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Steve Hendy, President Neal's Design-Remodel



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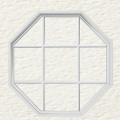
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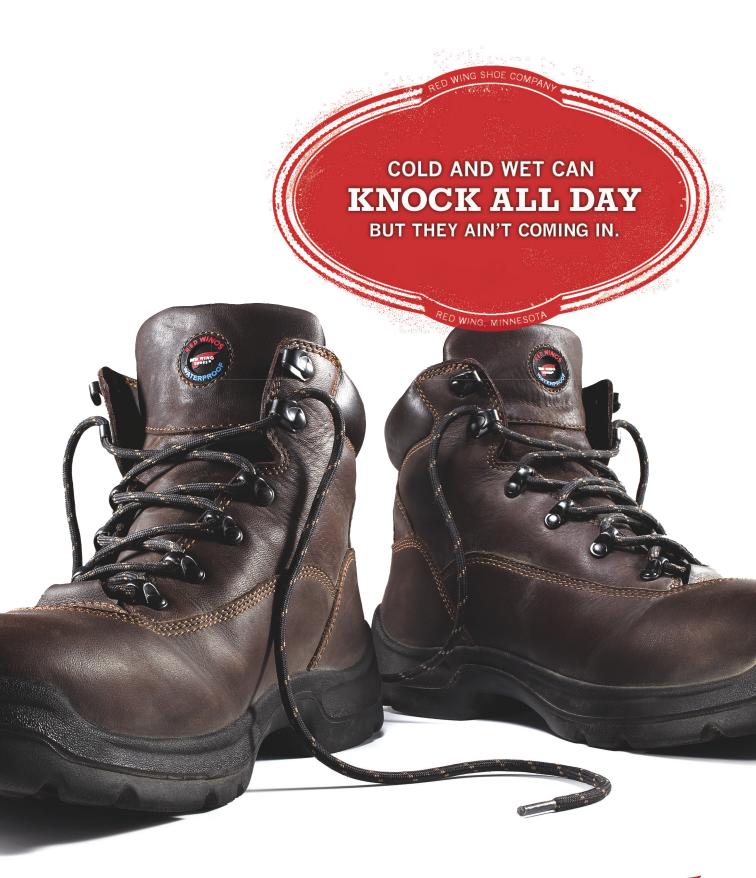


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OCTOBER 2006 **VOLUME 10 NUMBER 10**



Steve Hendy (left) and the management team at Neal's Design-Remodel are making long-term plans for the future of the company.

Cover photo by O'Neil Arnold











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Time to Plan Ahead

Do you have a long-term strategic plan in place? The remodeling market has enjoyed so many great years in a row, it would be understandable if many of you didn't. After all, who needs a plan when the phone has been ringing off the hook with leads, and backlogs



Michael R. Morris Editor in Chief 630/288-8057 michael.morris@reedbusiness.com

have never been longer than they are right now?

Unless you've been living in a cave, you already know that the U.S. housing market has been going through a corrective process in recent months. Just how that will affect your local remodeling market is anybody's guess, although experts predict the national remodeling landscape will remain strong for several years despite a significant slowdown in new and existing home sales.

This would be a great time to get together with your management team and devise a long-term plan that makes sense for your company in your current local situation. This month's cover story "The Next 1000 Days," (page 22) highlights the specific steps that two different companies undertook in making plans for the future.

One of the key points revealed in this article is that no matter what plan your team comes up with, it can always be modified if needed as the future unfolds.

Both of these companies point to marketing as one of the most important elements in sustaining their recent success moving forward, and I couldn't agree more. By increasing your marketing budget, you can be certain to continue to generate a lot of leads even if your local market becomes a little bit soft. This will allow you to keep a higher number of field personnel and subs you've gained during these good times busy.

It will also ensure that you're able to take full advantage of the brand strength you've no doubt built in recent years so you can continue to produce strong profits in the years ahead. **PR**

Clarification

Last month's column about how Blackdog Builders delivers an exceptional customer experience, ended with the following quote from Blackdog president Dave Bryan: "[Customer satisfaction is] a million little things like that. It isn't building the addition. It's building the addition while delivering an experience that makes them feel upset and disappointed when you leave." Bryan wanted to make it clear that he meant that the customer was sad to see his crews finish the job and leave because they had enjoyed the remodeling experience Blackdog provided.



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The Future of Green Remodeling

Green is the color of money and remodeling

reen remodeling is an everchanging process with innovations in building science and technology affecting it constantly. To do it successfully, one needs to educate crews, subcontractors and consumers.

Jud: Chris, would you define "green" for me as you see it?

Chris: I was part of the NARI task force where we defined it. The way we defined it was: a remodeling profes-



Chris Donatelli. Co-owner

Donatelli Castillo Builders

Based in San Jose, Calif., the firm has been in the construction industry since 1970. A member of NARI, Donatelli Castillo Builders is a general contracting company specializing in everything from kitchen remodels, bathrooms, specialty rooms, additions, and whole-house remodels. The firm has 15 employees with five in the office and the rest in the field.

Photo by Gary Laufman

sional who considers sustainability and maximizing nature's resources and energy in an efficient, responsible manner in the conduct of their business. That covers sustainability, nature's resources and energy conservation. For me, that pretty much defines it.

Jud: That's a nice little package, if you take each one of those words and go through them. Steve, give me your idea.

Steve: It would be very hard to expand upon what Chris said. That was a very well-thought-out statement. We call it an almost "holistic" way of looking at remodeling and building. In other words, it has a "whole-house" systems approach to taking and using as many recycled products, renewables and sustainable products that we can to make the house as sustainable as possible in the process. It increases the efficiency of the home, which is a passion for us.

Jud: So realistically, what we're saying here

is that it's not only to be more energy efficient but it's also to use our resources to the best of their ability. Is that a good way to put it? **Steve:** I think so – and to use resources in the home that have a minimal impact on the environment in a number of different ways, whether it's the shipping distance, whether they're recycled products or whether it's a product that's just environmentally-friendly - bamboo floors, for example because it grows so fast and we need it so quickly.

Jud: Good point. Chris, anything to add to that?

Chris: I think Steve's point is well taken. Too often in our industry, we're guilty of just "tear it down, throw it away and start over." I think the mentality of what Steve's talking about needs to begin to permeate all that we do.

Jud: We talked about green and I've heard about it, read about it and discussed it in some areas, even down to transportation. And Steve, I believe you brought this up. Let's not buy a product that we have to transport clear across the United States if, in fact, we can do that. That affects the environment not only from fuel use but also from pollution in the air and that type of thing. I thought that was interesting, when they take the "whole" concept.

Let's move on to the next one. Chris, how has the market changed regarding green in recent years?

Chris: There are a couple things. In one sense it's all the buzz; you see it in Newsweek and other national journals. From our standpoint here, my consumers and my customers are more aware of it largely in part because of some of this national exposure. I think the other place where we're being exposed to it is the simple fact that we're paying more for stuff that we used to get pretty cheaply. It brought about, because of the dollars in some sense, a consciousness about how much we're paying for energy and gas. I see it as a shift. There's still a whole component of people that just think, "If I have to pay \$4 a gallon for gas, I'll just do it," fill up their Hummer and ride off into the sunset. I see that as changing slowly but surely.

Jud: Steve, how has the market changed in recent years?

Steve: I think we've got about three or four things that are right at the forefront. One is media attention; it's become kind of chic. Another is we've got a group of people that have a great deal of discretionary cash: the boomers. They are in their 50s and approaching 60 and, quite frankly, grew up in the '60s, who at one point in time, really wanted to be more environmentally friendly. Up until recently, some of that was beyond their financial reach and to a lot of people



Jud Motsenbocker Contributing Editor

it didn't really make any sense. We've got \$60 a barrel crude oil, a 25 percent increase in the cost of natural gas on a per annum basis. Quite frankly, when it becomes more expensive to heat and cool, all of a sudden they say "Hey, we'll take a look at this." In the 1970s everyone was interested in this. We saw a bunch of "solar energy" coming out of the woodwork. We saw roof-top solar going on and people were talking about energy efficiency. Now you've got really viable compact fluorescent lights in a variety of sizes and styles and wattages that actually look nice, don't buzz and are styled well. So, you've got the products coming on line at the same time as this immense increase in the cost of energy with a generation of people who have the most money. The market is there and the buzz is starting.

Jud: It's taken a period of time to get this to come to the forefront. Is that what you would say?

Steve: All the right things are happening at the right time. And because people have been asking for it more and more, the technology is evolving at the exact same time as the market is asking for it. It couldn't be a better scenario.

Jud: Chris, Steve indicated that the manufacturers have kind of stepped up to the plate. Have you also seen that?

Chris: Yes, I have seen some of the products that he's mentioned in terms of lighting and those kinds of things. The paint companies with low-VOC paint, caulking with low-VOC, I would agree. There's a lot of stuff out there. It's still to the point where you still need to do your homework. One gentleman that I was talking to in Santa Barbara as part of the green remodeling program that we're doing with NARI said that some companies are "green-washing;" they

are taking one product and marketing it as green. We as contractors need to not just accept something at face value but need to read the ingredients - see where it's made, how it's made and just be a lot more aware than we used to be.

Jud: Steve, what percentage of your jobs now would you consider green?

Steve: It depends if you go by a strict pointing system like the National Association of Home Builders Green Building Guidelines with a score of 70 to be considered perfect, to be "green." I would be kind of layered. In everything we build we try and bring the efficiency level. Every new build and remodel. The stuff we put into the walls is a recycled cellulose product. We encourage people to try and use things like "Tough Rock" from Georgia Pacific that is a totally recycled gypsum product made in Indiana and on the west coast as well. Mainly, we try to put some component into as many projects as we can. To put an actual percentile basis on it, I would say that half of what we do has some incorporation of green into everything we do. If it's an addition, we have some component in it 100 percent of the time.

Jud: How about you, Chris? Can you give me some kind of idea of what percentage you're doing in green?

Chris: My answer would be much the same as his. On a strict point basis, we're not at that level yet. We do try to incorporate as many green products as we can. We as a company have to continue to focus on that. My partner and I took a small class out here. One idea that we've started doing with every project partly because, many of the disposal places are sort of forcing it and partly because we knew it was the right thing to do, is we're pulling out of our

wall jobs, segregating it and taking it to a disposal site that grinds it up and sells it back as mulching. We're pulling all our cardboard and separating it here at the shop. We have a person that comes in and picks that up so that doesn't go into the landfill. More and more we're getting classes for our crews on the way they build to give them some solid teaching in terms of how you can naturally do this in the course of how you build things just so they're aware of it.



Stephen Robinson, Owner **RE Construction & Maintenance** Services

Located in New Castle, Indiana, the firm is an Energy-Star builder that uses the latest technology, environmentally-friendly materials and recycled products whenever possible. Staffed with 14 employees; four in the office and the balance in the field, they're a full-service remodeling, renovation and general construction company.

Photo by Tod Martens

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Our insulation is formaldehyde-free, and those kinds of aspects we've been doing for quite a while.

Jud: Chris, you've indicated that we've kind of "stepped outside the building" a little bit. We talked about building green and we think of that as going into the structure itself in one way or another, or the products we buy. You doing the separation and the recycling of the material taken off of these jobs is also part of the green-built concept. Do you agree with that?

Chris: Yes, I think that is very much a part of it. We have a couple of sources up here that actually take doors, plumbing fixtures and light fixtures to resell them. One business up here actually packages some of this and ships it down

said, making sure where they came from and how they are made. Just because something is labeled "green" may not necessarily make it so.

Jud: Chris, you kind of answered that because you said you had taken some classes. Does selling green take additional education?

Chris: Yes, I totally agree with what Steve said. Sometimes Google is your friend! The Internet is a huge resource. It is a continuing education process. Part of that component as I eluded to before was I'm excited and passionate about this and willing to invest in classes and understand everything I can about it. I need to then educate my employees and, sometimes, my customers as well. It is a continual process that takes a constant that they were the authority on HVAC equipment, and not myself, and I explained to them that they were definitely the authority on HVAC equipment but not on the duct work. You have a whole generation or three generations of guys who are working who are used to the American economy, which is a throwaway society. You have got to totally rethink and say, "We know somebody who could use those doors. That is a perfectly good commode; let's take it down to Habitat and have them use it. This steel door we're pulling off of a house we're doing now and a brand new overhead door and opener, we're doing to find a place for it, someone who can use it because it is insane to

I think the entire "green" remodeling or building process requires almost constant education because there is so much emerging technology.

to Mexico to be reused. Very much a component of green building, in my standpoint, is diverting whatever we can from landfill.

Jud: Steve, does the selling green concept require additional education for you?

Steve: I think the entire "green" remodeling or building process requires almost constant education because there is so much emerging technology, almost on a daily basis if not a daily basis. I've got customers giving me information and new Web sites that I didn't know were out there. For example, we were going to do a kitchen for a young lady in Indianapolis, Indiana. She asked if I have heard of sorghum cabinets or wheat grass panels. I said "No." She showed me a Web site and showed me this stuff. There's an amazing vast array of recyclable, renewable products that are coming out, quite frankly, almost daily. From my standpoint, if you buy into those, you've got to educate yourself on them so you can make sure they are properly used and viable - going back to what Chris

renewing of what you're learning.

Jud: Do you think that we need to train subs and crews in the same way? Obviously, Chris, you think that very strongly.

Chris: Absolutely. Because some of the stuff is not necessarily intuitive; it isn't the way we've done things for the last 30 years. I've been in the trade since 1970 and I'm trying to relearn portions and pieces of how I was taught to put buildings together. It's got to be done differently. It's very much a part of teaching our crews and our subs. I still get a lot of push back from our HVAC guys. Yes they're still kicking and screaming about stuff like that; so it is a continual educa-

Jud: Steve, are you doing much on education for your crews and subs?

Steve: Yes, we do. I tell our HVAC contractors going in that I'm going to de-pressurize or pressurize the duct system and I'm going to test it, and if it's not right, you're going to go back and fix it. I've lost some HVAC contractors because of the fact that they felt

throw that into a dumpster." Yes, there is a huge learning curve.

Jud: The question was in regard to crews and subs as far as education is concerned. I certainly appreciate both of you bringing up the subject that it's not just building green on the building itself. It includes all of these things and reuse of some of the products, fix-

Now, does your customer embrace green, or is it a tough sell? Steve?

