tranquil retreat, the company started from scratch, scrapping every aspect of the existing space save the mechanicals for the steam shower. Similarly, many of the project ideas came “from scratch” — things owner and president Tracy Moore and his employees had never done on any other project.

For example, placing the double set of vessel sinks and wall-mounted faucets required a creative solution. The homeowner was not very tall, and the sinks had to be at an accessible height, affecting fixture placement. The owner also did not want a backsplash, opting for a mirror running from countertop to ceiling behind the sinks. Yet both the faucets and the two lighting sconces had to be anchored against that wall.

Remodeler and architect: Anderson-Moore Builders Inc., Winston Salem, N.C.

Project location: Kernersville, N.C.

Age of home: 32 years

Scope of work: A 220 square-foot bathroom with freestanding tub, steam shower and heated floors



A column-topped mini linen-closet echoes the styling of these shelves by the bathtub and divides the space, giving the illusion of a water closet. Metallic accents and natural stones used in the floor, shower space and countertop — granite, marble and travertine — lend the bathroom an earthy, ethereal air for relaxing.



The steam shower's half-wall is purely aesthetic to make the shower seem larger: The actual mechanicals, which were housed in the vanity cabinets of the previous bathroom, are now suspended in the garage below.

"You've got the difficulty of the spout and handles, a set for each bowl, the sconces, and an existing wall that's not quite square," Moore says. "Those are

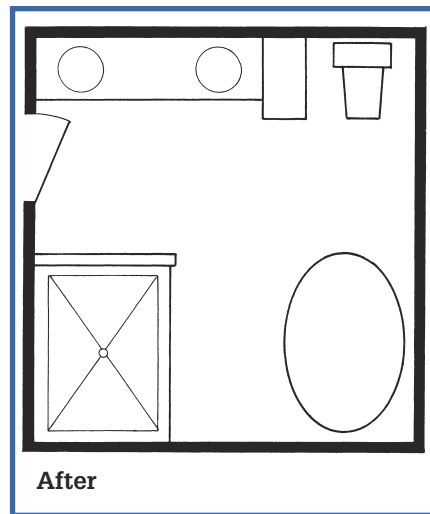
a lot of limitations, in addition to simple human error, and there's really no margin for human error." His suggestion for others who find themselves running fixtures through a mirror: plan on purchasing two mirrors.

The custom-designed vanity cabinetry has removable panels that hide the pipes while still allowing access to them.

To determine where the fixtures and controls for the tub would go so they were both within comfortable reach, Erik Anderson and his crew soaked in their surroundings, lying in the tub on numerous occasions to get the precise placement. The \$51,000 project took six months to complete.

"When you first walked into that blue bathroom, you kind of laughed," Anderson, owner and vice president, says. "But the customer was very trusting, and she put a lot of trust in us and the designer, and she believed in what we did, so much so that we did two more jobs for her after this." **PR**

— Meghan Haynes



The open shelves under the sinks gives the space a chic flair thanks to false backs that mask the plumbing.

Sunny Sanctuary

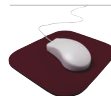
Adding an oval window through the existing, out-of-plumb brick exterior wall was the project's ultimate test of precision and planning.

Once Anderson established the tub's location, he measured for the window, then burrowed through the plaster and sheetrock to "reverse install" the window. Crews then traced a matching oval shape on the brick's outside, using the shape as a guide to cut the brick. The rough after-cut edges of the brick created a 3-inch gap between the wall and window, so a jamb was built from the inside to bring it more flush with the inside wall.

"Putting in the window added a day to our work, but I don't think the room would look nearly as beautiful and finished without it," Moore says. "Our main goal was not to have to patch the brick from the outside, which would affect the street-scape of the home."

PRODUCTS LIST

Cabinetry: UltraCraft. **Faucets:** Barclay, Rohl, Toto. **Fixtures:** BainUltra, Toto. **Lighting:** Lithonia, Sea Gull. **Radiant flooring:** Easy Heat. **Paint:** Duron. **Sinks:** Franke. **Windows:** Carolina Trim Specialties.



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A Doctor in the House

Building performance testing has given one Illinois remodeler an edge in his market – and on the books

By Susan Conbere and Kate Fried
PATH Partners

Much like a doctor diagnosing a patient's illness, remodeler Michael Lotesto makes house calls ready to treat a home. His specialty: energy-efficiency and building performance.

First, he listens to the owner to find out the house's symptoms and runs tests to diagnose the problems. Then he treats the home and even performs a follow-up checkup.

It's a "medical approach" to solving air infiltration and performance issues that Lotesto, president of Performance Exteriors in Crystal Lake, Ill., credits with improving his business' bottom line and employees' morale.

Air infiltration testing reveals buildings with leaks that lead to poor energy efficiency – and the testing proves that many contractors need to take their remodeling further. Lotesto's method of identifying the problems and remodeling to solve them give him an edge over his competitors, he says.

"Diagnostic testing takes the guesswork out of remodeling," says Lotesto, who has worked in the building industry for more than 25 years. "It makes my clients much more comfortable in making a decision. We combine the right diagnosis with the best prescription and follow-up care."

