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DECEMBER 2006

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Remodeler OF THE YEAR

BOWA Builders

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Larry Weinberg, CEO
BOWA Builders

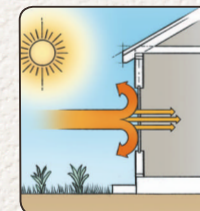
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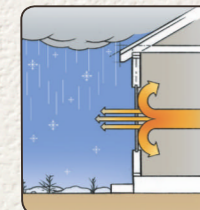


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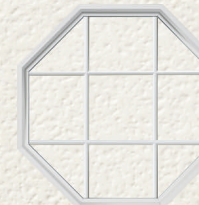
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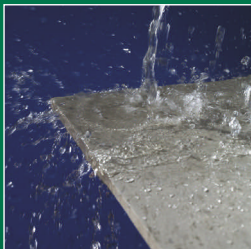


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COVER STORY

BOWA CEO Larry Weinberg (left) and President Josh Baker.

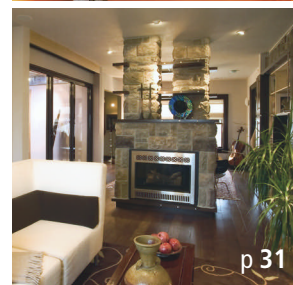
Cover photo by Bill Geiger



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BOWA Builders' success has been achieved through a process of continual improvement.

By Michael R. Morris

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A professor creates an accessible interior for his son while maintaining a historic exterior for the community.

By Wendy A. Jordan



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And the winner is...

I've received more than a few e-mails from remodelers who sent us Remodeler of the Year entries asking how we select the winner. Their question was whether small- or medium-size companies could compete for the award against larger companies.

The answer is yes. We base our selection on which company we feel has done the best job of improving its business practices in the most areas. It doesn't matter which areas, necessarily, and volume has nothing to do with it.

So the fact that McLean, Va.-based BOWA Builders, this year's winner, generates almost \$38 million in annual revenue doesn't mean that a company that does \$5 million a year can't be our 2007 Remodeler of the Year. I'll take this a step further and point out that one key factor in our selection process is how much value we can provide others by writing about the processes and practices of the winner in *Professional Remodeler*.

When you take a look at BOWA on page 16, you'll find many systems and business concepts that could be implemented in your company, regardless of size. In fact, BOWA was once a small remodeling company. But instead of standing pat at any particular stage of growth, it continued to tweak its processes and rewrite its business plan, sometimes taking concepts from peers and altering them to

the firm's needs.

That attitude of continual improvement is why BOWA was our choice for 2006 Remodeler of the Year.

How Sweet It Is!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Senior Editor Jonathan Sweet to our editorial staff at *Professional Remodeler*. Some of you may know Jonathan from his time spent with another remodeling industry trade publication. Most recently, he was editor of *Concrete Contractor* magazine.

Speaking of additions, we've added a number of industry leaders to our Editorial Advisory Board over the past few months, including NAHB Remodelers Council Chair Vince Butler and Executive Director Therese Crahan; and NARI past president Paul Winans and Executive Vice President/COO Mary Busey Harris. Their expertise and experience are a welcome addition to our editorial team. Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that another of our board members, and a great friend, Mike Nagel, will become Remodelers Council Chair in 2007. Congratulations, Mike! **PR**



Michael R. Morris

Editor in Chief

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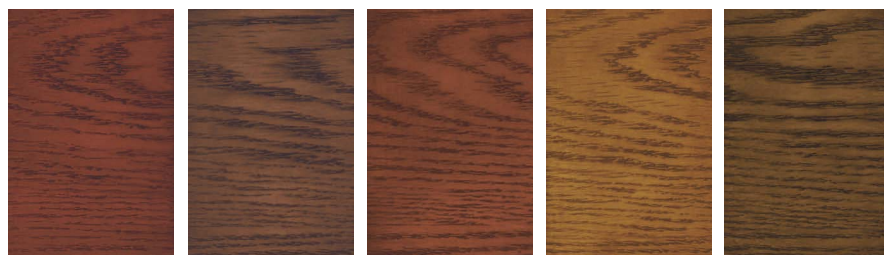
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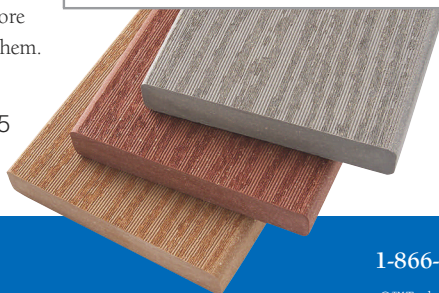
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Doug Dwyer
Contributing Editor



Invest In Planning

Early in my career I learned the following from a businessman: “What appears to be the slow way is the fast way.” It took a couple of years for this to really sink in.

The temptation today is to find a short cut to do everything we do. In many ways, this is practical and good. For example, innovation over the years such as nail guns, e-mail, CAD and other business software have sped the process of remodeling. But taken too far, the owner of the company and staff can try to short-cut the planning process. Not only do you need to develop a strategic business plan for the new year, but you also need to be looking forward 5 to 10 years.

I’ve noticed we can get so busy working *in* the business that we are not working *on* the business. We tend to experience an internal tug-of-war of where to invest our time. Now is the time of the year to really invest in planning for the New Year and revisit long-term plans. Why? The end of summer and beginning of fall is the time we make hay while the sun is still shining. This summer the remodeling industry was slow. Recently, things have begun to really pick up. It’s now time to make up for that slow period and try to get ahead before the slow-down of the holiday season hits.

The shift from sales and production work to planning and budgeting can seem like a switch to a snail’s pace. Working on our business plan takes time and thought. It takes uninterrupted time and concentration to think things through. Up until now, you may have done most of this work

yourself because it was easier and quicker and it seemed impossible to involve others.

However, I recommend that you start having your team be part of the process. We must do this individually as leaders and involve our team as well. Maybe you start with one area at first, like budget brainstorming or lead generation, or maybe it’s determining the type of project your company will focus on or system innovations you will make in 2007. At times this will feel overwhelming, but if you take on one piece at a time, your efforts will be doubled. The next year you can add on another, and then after several years, planning will be a team process.

You are the leader and still have the final say, but if you really want to grow, you have to let others be part of the process. It takes showing vulnerability with what you know and don’t know in front of your team. At first, involving others can be very painful and take a considerable amount of investment of time. But if you don’t do this, you’ll be stuck doing too much and working too many hours, and your business growth will be stifled. Your team will never take ownership of the company’s vision and plans at the level needed for you to experience strong margins and the quality of life you desire.

No doubt, it’s a challenge and will take a lot of time – mostly on your

team’s part. And yes, the normal things of business have to be done as well. So how can you find the time to get it all done? It may take your saying no to current initiatives you have now that could really wait. Or, you may have to stop doing things that really don’t make a difference or hire a part-time person in the office to delegate important but time-consuming tasks. The bottom line is you have to continue to stretch and press forward to get ahead.

The old apprentice model still holds much wisdom: it takes a key person time to master anything. So often we have that Burger King attitude to have it our way and now. This creates the wrong expectation; thus, we become very frustrated with the process. Remember, “What appears to be the slow way is the fast way.” This change in perspective has served me well and made the process much more enjoyable.

As I finish this column, I am on my way to Bangladesh and India on a mission trip, and my remodeling team is back home persistently executing the strategic plan they helped develop. After all, companies plan a remodel in detail with the client, and if done well, produce a great end result for all. So, do the same with your own businesses and teams.

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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The Payment Schedule

How and when you get paid makes a difference

The topic for this month's discussion may seem elementary but actually is much more complex: what's the best way to get paid for your remodeling services? Our participants, Lynne and Jeff, give some valuable insight as to how they manage their payment schedule.

Tom: *Jeff, I'm going to start with you.*



Lynne Stephenson, Co-owner

HUB Design/Build

Located in Villanova, Pa. just outside of Philadelphia, HUB Design/Build is a full-service remodeling business focusing primarily on kitchens, baths and additions. Co-owned with husband Mark, the company has been in business for 10 years. Lynne is a CR, CKBR, and is President of the DelChester NARI chapter.

The company has five office employees and six field employees. Its expected gross revenue this year will be \$3.5 million.

Photo by Ed Wheeler

We'll take the typical job that you're saying is design/build. This could be a kitchen or bath, a big lower-level remodel or room addition. How do you get paid by your customers? How is the payment schedule structured?

Jeff: Probably 50 percent of our jobs are either designed in-house or through one of two to three third-party architects/designers who we routinely work with. The other situation of course would be the client coming to us with plans in-hand or at least with some variation of a plan already in hand with some degree of being complete. Depending on that, we would execute either a professional services agreement for a job, where either the plans weren't already complete or needed some detailing or what have you, or a professional design agreement, which is essentially the same document. What we would do, typically, is on the order of anywhere from \$1,500 to \$5,000, depending on the scope and complexity of the job. The design agreement is designed to do two things: it's to get us the money upfront for the design, estimating, research, development of specifications, etc.; it's also to get the customer to commit to us in some way financially so we have a commitment from them and we're not out there spinning our wheels.

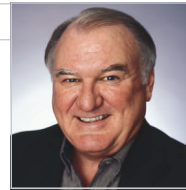
Tom: *Touch upon the highlights on how it's set up once this job is design/build and you have a professional design service agreement. How do you structure your payment?*

Jeff: The execution, we call it a start up payment. As part of our contract there is an attachment that is a hybrid document. It's actually a production schedule as well as a draw schedule. The draws are shown as key milestones on that schedule. That is given to the customer at a very early stage. We have a draft production schedule that goes out very

early on that indicates about what it will cost and about how long we think it will take. They know early on. Once they sign the contract, we finalize the draw schedule and the production schedule and dates. The dates vary; if there's a foundation involved we have a different draw in there. Typically, it will be: a start up draw at the top of execution; a foundation draw at the completion of slab; a rough-in or pre-drywall after all mechanical, electrical and plumbing inspections are done; then a trim draw and a final draw. The difference would be like in a kitchen and bath; if there is no foundation, it would boil down to four: start up, rough-in, trim and final.