Steve: If it's inside their budget, they always embrace it. Particularly if you can convince them it is the right thing to do and, quite frankly, if you can convince them it will save them money and it's an OK thing. Yes, most people are OK with it. As long as there's not a huge financial impact and it's inside their budgetary considerations, it's OK.

Jud: And, it's also the education part of it. Chris, what about you? Is it an easy sell out there on the coast or is it something you really have to work at?

Chris: Nothing in this life is an easy sell. I think there is a fair amount of aware-



It's Simply Phenomenal

REMODELERS EXCHANGE MODELET

ness here felt from the general public. It's easy to incorporate green components, green layers. Some people will pay a little more for that. But Steve's point is well taken; they're not going to pay 50-100 percent more, but they will probably pay 10-20 percent more depending on their passion for it. It's definitely something people are becoming more aware of and willing to pay more for.

Jud: Chris, do you try, in your selling process to sell green, to give them a payback on the additional cost?

Chris: No, I have not done that. It's probably more about me having to sit down and do the dirty math. No one has ever asked for it to this point. It's a good thing to have in your arsenal.

really need to pay attention to that and to be more careful. We are all aware of the fact that new products are coming out all the time. When they switched all the paints and took the lead out. There was a period of adjustment where there was struggling with application. The paint formulas weren't quite right and they didn't last like they should have. I think as this starts to flesh out, there are going to be things that we will have to go back and take a second look at like we did 20-30 years ago. But, I don't have a crystal ball to tell me what those are.

Jud: Steve, is there anything that comes to mind that you might get shaky about?

Steve: A couple of things. By the way, the Edsel was a great car! Some of the that be subcontractors or employees, on the proper way to put things in. Most of the problems I see in moisture developments are directly related to either the person had no idea he was supposed to keep an eye on things or the guy who put it in wrong created a thermal bypass by improperly installing a product.

Jud: Chris, try to give me a list, starting with the one you always do and working your way down to the one you very seldom do, as to the common green concepts that you incorporate into projects in your area.

Chris: At the beginning would be the recycle-reuse pieces in the demolition whether it's lumber, concrete, asphalt or wood. That would definitely be there. The building science aspect of it in terms of air

I think as this starts to flesh out, there are going to be things that we will have to go back and take a second look at like we did 20-30 years ago.

Jud: Steve, have you tried to use payback on that?

Steve: In our Resnet software, we'll show it on energy upgrades; it is primarily focused on energy consumption basis, and on emissions basis. You can show energy efficient upgrades, whether that's the HVAC system, duct-seal and reduction of air filtration. And show actual payback. I've never used it.

Jud: I'm going to ask you to look into the future. Do either of you see something in building green that might come back in the long run and bite us? I refer back to, as an example, when we went to electric heat, we sealed those houses up so tight that realistically we ended up rotting them away. Do you see anything you might be a little hesitant about because you're afraid it might come back and do something that we just don't have the research on yet?

Chris: Well, we always have the potential for an Edsel. I think the thing we should be aware of and not so much that it might bite us, but that the potential for harm is greater in the building science area. We biggest problems I see could be that of a person not doing their homework. We do some diagnostics work as part of the energy side of things. Almost always, it comes down to either the customer was not informed well enough about how to take care of their house or the green building standards guidelines weren't being posted. How they need to monitor and mitigate their own internal impact on the sealed environment which is their home. If they are generating X-amount of water through aspiration or cooking, lifestyle choices, a hot-tub or jacuzzi tub or if they're big pasta eaters or have a big aquarium. If they develop moisture in a house that's well sealed, they need to make sure they monitor and mitigate that. I think we, as builders and remodelers, need to do a better job of educating the consumer on how they need to live in the house whether they need to monitor where the moisture level's at and what to do if it exceeds that point. At the same time, we need to educate our installers, whether

sealing. We're not at the point yet where Steve is at in terms testing, although I have the capability of doing that. We're going to incorporate that but we're still on that path. The insulation in terms of being formaldehyde-free. That also goes for product choices inside the home as well. In terms of finishes, selecting paints and components of the home, low-VOC, that don't poison the environment inside the house. One area we don't control but definitely needs to be part of the planning cycle: we don't do landscape work, but just how that integrates into the control of the home. Just being aware of it and making suggestions to our clients all the way through their roof choices and trying to get down to a select color to be more reflective and not absorb so much heat into the home. That's a very broad laundry list of stuff. PR



For the rest of the discussion on this topic and more Best Practices, visit

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Doug Dwyer Contributing Editor

Skill or Capacity?

Too often we are focusing only on our skills: what we have or what we lack. We invest tremendous time, money and energy developing new skills and abilities which

is important and a vital part of growing as a professional in any arena. But that alone will not solve some of the major issues of growing your business to the next level of success. Too often we hit a ceiling and just can't seem to figure out how to take that next step up.

Many business owners find themselves stuck at sales levels of \$300,000 – \$500,000; \$800,000 – \$1 million; \$1.6 million – \$2.2 million, or \$3 million – \$4 million. Why? One of the major issues is capacity. One person, no mat-

if it was a people problem or a system problem.

It was a very confronting exercise, because I was the one being analyzed by the group. I thought, "Great, they will get to see all my weaknesses. Oh yeah, this will be fun." Well, it was challenging and I was pleasantly surprised by the outcome.

The challenge I was facing was that I was not able to get to everything done that needed to be done, or at the quality level I wanted. They asked, "What are

ondly, the solution might not be what we think. And third, coaching from someone outside your own company can give you a quantum leap in your growth and understanding.

What was the solution for my problem? I needed to hire more people and get the job done. Sometimes that is the only way to solve the problem.

You might say that you can't afford to hire anyone and that the work still all has to be done, even if it's not at the optimum level you'd like. For most remodelers, the solution here is to charge more for what you're doing. For others, it may be to focus on a niche that streamlines the business to free time up. And if you are already doing both of these things, you probably need to grow

You might say that you can't afford to hire anyone and that the work still all has to be done, even if it's not at the optimum level you'd like. For most remodelers, the solution here is to charge more for what you're doing.

ter how skilled, efficient and motivated, can only carry a certain load and for only so long. Then, things start to slip, mistakes happen and a lower standard of performance becomes the norm.

Typically, you either accept this as status quo or back the volume down to gain control on quality, profitability and work/life balance. Everyone in business experiences this at some level, some in greater degrees than others.

Back in 1995, I attended a two-week training course with a large and highly successful small business consulting company. I participated in an exercise that they diagnosed a challenge to see all your responsibilities?" As I described them they listed them on a board for all to see. They quickly diagnosed the problem and said I have a capacity issue. "One person can't do all these things, much less do them well." And I thought that I just needed to be more skilled and work smarter because that was the expectation I felt from others, as well as from myself.

I was thrilled to find out that I was not only doing a good job, but given the circumstances, doing a great job.

Many lessons came out of this experience. First is that we can be far too hard on and unrealistic with ourselves. Sec-

sales volume to get through this awkward growth phase so you can afford that next hire.

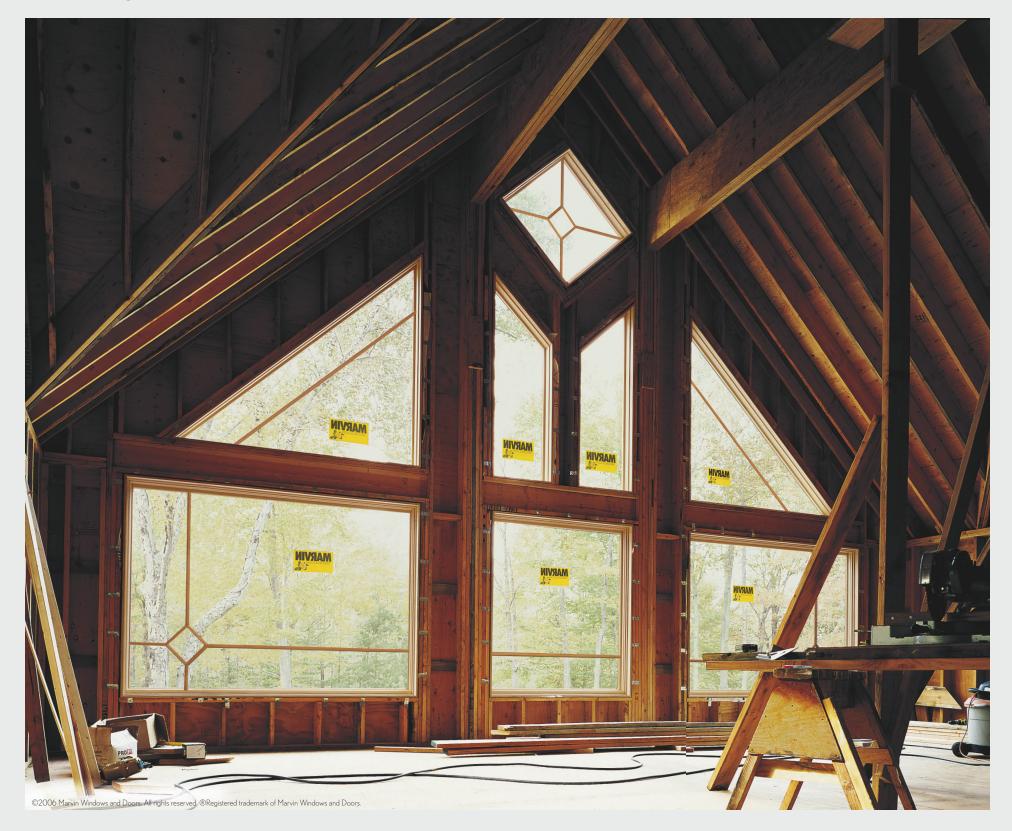
If you don't confront the reality of capacity, you will most likely be looking at the wrong solution to grow to the next level of business. **PR**

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



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Establishin Strategic Pl



The future looks bright for remodelers. Is your business planning for the years ahead?

By Wendy A. Jordan Senior Contributing Editor

If you're like most remodelers, you've been so busy in 2006 you've hardly had time to plan for next year let alone the next three years. The remodeling industry flourished in 2006, and the next three years will bring more growth for the industry, says Gopal Ahluwalia, staff vice president for research at the NAHB.

Spending in residential remodeling will register \$238 billion or more by the end of this year - a 10 percent gain over 2005 - he says, zoom up another 9 percent in 2007 and increase 5 or 6 percent a year for several years after that. "The remodeling market will stay strong and get larger" for some time to come, he says.

Even if the work is pouring through your company's door, it's important to set goals and chart a course to achieve them. Why? When business is hot, company

Finley Perry (left to right), president of F. H. Perry Builder, with his planning team: daughter Allison Perry Iantosca, vice president of sales and marketing; Bill Cosman, vice president of project development; and Brad Gardner, vice president of production. Photo: Dave Bradley



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Year	Base 2004 Actual	Base 2005 Actual	1 2006 Plan	2 2007 Plan	3 2008 Plan	4 2009 Plan	5 2010 Pla
Sales (\$M)							
Closings							
Gross Profit							
Net Sales/Employees							
Total # Employees (Office/Field)							
Production (monthly WIP avg)							
# of Jobs sold							
Average Job Sales							
Major Expenses							
Others:							
Carry over to next year							
GP%							
Overhead							
Bonuses							
Assumptions:							
Assumptions.							

The Hendy brothers used this chart at their annual planning lunch for Neal's Design-Remodel in Cincinnati, says Steve, "to get us all on the same page for five-year planning — growth, projections, concerns, budgeting, staffing, etc."

growth potential is high – and strategic planning helps you make the most of that opportunity. Boom times also raise the threat of increased competition, as well as the likelihood that weaknesses in your operating system will slide by uncorrected, only to come back and hurt profits later. Planning can protect you from these risks. Nobody said strategic planning is easy.

A new way of thinking

Steve Hendy, who runs Neal's Design-Remodel, a \$6 million company in Cincinnati, with his father and two brothers, admits looking beyond a year had always been a challenge. A few years ago they took the first step toward easing the process by initiating an annual planning lunch. One day in late fall, the three brothers sit down to talk about plans and goals for the next five years. There's no heavy duty number-crunching involved, but the discussion puts ideas and issues on the table. "It gives us things to think about" and pinpoints objectives he can factor in when he budgets for the next year, says Hendy.

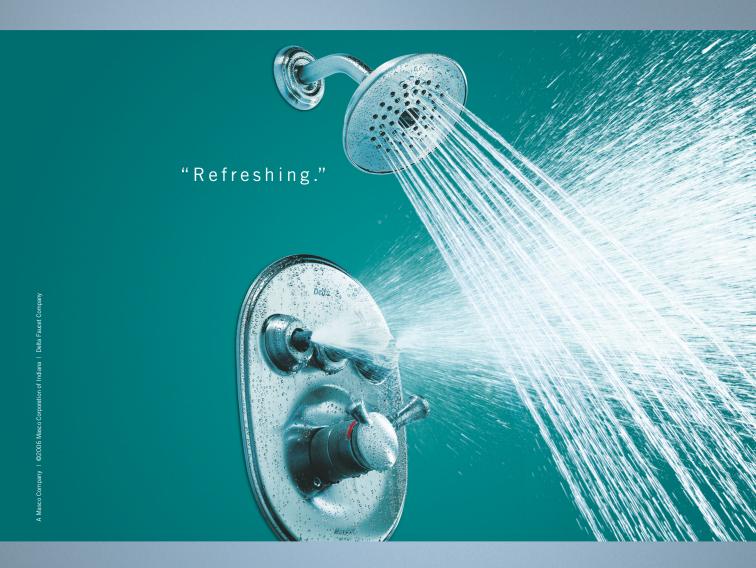
The informal planning technique worked so well for the Hendys that, in 2003, they enrolled in the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce Roadmap to Excellence program, which has helped guide them through the process of establishing a formal strategic plan for Neal's Design-Remodel to grow 8 to 10 percent a year over three to five years. The company's volume was already 40 percent above 2005 year to date in the third quarter of this year.

Residential remodeling company F. H. Perry Builder in Hopkinton, Mass., also has developed a strategic plan. "We're poised to generate more work," explains sales and marketing vice president Allison Perry Iantosca. The company's management team is determined to seize the opportunity without sacrificing quality. Combining ambitious ideas with a "focus on sharpening what we're doing," Iantosca generated a plan designed to propel the company from an annual volume from \$5.5 million in 2006 to \$12 million in three years.