Lotesto's routine

Too often, when a homeowner calls a contractor and complains about high utility bills, the contractor might simply push a product.



Michael Lotesto tests the air over a lit burner to check the ambient levels of carbon monoxide.

"We ask questions to determine symptoms," Lotesto says. "A house is a group of systems that are working side by side. If you address one of those systems, it may affect another. If someone is trying to save on their energy bills, telling them, 'I'm going to change all of your windows and it will automatically save you a bundle,' is kind of ridiculous. You need the house to tell you what it needs first."

After he performs the tests, Lotesto compiles a report that tells the owner about the house's energy efficiency,

air infiltration and other performance issues. Based on that data, he scientifically diagnoses the problems and makes recommendations. Then, he educates the homeowner about the solutions and products that will work best for the home while preparing the owner for the affects renovations might have on the house's moisture levels or air pressure. After the changes are implemented, he retests the home to show the owner that the renovations are doing what they were intended to do.

"This approach completely separates

3:31 PM

Hurricane Reggie moves through Charleston faster than predicted.



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us from the competition,” says Lotesto. “Although it takes additional education and commitment, I recommend this as a surefire way of increasing a remodeler’s business, professionalism and confidence.”

Paging Dr. Lotesto

Excessive air leakage is a common problem, but the solution is not always immediately apparent.

One homeowner spent a significant amount of time and money renovating his four-bedroom, 1960s home to make it more comfortable and energy-efficient. He installed a high-efficiency boiler, added insulation in the attic and crawlspaces, re-sided the house with rigid foam insulation board, installed energy-efficient windows and followed standard remodeling principles. Many dollars and much time later, his home was still drafty and his utility bills were almost as high as ever.

That’s when he turned to Lotesto

To diagnose the problem, Lotesto used a series of tests required for companies accredited by the Building Performance Institute, which provides performance standards for technicians and certifications for contractors. He checked gas lines for leaks, measured the carbon monoxide output of all the home’s combustion appliances and assessed vent pressures. He made a visual inspection and calculated heat loss of the siding, foundation, roof, ceilings, walls, windows and doors. He conducted a blower door test to assess the extent of air infiltration. Then he sectioned off individual rooms and crawl-spaces and used a second pressure gauge to determine specifically where the house was leaking the most air.

“We discovered that all the contractors who had worked on his home had missed the key areas of air infiltration,” Lotesto says. “A house that is properly air-sealed will replenish far less than half



Michael Lotesto tests water heater gas lines for leaks.

of its air in the space of an hour. This home was letting in outside air at over three times this rate. Although he used good products and experienced contractors, they didn’t use the right diagnostics or building science to determine the true cause of the home’s problems.”

Lotesto attacked with air sealing and insulation measures at key areas. He recommended plugging leaks in the crawlspace and rim joists; adding an

insulated attic hatch cover; installing new air conditioning vents; air-sealing all plumbing, electrical service and duct penetrations; adding some joist insulation; and replacing the crawlspace access door – all measures, he notes, that can improve the efficiency of most older homes.

The price of the upgrades was approximately \$2,500; Lotesto estimates the homeowner will save about \$700 a

Strengthening the Team

Lotesto employs eight staff members to perform upgrades on the building envelopes of the homes he tests, and he believes that pre- and post-testing has a positive affect on his crew.

“Going into a project, my installers know that their work is going to be evaluated because I retest all of my homes after the renovations are complete,” Lotesto says. “They look forward to this because they get verification that they did a great job. It has a positive effect on them; it makes them feel like they’re involved in a stronger operation with a superior end-product. It increases morale.”



A blower door test reveals air leaks anywhere in the home.

year in energy costs while experiencing greater comfort as well.

Building market recognition

Before reestablishing his remodeling business in Illinois, Lotesto spent two years as a remodeling consultant in New York, where building science approaches are popular. In the Midwest, Lotesto finds, diagnostic testing has been slow to gain recognition; in fact, Lotesto's is the first BPI-accredited company in Illinois.

"Unlike some other states, Illinois has not dedicated sufficient funding for programs that educate remodelers about building performance testing, and no state or local agencies require energy ratings," Lotesto says.

To build his business, Lotesto, who won a BPI national award in 2006, structured pricing to make testing attractive



This gauge for the blower door test measures how much the house leaks.

to homeowners. Clients who hire him for diagnostic testing pay \$400. Those who hire him to perform the recommended upgrades get the testing free.

He markets his services through print

advertisements, and he has hired a public relations firm to direct media coverage. But Lotesto believes that government acknowledgement lends the most credence to his services.

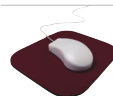
"Public awareness is the greatest challenge facing us right now," Lotesto says. "Gaining media coverage of our work and having the support of government programs like PATH and Energy Star helps a lot, adding additional legitimacy to what we do."