Tom: *Lynne, let's talk about what you've found to work as far as your payment schedule structure.*

Lynne: I would say our payment schedule is atypical of the industry. We do not do progress payments or payments based on a percentage of completion. We do a projected job schedule early on. When we actually have a definitive start date the client has already seen the payment schedule. That payment schedule is essentially based on payments for the project development procedure that we go through. That's based on 7 percent of the projected budget for the project. That's the first payment that appears on the payment schedule. The second thing, if it's a kitchen, bathroom, or anything that involves cabinetry, the cabinets are paid for in full. There may be another payment on there that shows payment for special order materials. All those things would be generally collected prior to the start of the job. Then, we take as many weeks as the job is going to take – say it's a kitchen that we will do in six weeks – we have a start payment, a payment that is dated for each



Tom Swartz
Contributing Editor

week of the project and then a final payment, called a completion payment, which is generally 5 percent of the job. We're looking at essential completion, and we essentially have been paid for the job, with that 5 percent outstanding for anything that needs to be finished at that point.

Tom: *You're saying that what you do basically is set out a project. Before you design it, do you set a projected price, and is that what the 7 percent is based on?*

Lynne: We'll look at a project and, because of the experience that we have, we know when we do a particular project that someone is talking to us about, we can basically say the project will be between X number of dollars and X number of dollars. We'll give them a range. They will say they "want to target this budget," — say it's a \$100,000 budget. That's what we'll base the project development agreement upon, and it would be 7 percent of that \$100,000, which is our good faith money.

Tom: *\$7,000, and you really haven't designed anything yet.*

Lynne: I haven't done anything.

Tom: *What you've done is made a scientific guess on how much you think the project will cost. Basically you're getting a budget from the customer. Based on your \$100,000 example, you would charge them \$7,000.*

Lynne: Correct. That's for the design of the project, going through the entire selection process with them, and also getting to a final budget. Then we're ready to pull the permits and start the work.

Tom: *Then you set up \$93,000, and you think that project is going to take about how long, just for example?*

Lynne: Let's make it up that it's an eight week project.

Tom: *You'd take that \$93,000, and divide it by 8, is that right?*

Lynne: My cabinet number is going to come off that as well. They're going to pay me up front for the cabinets that I'm going to make.

Tom: *Let's say the up-front for the cabinets would be \$20,000, is that a fun one to make up?*

Lynne: That's perfect.

Tom: *You're left with about \$75,000 to \$80,000.*

Lynne: \$73,000.

Tom: *\$73,000 to be specific on that. And then you divide that by the eight weeks?*

Lynne: When I look at it, I take the \$73,000 and work backwards.

I only want to be out 5 percent at the end of this payment schedule. Actually, I determine 5 percent of the \$73,000, and that is my completion payment. Then I take the eight weeks of the job and make it into nine payments. So I get a start payment and then a payment at the end of the first week. We don't make them even payments. We just make them differing amounts, enough so the client can keep track of which payment it is.

Tom: *So, it's not \$8,300 every payment?*

Lynne: It's too confusing.

Tom: *It could be off a little bit.*

Lynne: Yes. You go up a little at the beginning, and down a little bit at the end. It keeps the money even. We're working there every day. They're just paying us every week. We're not worried about whether the drywall is on or if there's rain and we can't get the foundation in, etc. We'll adjust the payment schedule if there's a glitch. A lot of time, we're actually ahead of our payment schedule. We tend to make that payment schedule in the beginning longer than we think the actual work will take. Then, we'll go through and adjust it.

Tom: *Interesting. To follow up on that,*

because that is atypical of what I've heard, which is fine, let me ask you this because we've had this happen to us. There's a room addition, and you're waiting for some special order items, and the trade contractor doesn't get on there, or something happens and you don't even work on it. No one is on the job for a week. Has that ever happened?

Lynne: No. Maybe a day or two. Generally, the way our jobs are set up there



Jeff Hunt, Owner

Heritage Construction Services

Although Heritage was founded in 2003, Jeff has a background in both residential and commercial construction through his father's company and is CGR, GMB and CAPS certified. Located in Houston, the company focus is on kitchens, baths and additions. The business consists of Jeff, who runs the business end, his partner who runs field operations and two flexible-use field employees. Volume this year will be about \$850,000.

Photo by Charles Edwards

are contingents. We can do something else on the job.

Tom: *But if it rains, and you get wiped out for a whole week.*

Lynne: Then you adjust your payment schedule. You don't get a payment that week.

Tom: *So you'd move it back a week or whatever.*

Lynne: Yes. And most of the clients we've dealt with have really loved the payment schedule. They feel like the money flows evenly in both directions. We can adjust the payment schedules or adjust the work schedules. It's very predictable in terms of cash flow for the company. We've had very good responses from people — even architects who we've

group — just having the benefit of being around professionals like Lynne. You can collaborate; I've learned a lot from Lynne about how she's doing things.

Tom: *How did you do it before? What effect did it have on you?*

Jeff: As far as doing it before, we used to, because we now keep our books in QuickBooks Contractor Edition, we used to just do a weekly progress update consistently. We'd give people invoices. We'd get into squabbles with people and disputes over an item on the estimate and then all of a sudden they want to argue about the cost of one individual item. After getting your teeth kicked in a few times on that, we decided we're not going to show any more line items

or some other calendar based type of draw schedule. Does that answer the question? The only other way we've done it is to go off an invoice per se that we'll bill you in a week or two. Being young we've kind of gravitated into this method that seems to be working now for the last year, year and a half.

Tom: *Yes. Our experience with the ones where they show an itemized invoice, in every case, most folks who do that have a difficult time making proper markups. They have to get into the labor side and also by "smoke and mirrors," and the customer is too smart for that. Lynne, have you had this system all 10 years or have you gradually found this to work. In the lifetime of the company, have you had any other structure that you used?*

Most of the people we deal with have really loved the payment schedule. They feel like the money flows evenly in both directions.

worked for personally in their own homes. They look at the payment schedule and think it's odd. Then they look at it again, start doing percentages and some of them have even started working with it on their own.

Tom: *Jeff, it sounds to me like you have a little bit up front and you set them up with a start-up payment. Then, based on a production schedule you have four to five draws: the start-up, of course, and after that the foundation and drywall and trim draw and the final draw. Have you changed the way you structure your payments at any time during the life of your business. In other words, have you ever done it any differently? If so, why and what effect did it have? Have you ever changed the way you've structured your payments?*

Jeff: Yes, we have. As a relatively young company, we've gone through a couple different approaches to this. Probably the biggest influence on our decision to be where we are now has been a result of CGR classes, continuing education classes and Remodeler's 20

on it — we're just going to come up with a very simplified draw schedule that's based on some milestones, based on completion of certain items, and we'll lay it out up front. Initially, I had some reluctance to do it. I felt like we were asking for a 20-25 percent start-up payment and we would hear horror stories from the industry about contractors walking off the job with the payment and going to Mexico or whatever. We just take the time during the sales process to really impress upon the client our level of professionalism in the things that we do and the processes that we have in place to execute the job properly — the safeguards that we have and the reasons why. You want a kitchen or bath; you've got a lot of expensive fixtures and cabinets, as Lynne points out, to order up front. A lot of that money goes — even on a room addition, you've got a lot of money going into the ground right up front. We educate the consumer on why we do it that way as opposed to a weekly draw or a bi-weekly draw

Lynne: Actually, Mark fell into remodeling almost by accident. When he was doing the first job, we were working for someone who was very wealthy, and spent a lot of time out of town. He was actually the one who came up with payment this way while Mark was doing a fairly large job for him. He used Check-Free at the time, which is electronic banking. He just sent Mark a check every week. It was put into the system before he left town. The money was there when you needed things and it was very predictable for the client. It was easy to project all the payments up front. That's actually how we got the idea to do this. When Mark did the first job, and it was a significantly large job for another client, he just suggested that as a payment schedule. The client embraced it because the money was predictable. They knew what they were going to pay, what week — they could transfer the funds. We've done jobs actually where we were paid by the bank, and they used our payment schedule.

Tom: *OK. How do you handle getting paid for change orders? Now, we call them Additional Work Authorizations, just because we don't like the word "change." Whatever you call it, it's still additional work that the client has authorized. Some are small – "I want you to paint this room" – or larger – "I want to add a deck" or "I want crown molding throughout the house" – but it's an order outside the original contract. How do you handle that, Lynne? How do you handle getting paid for the change orders?*

Lynne: First of all, we call them Additional Work Orders as well. There's something about "change" for people that's difficult to accept. We try and be very thorough up front that if there is a possibility that anything could be added

of a change order, the money for that change order is due at the time the change order is executed. We don't proceed with that particular item of work until that change order has been signed off by both us and the client.

Tom: *And paid – or signed off?*

Jeff: Paid off and signed.

Tom: *So, you require them to pay 100 percent of the change order up front before you make the change.*

Jeff: Yes. When we sign the contract, Tom, we go through that paragraph specifically with them. There are a couple of things we point out, early in the process, in our proposal template, there is a copy of our blank contract. When they see that contract from the

want to be gone; we don't want to be on your job longer than we projected, it costs us money. Change orders disrupt our schedule and your schedule, and we want to minimize those. But, in the event of a change, there will be not only the cost of the materials and labor in question and the normal markup of those items. In addition to that, our contract allows us a 10 percent administrative fee on the price of the change order including markup, for administrative purposes. We typically don't use that 10 percent fee. It's there, but we don't want you to think we're going to beat you in the head with it every turn of the wheel. It's there for customers who get unruly. It happens from time to time – you're

The contract clearly states that in the event of a change order, the money for that change order is due at the time the change order is executed.

we want to get that into the initial contract. Once we do an additional work order, it's very hard to get your markup and for the client to feel it's justified to pay what you're going to have to charge them. We avoid that if we can, but if the client wants something additional done, then our lead carpenters in the field have forms that are printed in triplicate. They can actually write out the work order in the field, they know what the markup is. They have the client sign it and they get paid at the time the client signs the work order. We don't typically do any additional work until we actually have been paid in full for it.