Strategic planning has enabled both companies to pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses and plan what they need to do to reach ambitious goals. As Hendy says, multiyear planning has made Neal's "look at who we are, where we want to be and how to get there."

Generations of remodeling

Underlying any corporate strategic plan is market analysis. Identifying the emerging remodeling client base and speaking the "language" of those homeowners in sales and Feels custom, installs standard.



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Another goal of the strategic plan: to solidify Neal's as a **great place to work** — a place where good job performance is rewarded.

marketing is essential for success in a remodeling business that will go forward.

The Baby Boom generation, born between 1946 and 1964, "still accounts for over half of remodeling spending," says Kermit Baker, director of the Remodeling Futures Program at Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies. These Americans - some 77 million strong - have the home equity and the wealth to bring luxury into their homes. And with the first wave of baby boomers turning 60, they represent an enormous emerging market for modifications to make their homes comfortable, adaptable and accessible as they age.

The other big wave washing through remodeling is the Generation X population born between 1965 and 1977. It's no mistake Gen Xers are turning to a high-end remodeling company like F. H. Perry. Ahluwalia says that, in terms of financial success, this savvy group is "doing as well or better" than boomers. In terms of remodeling spending, Baker says they are investing more in their homes than baby boomers did at their age. With demanding careers, little time or interest in do-it-yourself projects, and a desire for high-quality home makeovers with all the technological bells and whistles, Generation X is becoming an increasingly important component of the remodeling market.

Through strategic planning, Neal's and Perry are positioning themselves to meet the expectations of the industry's two strongest market segments.

Defining Neal's

Since Neal P. Hendy founded Neal's 35 years ago, the design-build remodeling company has developed successful practices for delivering excellent customer service, design and construction. One top goal of the company's strategic plan is to polish and systematize those practices so Neal's will continue to achieve high customer satisfaction ratings even as volume grows. Another major goal is to get out the word to both repeat and newly targeted clients, making sure that everything about the company reflects the company identity and hits the market's hot buttons.

Succession and transition planning also shaped the company's strategic thinking. As the family prepares for Neal P. Hendy's sons to take full control of the company and eventually for the third generation to come on board, the plan needed to lay the groundwork for sustained, longterm company growth.

Many employees have been with Neal's as much as 10, 20 and even 35 years, so it's a family company in more ways than one. Another goal of the strategic plan: to solidify Neal's as a great place to work – a place where good job performance is rewarded.

The F. H. Perry brand

Finley Perry's company has been remodeling homes in the Boston area since 1975, building a reputation for A-l customer care and craftsman-quality construction. Articulating and preserving that reputation, that "brand," is a key component of Iantosca's plan to grow the company in the competitive Boston market.

Perry's chief client base has been baby boomers, particularly empty-nesters moving from the suburbs to Beacon Hill, the Back Bay and other desirable areas of the city. "We're starting to hit a younger market," says Iantosca. Positioning the company to attract and serve that new market niche – prosperous 40-something Gen Xers – is a top goal of the company's three-year strategic plan.

Like the Hendy plan, the Perry plan moves the company toward a smooth succession, so that Finley Perry can eventually become less integral to sales and the day-today operation and focus more on being primarily a "big picture" company president. Also like Neal's, F. H. Perry has highly skilled crews, most of them logging seven to 15 years with the company. A goal of the Perry plan is to assure that the company will remain an attractive place for top-quality personnel to stay and make a career.

Re-evaluating the plan

Iantosca says, "I'm the personality type to create a threeyear plan and follow through with it." She drafted a plan for F. H. Perry, "it made sense to dad [Finley Perry], and we made a presentation to the company in March 2006. Staff members said, "Wow, Allison, that's ambitious, but it's exciting." Iantosca was pleased. "A three-year plan needs to be ambitious," she says, presenting "a realistic stretch. If they had not said ambitious, I'd have been dis-



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As part of the **planning process**, Neals and F. H. Perry performed **corporate self-exams** to determine what's working...

appointed." With a plan in place, she says, "now there's accountability" and everyone in the company is united behind goals to strive for.

Once they enrolled in the Roadmap to Excellence program, the Hendys wrote a mission statement - "smooth remodeling experience with least disruption for the client" - and embarked on the process of creating goals and objectives for every area of the company. An eightmember continuous improvement team, which includes the three Hendy brothers and representatives from sales, design, production and office administration, mapped out the multi-year corporate strategy. Blitz teams are formed as needed to tackle specific problems and objectives. Other employees are invited to attend planning meetings, too, so that everyone feels invested and involved.

Strategies for success: 2007-2009

As part of the planning process, Neal's and F. H. Perry performed corporate self-exams to determine what's working, what needs improvement and what needs to be reinvented or changed for their goals to be met. Here's the result:

Target market: F. H. Perry's niche is the high-end, customer-service-oriented market. Iontasca is satisfied that "the right people are calling us." But over the next three years, she wants to increase the company's volume in that market. That means remaining active in the baby boomer segment and energetically targeting the affluent Gen X population. Perry's client base used to be 80 percent baby boomers; now it's closer to 50 percent boomers and 50 percent Gen Xers. To grow both markets means landing a few more \$1 million-plus jobs or more smaller jobs. It means maintaining a strong presence in Boston and the three or four suburbs where the company has an established name, plus expanding into "a few northern and western suburbs that would be good for us."

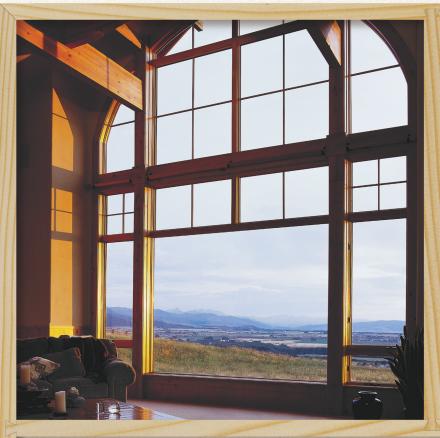
Until now Perry has focused strictly on remodeling, but "were talking about taking a custom home project," says Iantosca. If the right one comes along -"a sweet custom home" calling for high-octane customer service and fine custom craftsmanship - it "would work well for us. It would help to show that we're going toward [new home construction but sticking to our niche."

Hendy says his company has "chosen not to diversify and to focus instead on becoming the best design-build firm we can be." Neal's targets a market that straddles the line between baby boomers and Gen Xers - twoincome households age 40 and older. It's a population that includes active empty nesters who want to expand their homes for entertaining and people who want the latest home technology trends, from refrigerator drawers to home theaters. Neal's wants to gain market share throughout the Cincinnati area, particularly in the rapidly growing Northeast side.

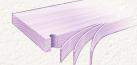
Company identity: "Our identity didn't reflect who we are and our level of service," says Hendy. The longtime company name, Neal's Remodeling, didn't fully explain what the company does. So as "a first bold step we reinvented our brand," says Hendy. The team changed the company name to Neal's Design-Remodel and introduced a sophisticated, design-oriented new logo. Like a silk top hat on the head of a well-dressed gentleman, the new name and logo set the standard for every other aspect of the company.

As a Gen Xer herself, Iantosca was sensitive to the potential disconnect between what Perry does and the image it portrayed to this up and coming market. "Our message used to be too F. H. Perry Builder-centric - all about traditional craft. Now we are focusing on the experience of working with us from the client's point of view: 'Your experience will be ... 'You will feel this way when you are in the presence of our brand," says Iantosca. "We are painting a clearer picture of who we are," she adds, to show that clients who want "superb craftsmanship, an outstanding construction process and a focus on the priorities of clients" have come to the right place. The new picture, expressed through every aspect of the operation, is that of "a custom contractor" as creative as it is service and quality oriented.

Marketing: This fall Perry is introducing a radically new marketing brochure to convey what the company is all about. Current clients, architectural and interior design firms with whom Perry likes to work, and selected prospects will receive a box that contains punch-out cards to assemble into a house, along with a pencil and a pad labeled, "cre-

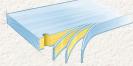


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Company owners hope this card — a new brochure written from the client's perspective — demonstrates exceptional service, creativity, and craftsmanship at F. H. Perry Builder in Hopkinton, Mass.

ate." Information cards about the company will be mixed, matched and inserted, too. The idea is to employ "a powerful but softer marketing pitch, with more pictures and fewer words. The fun of the brochure gives a sense of the fun, creative process of working with us. We hope people will 'get' us before they've even met us," says Iantosca. Perry will update the company Web site and print ads to coordinate with this new approach, she adds.

Neal's developed an impressive new marketing piece to demonstrate the company's high standards of quality and design. The portfolio contains a foldout brochure on the company's design-build process, coordinated mix-andmatch inserts about the company, and a multimedia "gem book" listing 40 customer service details that the company always takes care of. Because "women are the drivers in the decision-making process" in Neal's target market, the gem book emphasizes issues of most concern to women, such as keeping an eye on the family pets and providing a kit of plates, utensils and restaurant certificates for kitchen remodeling clients.

The company will offer cooking classes in the design center, send the Neal's magazine to clients, present seminars at the local home show and promote its image and its design center in other ways.

Also on the Neal's marketing agenda: direct mail campaigns in target market areas and the posting of customer "mini-sites" - digital photo albums of their remodeling

projects - at Neals.com. Proud clients showing pictures to friends will be marketing for Neal's, says Hendy.

Location: Relocating is the next big step, Hendy says. For 35 years the company has occupied a 2,000-squarefoot office inconveniently located 45 minutes from most of the neighborhoods where Neal's works. Next spring the company will move into the 5,500-square-foot building it designed and is constructing in the northeast Cincinnati target market. The building will feature a cutting-edge showroom with digital design portfolio and design center to display the latest trends and streamline the design and product selection process.

"Our plans for 2007-2009 are to get firmly established in the new location," says Hendy. "We know 2007 will be a challenge due to this disruption." The marketing budget will be increased in 2007 for more direct mail and events.

The new location should help some sales in particular. "The new design center will be very kitchen-focused. We are expecting kitchen sales - now 32 percent of our business - to increase by 15 to 20 percent."

Sales: The firm has shored up staffing in sales and design by hiring one additional designer and two more salespeople, says Hendy. One reason is succession planning: "Dad does sales, and he's getting older." The other reason is that the company's aggressive growth strategy calls for more sales and project management power.

Within the next year, F. H. Perry is looking to hire

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	Installs directly to stud walls	Ideal for remodeling or new construction Less costly installation – no backerboards or adhesive needed
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"Part of the three-year plan is to create growth **opportunities** for **everyone** in the company."

- Allison Perry Iantosca

"a savvy salesperson who understands the differences" between baby boomer and Gen X buyers and has the skills to sell the right way to each of them, says Iantosca. For Gen Xers the right approach is relationship selling versus project selling. These busy, technologically connected people, Iantosca says, have a 20-minute attention span for the company to present its message. That message needs to be delivered "efficiently, quickly and in a way that [establishes] a connection between us."

Producing the job: Of course a company's identity has to be more than skin deep. Both Perry and Neal's have put systems in place to make sure the company standards are met on every project. "We meet biweekly as a company," says Iantosca, to share information, discuss issues and engage every member of the company. To erase the "us versus them" communications gap between field and office, Perry organized the staff into "continuity groups" that carry projects from sales through administration and production.

As part of the three-year plan, the company is creating a book of standards and forms to ensure tight control of project management and flow. "Now a work group is creating a project debriefing template," says Iantosca, to evaluate the successes and challenges at each stage of a job.

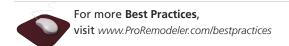
Because Neal's relies heavily on subcontractors, Hendy is comfortable that the company has the available skilled manpower to handle two to three years of production at the 8-10 percent annual growth rate he expects. Rather than add production managers, the company is having others take on more responsibility. The firm added a project coordinator who makes sure everything is completed - selections, materials ordering, plans, permit, etc. - when it is handed off to production, responsiblities the salesperson previously handled. The lead men also participate in scheduling, materials ordering and customer communication. Employee development: Iantosca credits strong people in each position in the company; making optimal use of that talent is integral to Perry's growth. "Part of the three-year plan is to create growth opportunities for everyone in the company. The whole reason we want to grow is not so much for the money as much as it is to keep giving these highly skilled individuals opportunity. The employees will help us determine the structure of this effort."

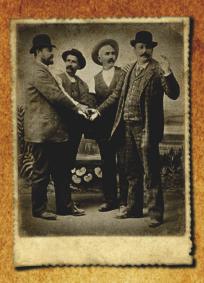
To reward and motivate Neal's workers, the company has started giving out "wows." If an employee or subcontractor, does something especially well or comes through with the solution to a knotty problem, he or she might get wowed with a \$30 gift certificate or another prize. There's new excitement in the air, and it's become common to hear someone around the office say, "I wowed Joe today," or "I got wowed." Every wow is listed in a company log.

Monitoring the plan: The three-year plan hinges on successful sales, says Iantosca, but "it's all cyclical. When we produce what we're selling - an exceptional process [of customer service and quality construction – we generate more sales." She revisits the F. H. Perry three-year plan every month to monitor sales and market conditions. The planning team - which includes Perry, Iantosca, the production vice president, and the head of pre-construction services - meets at least annually to assess progress. To benefit from an expert outside perspective on the market, the company wants to establish an advisory board composed of Boston area professionals and business leaders. Board members may be drawn from F. H. Perry's client roster.

If the plan needs to be tweaked, it will be; the nature of the plans is that they are flexible, Iantosca says. Hendy agrees, but warns, "Don't change your vision." To stay on course toward achieving company goals, the continuous improvement team at Neal's meets twice a month, focusing on areas that need attention. Hendy keeps a close watch on the financial side, reviewing overhead costs quarterly and work-in-progress job costs every month "while there's time to react." The company continually monitors customer satisfaction, considering it a problem when any response to the question, "Would you refer us?" is "No." Hendy says, "We strive for 100 percent. We are averaging the year to date at 97 percent."

What if the remodeling industry starts to really feel the economic cool-down? This advance work should pay off. "It's our responsibility to be successful no matter where the remodeling is going. We need to move within the fluctuations of the market," Iantosca says. PR





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Condo Conversion

The good, bad and ugly of converting a 1917-vintage six-flat into eight luxurious condos.