Diagnostic testing and your business

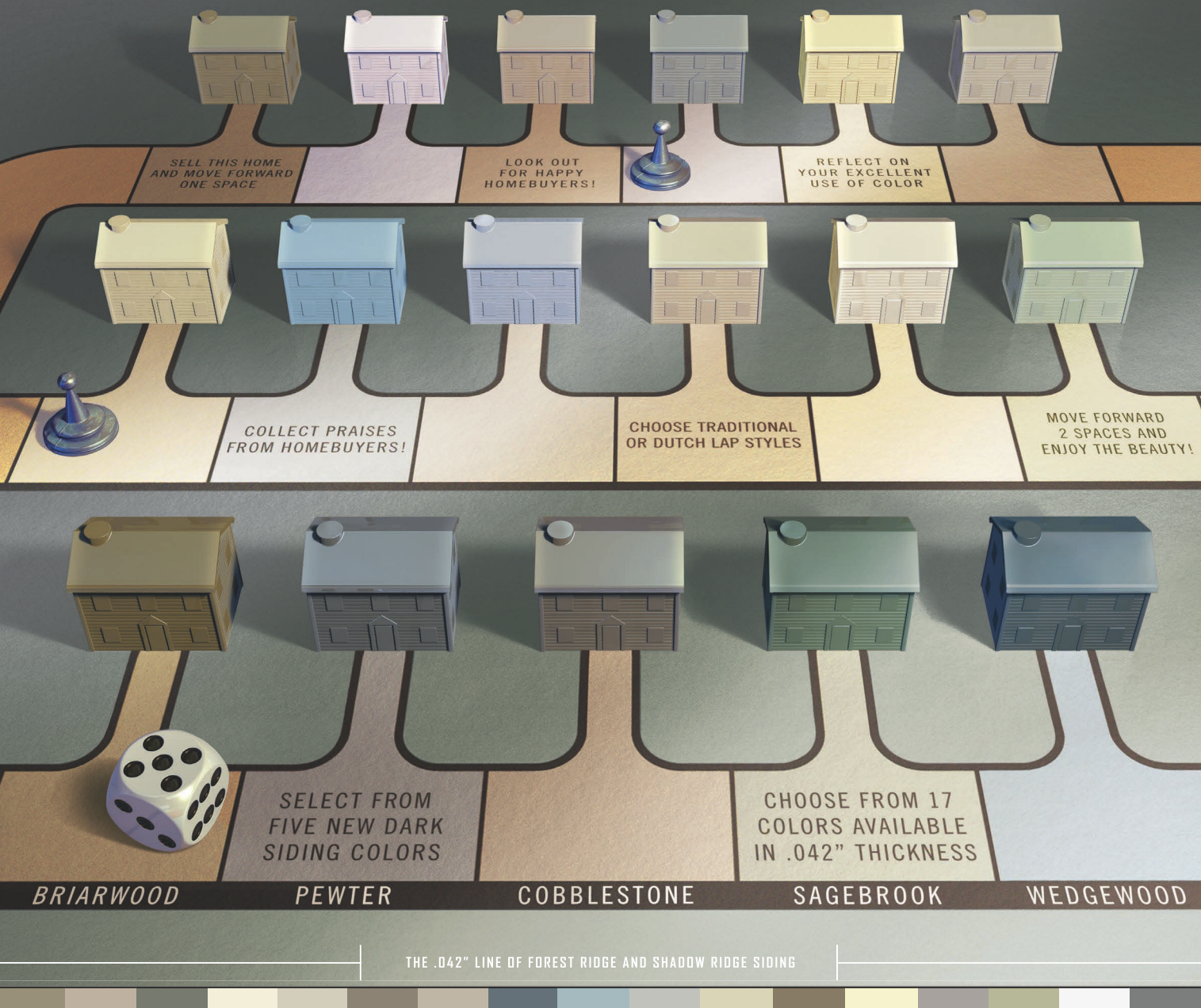
The amount of time it takes to become certified in building performance testing depends on the depth of knowledge you want. Lotesto studied to become a BPI-Certified Building Analyst, a BPI-Certified Shell Specialist, a BPI-Accredited Contractor and a RESNET-Certified HERS rater in a year. He estimates that others could satisfy one or two of the basic requirements in less time if they pass the requisite field and written evaluations.

The basic equipment needed to perform the tests costs about \$5,000, while the length of time it takes to make up for that investment depends on the aggressiveness of your marketing strategies and how popular building performance testing is in your region, Lotesto says. Remodelers working in areas where the testing has already become recognized will have an easier time earning back their initial investment. It has increased his leads and closing ratios by approximately 20 percent, he says.

Having that edge is a great investment, Lotesto says. "Raise the bar for yourselves and for your clients," says Lotesto. "The rewards are tremendous, not only financially, but psychologically. You and your team will rise above the competition." **PR**



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Clearing the Air

Qx2 shows the way to a safe, profitable industry

By Michael R. Morris
Editor in Chief

Brindley Byrd spent many a day as a youth in Lansing, Mich., rehabbing old buildings and houses, and that experience is paying off in ways he probably never imagined.

Byrd, CGR, CAPS, founder and president of Qx2 Incorporated in Lansing, has turned a profitable remodeling business into a consulting and training firm that specializes in teaching dust control and safe work practices to other remodelers. In his “spare time,” Byrd is also the project manager for kitchen and bath specialist The Kitchen Shop in Lansing.