Tom: *Jeff, how do you do change orders, and how do you get paid for them?*

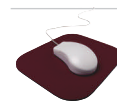
Jeff: We do call them change orders. The way our contracts are written, we have an 11-page contract. That contract has a very specific paragraph about change orders. What we would do whether it's an additive or deductive change order. In either case, the contract clearly states that in the event

early stages of the sales process, they understand what our terms are. One of the terms we specifically talk about is change orders. And as Lynne pointed out, we try to explain to the client that we want to go to great lengths to bring up all the things: "Mr. & Mrs. client, in our experience, we've typically seen customers like you in this situation who ask us about the availability and wisdom of doing X, Y and Z. We're only bringing this up, Mr. & Mrs. Client; we're not trying to oversell; we don't really care if you do or don't. What we don't want to have happen is get six weeks into the job and have us look like we don't know what we're doing because you went into some design studio and see something and think 'Well, why didn't Heritage think of that?.' We're going to bring up some things during this proposal and estimate development process, Mr. & Mrs. Client, just suggestions. We want to minimize change orders. As soon as we get to the job; you want us there and gone. And the feeling is mutual. We

probably not one of those. We have had it happen, where a job gets into 40 or 50 change orders and we have an administrative nightmare on our hands just in keeping up with the changes. We have to be paid a premium over and above our standard markup for that". They know that – from the very early phases of the job. No. 1 we're going to try to minimize change orders and work with them to not have change orders. Let's be realistic. There hasn't been a job done yet that hasn't had at least a couple of small change orders. But they are paid for at the time the change order is executed.

Tom: *Jeff, do you itemize your change orders?*

Jeff: No, we don't. I just give them a final number that the change is going to be \$2,700.42.



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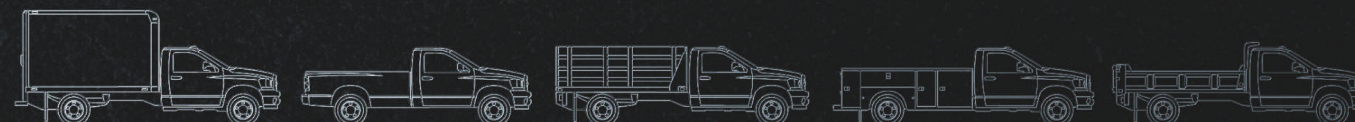
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2006 Remodeler of the Year

BOWA Builders, Inc.

BOWA Builders CEO Larry Weinberg (left)
and President Josh Baker. *Photography by Bill Geiger*

'Never

BOWA Builders' success comes from a foundation of continual improvement

By Michael R. Morris

Editor in Chief

Shortly after Josh Baker and Larry Weinberg founded BOWA Builders in 1988, they had a vision that their small remodeling company could grow into something big if they kept their focus on integrity, customer service and continual improvement, among other things.

Almost 19 years later, the company that produced \$300,000 in revenue that first year will pull in roughly \$38 million in 2006 with a net profit percentage of just over 8 percent. Although those core values have changed very little over the years, the most important element in its exponential growth and success – including being named *Professional Remodeler's* 2006 Remodeler of the Year – would appear to stem from one company trait in particular: the endless quest for improvement.

"That's always been our mentality," says Weinberg, CEO of the McLean, Va.-based remodeling firm and custom home builder. "In a lot of what we do – our goals, our vision – the tweaking and continual improvement have certainly been a key. It's just a process of reevaluating and realigning the model and moving forward."

It's a goal that's easier said than done. Many successful remodeling companies hit a ceiling at a certain volume – whether it be \$1 million, \$5 million or \$10 million – and remain there. One of the remarkable things about BOWA is that this has yet to happen.

"One of my personal mottos is 'never peak,'" says Weinberg. "If you go back to your high school reunion, some-

times you see the most popular guy, and he peaked at 18. And you see the same thing in college. At different levels, you even see that from a company standpoint. There are companies that kind of get there and then they've made it and they peak. One of our goals and one of my personal goals is to never peak. It's certainly part of the corporate culture here."

Culture of success

Most of the growth stages BOWA has gone through included adding employees, so early on it became apparent that employees are the organization's most valuable resource. The company has been recognized as one of the best remodeling firms to work for (*Professional Remodeler*, 2005), having the best bosses (*FORTUNE* Small Business, 2005) and being a great place to work (*Washingtonian Magazine*, 2003). Some of the benefits it offers employees include stock options, profit sharing, job sharing, quarterly bonuses, 401(K), telecommuting, flex work hours and tuition reimbursement.

"We've focused on corporate culture and how important that is to the success of a company," says Baker, president of BOWA. "We're not a company that's just about the profits. We've got people who are the first ones in their family to ever own a house. We have people who have sent their kids to college for the first time in the history of their family."

BOWA's management team (right) takes great pride in the company culture it's created.

Peak'



Snapshot

BOWA Builders

Founders: Josh Baker, President;
Larry Weinberg, CEO

Corporate headquarters:
McLean, Va.

New sales office: Middleburg, Va.

Type of company: High-end
residential remodeling; custom
homes

Years in business: 19

Full-time employees: 85

**Sales history (total installed
revenue):**

2002	\$22,258,000
2003	\$21,518,000
2004	\$26,579,000
2005	\$37,468,000
2006	\$37,401,000



Photo by Greg Hadley Photography



Photo by Bob Narod Photography

BOWA focuses on the high-end market in the Washington, D.C., area. Its average job size in 2005 was \$786,000.

One of the goodies BOWA offers its people is the opportunity for career advancement and personal development via its employee review process. Quarterly goals urge BOWA personnel to achieve specific performance objectives in return for both monetary and professional gain.

“Perhaps what I appreciate most is the opportunity for growth – both professional and personal,” says team coordinator Stefani Wong, who has worked at BOWA for 12 years. “On the job and off, BOWA encourages employees to challenge and enrich themselves through training, mentoring and goal setting. Whether it’s learning new carpentry skills, pursuing a passion in green building or training for a marathon, the BOWA team does everything it can to ensure our employees succeed.”

At quarterly meetings, the company hands out a Core Value Award, which reinforces the values – heroic customer service, continual self-improvement, integrity, hard work in a fun atmosphere and sharing the success – that has helped BOWA achieve such substantial growth in the competitive Washington, D.C., market.

“BOWA’s unwavering commitment to quality craftsmanship and heroic customer service is profound,” says Director of Marketing Kathy Kelly. “At every level of the organization, employees are committed to these principles, and examples can be found every time you turn around. This culture is in part what brings our clients back time and again, and our employees take great pride in that.”

On a hiring spree since the mid-90s, BOWA has all but perfected the art of hiring quality people. Through the use of personality surveys and computer tests for office workers, for example, the company strives to take subjectivity out of the hiring process. Once employees are hired, they attend an orientation session, which ingrains

the company’s core values immediately.

An employee handbook (including an online version with live links to all company documents) was created earlier this year to help new employees get up to speed more quickly and have ongoing access to company best practices. The handbook was produced by a committee including representatives from production, sales, human resources and upper management and includes a job description for every position in the company, plus company procedures and checklists for every process, and all company documents, forms and contracts.

Best practices

Sales and marketing are two key areas of strength for BOWA, which has managed growing revenues nearly every year of its existence.

Ongoing training for the eight-member sales team includes weekly meetings for sharing best practices and on-the-job experiences, plus frequent sessions with outside professional trainers.

“We do a consultative sale,” says Baker, who has been the company’s sales manager throughout its history. “And I think that’s a lot different from some of the order takers and ex-field guys who are now sales people for some companies. We give them the tools in terms of training to be professionals. If you look at our volume compared to the number of sales people, we have numerous people who sell over \$5 million a year and a couple who sell over \$10 million a year. These are superstars. They’re super-trained and we’ve set them up to be successful.”

Most of the sales staff BOWA hires have an architectural background, so they thrive in the consultative sales environment. All sales trainees spend a year at the side of a seasoned salesperson.

“We allow the various sales people in their geographical areas to create budget and marketing for their particular area.” — Josh Baker

“It’s very much hands-on training,” says Baker. “There aren’t any classes; it’s essentially a shadowing program. They are sort of a fly on the wall observing and then actually becoming the lead sales person throughout the year as they become more confident and competent.”

BOWA’s market is structured into geographical areas, and each sales person oversees one territory. This allows the sales people to become experts in their own market, and to provide valuable insight to Baker and Weinberg for strategic planning.

“People that are at that professional level are very driven,” says Baker. “They want to be able to be creative in how they develop business and want to make sure the effort they put forth is going to eventually produce. And to really do that, I think you need a clear idea of what their territory is. This has been very successful for us.”

The marketing strategy takes a page from this book as well. BOWA operates two separate marketing plans: one is conceived and executed at the corporate level over its entire market; the other is planned and implemented separately in each geographic area.

“We allow the various sales people in their geographical areas to create budget and marketing for their particular area,” says Baker. “And then we do some global, corporate marketing as well. We’ve been doing it this way for about two years. Everything we do is geared toward accountability and making sure everything is aligned appropriately. Why shouldn’t the folks who know the territory the best have a good sense of where the dollars that are going to be spent will have the most impact to benefit them? It just seems to make sense.”

In May 2006, BOWA instituted an on-time guarantee that it had been pondering for some time. Because the company’s sweet spot is the high-end market, guaranteeing finished projects on time presented a fair amount of risk. The solution BOWA devised came in the form of a partnership agreement of sorts between BOWA and the client. At contract, the customer is informed that they must meet all project preparation and product selection deadlines – and stay under a certain percentage of change order increases – to qualify for the guarantee. In return, BOWA guarantees the project will be finished on time or it will reward the customer with a luxury trip to an Exclusive Resorts destination.

“I felt that if we wanted to make a statement, and this is what everybody hates about the remodeling industry or the custom home, that their project is taking so long, then that’s got to be our guarantee,” says Weinberg. “Talk about putting our money where our mouth is. But it had to percolate for a while because at the ultra-high end, a lot of the schedule is driven by the client and whether their selections are made on time or whether they bring in a designer that wants to design as you go. There’s so much that we can’t control.”

Going forward

Heading into 2007, one of BOWA’s goals is to turn its latest geographic expansion, in Loudoun and Fauquier Counties, into a vital profit center. The company opened a new office in Middleburg, Va., in October 2005 after receiving numerous inquiries from past clients and new prospects in that area, and it’s already proven to be a good move.

“It’s getting busier and busier,” says Baker. “We’ve got a couple projects going there now and more on the books. We’re going to do a nice bit of business there in 2007. We’re certainly doing more marketing. We’re actually doing some advertising. We’re supporting more golf tournaments and private schools and that sort of thing because we need to make more of a splash.”

To gain some brand recognition in the new area, BOWA even took on a rare commercial renovation, at the Middleburg Tennis Club. It even had several hundred towels made with both the BOWA and Middleburg Tennis logos on them because the club’s laundry service would be down.