By Wendy A. Jordan **Contributing Editor**

There's a right way and a wrong way to drive a condo conversion. Just ask Michelle Brown. An experienced Chicago real-estate broker now with Rubloff Residential Properties, she and a colleague snatched up a foreclosure property in 2004 – a 1917-vintage six-flat apartment building – planning to convert it to eight condos. She had invested in other properties over the years, but always with a development partner who took charge. This time she planned to be the general contractor, driving the conversion while managing her real-estate job.



With the original arch-top entry door, decorative masonry and period windows, the façade is as eyecatching as it was 90 years ago.



The original lobby was in great shape; Graves cleaned the floor tile, refinished the oak door and stair rails, and cut a stair opening to the garden level.

But she didn't get far down the road before realizing that she was making a big mistake. That's when J.R. Graves of CMS Consolidated in Skokie, Ill., took the wheel.

False start

From a real-estate perspective, the building, called Crandon Park, had a lot going for it. Not only was it in the South Shore area, a once-grand neighborhood that was making a comeback, but Brown says it also was on a premiere street with plenty of parking, two blocks from Lake Michigan and half a block from a park. Dating from an era when wealthy families rented rather than bought apartments, the building was "absolutely stunning," she says, "very majestic, on an extra-deep lot, with huge, [2,000 square foot] units. We wanted a building," she says, where "we

could come in, do a nice quality rehab and be able to sell for a fair price." This looked like just the ticket.

The place was rundown after sitting vacant for many years. But "we decided to buy the place anyway, figuring, 'How bad could it be?" recalls Brown. The answer: very bad. Once Crandon Park was theirs and some of the debris was cleared, Brown and her partner discovered that the building's condition was "ghastly, much worse than we thought." All the floors and windows - 218 of them – needed to be replaced, one side

of the building needed to be re-leveled, all the plumbing and electrical had to be replaced, and the roof not only sagged but required 45 new 2x12 supports and new plywood. Managing the remodeling of this building would

FINANCIALS

ross profit on the Crandon Park conversion is at 26 percent now, but it's on the rise, even though CMS Consolidated completed construction in January 2006. Why? Not all units have sold, which means not all of the CMS profits are in. Having owned many condo properties himself, J.R. Graves knows how steep the investment costs can be. So he prices condo conversions in a way that eases the up-front financial burden for his clients, yet takes advantage of anticipated sales performance to ensure a healthy final profit for CMS Consolidated. He charges a 10-12 percent contracting fee plus a pre-set percentage of the extra profits earned when units sell for more than the original asking price.

Almost always, Graves says, sales prices go up after the first unit is sold. "I'll usually try to take a percentage of that difference in asking price," he says. "I come up with a number ranging from 10 to 20 percent," depending on the extent of his contribution of ideas on "how to make it work and increase the value of the property." On the Crandon Park Condominium project, he took 20 percent. With six of the eight units sold all but the first going for some \$20,000 more than the originally planned asking price — and a contract on the seventh, "it's all going to work," says Graves. "It's just a matter of time. I'll make exactly what I wanted to make on the job when all the units have sold."

Graves also protects his bottom line by keeping overhead to an absolute minimum. "I used to spend \$3,000 or \$4,000 a month on a shop and office. Then I

said, 'For what?' I don't get my work by impressing people with a big office. Now we have all of our equipment in a 400 square foot garage at a property I own." Graves' office is his cell phone. "Every delivery comes through me," as does every call from client, subcontractor or supplier, giving Graves the "total control" he wants. He manages all CMS projects and pays all the bills but subcontracts the bookkeeping to his former real-estate partner.

Budget History

\$1,169,884 Initial estimate: \$85,292 Add-ons: (added 600 square feet to garden units, upgraded to granite, upgraded to whirlpool tubs, added wroughtiron fence) \$1,255,176 Final price of job: \$928,141 Cost to produce: Budgeted gross profit 27.5% Actual gross profit 26%

be an intensive job.

Brown and her partner started getting estimates from subcontractors. But "we didn't even know what to ask and when to do what" in rehabbing the building, she says.

"We even needed help getting permits." Brown's friend J.R. Graves had bought and converted some 400 multifamily units over the past 11 years, so she called him for advice.

He told her to sell the place. His reasons: It would be

expensive to rehab, and managing the project while running her real-estate business would be too difficult. "I was stubborn and said absolutely not. I always acknowledge when I'm wrong," she laughs.

Instead, she urged Graves to rehab the building himself. She accepted his \$1,169,884 estimate without hesitation -"I trust him 100 percent," she says - and Graves got started in October 2004.

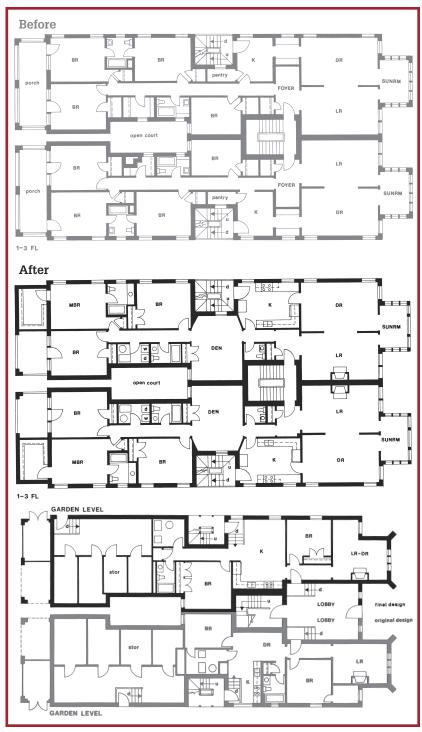
Knowing the system

Picking up where Brown left off, "I called every contractor she'd called," Graves says. Most were subcontractors she'd encountered at residences she'd sold. "Half were out of business and most of the others didn't call back. Nailing the right contractor for the job was important, too.

"It's important to ask contractors if they've done eight-unit buildings versus \$1 million houses. They are two different animals. If the subcontractors are not used to doing this work it becomes a problem," he says, because they need bigger crews and a production-oriented approach to sweep through a condo

The six apartments on the first through third floors were gracious by 1917 standards, but the kitchens and bathrooms were small, the closets were almost nonexistent and the bedrooms sprawled across the units. Architect Patrick Thompson redistributed the space, clustering the bedrooms including a master suite - in the back, enlarging the baths, almost doubling the size of the kitchens, and creating a versatile den/dining room/office space where one bedroom had been. Each garden unit picked up 600 square feet of excess basement space, and there still was room for eight storage closets.

building, taking care of multiple units at once. Graves lined up a plumber, a roofer and an HVAC company that he uses regularly in his multifamily projects. His son, an electrical contractor, does all the CMS Consolidated electrical work,





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spotlight





Partial walls separate the front rooms designated on the plans as living room, dining room and sunroom. Graves installed gas fireplaces in all the living rooms.

and Graves' crew handles the rest of the interior work, from carpentry to painting. "We do pretty much all categories" of interior work, says Graves.

Getting permits and demolishing also presented circumstances most home remodelers don't have to contend with. "We got a demo permit first so we could start cleaning out the building," says Graves, only to wait another nine months for the building permit to work its way through the city system. The demo permit came in 30 days, but the demo itself took a full six weeks, mainly because there was no alley, the driveway was too narrow for truck access, and there was no room for a dumpster in the front yard. Using a small Bobcat and wheelbarrows, Graves's crew carted 60 dumpsters worth of debris from behind the building to dumpsters on the street. When finished, they had stripped the building down to the bricks and central bearing wall.

Having worked with Chicago architect Patrick Thompson of Manske Dieckman Thompson on several six-flat condo conversions, Graves naturally recommended him to Brown to design the Crandon Park Condominium. "What we tried to do is keep things simple," Thompson says. He removed a few bumps and bends in the six 2,000-squarefoot, three-to-four bedroom units to turn irregularly shaped rooms into large, versatile rectangles. He added generous closets and bigger bathrooms and removed pantries to enlarge the kitchens. And he arranged the floor plans to allow flexibility so "the building is able to satisfy a lot of different kinds of buyers."

For the raised basement, Thompson designed side-byside two-bedroom garden units, modernizing an existing apartment and mirroring it with a new one. Eight-foot ceilings made the units bright and airy, but they were not large. By absorbing 600 square feet of surplus storage space into each unit, Thompson was able to give each garden condo a roomy 1,300 square feet and still include basement storage for all eight condos.

Once Graves had gutted the building he faced some structural challenges. The main 6 by 6 wood beams in the basement were completely rotted. Graves removed them and inserted a steel beam to raise the sagging floor overhead. And because each condo got its own heating system, a 7- by 7-foot-wide chimney shaft rising from the boiler was no longer needed. It hogged bedroom space, so Graves removed it.

The building façade retains its vintage charm, as does the lobby. CMS repaired and refinished the original archtop front door and cleaned up the lobby's tile floor, cutting into the concrete and tile to create stair access to the



Unoccupied for years before Brown bought it, the building was a mess. Graves' crew completely gutted the inside of the building, with the trash being hauled away in wheelbarrows.



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Many buyers chose the finishes displayed in the completed model, from the same granite counter to the stainless steel appliances to the cabinet style and finish.

garden units. He painstakingly stripped and refinished the original oak stair rails to the upper floors. "It would be too costly to duplicate the woodwork at today's prices, especially for an eight-unit condo," says Graves. "The quality workmanship was worth saving."

SNAPSHOT



J.R. Graves

CMS Consolidated Inc. Location: Skokie, Ill.

Type of company: General contractor specializing in multi-use buildings

Staff model: 8 field Years in business: 27

Sales history:

2002	\$1,100,000
2003	1,200,000
2004	1,200,000
2005	1,200,000
2006 (projected)	1,100,000

Annual jobs: 10-15

Workweek: 40 hours crew, 60 hours

Software: QuickBooks Premier Contrac-

tor, Microsoft Word and Excel Contact: 773-447-3992: www.cmsconsolidated.com

Sealing the sale

CMS worked at Crandon Park on and off for a year, awaiting the permit and coming in to finish off units as they sold beginning in July 2005. "As each condo sold, we finished it to accommodate the owner's particular tastes and lifestyle," he says, from cabinet finish and style to floor plan modifications, adding a nonbearing wall divider wall here, removing one there. The buyers paid Graves directly for unit modifications. Handling almost all trades with his own crew gave Graves the strict scheduling control he needed. In condo work, he explains, units are remodeled through the drywall stage, but cabinetry, finishes and other buyer options are installed in 30 to 45 days following the sale.

When only two units remained unsold, the company was able to finish them and turn to other projects. "We completed them to meet the needs of potential buyers based on the information we had learned from the previous condo buyers," says Graves.

Condo shoppers "love the building," says Brown. "There's so much space; it's so versatile, everything is new and the layout is gracious, with all the living space up front and the bedrooms in the back." The garden condos were originally priced at \$159,000 but with the extra 600 square feet sold for \$179,000. The larger units started at \$259,000 and sold at \$279,000 in part because of luxury features such as granite counters, stainless steel appliances, gas fireplaces and an additional half bath that Brown decided to add. Also, says Graves, "our workmanship proved to be superior when compared to other condominiums on the market, increasing the value of our condos."

Both Brown and Graves are happy with their numbers on the Crandon Park project. But neither is anxious to jump into a similar project. Says Brown: "I'd do it only if it were my full-time job." Says Graves: "Right now it is not a good condo market. With selling prices not going up, you can only mark up your costs so high. Materials prices are wiping out the profit." Graves's advice to remodelers is to do more than just construction. I've always told my crew to diversify and invest: buy real estate, invest in projects and master the craft of remodeling. Take the ability you've developed and capitalize on it." PR

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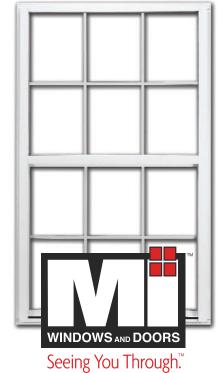
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To THE 2006 Modeling Narket

Market Outlook

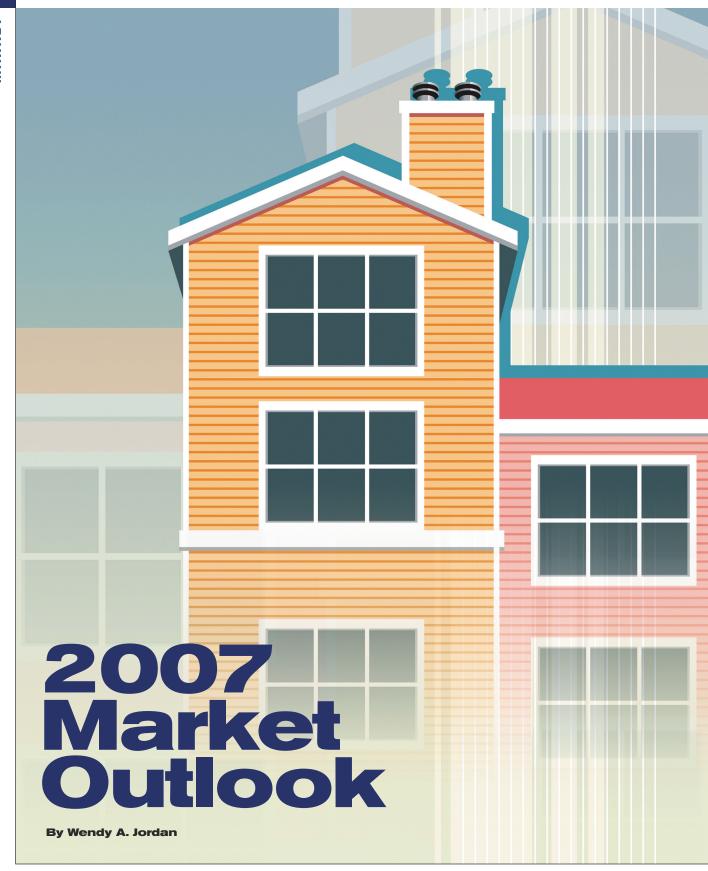
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hat's on the horizon for remodeling? Experts predict 2007 will be a year marked by transition. "After three or four years of very strong growth, we

are entering a transition period for the industry," says Kermit Baker, director of the Remodeling Futures Program at Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

But don't think remodeling won't be robust: even with the 2006 slowdown in housing sales, remodeling will grow, Baker says. In fact, Gopal Ahluwalia, staff vice president for research for NAHB, expects residential remodeling volume to reach at least \$238 billion in 2006 - an increase of 10 percent compared to 2005 - and expand another 9 percent in 2007, to reach \$260 billion. After that, remodeling will continue to grow, but more slowly. Ahluwalia says residential remodeling volume will increase about 5 percent annually over the next 10 years, reaching \$439 billion by 2014 and potentially overtaking new home construction.