For the first six years after he founded Qx2 in 1994, Byrd specialized in Community Development Block Grant funded whole-house rehabs, working with HUD and non-profit redevelopment corporations that buy houses and hire general contractors through a competitive bid process.

In 1999, one of Byrd’s bids landed him a two-house rehab lead abatement project. It was an eye-opener.

“I was not very aware of the lead issue at that time, but on that project, I got the crash course and learned a lot,” says Byrd. “As the general contractor, I had to coordinate the lead abatement work that was happening, and it was an interesting experience. The two projects are beautiful, they’re historically correct and we got an award from the Historical Society.”

Byrd realized after that project that the sum of his experiences were nudging him in a certain direction. So he



Brindley Byrd

Photography by Paul Bednarski



Brindley Byrd, 38

Company: Qx2 Incorporated.

Personal background: Grew up in Lansing, Mich., and worked on income properties his family owned from early childhood through college. Holds a bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology from Michigan State University. Founded Qx2 Contracting in 1994, which evolved from a full-service remodeling firm into a consulting business for remodelers in 2004. Has spent the last two years also serving as project manager for The Kitchen Shop in Lansing, which does about \$1.2 million in installed sales of kitchens and baths in the greater Lansing area.

Employees: 1.

Typical job: Consulting and training, primarily on lead-safe work practices.

Market: Anywhere in the U.S.

Company goals: Increase the level of professionalism among remodeling firms, particularly concerning dust control and lead abatement.

Personal goals: Finding more opportunities to share his experiences and knowledge with like-minded remodelers.

He envisions a future when remodelers can work cleanly, safely and profitably.

took advantage of a state initiative offering willing contractors free lead worker training, free lead inspector training and free lead risk assessor training. He took those courses and had his employees take the lead worker's courses to prepare his company for the lead abatement issues that were starting to get serious attention.

"Because I had sent my guys to all the lead training that other contractors didn't, I was a member of the Home Builder's Association and they weren't, I was taking University of Housing courses and they weren't, my costs were higher and my bids were higher," says Byrd. "So I said, wait a minute, if I'm going to continue to face this, I will not be in business very much longer. And as I learned more about the lead abatement issue, I learned that it really was a path to nowhere because you just couldn't compete and make money."

So from 2001 through 2005, Byrd stopped bidding on the CDBG jobs and focused his business on residential remodeling for homeowners. But when the EPA announced it was going to revisit setting strict lead abatement guidelines last year, Byrd decided to turn his remodeling enterprise into a consulting business focused on helping remodelers remain profitable and safe.

"I started thinking what the lead issue would mean for professional remodelers who really want to get a leg up, that really want to do a better job," says Byrd. "I realized that there is a better way to do it. You can make money, and you can help reach the goal of the lead abatement rules by doing what you can as a professional remodeler to control your dust. I've broken it down into three fronts: protecting the workers, protecting the public, and protect-

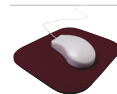
ing your profit."

The key to Byrd's message: professional remodelers need to promote the fact that they practice safe work habits and keep clean job sites for their customers because the best customers are willing to pay for their families' safety and a clean and healthy home environment during construction.