“It’s a little bit out of our sweet spot, but it’s one of the main social clubs in the town, so there’s a lot of visibility,” says Weinberg. “It’s the kind of thing that in the heart of McLean we probably would have shied away from. But when you’re breaking into a new market, and it was an architect that we’ve been wooing there, and it’s a sort of a rescue project, which is higher risk. But if we can come in as the white knight, it’s good for us, especially in a new market where we’re trying to make a name for ourselves.” **PR**



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California Reconstruction

A professor creates an accessible interior for his son while maintaining a historical exterior for the community

By Wendy A. Jordan
Contributing Editor

In typical earthquake-country fashion, a run-down old farmhouse sparked a big shake-up in Mountain View. Alward Construction had the task of putting everything back in order.

A Stanford University professor bought the property in May 2001, intending to replace the 1904 house with an accessible new one for his 30-something son, who uses a wheelchair. The professor planned to add a second house at the other end of the double lot for him and his wife.



THE FINANCIALS

Alward Construction works exclusively on a time and materials basis, partly out of tradition. "I started working as a youngster being paid by the hour," says Keith Alward, and he still likes this straightforward compensation method. What about the risk of financial disputes, especially on an expensive project like this one? Time and materials "requires the owners to be very trusting, and if they trust you I find that you can trust them," he says. "Our crews are so good that I don't get problems" with clients saying they aren't working efficiently, he adds. On this project, the architect stayed actively involved, advising the client during construction and approving all invoices. As with all Alward projects, the company had no trouble collecting payment.

Besides, Alward issues change orders. That makes the company's T and M system "a little of an oddball," he admits, but "if a change is going to be made and it has quantifiable effects on the budget we write it up" to keep the clients informed and formalize the decision. Project manager Steve Johnson says many small items on this project were "changed on the fly," but "close to 50 change orders" for more substantial changes were written up.

Job cost reports also help manage expectations. Every two weeks Alward Construction gives the clients a bill accompanied by a report that lists the original budget, all budget modifications that have been made, an itemized list of the money spent to date and of the money remaining in each budget category.

The other reason Alward sticks to T and M is that he sees an inherent unfairness in fixed rate contracts.

"Either you're going to lose money or the owners are at a disadvantage" because the budget is padded to protect the contractor, he says. "I charge them for what it actually cost," adding a gross profit percentage. Alward says his markup, 20 percent, "gives us a lower margin of profit than a lot of companies, but it's sufficient to keep us as a healthy company."

The repositioned house now sits a foot above ground making it easier to run ramps to the entrances. New siding on the addition blends seamlessly with the original.

After photography by Russell Abraham

Budget History

Initial estimate:	\$1,734,000
Change orders	500,000
Choices by the client included bamboo flooring; radiant floor heating; ground floor powder room; elevator, stair, cabinet, drywall and landscaping upgrades. Changes the old house needed included new roof framing and extra ceiling demolition.	
Final price of job:	2,234,000
Cost to produce:	1,861,666
Budgeted gross profit	20%
Actual gross profit	20%



The elevator allows access to the main floor, second floor and basement.

He specifically selected architect Bill Bocook, of B.H. Bocook Architects in Palo Alto, Calif., he says. “Bill redesigned the baseball stadium at Stanford, and it is one of the most beautiful and most handicap accessible” stadiums around. But when the professor submitted Bocook’s plans to replace the old house for city approval, the planning office threw a curve ball, turning it down because it suspected the house was historical and thus could not be razed.

An 18-month debate ensued, concluding with the city’s decision that the house was not historic. By then the professor had had to solve the problem of providing a house for his son. The plan would give the son a spacious house incorporating accessible, universal design features and satisfy the city by preserving the building exterior. Bocook’s solution would jack up the project cost but enable the work to go forward. The professor decided to do it.

The existing two-story building straddled the line between the property’s two lots and, at 2,400 square feet, was too



Wide toe kicks under the lower counters and appliance drawers make it easy to navigate.

small to comfortably house the son and a live-in caretaker. Bocook’s solution: reconstruct the basement, redesign the interior and construct a 1,000-square-foot first floor master suite addition at the rear. The plan would move the house 10 feet closer to the street, which would clear the second lot to make it buildable.

Moving ahead

Bocook recommended three contractors, and the professor gathered estimates from two. “They were within \$100,000 of each other,” he says, around \$1.7 million. One offered a fixed-price contract, which Bocook prefers. However, “he didn’t have the financial resources to take on a project of this scale,” says the professor. The other contractor, Keith Alward, works on a time and materials basis but had earned Bocook’s trust from working with him on another project. Bocook also respected Alward project manager Steve Johnson, who worked on many

Bocook projects over two decades when he ran his own contracting business before joining Alward's company in 2003. After several months of design and budget planning the professor signed a contract with Alward Construction in September 2004.

That fall Alward hired a house mover to raise the building on steel beams, roll it away on a track and secure it on cribbing. Alward's crew dug the hole for the basement, only to encounter heavy rains. "We didn't want the soil to get wet," Johnson says, so several times "we had to cover the hole and stop work for two or three weeks at a time."

In spring 2005, a subcontractor began building the basement. Engineered for earthquake resistance, the structure has 10-inch-thick walls, a thick concrete floor and double mats of 3/4-inch steel. "A soil test showed that the basement would be surrounded by water, so great steps were taken to waterproof it," Johnson says.

While the basement was under construction, Johnson's crew built the detached garage to use for materials storage. They also gutted the house. Bocook's universal design radically changed the floor plan. There was little inside the old house worth saving anyway; after a fire in the 1930s, the house had been "rebuilt in a very sloppy way," explains the professor, and at some point it had been chopped into separate living quarters.

Working with the "cranky" old house presented surprises even during demo, says Johnson. For example, the crew removed the plaster ceiling in one room, only to discover another badly cracked one 5 inches above it. They even found a chimney hidden in the walls. And moving the house into position over the new basement was tricky. "You really have to get everything pretty right," when matching the footprint of an old house says Alward.

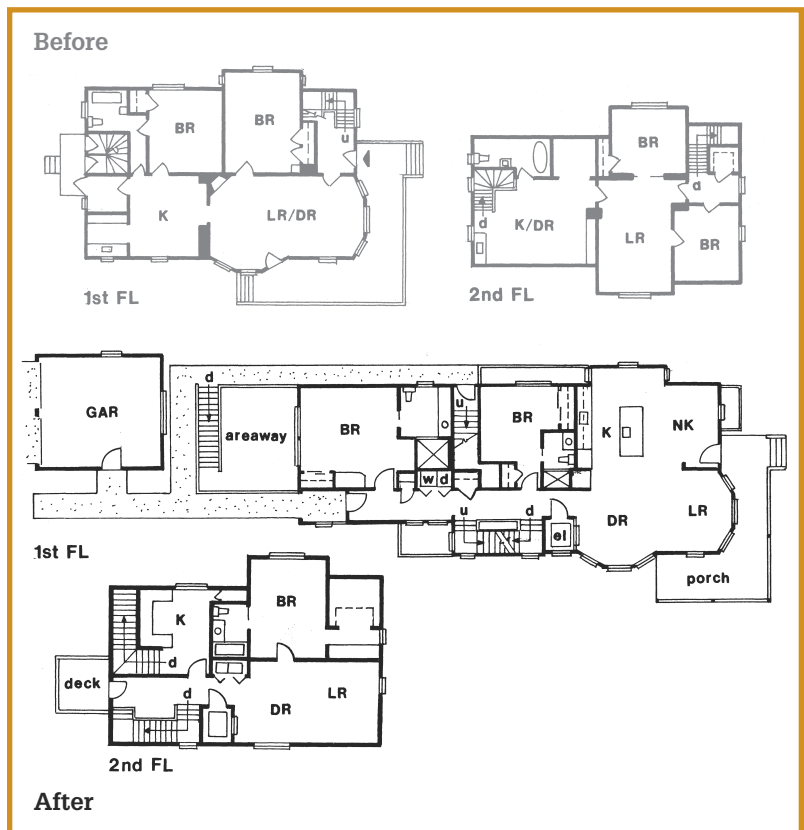
Classic exterior, accessible interior

Originally the house perched 3 feet above ground; on its new foundation it is just a foot above ground, making it much easier to run shallow grade ramps to the entrances, says Bocook. Other than that, the exterior looks unchanged. Alward patched and painted much of the thick old lap siding, lining up the thinner new pieces for a seamless surface. Tucked unobtrusively behind the house, the addition ties into the existing structure with matching siding and roofing.

Modern clones take the place of the



The master bath has a chair-height toilet, room for the wheelchair to maneuver and an extended grab bar.





The electronic door opener is placed within easy reach of the son's wheelchair.

dilapidated old columns on the wraparound porch. Energy-efficient look-alikes replace all the existing windows. The windows in the master suite match the style and those in the three-story elevator shaft that Alward built into the

existing house. To complete the period look, the original wrought-iron fencing will be reinstalled around the house.

The bright, contemporary interior incorporates universal design elements that enable the son to enjoy an independent lifestyle. All doorways in the house are at least 3 feet wide and the halls 40-44 inches so the wheelchair can move freely. There's space in the kitchen, baths and other rooms for a wheelchair to get through and turn around. Countertops have rounded corners to avoid scrapes, and cabinets incorporate wide toe-kicks to accommodate a wheelchair user's feet. Light switches are lower than usual – about 3 feet above the floor – and outlets are higher than usual – about 24 inches above the floor – for easy access.

Appliance drawers in the kitchen are handy and accessible. The laundry area has a front loading, side-door washer and dryer. The sunny, high-ceiling master bedroom and bath suite are located on the main floor. The master bathroom features a curbless, roll-in shower with bench seat and handheld shower spray; a sink with legroom underneath; a chair-height toilet; and grab bars. In the bedroom, slide-out trays store clothing. The desk in the master suite houses the command center for the whole-house music system. The new basement offers entertainment space and a fitness center.

Likewise, Alward built stairs on the other side of the house so the caretaker living in the second floor apartment can come and go without passing through the son's living space. The physical therapist can enter from the side without going through the house.

The project involved scores of change orders, some to upgrade selections, others to address old-house surprises, and still others that addressed problems such as the kitchenette refrigerator the professor selected without realizing it would be deeper than the counters. Alward modified the cabinets during final cleanup at the job.