New-home slowdown. remodeling gain?

The current deceleration in housing starts and sales has been unsettling for home builders, but it may not be all bad for remodeling. We're seeing "a general slowdown in the housing market, with rising inventories of new homes and existing homes," says Paul Bishop, manager of real-estate research at the National Association of Realtors. "Over the past few months, mortgage interest rates have ticked up a bit." Although nobody expects a big increase in rates - and Ahluwalia points out that rates still are not high - these market factors may affect remodeling.

On the one hand, says Bishop, higher interest rates mean "remodeling becomes a little more costly" for clients who borrow for home improvements. "The interest rates we're at now may cut off some remodeling projects," he says. On the other hand, slower home sales and a smaller new home inventory may encourage some homeowners to stay put and remodel rather than move. "Given the costs and time involved in selling [one home and buying another], remodeling is still in a pretty good position to move forward," says Bishop.

Even if some would-be sellers choose to stay in their current homes, millions of others will move, and that will stimulate remodeling by both sellers and buyers. Between 2001 and 2005, about 36 million new and existing homes sold, says Ahluwalia, and he expects housing turnover to remain high.

Also bolstering remodeling: the age of the nation's housing stock. "More than 50 percent of remodeling has nothing to do with interest rates," says Ahluwalia. It's must-do maintenance and repair of older homes.

People are staying in their houses longer before moving - on average more than 12 years - and they're taking care of their houses, too. With a huge inventory of houses built in the

1970s and earlier, plus 1.3 million new homes being added every year, it's a given that the maintenance side of remodeling will remain strong. "Low- to moderate-income housing stock has not had the level of investment it needs," adds Baker. "It will get routine systems upgrades" going forward.

Booking into 2007

Splashy new kitchens, baths, additions and other upgrades will continue to be in demand next year, too, filling the schedule for full-service remodelers, experts say. "It's been a banner year this year and I don't see it stopping," says Mike Nagel, CGR, of RemodelOne in Roselle, III. By early summer, Nagel was booking into late spring 2007, with about half the work big ticket residential and half light commercial. "I'm very upbeat about remodeling in the Chicago area," he says.

With a \$5.5 million backlog going into 2007, Charlotte, N.C., custom home builder and high-end remodeler Hubert Whitlock Builders is on target to grow 10 percent and reach revenue goals of \$7.25 million in remodeling, \$14.5 million total. The job mix will change, from 60 percent remodeling in 2006 to 50 percent next year, "but 2007 will be a solid remodeling year for us," says Scott Whitlock.

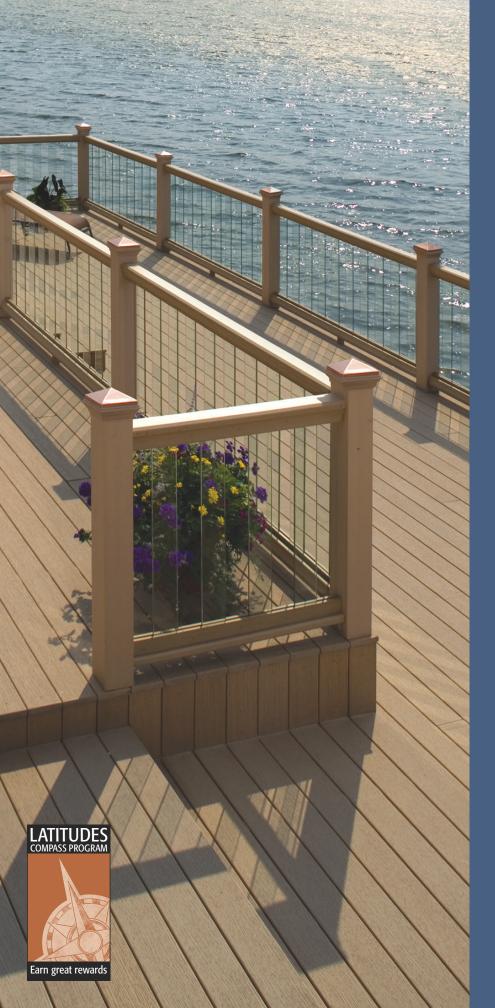
Why the change in job mix? "Remodeling is tougher to grow in our market," says Whitlock. The million-dollar remodels aren't happening much anymore and "we now are doing more jobs for the same revenue," he says. Charlotte is seeing a lot of growth, Whitlock adds. The city's brisk high-end remodeling market is attracting more competition - from remodelers new in town to area remodelers shifting into the high-end market to home builders launching into remodeling.

Shaping the year ahead

Look for these factors to affect remodeling in 2007, some presenting hurdles, others creating opportunities.

High materials costs: It starts with the cost of electricity. "Energy prices affect everything," from deliveries to fabrication equipment to petroleum-containing products themselves, says Nagel. Price hikes "trickle down to the cost of material and could drive the cost of a project beyond the budget. Concrete in our area has gone up 15 percent in the last two years. Cabinet plywood has gone from \$46 to \$65 a sheet in the last year and a half." Nagel expects most of his clients to go forward with their projects, but some may opt for less expensive features, such as opting for a lowergrade cabinet, like one of Nagel's customers did.

There's another side to energy-costs, too: interest in energy conservation. "Energy-related retrofits will be an important driver for the next few years," says Baker. Many of Nagel's clients now are willing to spend \$1,500 extra for better spray-in insulation. In Charlotte, "people are much more aware and concerned" about energy use,



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says Whitlock. They're interested in energy-saving green products, and "some of our clients are going with energy-efficient mechanical systems. The payback period is relatively quick, and we're making people aware of it," says Whitlock.

Storm damage: Katrina and Rita may be long gone, but the damage they caused will be a significant factor in remodeling for the next 10 years, says Ahluwalia. In fact, adds Baker, "more severe weather patterns" are likely to generate more remodeling demand in storm areas.

War and terrorism concerns:

Worries and uncertainties generated by gloomy news reports and the possibility of a major terrorist attack "make people nervous about spending money," says Nagel. "They become more frugal."

Technology: "New home trends percolate into the existing home market," says Ahluwalia. High-tech luxuries - such as state-of-the-art security systems and media rooms with big-screen televisions, projectors and reclining seats - are making their way into remodeling projects, he says.

The condo-rental mix: The sizzling condo market is cooling down. "Highrise luxury condos - both conversions and new buildings - are big [in Charlotte]," says Whitlock, "but we're about

to get a glut of them." While the condo market has steamed ahead, "there has been very little investment in rental stock over the last six to eight years," adds Baker. "That tide has been stemmed." There's an emerging market for high-quality rentals and "we may see condo conversions to rentals over the next several years," Baker says. And that means more remodeling projects.

An evolving client base: Baby boomers have dominated the market and will continue to account for a big chunk of the nation's remodeling activity. This huge population segment "still accounts for over half of remodeling spending," says Baker. They pay big dollars to customize their homes, and "a good number," says NAR's Bishop, "will be thinking about making their homes more flexible ... as they get older."

Adds Baker: "There's a lot of potential for aging in place." The Gen X market is coming on strong, too. Compared with boomers, the people in this generation "are doing as



Mike Nagel, RemodelOne



Scott Whitlock, Hubert Whitlock Builders

well or better" financially, says Ahluwalia. They, like the boomers, are hiring professional remodelers to produce high-quality projects. In fact, Baker says they are spending more now than baby boomers did at the same age. "Strong immigration numbers help backstop the Gen Xers," he adds.

Regional read-out: The hot spots for remodeling activity are shifting. The Northeast and Midwest have the oldest housing stock - in other words, houses most in need of maintenance and updating. Homes built in the 1970s in the South and West now are ripe for remodeling too, though, which is helping to heat up remodeling in those regions. Also fueling remodeling activity in the South and West, says Bishop, is the fact that they are "ideal places to retire, the chief places where baby boomers want to live."

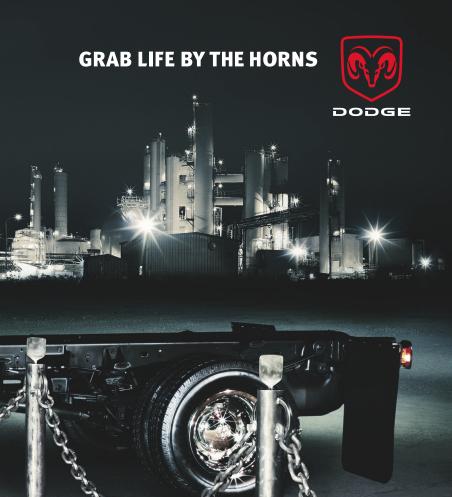
Labor and competition: As Whitlock has discovered, the slowdown in new home construction can bring new players into the remodeling arena. The good news, points out Baker, is that it may also make subcontractor labor more available.

Not business as usual

Business has been so good over the past few years that many remodelers have picked up all the work they want

just by taking phone calls from eager prospects. "This is the time in the cycle when a lot of businesses get sloppy," savs Baker. Don't do it. The boom times we've seen "are not business as usual. Remodelers need to be aware of that."

Scott Whitlock's father is making sure his son gets that message. Having started the Hubert Whitlock Builders company 50 years ago and weathered a number of construction cycles, "he won't let us get too comfortable even in the best of times," Whitlock says. "We're watching the bottom line, keeping costs down and watching our overhead." The company is more than doubling its marketing budget to 1 percent next year. Because condo conversions are still a big market in Charlotte, Whitlock is actively going after them. And he's expanding the company's reach to the mountains 90 miles away, where many Hubert Whitlock Builders clients have or want to build vacation homes. "Diversity is important," he says. PR





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Experts predict a greener future for sustainable remodeling practices



By Ann Matesi

ealthy living and soaring energy costs have their place in dinner table conversations around the country. The same holds true for the remodeling community; remodelers are finding their clients more enthusiastic than ever when it comes to embracing sustainable, or green, building concepts.

Teaming up with the burgeoning number of local, state, and national green building programs, remodelers have an opportunity to spread the word that the rewards of green remodeling can be significant without taking a bite out of the bottom line and while differentiating themselves from competition. And manufacturers are responding by flooding the market with new products and materials to meet escalating consumer demand.

"Remodelers who are knowledgeable about green concepts have a tremendous opportunity to differentiate themselves in their marketplace and increase their profit margin," says certified green remodeler Michael Strong of Houstonbased Brothers Strong and This living room includes natural grass window coverings; a reclaimed teak floor; a glass mantle; fiberglass windows; and a reclaimed teak balcony railing with glass balusters. Cork floors were used elsewhere in the home.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPECTRUM FINE HOMES

GreenHaus Builders. "As for the client, they get a much healthier living environment and save money by reducing their energy usage."

Experts like Strong agree that everyone benefits by adopt-





ing green building techniques and materials - including those that improve a home's energy efficiency and indoor air quality - specifying products that come from renewable resources, and salvaging or recycling demolition and construction debris whenever possible.

"It seems that everything in the news these days supports the concept of green building," says

Susan Davis, a certified green building specialist with Spectrum Fine Homes, a Mountain View, Calif.-based renovation firm that incorporates green concepts into about 98 percent of its projects. "Not only are we improving the lives of our clients, but we're also promoting healthier working conditions for our employees by minimizing their contact with potentially harmful substances. And, by using local resources, materials and people, you not only support your local economy, but you also reduce transportation and energy costs on a global scale."

"One of the greatest things about green remodeling is that it is not an all-or-nothing-thing," says Jerome Quinn, president of Atlanta-based SawHorse and one of the creators of the city's EarthCraft House Renovation Program that focuses on making existing homes more energy-efficient and healthy. "It's about starting on a process that can

The kitchen's maple cabinets are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as sustainably harvested and containing no formaldehyde. Other green products and materials incorporated into the kitchen's design include fiberglass, dual-pane windows; low-VOC paint; reclaimed teak flooring; recycled tile; fluorescent and LED lighting; lava stone countertops; and glass shelving.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPECTRUM FINE HOMES

be as ambitious as the client wants it to be. I compare it to going on a diet. You can go all out, but even losing five pounds will make a difference."

Cost of going green

Does green remodeling increase costs? "That depends on which shade of green the project is," says Strong. "There are fundamental green practices and materials that you can adopt that will not affect the budget." Going beyond the basics, he says, might add 20 percent to the tab, but the money comes back in savings.

"The starting point," says Quinn, "is to do a better job sealing the building envelope with additional caulking, improved insulation and radiant barrier roof decking. This can be a function of using new techniques and materials rather than spending more money."

Don't discount the learning curve associated with converting from conventional remodeling practices to green ones, warns Davis. "Researching and procuring new materials and

TRENDS Experts predict a greener future for sustainable remodeling practices



educating your employees can take more time, particularly when you're trying something new. Your estimator has to account for this when setting up the budget for the project."

Selling the green concept

"People buy comfort, luxury, and status," says Strong. He recommends selling the healthy living component of green remodeling first followed by lower maintenance costs, better performance and energy efficiency.

"We demonstrate that the way to achieve this is by product selection, such as choosing Energy Star appliances, using low- or no-VOC materials, and altering construction methods and design considerations," Strong says. "We

include a 'green page' with our proposals to get the client thinking in these terms."

One way to steer clients toward green products is to prove their return on investment.

"We find that most people will choose a green alternative if the cost is right," says Davis.

Green remodelers recommend starting with a performance audit by an outside contractor to determine operating efficiency of their client's home as well as to identify areas of concern for indoor air quality such as windows, doors, insulation and HVAC equipment. Once a project



An improperly insulated attic or damp basement can lead to problems with indoor air pollution, including mold and mildew, says Atlanta remodeler Jerome Quinn. Green products and techniques such as spray foam insulation, radiant roofing panels, caulking foundation joints and sealing off crawlspaces help to eliminate these problems at their source. "Creating a healthy interior living environment and energy efficiency go hand in hand," he says.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAWHORSE INC.

is completed, the home can be reanalyzed to quantify the homeowner's savings.