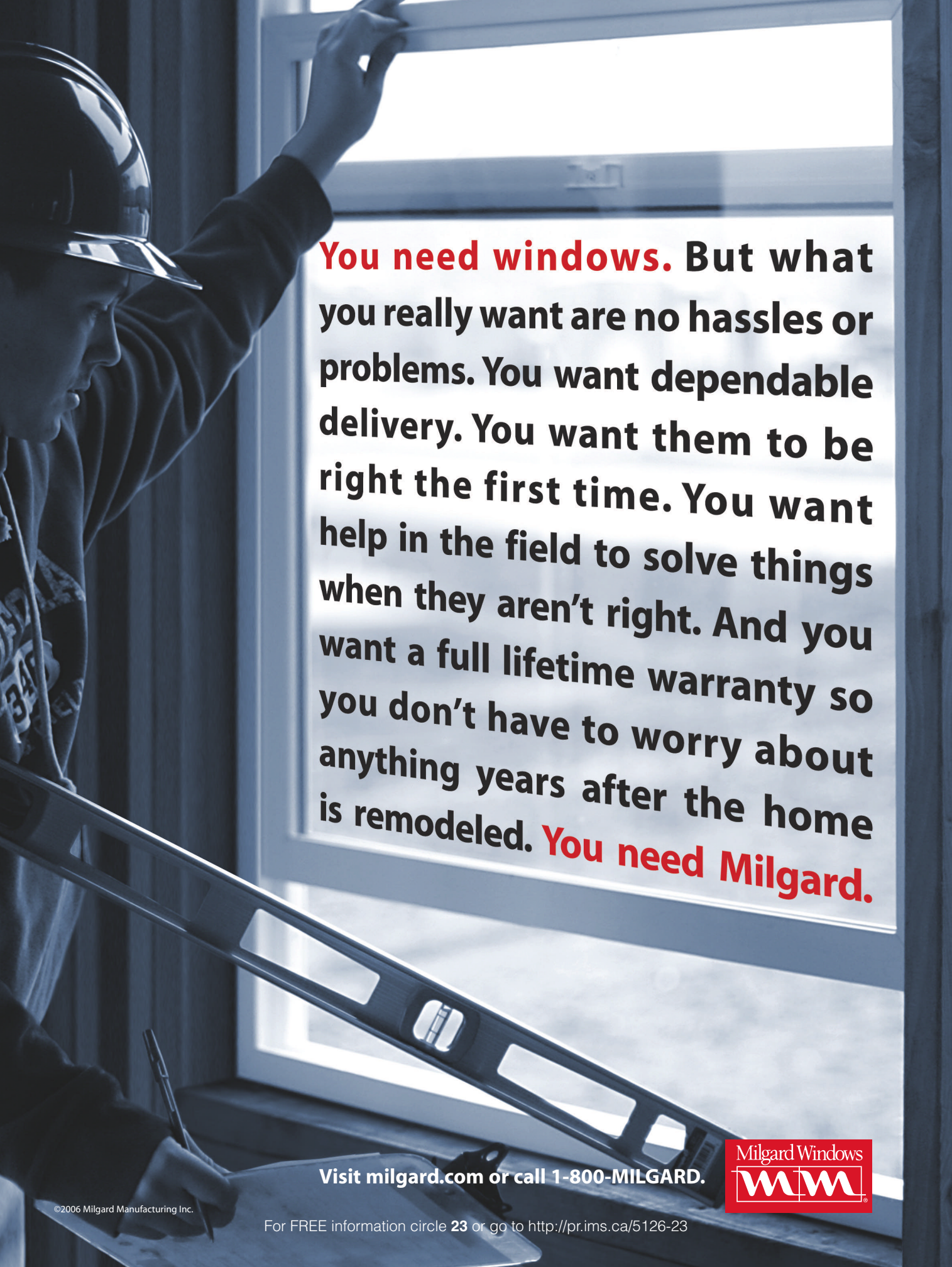
"You need to have a line item that says 'dust control' and a line item that says 'daily cleanup,'" says Byrd. "You estimate in your proposals the extra time that it takes to do what you should be doing anyway: protecting your workers, protecting your customers, protecting your profits. So when your client is comparing Joe Smith Contracting to ABC Contracting and ABC's got in their proposal all that stuff to keep the house clean and their workers safe, your dollar invested in their safety will yield you at least four. And that's been proven by the National Safety Council."

Byrd practices these same principles when he's managing projects with The Kitchen Shop. He envisions a future when remodelers can work cleanly, safely and profitably.

"We do lose jobs because sometimes we're higher," he says. "But for the jobs that we get, we know we have the right customers. If you're going to lose them because your bids are high, you're going to have them as an adversary in court when they think that you poisoned their kid. It really comes down to passion about this issue. After seeing what lead did to my business, I want to make sure other people don't make those same mistakes." **PR**



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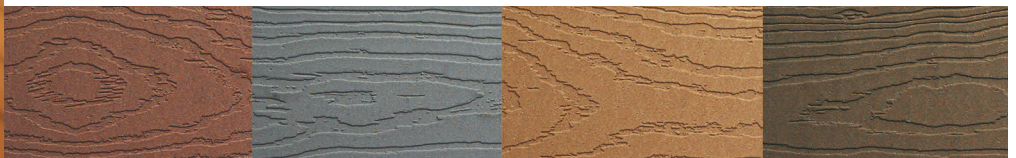
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Kitchens, spas and gazebos extend outdoor living space

Viking

Viking's all-stainless steel cabinets are 30 inches deep with handles that match Viking outdoor appliances. Drawers are equipped with full extension slides. The doors have fully concealed hinges and may be adjusted to mount on the left or right hinge. Three- and four- inch filler strips can be used as spacers between the cabinets.

All cabinets have heavy-duty adjustable legs and are available with optional, clip-on toe kicks. Cabinets come in a variety of models and sizes.

888/845-4641
www.vikingrange.com
Circle 125 or go to
<http://pr/ims/ca/5126-125>



Lennox

The 42-inch Oasis wood-burning outdoor fireplace is constructed of stainless steel with a choice of two styles of detailed brick interiors. The heavy-duty stainless steel grate holds up to six logs. Recessed side pockets hide stainless steel fire screens from view when open. The design provides a large viewing area with the option of adding bi-fold glass doors.

800/953-6669
www.lennoxhearthproducts.com
Circle 126 or go to
<http://pr/ims/ca/5126-126>



Benjamin Moore

Benjamin Moore's new Exterior Stain Collection features a full selection of finishes from clear to solid colors, and offers a broad selection of hues. The clear finish works best for new wood while the solids provide additional protection for older wood while maintaining the wood's natural texture. All finishes are designed to protect the wood from water and UV rays.

Opacity choices: Clear, transparent, semi-transparent, semi-solid and solid

201/573-9600
www.benjaminmoore.com
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GeoMatrix

Severe Weather decorative plastic lattice by GeoMatrix and Brite is manufactured using a one-piece injection process that ensures the product will not split or separate, the manufacturer claims. The 4 foot by 8 foot sections are available in four designs: traditional diamond, privacy diamond, privacy square and 3-D architectural. The lattice can be used as a garden arbor, trellis or semi-private partitions for hot tubs, porches or patios.