As the professor says, building a complete house like this is a learning process. But in the final test, when the son moves in, the team hopes this house will earn an A. **PR**

SNAPSHOT



Keith Alward

Alward Construction Co. Inc.

Location: Berkeley, Calif.

Type of company: Full service remodeling

Staff model: 7 office, 25 field

Years in business: 27

Sales history:

2002	\$3,349,000
2003	3,839,000
2004	5,465,000
2005	6,373,000
2006 (projected)	6,500,000

Annual jobs: 125

Work week: 42.5 hours

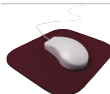
Software: Microsoft Office (Excel, Project, Word), ACT, American Contractor

Contact: 510/527-6498;

www.alwardconstruction.com

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Pictured: Rainier Maple Natural Kitchen



kitchen remodel

The Good Swap

Moving the kitchen and laundry room gave owners the link to the family room they craved

Homeowners at this Philomath, Ore., remodel knew they wanted to integrate the kitchen into the family room and came to Powell Construction with a clear vision, designer Deborah Flaming says. Students at the nearby university had studied the house for a project and offered

The island serves as a buffer between the kitchen and family room and provides more serving and prep space for entertaining. The built-in bookshelves and custom cantilevered breakfast bar — a special request of the homeowners — also stands out. Flaming says the countertop's two-inch lip and the sheen of the bird's eye maple, which reflects the rope lighting overhead, visually enhance the kitchen and aesthetic value while using inexpensive products.

After photos: Marcus Berg, Unique Angles Photography

Few exterior windows in the new kitchen presented a serious challenge, but designer Deborah Flaming of Powell Construction notes that reflective surfaces — slate and marble flooring, mirrored backsplashes, silver paint on the tray ceiling and glass cabinet doors — maximize light from the multi-layered track and can and undercabinet lighting. Additionally, the yellow countertops brighten the space.

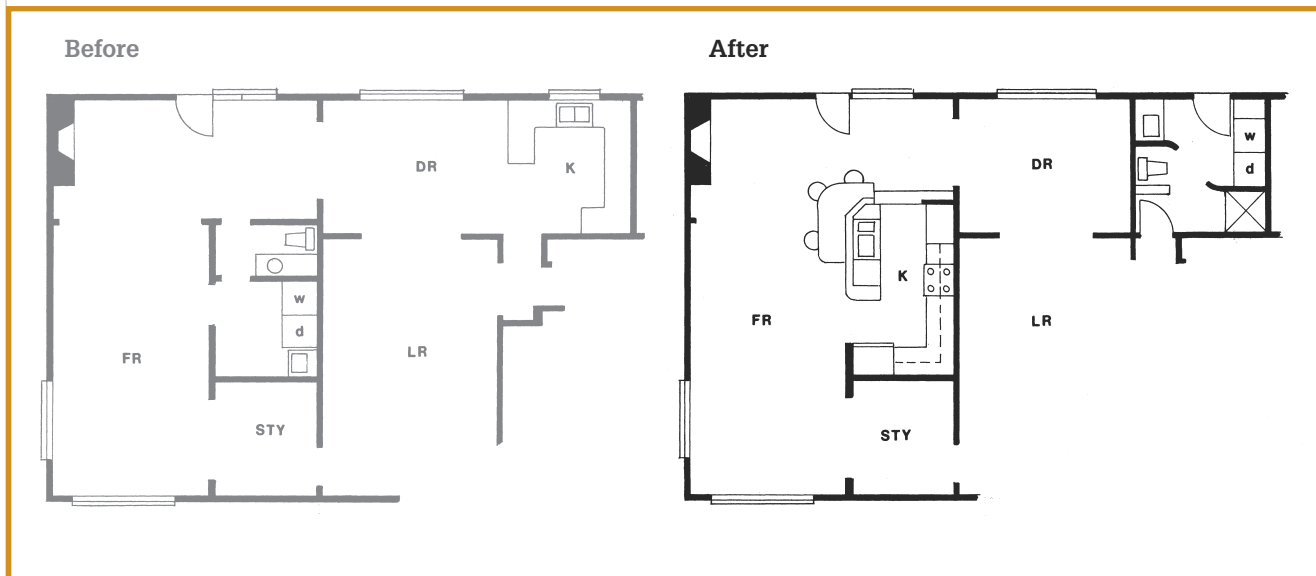


Remodeler: Powell Construction
Project location: Philomath, Ore.
Age of Home: 30 years
Scope of work: Move a kitchen from the back of a ranch-style home to better integrate an existing family room

the homeowners ideas to fix the spatial relationships of their home and create more natural, obvious transitions. “The customers had been through a lot of options and ruled out things through that process — not every client has that luxury, but there were still a lot of questions, especially around access and structure.”

To accomplish the homeowners’ goal, the firm decided to swap the laundry room and kitchen even though it meant all electrical wiring had to be rerouted to the back of the home. The homeowners also wanted to offset the 500-square-foot kitchen from the surrounding space, which





Flaming did by using a tray ceiling and soffit, adding a unique element to the kitchen.

Powell's design/build approach to the project, Flaming says, shows high-end and mid-range elements can be successfully mixed. The kitchen's one-of-a-kind aspects, such as the custom knife block and open shelving to display the homeowner's vintage cookware collection,

highlight the space's personality and quirkiness. Mounting necessities such as electrical plug strips behind the light bar on the upper cabinets (and ensuring the angle of the mirrored backsplash didn't reveal the placement) and choosing appliances with hidden controls ensure these design elements pop out visually and keep the small space clear in the midst of its surroundings.

"It wasn't particularly about using the not-so-big house concept, but we kept the scope of the project very focused," Flaming says, noting that the three-month, \$47,700 project represents a truly noteworthy value proposition when the range of work — structural alterations and renovation — and affordability of the neighborhood are considered. "There is very little creepage into accompanying rooms, and by using laminate cabinets and countertops we made the kitchen unique though it's not fancy.

"I think this project shows that customers are often better off putting their money into two or three nice things that are going to be the 'wow' factor, and then everything else can go middle of the road. At the end, it all blends." **PR**

— Meghan Haynes

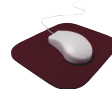
What's in the Definition

The breakfast bar's design and new tray ceiling required removing the walls and headers of the family room and cutting ceiling rafters. Flaming couldn't simply add posts to replace the supports because they would have disturbed the aesthetics of the floating breakfast bar. Instead, Powell added footers to the supporting beams at either end of the space and hoisted a Glulam beam above the attic rafters for support. Because the Glulam beam was too heavy to lift to the attic, the team used three 2-inch beams.

The tray shape was then surrounded by posts hidden in the walls — a move that required complex framing — and a ceiling lip was formed to hide the flush box lighting that runs around the ceiling's perimeter. "The precision necessary to craft the tray ceiling was tricky — everything from the thickness of the drywall, diameter of the rope light and color of paint had to be considered. But we were very happy with how it turned out. The proportions go with the room and the box isn't too narrow," Flaming says.

PRODUCTS LIST

Cabinets: Nevamar. **Countertops:** Wilsonart. **Faucets:** Delta, Kohler. **Lighting Fixtures:** Kichler. **Appliances:** Amana, Bosch, Frigidaire, ISE. **Paints & Stains:** Sherwin-Williams



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condo remodel

Urban Renewal

Two rundown apartments create the canvas for a high-end condo

Remodeler: Silent Rivers

Project Location: Des Moines, Iowa

Age of home: 96 years

Scope of work: Gutting two existing apartments to create an artist's home and studio

Downtown Des Moines has seen a resurgence in recent years as residents move back to the riverfront that anchors Iowa's capital city. The new homeowners are looking for historic ambience combined with the modern conveniences of central city living.

This three-story brick walk-up was saved from demolition more than 10 years ago by the local neighborhood association, which converted the empty shell to a low-income rental property. Now, after years of neglect by renters, the building again needed rescuing. This time, the association



The central living area of the condominium was intended to be the social core, designed around the dual fireplace.

After photos by Chaden Halfhill





Halfhill designed the master suite with stepped walls to divide the space, but still maintain the openness equated with a contemporary urban loft. The translucent polycarbonate backs of the bookshelves allow light from the central living areas to filter into the master suite.



Crews removed the casing from the original windows by hand so it could be used again in the renovation — a move that melded the historic and contemporary styles.

make the most of the limited space and encourage creative flow, Halfhill says. The master suite is positioned to benefit from the early eastern sun, so Suzanne can sit and think about her designs in the morning before moving to the working studio in the western wing. The two fireplaces, originally designed to be centered in the room, anchor the central living space. Venting requirements made that impossible, so instead the fireplaces were offset, which opened the views between the rooms.

Silent Rivers also extensively used glass throughout the unit as another way to open up the space. "It takes advantage of all the different light sources, both natural and artificial," Halfhill says.

Not the usual project

Besides the many technical challenges of remodeling the nearly 100-year-old space, a unique ownership structure also made the project unusual.

Because it was a charity project, Silent Rivers was expected to donate many of its normal fees. Company president Chaden Halfhill estimates about \$67,000 would have been billed to a normal client but was not collected in this case. To recoup some of those costs, Silent Rivers bought the condominium on option with a contract that calls for the company to pay the neighborhood association when the property sells. So far, the condominium, completed in 2004, is still on the market.

"Honestly, I think it's a little before its time," Halfhill says. "It'll sell eventually, but we're not going to get what we put into it. But that wasn't the point of the project either."