Salvaging and recycling materials is also key, says Davis. She uses a deconstruction sub-contractor that specializes in sorting, salvaging and recycling materials from the job site to earn a tax credit for her homeowners.

Davis contributes articles on green remodeling to industry trade journals and gives presentations to local community and environmental groups and at home shows, local furniture stores and building supply centers. "This costs time rather than money and demonstrates our

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Chuck Gabbert credits much of his success to the fact that he "just didn't know any better" when he launched C.T. Gabbert Remodeling and Construction in 1978. A native of Peoria, Illinois, he got married, bought a house and went into business all in one year. In 2003, Chuck was named DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen's Franchisee of the Year at the company's national convention. In 2004, Professional Remodeler magazine named him a Benchmark Market Leader for having one of the best practices in the nation. By 2006, he made the "Big 50" list in Remodeling magazine.

When you decided to open your own remodeling business, what challenges did you face?

Chuck: Since I was broke, I figured I had nothing to lose, but it turned out that I had plenty to learn. I learned that pounding nails was the easy part. When

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I started, I was surprised by the amount of time needed to do paperwork, run estimates and work with my wife, Becky, keeping the books. Job costing was the toughest part of the business, making sure that I calculated the cost of the work properly to show a profit at the end of the day. I knew I could build anything, and I loved the satisfaction of standing back at the end of the day and being able to see what was accomplished. You just don't get that same feeling from shuffling papers. But I hired good people, accepted good construction jobs and we slowly



prospered. From kitchen remodels to additions to entire new houses, my business and my managerial experience grew. By 1987, I had bought an 11,000 squarefoot building for the operation. Every risk paid off. But when I considered my long-term future, I questioned my retirement options.

So, it was a life after business that made you consider franchising?

Chuck: Yes. When the owners of construction companies retire, they don't sell their business. They put it up for auction. People don't want to buy your business. They want to buy your equipment. In 1989, I decided to strengthen my position by buying a franchise that complemented my remodeling business and would be worth something when I was ready to move on.

How did you choose DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen?

Chuck: I looked at DreamMaker as a product, like McDonald's or Subway. I figured I could buy it, build it into a strong business, and maybe sell it when I wanted to retire. The value of the DreamMaker name as a brand is priceless.

DreamMaker is very particular in choosing its franchisees because they know that the value of the brand lies with its franchise owners. That

assures me that they are protecting my investment in the company and ultimately my reputation. I've built my livelihood on doing quality work, and I have that in common with DreamMaker's franchisees around the country. So many of us turned our family business into a DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen franchise, and we all agree that it was one of our best business decisions.

How has your business changed since you became a franchise owner?

Photo: Chuck Gabbert and daughter, Kari

Chuck: We specialize in kitchen and bath remodeling projects from \$15,000 - \$50,000 and it's done so well for us that, by 1990, we bought the 6,000 square-foot building next door to make more room for ourselves. In 2001 we added a 2,500 square-foot showroom for our customers. Our kitchen and bath business has grown five-fold since then. Using the systems that I learned through DreamMaker's franchise training has helped us turn around estimates faster and work more efficiently. DreamMaker's national buying power also gives me access to better products at better prices for our customers than I could get on my

What's been the biggest benefit of being a DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen franchisee?

Chuck: I now have access to a peer network of DreamMaker franchisees that I can turn to if I have questions. Nobody with a DreamMaker franchise is a direct competitor in my market, but they all know what it's like to operate my business. It's the best of both worlds.

About DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen:

Located at 1020 N. University Parks Drive in Waco, Texas, DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen has approximately 105 independently owned and operated franchises nationwide.



For more information, please call 800-253-9153

www.DreamMaker-remodel.com

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Experts predict a greener future for sustainable remodeling practices



company's commitment to the concept, giving us huge credibility with our clients," she says.

Getting started

"The challenge is not a lack of information about green remodeling but collating it into something practical for your own use," says Strong. He recommends a bite-at-a-time approach. Make changes first in areas where you're comfortable.

"Search out remodelers in your own neck of the woods who are already embracing green practices and get advice from them," recommends Quinn. "They'll let you know what has worked for them and what has not."

Recognize that the technology associated with green remodeling is constantly evolving, says Davis. The Internet remains one of the most helpful tools for remodelers and



A green home does not have to be ultra-modern, says Susan Davis, CKBR, ASID. "Every architectural style can support the green concept." This traditional kitchen includes high-performance Andersen windows, recycled tile for the backsplash and energyefficient appliances.

A custom-designed composting cabinet includes a bin for conventional trash and a rear cutout that aligns with a second bin for sorting organic recyclables. The granite countertop was made using e-templating. PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAWHORSE INC.

homeowners alike when looking for the most current information about sustainable building. "I learn something new on every project, and I find my clients better informed and more willing to be part of the process than ever before," Davis says. "There is a synergy that happens on a green remodeling project that sets it apart from a conventional one." PR



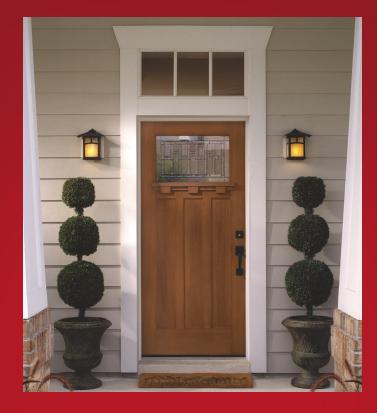
Regardless of panel temperature, CertainTeed Cedar Impressions® siding is always a perfect match. Forget about outside temperatures to install our shakes. The brightest number on our exclusive PanelThermometer™ is the only guide you need. As long as you align the same panel temperature lines to match the current temperature on the thermometer strip, you'll always achieve proper spacing. And with a great selection of styles and colors, you'll also achieve a perfect fit for all your homes.

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Introducing the new Barrington® Craftsman Fiberglass Entry Door from Masonite.

The Barrington® Craftsman Series beautifully complements Mission or Craftsman style architecture with the durability of fiberglass. Like all Barrington, this door is the ultimate in authenticity.

The Barrington Craftsman features three recessed panels and a unique one-lite glazing system.

This door is factory-glazed with a flush-glazed profile that matches the panel design for an extra clean look.

The surface features a straight-grain hardwood texture that finishes easily and beautifully. Barrington Craftsman offers a simple, clean and classic look and is available with three glazing options including a choice of two dramatic, decorative Specialty™ Glass designs or clear insulated glass.

Masonite. The Beautiful Door.®







COO

BOWA Builders McLean and Middleburg, Va.

Total annual sales: \$38 million

Founded in 1988, BOWA Builders is a full-service residential construction firm specializing in high-end additions, renovations and custom homes, as well as project planning and feasibility. BOWA serves clients in suburban Maryland, the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia. The firm has won more than 70 awards for excellence and has 90 employees.

Floors



"We use Schluter Ditra, which provides a superior underlayment for floor tile installation," says Flyer. "By decoupling the stone from the wood beneath, this product helps to prevent movement and cracking of grout/tiles." The underlayment is also used on masonry and Terrazzo flooring applications.

www.schluter.com 800/472-4588

Decking



When working on a deck remodel/building job, the company finds Eb/Ty handy. According to Flyer, minimizing the seams on a deck makes a lasting impression on the customer. "When installing deck boards, we find this deck biscuit system to be highly efficient because of its ease of use and aesthetically appealing because of its hidden system."

www.ebtv.com 800/GET-EBTY

Housewrap



It may come as no surprise that BOWA uses TyVek Housewrap. BOWA uses the housewrap because Flyer says, "it's simply the best housewrap on the market." www.tyvek.com 800/441-7515

Appliances



With steel appliances still in vogue, BOWA relies on Sub-Zero refrigerators, particularly the under-counter models. "Sub-Zero refrigerators are the only game in town when it comes to reliable undercounter cooling units. They are generally easy to install and their customer service is helpful."

www.subzero.com 800/222-7820

Lighting



The firm prefers Lutron dimmer switches because they "provide the flexibility of varied lighting scenarios," says Flyer. In his experience, prices are also a big help. "The Lutron dimmer switches are some of the most reliable and reasonably priced switches on the market."

www.lutron.com 888/LUTRON1

Jeff Brinton



Residential Design Department Director Gardner/Fox **Associates** Philadelphia

Total annual sales: \$30 million

A residential and commercial contracting firm founded in 1987, the company has evolved into two parallel but distinct divisions. The Residential Division provides homeowner-focused architectural, interior and landscape design executed by professional construction project managers and multi-trade craftsmen.

Housewrap



For exterior protection, Gardner/Fox relies on an industry mainstay. "Tyvek housewrap is a product that we have been using on homes for a number of years. Installed properly this product performs very well with stopping air flow through wall cavities and keeping out wind-driven rain, but still allows moisture vapor to escape from inside walls."

www.tvvek.com 800/441-7515

Trim



"Azek trim is another product that we have been using more and more of the past couple of years," says Brinton. "This product performs just as the manufacturer states — it feels like wood, cuts like wood and fastens like wood but is not susceptible to weather like wood products are." www.azek.com

877/ASK-AZEK

Windows



According to Brinton, "More and more of the window specs that we are using, whether they are Pella (Impervia model shown), Marvin, JELD-WEN, Weathershield, etc. are being specified as clad exterior units. Homeowners like the benefits of the low maintenance but want the authentic details that older homes have such as SDL (simulated divided light), window grids, wider brick mold casings, shoe sills, etc. These options are now readily available by the bigger named window manufactures."

www.pella.com 800/374-4758

Skylights



A growing trend in the residential remodeling market is the installation of skylights. Brinton says: "Velux skylight windows have been exclusively used by us on our projects because of their excellent reputation and quality for years. If installed correctly, Velux skylights will be problem free."

www.velux.com 800/88-VELUX

Countertops



Despite a recent shift away from granite, Brinton says, "A large majority of the kitchen renovation projects that we do still incorporate the use of granite countertops. There are a lot of similar materials on the marketplace, but the homeowners tend to like the look and feel of the natural granite when compared." The cost offset between granite and similar products is typically not that different.

www.granite.dupont.com 800/906-7765

tion and quality...

Michael **McCutcheon**



CGBP McCutcheon Construction Berkeley, Calif.

Total annual sales: \$8 million - plus

Formed in 1980, the company has received numerous industry awards, including Preservation Awards, from the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association for work on two registered landmark houses as well as a Best of the Best Design Award from Professional Remodeler (2004) and COTY Award from NARI (2005).

Windows



McCutcheon tends to side with Pella windows. The latest Pella line, the Impervia, is made from Duracast and now offers a double-hung window. The line includes single-hung windows, sliding windows, fixed windows and sliding patio doors. An 8-foot sliding patio door is also available. "We use Pella windows for their quality, service and between-the-glass features," says McCutcheon.

www.pella.com 800/374-4758

Faucets



The company has been using Grohe faucets for their quality, value and style, McCutcheon says. A good relationship with his supplier and overall customer satisfaction has kept him in Grohe's camp. "We especially (like) the single handle kitchen faucets with pull-out spray and the thermostatic shower valves."

www.groheamerica.com 630/582-7711

Toilets

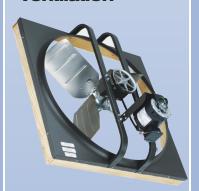


With a wide variety of styles to choose from, McCutcheon relies on Toto toilets and their line of low water-consumption units.

"We use Toto toilets for their water conservation, style, quality and function. I really like their washlet toilet seats and dual-flush toilets, which save water." www.totousa.com

888/295-8134

Whole-house Ventilation



Instead of relying entirely on HVAC units, McCutcheon favors whole house ventilation fans whenever possible, like those offered from Nutone. "I like wholehouse (built-up) ventilation fans for their improvement of indoor air quality and energy savings versus air conditioners when used in a mild climate like the Bay Area."

www.nutone.com 888/336-6151

Flooring

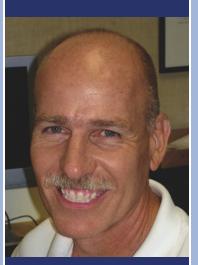


With an eye for the green movement, McCutcheon favors bamboo floors, such as the ones offered by Teragren, which also manufactures panels, veneers, stair treads, risers and coordinating flooring accessories. The company uses bamboo flooring for its "durability, beauty and sustainability."

www.teragren.com 800/929-6333

sustainability.'

Bill Bishop



Purchasing Agent SawHorse Inc. Atlanta

Total annual sales: \$5.5 million

SawHorse, Inc. was founded in 1980 and has since become one of the top design-build residential renovation firms in the United States, having won more than 100 local, regional and national awards for design and innovation in the industry. Recently, SawHorse was named 2006's Georgia Remodeler of the Year.

Siding



Bishop knows his stuff when it comes to siding. "We use (James Hardie) Hardiplank siding when we can on our projects. It is a durable no-rot product that virtually lasts forever. It is immune to water and termite damage. It blends with other siding materials so it can be put on an addition without interrupting the 'flow' of the house. It is non-combustible; contains no formaldehyde, fiberglass, or asbestos, and has a 50-year warranty." www.jameshardie.com

888/J-HARDIE

Toilets



With universal design in mind, Bishop says, "We use the Kohler Comfort Height toilet on many of our bath projects. It comes with the Ingenium flush system, which is a 1.6-gallon low noise and no-splash, high performance flush. The height is that of a standard chair that lends comfort and makes sitting and standing easier for people of all ages and statures.'

www.kohler.com 920/457-4441



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Bill Bishop Purchasing Agent SawHorse Inc. Atlanta

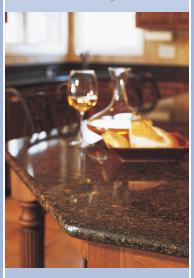
Exhaust Fans



"We use Panasonic exhaust fans in virtually all of our bath projects. These fans are so quiet, it's hard to tell they are on. The motors are super efficient, so they use less energy," says Bishop. The fan/light combo units come with energy-efficient fluorescent bulbs. "We will often use timer switches to control them since they are so quiet. This way you won't forget to turn it off. This is truly a green product."

www.panasonic.com 800/405-0652

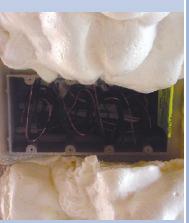
Countertops



Like the folks at Gardner/Fox, SawHorse is sticking with the appeal of granite, only with a twist: "We've been using Cambria for many of our kitchen and even a few bath projects. We like Cambria because it has the look of granite but is a synthetic quartz product. It has advantages over quartz in the fact that it never needs sealing and comes with an antibacterial finish. The choice of colors is greater than those of other synthetics."

www.cambriausa.com 866/CAMBRIA

Insulation



"We recommend Icynene spray foam insulation to our clients, especially in attic additions," says Bishop. The spray is an environmentally friendly product that seals all air gaps because of its expansion properties. When sprayed on the roof line, it gives an insulation seal to the attic and when used wholehouse, it seals the building envelope, which optimizes energy efficiency and insulating properties. "It virtually eliminates air leakage and minimizes moisture intrusion," Bishop says.

www.icynene.com 800/758-7325

green product.