Colors: White, dark green, cedar, clay and redwood

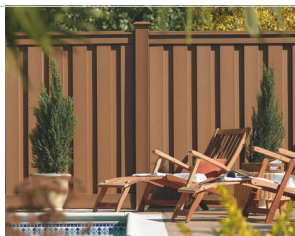
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Vixen Hill

Vixen Hill, manufacturer of modular Western Red Cedar structures, offers a full line of gazebo designs. Combining computer-aided technology and cabinetmaker-quality joinery, Vixen Hill can customize a gazebo for any environment. All modular gazebos are prefabricated of kiln-dried Western Red Cedar and are available with or without wooden floor systems and concealed electrical wiring.

800/423-2766
www.vixenhill.com
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Trex

Trex Seclusions privacy fence is a composite system with a wood-like appearance that won't splinter and never needs painting. The line includes a 6- by 6-inch post, decorative post caps (flat or pyramid), an aluminum channel at the base covered with "C"-shaped pickets that slide together, and a crafted top rail. Made of recycled plastic and reclaimed wood.

Available in four colors: Winchester grey, Madeira, saddle and woodland brown.

800/BUY-TREX (289-8739)

www.trex.com

Circle 130 or go to <http://pr/ims/ca/5126-130>



Alcoa

Alcoa is introducing four new colors for its Oasis composite decking and railings: Carolina pine, New England grey, Pacific redwood and teal. The Oasis plank surfaces are reversible, with natural wood grain texture on one side and a brushed finish on the other. Crafted of high density polyethylene and reclaimed wood fiber through Alcoa's proprietary encapsulation process, which fully coats wood fibers with polymer before the planks are formed.

800/962-6973

www.alcoahomes.com

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DeckKorators

The Scenic Contour balusters for decks, porches and rails feature an hourglass shape. Made of tempered glass that is 5/16-inch thick, the hourglass shape is five inches at the widest and three at the thinnest. The balusters can be installed on either straight runs or stairs with four screws. Made with corrosive-resistant fittings that are ideal for humid or salt air environments. Available in two tints: clear and autumn.

800/332-5724

www.deckkorators.com

Circle 132 or go to <http://pr/ims/ca/5126-132>



Azek Trimboards

Walpole Woodworkers, using Azek material, has created the Freeport Collection which includes pergolas, cupolas, window boxes, planter boxes, lattice panels, lantern and mail posts, gates and more. Walpole engineers and craftsmen can custom build to plans or drawings. Azek material can be milled, routed and mitered using standard woodworking tools and can even be heat formed into curves and arches.

800/ASK-AZEK (275-2935)

www.azek.com

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CPI Plastics Group

Eon Outdoor Living is a full line of alternative decking, fencing, railing, spa cladding and accessories. The product is made from engineered polymer manufactured from 100 percent virgin polystyrene with the addition of proprietary colorants and the look and feel of stained wood. Eon can be drilled, cut, sanded, and cleaned with water from a garden hose. Available in six colors.

866/DIAL-EON (342-5366)

www.eonoutdoor.com

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GeoDeck

The Designer Post Cap Series comes in three different lines: Merritt, Vero, and Cocoa. The Cocoa is the best-quality line and comes in three profiles: silver high point, copper high point and Tiffany high point (shown above). All of the 4- by 4-inch cap profiles are available in cedar, driftwood or mahogany and can coordinate with any GeoDeck decking or railing product. The post caps are part of GeoDeck's new Designer Series, which will also include more railing options.

877/804-0137

www.geodeck.com

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CertainTeed

The EverNew glass baluster railing system is made of strong tempered glass 3/8-inch thick and 4-inches wide. Designed with a standard angled edge that works in both 3 1/2-inch flat and stair applications. The one-size-fits-all design can be used on vinyl, composite or wood deck surfaces and the routed rails eliminate the need to fasten and screw the balusters. Available in either clear or smoked glass.

800/233-8990

www.certainteed.com

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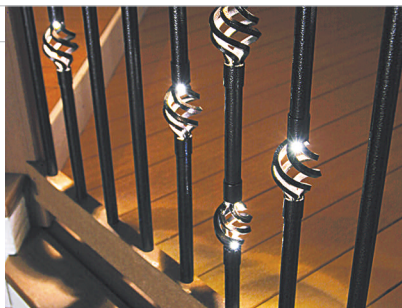
TimberTech

The RadianceRail System delivers the attractiveness of white vinyl with the sturdy, structural feel of a wood railing. Each piece of deck railing is made from precision-engineered TimberTech composite, capped with durable, pure-white vinyl. It has no exposed hardware or mounting collars. Available in Coastal white in both 6-foot and 8-foot kits. Additional items, including post cover, post cap and post skirt are available separately.

800/307-7780

www.timbertech.com

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De-Kor

The Scenic Contour balusters for decks, porches and rails feature an hourglass shape. Made of tempered glass that is 5/16-inch thick, the shape is five inches at the widest and three at the thinnest. The balusters can be installed on either straight runs or stairs with four screws. Made with

corrosive-resistant fittings that are ideal for humid or salt air environments. Available in two tints: clear and autumn.