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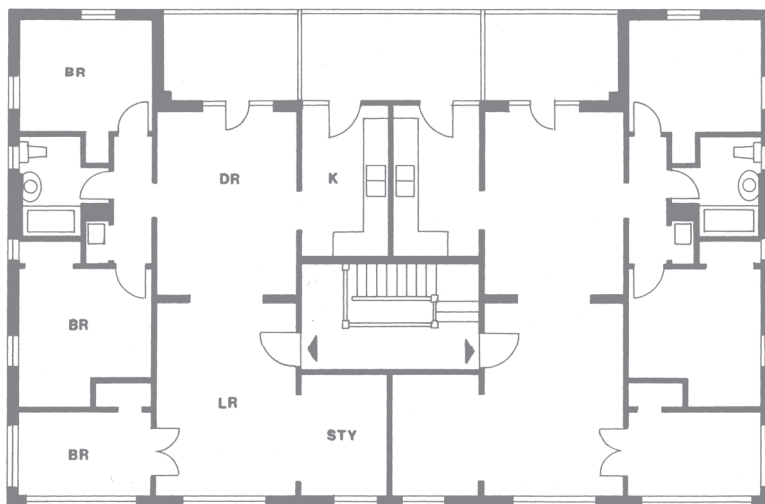
Ensemble™ 42" Bath shown in White. 71111110-0
Ensemble 48" Tile Shower shown in White. 72120100-0

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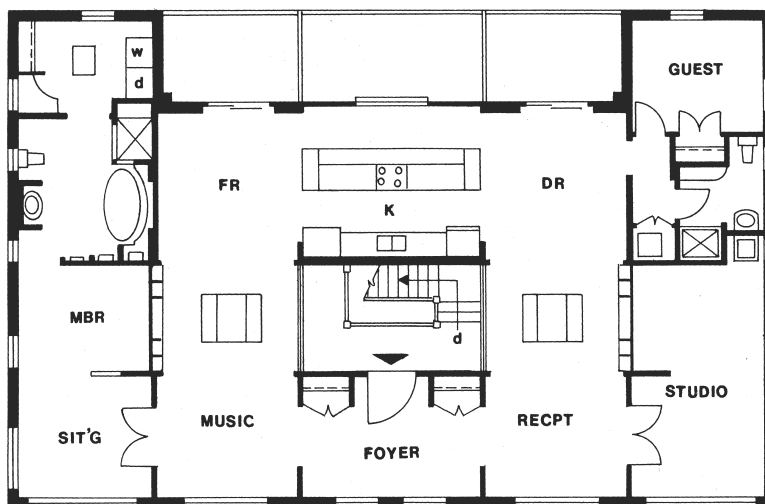
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Before



After



The kitchen uses four stained glass panels to take advantage of the southern light and create warmth; limestone countertops; and dual wood (oak and maple) cabinets designed to mimic the salvaged trim from the original building and contribute to the traditional feel.

The entryway has an abstract relief, designed by a local artist, mounted about a foot from the ceiling. The design of the frieze was carried into the main living space, which helped incor-

porate the entryway into the rest of the unit and separate it from the other staircase and other common areas.

Although experienced with residential remodeling, Silent Rivers had never tackled a project quite like this before.

"A condo has a lot more commercial aspects to it that we're not used to," Halfhill says. "It took a lot more planning and consideration of different issues."

Features such as sprinklers, shared



Silent Rivers designed the kitchen for modern convenience with a traditional appearance.

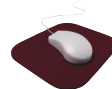
walls and centralized mechanicals all made the project different than the company's typical work. Halfhill and his team also had to carefully consider how changes they made would impact the companies remodeling the other two floors and the exterior of the building. For example, the company was not able to implement its original design for the bathroom because the other floorplans kept the same footprint. What began as a larger, formal room had to be redesigned as a smaller asymmetrical space that incorporated a salvaged pocket door to hide the washer and dryer.

In the end, most of these changes ended up being positive, because it forced the team to be more creative in their design, Halfhill says: "We ended up with something that reflected what people are looking for now, but still references the architecture of the period." **PR**

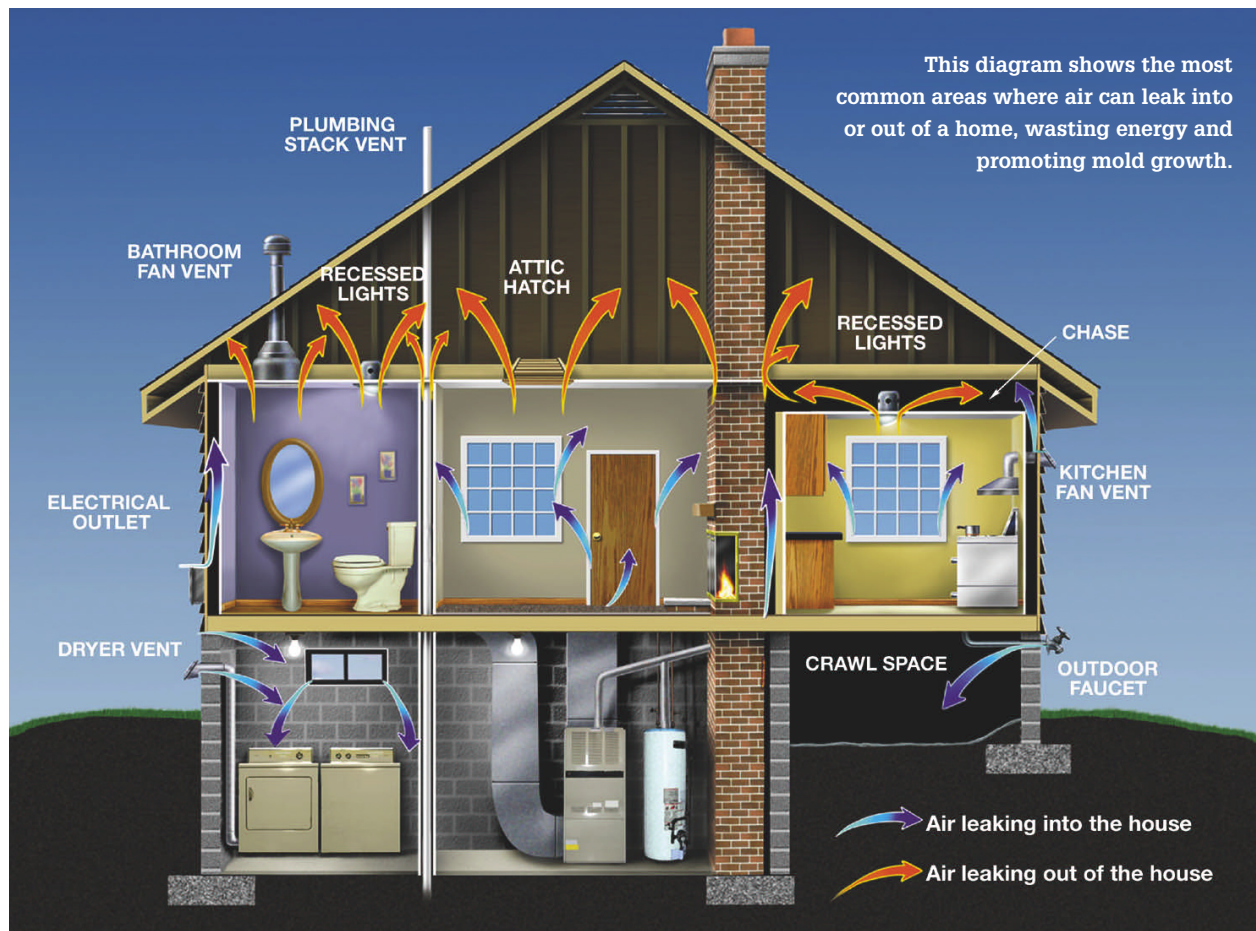
—Jonathan Sweet

PRODUCTS LIST

Appliances: Jenn-Air. **Cabinets:** Omega. **Ceramic tile:** Florida Tile, Walker Zanger. **Doors:** Woodharbor, Porte Blindate. **Faucets:** Kohler. **Fireplaces:** Travis Industries. **Paints & Stains:** Benjamin Moore. **Sinks:** Kohler. **Windows:** Eagle.



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Open a Faucet of Revenue

Bathroom remodels can deliver comfort and quality

By Scott T. Shepherd
PATH Partners

Jacuzzis. Saunas. Granite countertops. These may be your client's idea of comfort and quality in a bathroom remodel, but the fancy extras can't make up for what's in the walls and under the floor – where comfort and quality truly begin.

The basics

A drafty bathroom is an uncomfortable one. So is a humid bathroom, which can

lead to mold. Prevent or solve these problems in three easy steps: seal air leaks, insulate and ventilate.

Seal leaks in the walls and floor and around plumbing and electrical penetrations with caulk or expanding foam. Besides wasting energy, air leaks may also allow moist air into the walls, which will reduce the effectiveness of the insulation and support mold growth.

Next, fill the cavities of existing uninsulated exterior frame walls with blown-in cellulose or fiberglass. If you have to replace the existing wallboard, fill the

cavities with batt insulation first.

Now ventilate with a bathroom fan, which is the best way to control excess moisture. Proper ventilation prevents mold and mildew and prolongs the life of paint and wallpaper.

Still, a fan is only effective if homeowners use it, and if it's noisy, they won't. Pick a fan with a noise level of 0.3 sones or less, and make it an Energy Star qualified model to ensure maximum energy savings.

Then remind your client to turn it on before every bath and shower. The fan

should stay on for another 20 minutes after the water is shut off.

Natural light

Good lighting creates ambiance – and shows off good work. For natural lighting, choose double-paned, argon-filled Energy Star qualified windows and skylights, which can make an especially big difference in the comfort of a bathroom with inefficient single-pane windows. Efficient windows also eliminate fogging and problems with condensation running off the window onto the sill.

Replacing windows may solve another problem: in homes built before 1978, the windows likely have layers of lead paint, which will create lead dust every time the paint on the window scrapes against the frame.

If new windows are beyond your client's budget or the client likes the current windows, you can suggest adding storm windows, which will also improve comfort and cut energy costs.

And what if you're remodeling an interior bathroom and windows aren't an option?

Try tubular skylights, also called solar tubes, which have a roof-mounted light collector and a reflective sun scoop that directs sunlight into a tube. The tube guides the sunlight to a lens that spreads light evenly throughout the room.

"I've been installing them for more than 10 years," says Sylvain Côté, president of Absolute Remodeling in South Salem, N.Y. "Tubular skylights are a great way to give the warmth of the sun to a room, plus it limits the need for artificial lights."

You can integrate the skylight with electrical lights, so the fixture provides light both day and night. The tubes also can be installed with baffles to regulate the amount of incoming sunlight.

Storm windows and Energy Star qualified windows and skylights are eligible for federal income tax credits. (See Resources for more information on tax credits.)



Tubular skylights let light shine into windowless spaces like interior bathrooms or hallways.

Better plumbing

While planning any necessary repiping, consider using cross-linked polyethylene (PEX), flexible piping that can be easily snaked through walls and crawlspaces.