Her powder room – Out of the ordinary.



Their spa — Clean and simple.



Her kitchen – A timeless beauty.









Eschewing trendy products and a focus on the flow between rooms rejuvenate the kitchen in this bachelor's home

itchen projects traditionally involve families who want to make the spaces bigger, splashier and the true crown jewels or activity centers of their homes. But this project was unique in that it involved a bachelor who didn't want to blow out the space with the latest, most efficient gadgets yet sill needed a warm, functional space that blended well with adjacent room in his 1960s ranch home.

"The homeowner wanted a contemporary feel that gave him organization and also allowed him to entertain while cooking, but he couldn't go to the

extreme with his budget," says Saw-Horse project manager John Patterson. To accommodate this, the project focused on knocking down portions of the wall between the kitchen and great room and installing an eat-in island between the two rooms, thus making the narrow 8- by 15-foot kitchen appear

The designer retained the space's masculine flair by using a rectangular subway tile backsplash. The thin black line successfully creates a geometric design element in lieu of a busy design or more popping color.

Remodeler: SawHorse Inc. Project location: Atlanta Age of Home: More than 40 years Scope of work: Opening up a kitchen to create a great room conducive to entertaining.



open without changing the dimensions or adding space. "We stayed with the U-shape of the kitchen but made the island as big as possible to maximize storage and create more counter space," he adds, noting that they took the unconventional route of doing a 2-foot top on a 1-foot base to ensure there was adequate support, especially at the end of the island/bar where the granite overhung. "With such a large piece of granite, you want to make sure there are no problems after the project is complete, so we went to granite installers twice to make sure the slab was supported and had the proper support it needed."

To help the homeowner visualize what the project would look like - especially given that walls were being torn down - SawHorse used a cabinet software program that produced a threedimensional, color rendering of the space. The designer moved the sink to the island so the homeowner could be more social while preparing food and serving drinks. This created a new, appliance-free wall under the window, where

Because the homeowner was partial to the existing paneling in the great room, Patterson took extra care to make sure the trim work matched the walls. "The stain on panel work was 50-plus years old, so matching the new stains took a little more thought and time. But it makes for a better feel and really blends in the old," he says. Pendant lights help define the island space.

lazy Susan cabinetry in both the base and wall cabinets maximize storage in the absence of a pantry and also allow for unencumbered counter space.

The owner gained counter space by moving the stove inward and putting counters on either side to create a nice buffer when entering the home via the kitchen's side door. The move provided a more seamless great room by keeping the appliances mostly encased in the existing kitchen "U-shape."

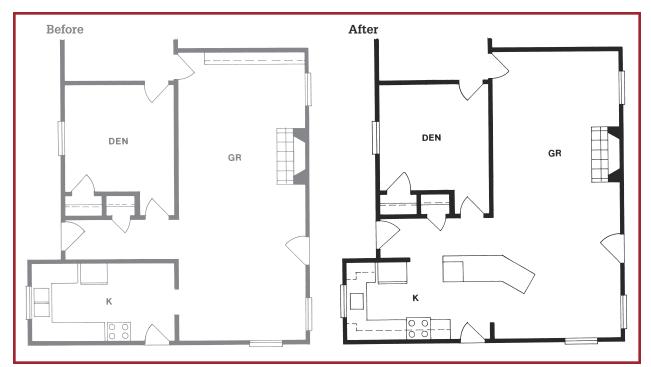
The four-month project cost just under \$50,000. PR - Meghan Haynes

PRODUCTS LIST

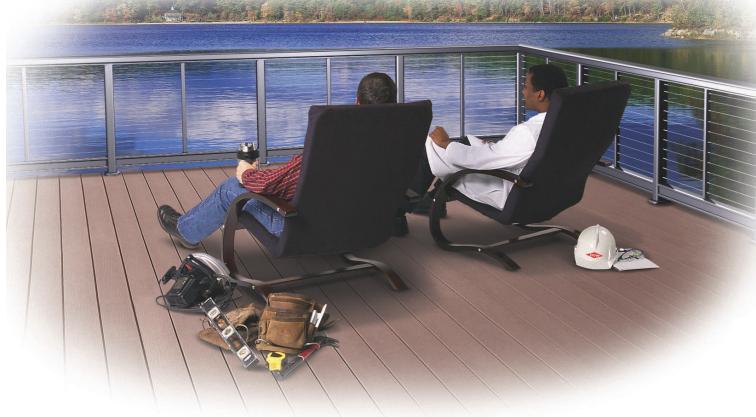
Appliances: GE. Cabinets: KraftMaid. Faucets: Kohler. Lighting Fixtures: Lightolier. Paints & Stains: Benjamin Moore. Sinks: Kohler



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Get on board with SYMMATRIX Composite Decking from Dow. Available through select dealers.

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Plugging into Energy Efficiency Market niche puts more 'green' in remodelers' pockets



By Scott Shepherd and Dustin Rosa **PATH Partners**

nergy efficiency. Resource conservation. Green. These are the hot marketing buzzwords in new home construction. What do they mean to the professional remodeler?

Potentially, they could mean a new

You can help make any existing home green, and help your clients come to grips with soaring energy costs. In the process, you can put a different kind of green in your own pocket.

Ready and able

Able Home Builders of Sioux City, Iowa, was founded by brothers Willie,



Above: Workers level and set a window before caulking. Below: Willie (left) and Jeff Delfs.

Jeff, and C.L. Delfs in 1987. They average 40 to 60 remodels and two new homes a year, with annual sales revenue exceeding \$1 million.

The Delfs started their business as remodelers, but expanded to new construction in 1993. They were traditional stick builders at the time, but quickly saw the business benefits of energy efficiency.

The Delfs dedicated themselves to learning about new techniques and technologies available in the market, and finding those that worked best for them and their clients.

"As we began educating ourselves through the local utility's ENERGY STAR program, we started learning about why energy efficiency was important - how energy efficiency affects all of us," Willie says. "We used ENERGY STAR to create our basic requirements. As time progressed, we became so comfortable with ENERGY STAR that we committed ourselves to 100-percent participation. Then we thought that if we can build ENERGY STAR qualified



The crew ensures that window replacements are done properly.

homes for new construction, why not take it to our remodeling business?"

The Delfs realized there was a large remodeling niche waiting for an energyefficient contractor.

"When we first started out, we decided to focus on the working-class market," Delfs says. "As our reputation grew, more affluent clients requested our services based on referrals. For the last ten years, most of our client base has come from referrals. Now we're recognized for energy-efficient remodeling, so when someone is looking for construction services that involve energy efficiency, we're the first company they call."

Getting the call

Which is exactly what Don and Susie Townley did when they were looking to expand the kitchen by 400 square feet and redo the windows and siding of their 1970s home. Since they were having the work done anyway, it was a perfect opportunity to address efficiency as well. "A large portion of people's disposable income goes straight to utility companies. As that portion of their income gets larger, it's really a no-brainer for our customers to increase their home's energy efficiency," Delfs says. "My goal is to add space without adding energy consumption."

But not all of the Delfs' customers start out as eager as the Townleys.

Some clients are reluctant to incorporate energy efficiency because they're concerned it will create delays. However, the Delfs see little or no increase in their construction schedule, whether they incorporate energy efficiency or not. Often it's just a matter of substituting a better off-the-shelf product for the conventional one.

Some clients also assume energy efficiency will make the project too costly.

"I try to make them realize that the measures I'm proposing will pay them back. I'm very persistent because I think it's important that my customers recognize both the short- and long-term benefits of energy efficiency. It's a very easy sell, especially now that energy costs have been rising for the last few years."

The growth of utility, state and federal incentive programs can accelerate the payback. While the incentives are usually larger with new construction, even in a remodeling project, homeowners can recover up to 50 percent of their efficiency investment.

Typically, utility incentives apply to heating, cooling, and water heating only. In some cases, however, you may have to do both HVAC and water heating measures as a package.

The new federal Energy Bill gives tax credits and deductions for many of the 12-15 prescriptive measures from ENERGY STAR, which include installing high efficiency windows; adding insulation to sidewalls, basements, or slabs; adding a programmable thermostat; using high-efficiency HVAC and water heating equipment; and installing at least three ENERGY STAR qualified appliances or lighting. Some of these benefits go to the client, but some go directly to the contractor.

The fact that some potential clients remain unconvinced is hardly a deterrent to Delfs.

"We probably lose about a quarter of the jobs we bid on to contractors with a lower bid, which is fine, because we'd rather focus on building our niche than worry about jobs with minimal profit," Delfs says.

Going the extra mile

This means that Able Home Builders is doing more profitable remodeling jobs with clients interested in going the extra mile. Clients like the Townleys.

Knowing Able Home Builders' expertise in energy efficiency, the Townleys were open to suggestions.

The Delfs recommended optimumvalue framing techniques for the exterior kitchen walls. These simple techniques, such as spacing studs farther apart and eliminating other non-essential framing, reduce material and labor costs, while improving energy performance. While the system can be applied as a whole package, the Delfs often use many of its components independently, depending on the specific needs of the project.

Cellulose insulation, a greener alternative to conventional fiberglass, enhanced the energy performance of the addition. The Delfs also installed Low-E glazed windows throughout the home and

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CHYPTOSSIONAL Remodeler



added insulative vinyl siding to the exterior. They completed the job by air sealing the entire building envelope, closing holes, cracks, and gaps wherever air passed in or out of the home.

"I feel that the building envelope is the most important thing to consider when remodeling or building a home," Delfs says. "Create a good envelope with the right combination of insulation, windows, and caulking to minimize air infiltration. Even if the existing HVAC equipment isn't the most efficient, it will work better in an environment that is well insulated, well sealed, and has good windows. In either case, less heating and

A worker inspects the plumbness of a window.

Resources

■ ince the majority of green literature and coursework is designed for new construction, learning the best ways to go green hasn't always been easy for remodelers.

"PATH saw a huge need for homeowners and remodelers to get quick answers to their remodeling questions," says Carlos Martín of the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing. "So many folks are concerned about their energy costs, but are bewildered by the pea soup of all the green information and resources."

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB), and the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) are working to make it easier.

HUD's Rehab Advisor, http://rehabadvisor.pathner.org/ provides guidelines for conducting energy-efficient housing rehabilitation. Written in easy-to-understand language, it's a good resource to help remodelers understand the issues, and also a useful tool to help remodelers market upgrades to their clients.

PATH's remodeler page, http://www.pathnet.org/sp.asp?mc=Inremodelers, provides a wide array of resources to help remodelers navigate advanced building technology issues.

NAHB offers multiple Energy Efficiency Design and Construction Guides on the ToolBase Web site, http://www.toolbase.org/ToolbaseResources/level3. aspx?BucketID=4&CategoryID=42.

In June, NARI rolled out a green remodeling education program focusing on energy efficiency and conservation, indoor air quality, efficient use of resources, recycling of demolition material and renewable energy sources. Learn more at http://www.nari.org/news/gogreen.cfm?CFID=11663915&CFT OKEN=46226259.

cooling will be required."

The result: 20-percent energy savings for the Townleys from one December to the next.

Finding the market

Delfs says his clients appreciate the consideration he gives monthly operating costs.

"It helps from a marketing perspective," he says. "If a potential client is comparing us to another builder who doesn't include efficiency in their list of services, it may help us get that project."

"In a small community like ours, people recognize certain business qualities and tell their friends about it," he says. "If we treat our customers nicely and educate them in the process, they end up selling our services for us. In the nearly 20 years we've been in business, we've never had to spend much on advertising. Instead, we've just always tried to give our customers a fair price and do the best job that we could, and word of mouth has sold our work for us."

"The main concept is that a house, whether new or a remodel, is a system and whatever you do to it affects everything else," Delfs says. "We don't start each day going to work to just throw sticks together and do it over again at the next project. By studying energy efficiency, we've become smarter builders than we were ten years ago. Ten years from now, we'll be even smarter because as technology advances, we'll be using it before our competition." PR

Scott T. Shepherd and Dustin Rosa write about better building practices on behalf of the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (www.pathnet.org). PATH is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Learn *more at* www.pathnet.org.



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3:31 PM

Masonry BoxFrame Fin with Fin7-Channel

It used to be that window installer Reggie Neilson got very frustrated putting in those heavy, bulky hurricane windows. But now, thanks to new integral frame options on Simonton's StormBreaker Plus™ windows, it's quick. Which means less adjusting. Less hassle. And a whole lot less aggravation. And once the windows are installed, they're even more impressive. Because not only are they stunningly beautiful, they meet the strictest hurricane codes. Simonton StormBreaker Plus™

windows are available with masonry flange for masonry construction, box frame for retrofit, fin for brick, and fin with J-channel for siding. So choose StormBreaker Plus.™ Not only will you improve productivity, you'll improve the disposition of workers, like Reggie. To learn more, call 1-800-SIMONTON or visit www.simonton.com.



Circle 36 or go to http://pr.ims.ca/5221-36

Lighten Your Environment

Windows, sunrooms and skylights can all be used to let a little light into an otherwise dark space

Amsco Windows

The Serenity Series line of sound deadening and control windows by Amsco are made to regulate outdoor sound transmission in heavy transportation, airport or industrial areas. The window series is engineered with various glass widths using a triple glaze design to block invasive sound. The line offers an improvement on typical double-pane or dual-glazed glass win-

dows and ranges in STC ratings from 40 to 47 rather than typical dualglazed window ratings of 28 to 35. Single, double-hung and other configurations are available.