800/332-5724

www.deckrators.com

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Boral

Boral Pavers all-natural clay composition – with colors ranging from deep brown and burgundy to light tan and grey – ensures the color will not fade. Available in 13 colors and three primary styles: 4- by 8- by 2 1/4-inch standard straight edge, 4- by 8- by 2 1/4-inch standard beveled edge and 4- by 8- by 2 1/4-inch standard antique. Modular pavers measuring 3 5/8- by 7 5/8- by 2 1/4-inches are available for mortared applications.

800/5BORAL5 (526-7255)

www.boralpavers.com

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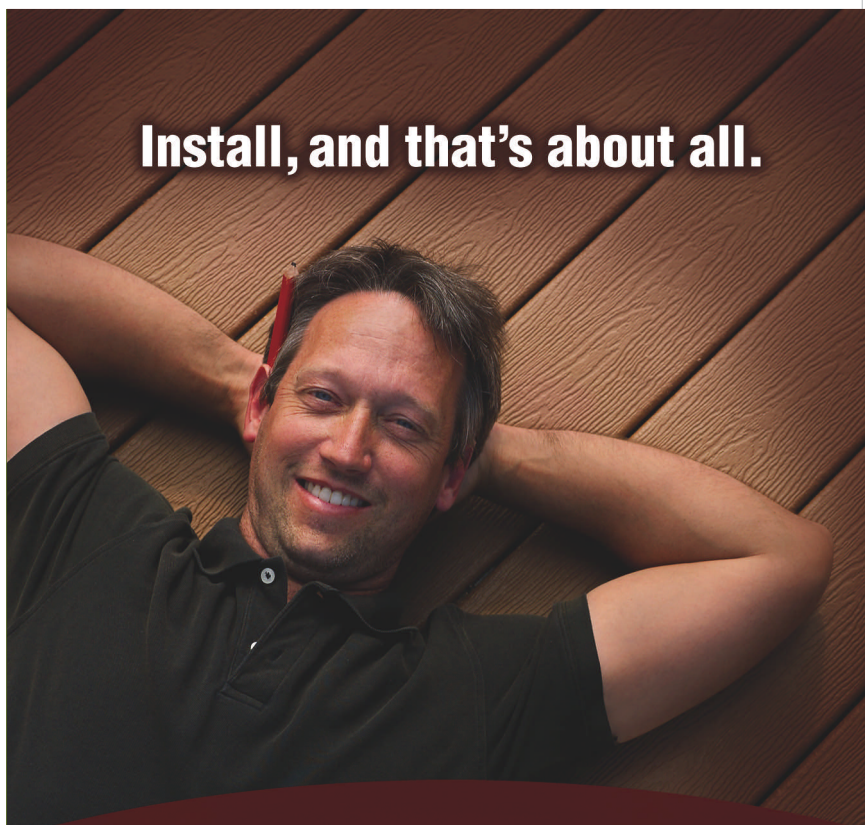
Sherwin-Williams

A new oil-based coating Life Extender has been added to Sherwin-Williams' DeckScapes line of deck protectors. The Life Extender technology binds loose wood fibers to form a sound, smoother substrate with better adhesion for topcoating with DeckScapes semi-transparent or solid color Waterborne stains. Easy to apply with a brush or roller.

800/524-5979

www.sherwin-williams.com

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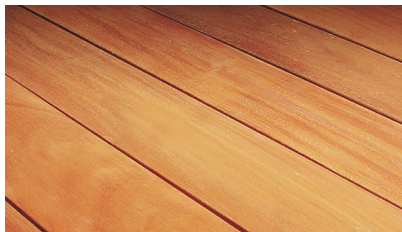
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CorrectDeck

CorrectDeck introduces the DCL (Dimensional Composite Lumber) Connector. Made of polypropylene, the connector has been designed to attach Correct-Deck DCL 2- by 4-inch or 2- by 6-inch railings to a 4- by 4-inch post eliminating the need to toe screw. Designed in cooperation with Deckorators Inc., it produces a consistent color match with the rails and planks.

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877/DECK-877 (332-5877)

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www.dowsymmatrix.com

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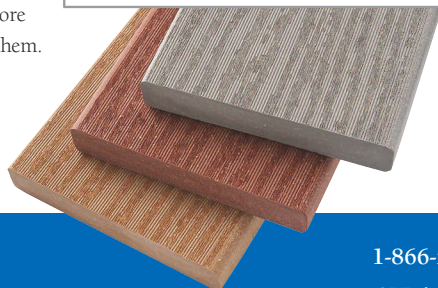
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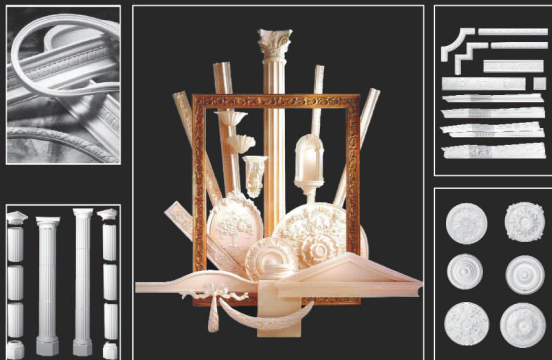
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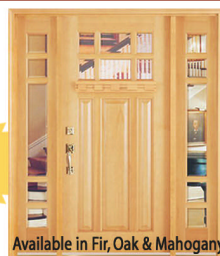


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CAPS Program Flying High

NAHB Remodelers Council reports record graduates

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The NAHB Remodelers Council CAPS Board of Governors reported at its Spring Board Meeting in May that it anticipates another record number of graduates in 2006.