"Above all, flexible piping is ideal in retrofits or additions where you are working with the existing piping," says Tommy Strong, a project manager with Brothers Strong in Houston. "It greatly reduces the time needed for piping."

PEX also reduces cutting, welding, and gluing for the plumber, which can result in labor cost savings for you.

Sometimes a job like a bathroom remodel requires replacing old piping, particularly if there is a history of pinhole leaks, malfunctioning valves or leaky fittings. In that case, consider replacing it all with PEX plumbing and a home-run plumbing system, one of the simplest plumbing improvements a remodeler can make.

A home-run system includes a plumbing manifold, a control center for hot and cold water that feeds plastic supply lines to individual fixtures. A manifold essentially acts like a fuse box for the water supply, allowing you to turn off

the water one fixture at a time. This simplifies maintenance if the plumbing ever springs a leak and makes it easy to add or modify fixtures in the future.

Less piping; fewer penetrations

If you could reduce the need for conventional pipe venting and roof penetrations, you'd put fewer holes in the roof, use less flashing around roof vents, and have fewer callbacks because of a roof leak. With air admittance valves (AAVs), this isn't just a pipe dream.

These pressure-activated, one-way mechanical valves are installed in a plumbing drain system, taking the place of through-the-roof or through-the-wall pipe venting. They operate automatically with the discharge of wastewater, such as a toilet flush or an opened drain.

Codes usually require only one plumbing vent when you use AAVs. Because AAVs eliminate a lot of piping, the cost – typically between \$25 and \$40 – can result in net savings. They also require less installation labor: no extra penetrations; no extra piping. AAVs are ideal for remodelers.

Plus, it's going to be a long time before

the homeowner has to replace one. American Society of Sanitary Engineers standards require AAVs to last about 30 years, while some manufacturers have tested valves to last up to 80 years.

Instant hot water

Available in electric, gas and propane, tankless water heaters offer an endless supply of hot water and are small enough to fit in a closet, under a sink or on a wall. They are gaining popularity in upscale bathrooms, where homeowners want double sinks with instant hot water to both faucets.

"Tankless water heaters are quite popular among our clients," says Tommy Strong, a project manager with Brothers Strong. "They can really feel the impact as soon as they turn the water on."

While whole-house models are available, point-of-use units are usually more practical for a bathroom remodel because they are easier to install and less expensive.

Tankless heaters don't require energy to keep water hot while it sits in a tank, so they deliver energy savings. Point-of-use water heaters can also deliver water savings because you don't need to flush the standing cold water from a long supply line.

Some tankless water heaters qualify for federal income tax credits.

Even heat, warm feet

If you're looking for bells and whistles – and something your competitor might not have considered – radiant floor heating is a great option. This will keep feet warm and cozy on hard stone or tile floors.

Radiant floor systems pump heated water through tubing under the floor or use electric heating cables under the floor to produce consistent, even heat throughout the room. These systems are energy-efficient and especially clean because they don't use registers, which can kick up dust every time the heat turns on.

"The clients who go with radiant



Air admittance valves (AAVs) eliminate the need for many piping and roof penetrations.

heating always love it," says Côté. "It really adds value to the project."

Radiant floor heating is less common

in remodels because the typical "wet" system isn't usually practical to install in an existing home. But don't let that deter you: a variety of radiant systems are available to meet a variety of needs.

Wet systems require tubing or heating cables to be embedded in the concrete foundation slab, in a lightweight concrete slab on top of a subfloor or over a previously poured slab. This will work well for a large addition.

Dry hot water systems use tubing positioned in loops beneath the finished floor and do not need to be planted in concrete. These systems are ideal for remodeling an existing structure. In electric radiant floor systems, the heating cables must be covered in thinset cement before laying down the new floor.

Other factors to consider: above-floor systems may affect the placement of doors and can make the room feel smaller; below-floor systems may require a higher water temperature to perform as well as above-floor systems. This may be more expensive because you might need a larger heater to ensure the correct water temperature.

Value added

Tommy Strong says his clients are often aware of these products and want more from their remodelers.

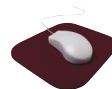
"In most cases, they are looking to add value to the bathroom," he says.

While you still may want to propose that Jacuzzi, do it after you've discussed some of the less glitzy features that will give your clients the real value they're seeking. **PR**

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

Resources

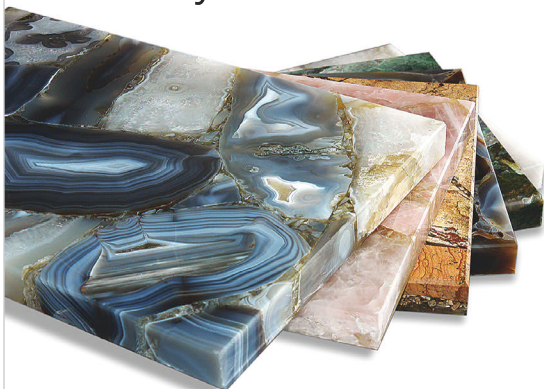
- **Tax credits for homeowners:** www.pathnet.org/homeowners (Click on "Tax Credits" in the Home Improvement box)
- **PATH Tech Set 1: Resource-Efficient Plumbing:** <http://www.pathnet.org/sp.asp?id=14055>
- **PATH Tech Set 4: Energy-Efficient Lighting:** <http://www.pathnet.org/sp.asp?id=16574>
- **Energy Star qualified lighting, windows and ventilation systems:** <http://www.energystar.gov/products>
- **Energy Star bathroom remodels:** http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=remodeling.hm_improvement_bathroom
- **National Association of the Remodeling Industry Green Remodeling Program:** <http://www.nari.org/level2/remodelers/contedu.cfm>



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Cabinets, Countertops and Hardware

New styles and finishes for the kitchen and bathroom



Coverings Etc

Slabs made from semi-precious stones make up the quarried stone surfaces in the Concetto line of countertops and surfaces from Coverings Etc. Each slab has unique shading and patterns and often resembles geodes. Each slab measures 118 by 56 by 1 inches and can be maintained with regular household cleaners. Due to

the relative rarity of the stones, some lines are limited editions. Options include pastello, puro, indigo, nebbia, patina, Rosado and sfumato.

305/757-6000

www.coveringsetc.com

Circle 125 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-125>



Merillat

The new built-to-order, semi-custom cabinet options from Merillat's Masterpiece line include the base corner cabinet feature with a wood Lazy Susan kit, a blind base corner with swing out and an easy-reach wood "Super Susan." Each option provides more flexibility in a limited amount of space. New colors include a dark brown peppercorn; golden praline; off-white Irish cream; and medium brown toffee.

517/263-0771

www.merillat.com

Circle 126 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-126>



SA Baxter

The Artisan series from hardware manufacturer SA Baxter offers decorative and intricate design options from artists such as jeweler Paul Ribolotti, sculptor Thomas Kurilla and goldsmith Judith Frey. The line includes polished nickel or hand-finished, rough antique finishes. Each piece of hardware is created at the company's own foundry in New York. Customer-submitted designs can be replicated as well.

800/407-4295

www.sabaxter.com

Circle 127 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-127>



VT Industries

The new contoured-edge laminate countertops from VT Industries include the Valencia and Barcelona line. The Valencia has a full-wrap profile, and the Barcelona features a double-waterfall edge design. Both are available with or without a backsplash and are formed as a single piece of laminate wrapped around the core material.

800/827-1615

www.vtindustries.com

Circle 128 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-128>



Yorktowne Cabinetry

The Stockton door style from Yorktowne Cabinetry now comes in hickory and oak. The company also offers the line in cherry and maple. The cabinets have a recessed solid wood center panel with 3-inch stiles and rails, and a 5-piece drawer replaces other offerings. The company offers several staining or glazing options. Character finish packages are also available.

800/777-0065

www.yorhtownecabinetry.com

Circle 129 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-129>



Diamond Cabinetry

Included in the company's three Maple door styles is the Laureldale door from Diamond Cabinetry. The door features mitered corners and a 5-piece drawer front with solid raised-panel construction, full overlay design, and wide stiles and rails with blended curves. The door is available in most of the company's standard and premium finishes.

www.diamondcabinets.com

Circle 130 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-130>



Starmark

The Woolridge cabinet door from Starmark Cabinetry has a raised center panel, and its sister line, the Willowbrook door, has a flat center panel. Both have wide stiles and rails and a double-bevel on the edge. The look is repeated on the profile of the moulding around the center panel.

800/594-9444
www.starmarkcabinetry.com
Circle 134 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-134>



Eos Surfaces

The Eos solid surface is a 1 1/4-inch-thick countertop with the look of natural stone without seams. The surface is non-porous and resistant to heat, scratches and most household acids. It can be fabricated with integrated bowls and backsplashes. Colors include glacier, marine pebble, blue sand, Castlerock and Portland. The line has a 10-year transferable warranty.

800/719-3671
www.eos-surfaces.com
Circle 131 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-131>



Wm Ohs

The Transitions line from Wm Ohs is hand-crafted and hand-finished in three styles: Asian, American and European. The Asian line is relatively minimalist; the American has wider cabinet doors with stainless steel accents; and the European option has warm-colored wood doors and clean lines.

303/371-6550
www.wmozs.com
Circle 135 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-135>



Cole & Co.

The Marquetry Star Chest vanity from the Designer series "Bathroom in a Box" from Cole & Co. is made with veneer patterns that match hardwoods. The vanity comes with a marble top and brass sink with aged brass wide-spread faucet. The line also includes the Hollywood Sink Chest with an off-white marble top and chrome faucet.

www.vanitybath.com
Circle 132 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-132>



Formica

The Riverwash high-pressure laminate finish countertop collection by Formica has low-luster gloss textures in Crete and rust design series. The Crete series resembles cast concrete with multicolored stones. The rust series has more options, including plaster rust that resembles ivory or the deep brown and gold of the bronze rust option.

800/FORMICA
www.formica.com
Circle 136 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-136>



Knap & Vogt

The KV in-line undermount drawer slide from Knap & Vogt Manufacturing Co. has a removable dampener for easy installation, an ergonomically-designed front release lever and true full extension slides. The soft-close cylinder prevents slamming. The drawers are available in 9 to 22-inch lengths and have a limited lifetime warranty.

616/459-3311
www.kv.com
Circle 133 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-133>



Century Hardware

The Vineyard collection from Century Hardware uses the Northern Californian wine country as its inspiration for the motif, which includes grape, vine and leaf designs. The line has several finishes, including rubbed and distressed looks. The company now has more than 40 collections.