888/82-AMSCO www.amscowindows.com Circle 125 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-125





Jeld-Wen

Custom wood screens are available from Jeld-Wen to fit in radius style and casement windows. The frames are made with pine, Douglas fir, mahogany or red alder and the screen is made with charcoal fiberglass screen cloth with an 18 x 16-inch mesh that resists denting. The wood screens are made to be interchangeable with the company's aluminum screens.

800/877-9482 www.jeld-wen.com Circle 126 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-126



Andersen

The TruScene insect screens from Andersen are made of a high-strength stainless steel material that offers more transparency than standard insect or mesh screens. The mesh-like material is 40 percent more dense than other Andersen screens and is backed by a 10-year transferable warranty.

800/426-4261 www.andersenwindows.com Circle 127 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-127



WeatherShield

Anodized window finishes from WeatherShield are now available for windows. The anodized windows require no clear coat or ongoing treatment. There's no galvanic corrosion risk when it is next to other metals and it will not leave copper run-off stains. It meets AAMA 611 Class I specifications. Colors include champagne, light bronze, medium bronze, dark bronze, extra-dark bronze, black and copper.

800/477-6808 www.weathershield.com Circle 128 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-128



Crystal Windows

Made with the company's ThermoBlock construction and Energy-Star compliant, Crystal Window's 200 series vinyl replacement window features insulating air barriers and is made in double-hung, bay, bow, slider and casement configurations. It measures 31/4 inches at frame depth and PPG insulated glass spacers. The series also has tilt-out sashes, two-tone colors and decorative grids.

718/961-7300 www.crystalwindows.com Circle 129 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-129

PRODUCT SHOWCASE Remodeler



EGP's Thermique

The Thermique heated windows from EGP conduct heat through a transparent conductive oxide coating and copper buss bars that are applied to the glass during fabrication. The coating is heated via a controller and is uniformly heated across the entire pane. The controller cuts off power if it senses a fault or crack in the glass.

312/326-4710 www.egpglass.com Circle 130 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-130



Marvin

Providing more cross-ventilation and less obstructed views, the Marvin Venting Picture window has a sash that projects 21/4 inches outward to reveal its screened-in opening while the window appears closed from the exterior view. The screen attaches to the sash at a single point to minimize stress during operation and resists mold, mildew and UV rays.

888/537-8266 www.marvin.com Circle 131 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-131



Crestline

The VinylCrest 300 series from Crestline is a vinyl and brick mould and J-panel-constructed window with a traditional wood frame profile. The line has double-hung, singlehung, single glider, picture and special-shaped units. The window has a block and tackle balance system that locks into place when the sash is tilted.

800/552-4111 www.crestlinewindows.com Circle 132 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-1XX



The fixed windows from Fenestra come standard in Mahogany with other timber options available and are available in any size or configuration. The company's waterproof adhesive is used on all joints, and the windows have simulated divided lites, applied brickmold casing and applied sub-sill. The glass is hurricane-impact and is IBC and SBCCI tested and rated.

800/397-6060 www.fenestra-america.com Circle 133 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-133



Fen-Tech

Architectural casement windows from Fen-Tech are coated with the company's Truth E-Gard-coated hardware and have stainless steel hinges, multi-point locking tems and a variety of glazing options: tinted, single or thermo-pane. It's heavy-duty extruded aluminum screens. nail-fin stucco returns and brick mould options are also available.

715/392-9500 www.fentechinc.com Circle 134 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-134



Guardian Industries

The ClimaGuard SPF residential coated glass from Guardian Industries is designed to block 99.9 percent of UV rays without any bright colors, dark tints, shiny reflections or any visible change in day lighting. It has a U-factor of 0.24, an Rvalue of 4.2 and a solar heat gain coefficient of 0.382.

800/436-2157 www.climaguardspf.com Circle 135 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-135



Kolbe

Heritage push-out casements and awnings from Kolbe Windows and Doors are made from pine with latex primed exterior wood sash and frame. The line features single-point locking hardware and a stainless steel friction hinge on top and bottom that allows for full openings. The interior glass is coated with %-inch Low-E insulating glass with argon.

920/596-2501 www.kolbe-kolbe.com Circle 136 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-136



Great Lakes

The Seabrooke vinyl replacement windows from Great Lakes Window are made with the company's pinch fusionwelded process to make an airtight seal. Mainframes are filled with R-core, a high-density polyurethane insulation and the windows are made with the company's Energy Star-approved Low-E Warmedge Intercept insulated glass.

419/666-5555 www.greatlakeswindow.com Circle 137 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-137

Professional Repairs



Integrity

The Integrity Ultrex Series from parent company Marvin is available in single hung operating and picture frames, polygon and transom windows. According to the company, the Ultrex material is a fiberglass-based material that is eight times stronger than vinyl. It is finished and coated to resist scratching, denting and warping.

800/328-0268 www.integritywindows.com Circle 138 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-138



PPG

The Solarban 70XL solar control Low-E glass is a 3/4inch clear insulating glass unit that provides a solar heat gain coefficient of 0.27 and a visible light transmittance of 64 percent. The 70XL also decreases the amount of UV light that enters the room and is available in standard thicknesses of 2.5, 3 and 5 millimeters.

888/PPG-GLAS www.ppgresidentialglass.com Circle 142 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-142



DayStar

The skylight system from DayStar can illuminate 460 square feet of space per 4x4foot unit. Roof domes have a clear, acrylic outer dome and an inner collimation lens to minimize heat transfer. Galvanized steel roof curbs have watertight seams built to match the roof pitch. Packages include flash kits, rib caps, light shafts and ceiling lenses.

866/7-DAYSTAR Circle 139 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-139



Pittsburgh Corning

The Hurricane Glass Block system from Pittsburgh Corning uses the company's Thickset 90 glass with Kwik N' EZ silicone adhesive and horizontal and vertical spacers for installation to create an allglass appearance. The system is offered in Decora, Vue or Endura patterns. The blocks meet ASTM E-1886 and 1996 for large missile impacts.

800/624-2120 www.pittsburghcorning.com Circle 143 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-143



SilverLine

Weather Stopper windows, now from parent company Andersen, are impact-resistant and meet ASTM E 1886-02 and 1996-02 testing standards. The windows use DuPont's SentryGlas and SentryGlas Plus plastic safety glass made from polyvinyl butyral layers which also reduces noise and UV rays. Steel and aluminum tilt lashes secures the sash to the window.

732/937-5800 www.silverlinewindows.com Circle 140 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-140



Vetter

The ProV 300 series from Vetter is an all-vinyl window with integral brickmould, a built-in I-channel and has traditional wood styling. The series has single- and double-hung, single rolling, picture and specialty shaped windows with block-and-tackle balance systems in an easy-tilt design. The balance shoe locks when the sash is tilted out of the frame.

800/VETTER-2 www.vetterwindows.com Circle 144 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-144



Pella

The Impervia line of windows and patio doors from Pella are made with the company's Duracast fiberglass composite material that offers more strength and insulating properties than vinyl. The windows can withstand wind-driven rain up to 8 inches per hour, are Low-e and Energy Starrated, and are pre-finished in brown, white or tan.

www.pella.com Circle 141 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-141



ViWinTech

The 4%-inch XJ casement windows from ViWinTech have a beveled sash profile, triple weather stripping and heavy vinyl extrusions with the company's Truth Maxim hardware. An optional two-inch extension can be snapped on the interior of the jamb. The windows are Energy Star-rated and are covered under the company's Advantage 5.1 warranty.

800/788-1050 www.viwintech.com Circle 145 or go to http://pr.ims. ca/5221-145



Four Seasons

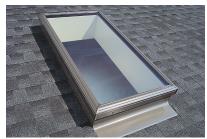
The Georgian English-style conservatory sunroom from Four Seasons Sunrooms is made in aluminum, vinyl or wood and comes in studio or cathedral styles. Four Seasons also has a basic line of more affordable aluminum-only constructed sunrooms in the 130, 200 and 230 Series range. The range is constructed with the company's insulated glass and structured insulated panel roofing.

631/563-4000 www.fourseasonssunrooms.com Circle 146 or go to http://pr.ims.ca/5221-146



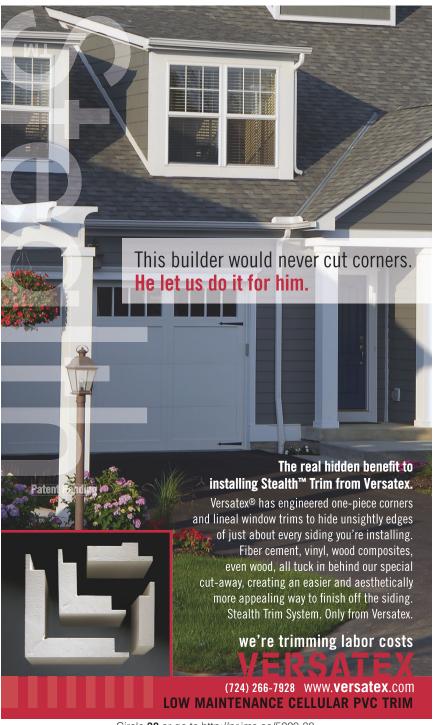
Ponderosa wood windows in a full color palette from Avonni feature Cardinal IG with Low-E2 Plus glass coating. The windows include in-swing, out-swing and sliding door systems with aluminum screen door tracks and extruded, bronze-toned sills with an interior oak threshold. The company uses Therma-Tru door weatherstripping and is Energy Star-certified.

866/229-7617 www.avonniwindows.com Circle 147 or go to http://pr.ims.ca/5221-147



The QVE electric venting skylight from Velux is designed for self-flashed installations and overhead applications and closes automatically in case of rain. It is preinstalled with a concealed motor, control system and two rain sensors. It opens and closes with a standard slimline remote control and an optional WLI 160 wall mounted keypad.

800/88-VELUX www.veluxusa.com Circle 148 or go to http://pr.ims.ca/5221-148





Professional Robuct Show cars E

MW

The Freedom series from MW features a vinyl exterior cladding and standard clear composite wood interior ready to accept primer, paint and stain. It is available in multiple styles, including double-hung, casement and awning, patio doors, accent windows and come in a variety of architectural shapes and configurations. The Freedom series also has White and sandalwood color options.

800/999-8400

www.mwwindows.com

Circle 149 or go to http://pr.ims.ca/5221-149



Graham

The latest GF line of protruded fiberglass windows from Graham Architectural Products expand at the same rate as glass to protect against expansion and contraction. The windows have Low-E glazing, are low in conductivity and come in a variety of factory finishes. Casement, double-hung, horizontal sliding and sliding glass doors are available.

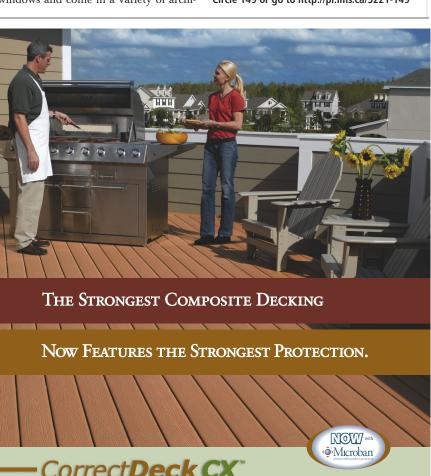
800/755-6274 www.grahamwindows.com Circle 149 or go to http://pr.ims.ca/5221-149



FiberTech

Tilt'n Slide fiberglass windows from Fibertec slide from end to end but the sash remains stationary when in a tilt position. The hardware design allows the sash to rotate inward and the frame and sash corners are connected with molded polymer shearblocks. Joints are factory sealed and filled with urethane foam. The glass is made with double or triple glazing to resist condensation.

905/660-7102 www.fibertec.com Circle 151 or go to http://pr.ims.ca/5221-151



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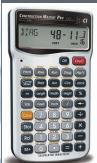
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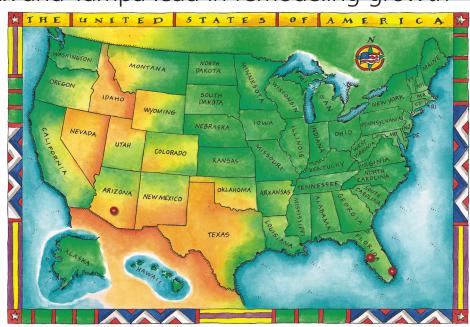


Fastest-Growing Markets

Miami, Phoenix and Tampa lead in remodeling growth

arvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies' Remodeling Futures Program has released its list of the fastest growing remodeling markets based on 2005 permit values.

Analysis of 2005 remodeling permit trends shows sizeable growth in permit value for most major metro areas, with many of the fastest-growth areas concentrated along the east coast. The value of remodeling permits for the nation grew at a rate of 11.2 percent in 2005. Miami (39.5 percent); Phoenix (32.6) and Tampa, Fla. (26.7) topped the list, followed by Baltimore (20.9); Washington, D.C. (20.7); New York (18.5); Pittsburgh (15.7); St. Louis (15.6); Portland, Ore. (13.9); and San Francisco (13.6) in the top 10 metro areas.



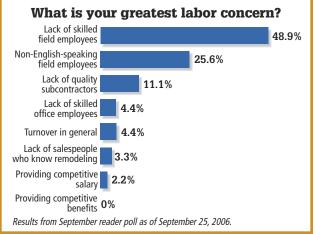
The majority of the largest metro areas in the U.S. experienced some growth in remodeling activity in 2005. A comparison between 2004 and 2005 growth rates showed that nine of the

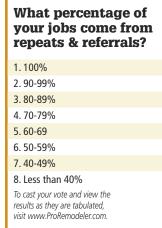
13 cities with the greatest growth in 2004 remained in the top 13 in 2005. Seven of these nine metro areas experienced the same or better percentage point increases in remodeling permit values

in 2005. By region, these "high performing" markets include Portland, Ore.; San Francisco; Riverside, Calif.; Phoenix; Miami; Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia and New York.

Got a Funny Story?

Every remodeling contractor has a funny story to tell, and we're on the lookout for the best of them. Here's an example: A contractor stopped at the job site and saw his crew urinating in the owner's yard, only to find out they were afraid to use the lone usable bathroom because they thought the "weirdo" homeowner had installed a two-way mirror. Send your stories to michael. morris@reedbusiness.com.





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