Through May, the Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) program has 268 new graduates; the program had a record 294 graduates for the entire year 2005. The program was started in 2002 and had 53 initial graduates, followed by 175 in 2003 and 284 in 2004 – 1,074 total CAPS graduates through May 2006.

The CAPS program is designed to teach strategies and techniques for designing and building aesthetically enriching, barrier-free living environments. The program goes beyond design to address the codes and standards, common remodeling expenditures and projects, product ideas, and resources needed to provide comprehensive and practical aging-in-place solutions.

There are 91 CAPS classes scheduled for 2006. In addition, the NAHB University of Housing is working with Remodelers Council members to revise the CAPS courses in 2007.

CAPS has received significant media coverage recently, including a front-page article



in USA Today and a segment on CBS' "Evening News."

Many statistics point in the direction of further growth for the aging-in-place trend. The 2000 Census reports that 4 percent of U.S. households (3.9 million) now have three or more genera-

tions living together. A 2004 study by the AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving reported that 9 million adults are living with a parent age 50 or older.

For more information about the CAPS program, log on to www.NAHB.com.

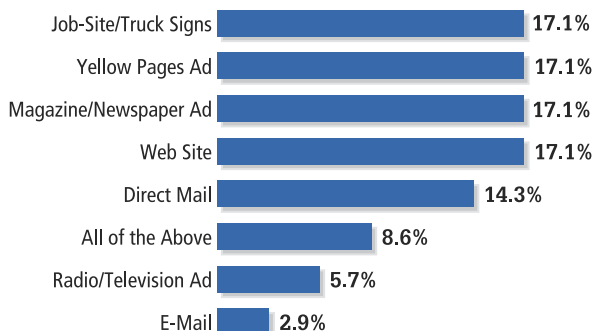
NAHB predicts record \$\$ in '06

NAHB economists are projecting that residential remodeling will increase 13 percent in 2006, the largest surge in a decade, to a record \$238 billion in volume.

"We have seen extraordinary growth in the remodeling industry over the past year, and we expect to surpass that in 2006," said Vince Butler, chairman of the NAHB Remodelers Council and president of Butler Brothers Corp. in Clifton, Va. "The most popular remodeling projects continue to be kitchens and baths, which usually get the most return on the investment."

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

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3. Up by 25-49%
4. Up by 1-24%
5. Same
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7. Down by 25-49%
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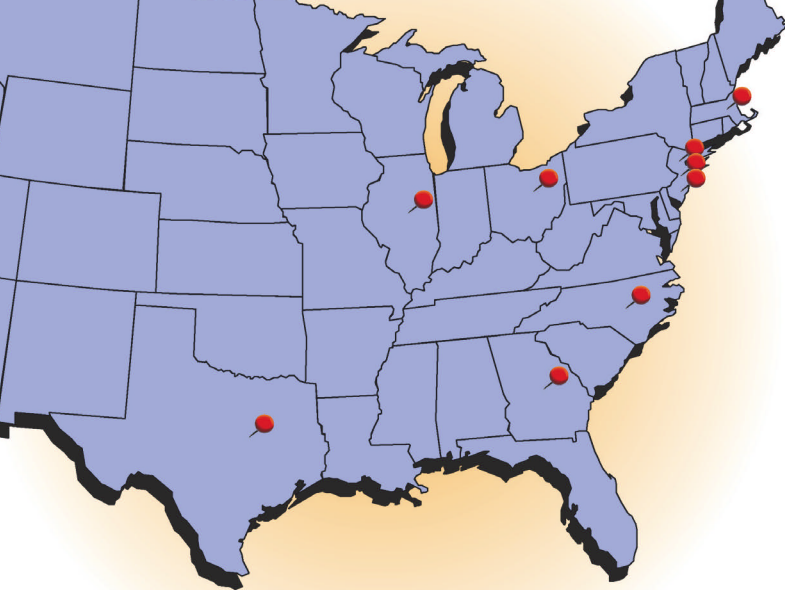
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126 Avenue of sphinxes at Wadi-es-Sebua
Nineteenth Dynasty, reign of Ramesses II, ca.
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Originally on the bank of the Nile before
being relocated, this temple was linked to the
river by a quay. On each side of the temple
entrance stood a statue of the king and a
sphinx. An avenue of sphinxes led through
two courtyards to a pylon in front of which
stood two monumental statues of the king
holding a staff. The actual temple building
was behind this, inside the rock. Like the
temple of Derr, the rock temple of Wadi
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