888/700-9778
www.century-hardware.com
Circle 137 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-137>

A photograph of a red brick house with a white door and a white door frame. Two black lantern-style light fixtures are mounted on the brick wall. A white sign is mounted on the brick wall to the right of the door. The sign features a small image of a brick wall at the top, followed by the text "REJUVENATE WITH", "BORAL" in large black letters, and "ReCote" in large orange letters. Below the text is the Boral logo, which consists of a yellow and green rectangle with the word "BORAL" above it.

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- o 1.800.5BORAL5
- o WWW.BORALBRICKS.COM

For FREE info go to <http://pr.ims.ca/5223-10>



North River Mint

Featuring intricate designs and cast in antique pewter or bronze patina, the Southwestern Mint are handmade in the U.S., lead-free and are quality-guaranteed. Though the company offers a wide range of sizes within the line, most knobs measure an average of 2¼ by 1½ inches. Knobs with embedded turquoise are also available.

800/914-9087
www.northrivermint.com
Circle 138 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-138>



HomeCrest Cabinetry

The Softouch drawer guide from HomeCrest Cabinetry uses a hidden mechanism with lubricated synthetic rollers that allows the drawer to close easily. The Softouch allows a drawer to be removed from its housing without difficulty. The line is available as an upgrade on the company's ¾-inch Deluxe wood drawers. The device supports 15- and 18-inch tracks.

www.homecrestcab.com
Circle 139 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-139>



Wilsonart

The Bella and Sedona design series laminate granite countertop option from Wilsonart have a distressed look and mixed matte and gloss textures. The Bella resembles the look of granite while the Sedona has the appearance of aged travertine and tumbled stone. The line is available in several color schemes.

800/433-3222
www.wilsonartlaminates.com
Circle 140 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-140>



Treefrog Veneer

The real wood veneer laminates from Treefrog Veneer feature two new horizontal cross-grains. Five vertical and figured laminates have been added to the company's existing line and are made in 4- by 8-foot sheets. Treefrog utilizes sustainable forestry methods, and the composite wood assembly techniques eliminate most of the natural imperfections.

800/830-5448
www.treefrogveneer.com
Circle 141 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-141>



BHK

The solid wood drawers from BHK are constructed with Birch lumber and are available with an optional UV finish. Drawers are customized according to grove location and are offered in ½-inch or ⅝-inch thicknesses. Unfinished blanks are available via special order. The company also has Birch-wrapped drawers made from Birch veneer.

800/724-4212
www.bhkofamerica.com
Circle 142 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-142>



Cambria

Four new colors are available in the Quarry Collection from Cambria countertops, including the Sussex, Dover, Southampton and Hyde Park. The Sussex has a gray and blue on chocolate brown finish; the Dover is in a subtle tan; the Southampton has a mixture of black, gray, copper and blue; and the Hyde Park has gray and light green tones.

866/CAMBRIA
www.cambriausa.com
Circle 143 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-143>



Outwater Plastics

The latest 304-grade stainless steel knobs and pulls from Outwater Plastics Industries architectural products are made in an assortment of standard and irregular sizes and shapes. According to the company, they can be used in a wide variety of traditional to modern applications and require little maintenance other than wiping with a damp rag.

800/835-4400
www.outwater.com
Circle 144 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-144>



Shenandoah

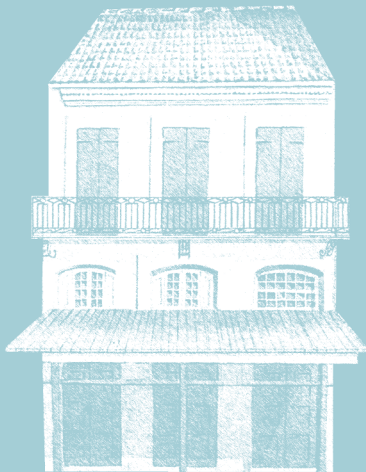
The CushionClose silent drawer system from Shenandoah cabinetry is an automatic, self-closing system that uses air dampers to prevent drawer slams. The drawers operate on steel ball bearings. The silent drawer system is available on the company's premium, full-access dovetail hardwood drawers.

www.shenandoahcabinetry.com
Circle 145 or go to
<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-145>

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Armstrong

The European-inspired Mod-erno collection from Armstrong is fashioned out of an all-plywood box construction and hardwood plywood sides and bottom panels. The interiors are finished with a clear-coat sealer and have the company's Cushion Tec side-mounted drawer guides. Toffee, natural, mocha and café finishes are available.

800/527-5903

www.armstrong.com

Circle 146 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-146>



KitchenCraft Cabinetry

The aXesso storage compartments from KitchenCraft Cabinetry include the company's Tall Tandem and Tall Dispensa pantry systems as well as the aXesso Round Waste bin that offers a pull-out option. The Base Slide-out (shown) comes in several variations and container configurations to allow separate sections for household waste and recycling.

www.kitchencraft.com

Circle 147 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-147>



el:

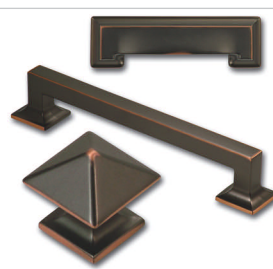
The new sustainable cabinetry line from el:, dubbed "eco-chic" by the company, features a variety of panel options and harvested wood types, including reclaimed rift-cut oak, lyptus, beech and bamboo in several non-toxic finishes. The cabinet line currently has three door styles: paneled, recessed/beveled and flat.

847/382-9285

www.el-furniture.com

Circle 148 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-148>



Hickory Hardware

The post-Victorian look of the Studio Collection of decorative cabinet hardware from Hickory Hardware is inspired by the 19th-century metal workings of Christopher Dresser. Bright nickel, oil-rubbed bronze and Venetian bronze finishes are available. Knobs come in 1-, 1¼ and 3-inch sizes. 96 and 128mm pulls are also offered.

www.hickoryhardware.com

Circle 149 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-149>



Omega Cabinetry

The Baroque finish for cabinet doors from Omega Cabinetry have an antique feel that is meant to create, according to the company, an "heirloom appeal." The doors are made with a technique similar to furniture distressing methods. The stain has a light finish and is available in pecan and alder wood, and only offered through the company's Custom line.

www.omegacabinetry.com

Circle 150 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-150>



MNG

The Striped series of knobs and pulls from MNG have round and egg-shaped knobs available in 1¼-inch and 1½-inch sizes. Mount pulls and clapper pulls are available in 5-inch or 9-inch from center-to-center. Six finishes are available: brass antique, silver antique, oil-rubbed bronze, satin or polished chrome and polished brass.

215/357-5700

www.mnghardware.com

Circle 151 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-151>



Hettich International

The Interamat Silent System from Hettich International allows cabinet doors to close almost silently. The line offers three options for cushioned closure, including a clipped-on-the-hinge arm; screw-mounted at the top or bottom; or screwed onto the hinge cup. The company also offers the Quadro V6 full extension undermount drawer slide.

800/HETTICH

www.hettichamerica.com

Circle 152 or go to

<http://pr.ims.ca/5223-152>



Fieldstone Cabinetry

The latest design options from Fieldstone Cabinetry, in collaboration with Enkeboll Designs, include the Woodfield door style in Cherry wood finished in Chestnut. For a more aged or distressed look, the company says dark pockets, pin knots and random streaks are common and that the wood will darken when exposed to light.

800/339-5369

www.fieldstonecabinetry.com

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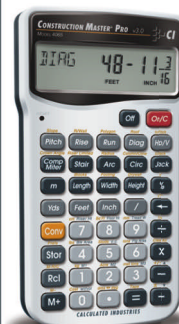
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Larger firms feast on profits

Harvard research also points to increased competition

Remodeling contractors with more than \$1 million in annual revenue accounted for more than 57 percent of the industry's annual billings, according to Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies' tabulations of 2002 census data.

Only 12.1 percent of the country's remodeling firms generated more than \$1 million per year, however, and they employed just 41 percent of the industry's manpower. So the nation's largest remodelers are producing the most revenue – and highest profit margins – per employee, in the industry.

The report, released at Harvard's Remodeling Futures Conference in November, also revealed that the number of remodeling contractor establishments



increased from 401,000 in 1997 to more than 530,000 in 2002. Most of the new companies that had entered the industry were self-employed contractors (77 percent) versus those with payrolls (33 percent).

Harvard reported that the remodeling market reached \$280 billion in 2005, nearly double what it was in 1995.

Two Elected to Hall of Fame

The nation's leading remodeling economists, Gopal Ahluwalia and Kermit Baker, recently were inducted into the Remodelers Council National Remodeling Hall of Fame. As vice president of research at NAHB, Ahluwalia analyzed the remodeling market for more than 20 years.

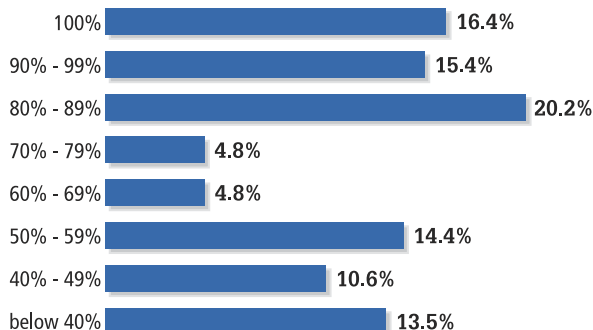
At one time, he was the only economist researching the industry and offering analysis. Baker leads the Remodeling Futures program at Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies. His research topics include why homeowners remodel and demographic/regional drivers of remodeling.

Lead Safety Update

An NAHB Lead-Based Paint Task Force presented to the EPA in November results of its study on lead safety at five residential projects. The study showed houses have less of a lead-dust hazard after remodeling than before remodeling, except when a worker performs uncontrolled sanding or sanding using a power tool without a vacuum attachment. The EPA's final rule on lead safety is not expected until 2008.

THE RESULTS

What percentage of your jobs come from repeats & referrals?



Results from November reader poll as of November 22, 2006.

THE POLL

What is your company's New Year's resolution?

1. Increase margins
2. Increase leads
3. Increase closing rates
4. Increase market share
5. Improve production systems
6. Improve customer satisfaction
7. All of the above
8. None of the above

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