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Normandy Builders' Jack Steindl,
Andy Wells and Reg Marzec

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DECEMBER 2007

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DELEGATION WORKS, IF YOU LET IT

Those of us who feel like we're pretty good at our jobs tend to subscribe to the theory that if you want something done right, you've got to do it yourself. We are commonly known as workaholics.

Then there are the smart folks who hire good people, train them well and delegate important duties to them. If you're a member of the former group and would like to get control of your hectic life as well as continue to succeed in business, I suggest you read a couple of articles in this month's issue.

I would start by reading about the growth strategy of our 2007 Remodeler of the Year, Normandy Builders ("Growth by Design," page 24). Normandy, a wildly successful Chicago remodeling firm, got that way because the company's founders, Jack Steindl and Reg Marzec, carried the load for most of the last 28 years themselves.

As the company grew, however, they realized they needed to delegate some of what they had personally attended to from the beginning to others. This not only allowed them to leave behind the crazy 70-hour work weeks that many young entrepreneurs carry; it also allowed their company to grow and prosper to the point that they were, frankly, an easy choice to receive this year's honor.

"Bringing Dan (Schoendorff) and Laurie (Camp) aboard have been very important," Steindl says of Normandy's new sales director and marketing director. "They are approaching their roles in a much more professional way than we ever did. Laurie knows her way around after working at an advertising agency, and the fact that she's focusing on it every day, rather than when we would treat (marketing) as a side, side, side issue, makes a big difference.

"Every day she's thinking of new



Michael R. Morris

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ads, new concepts and going over the bills, and that was one of my duties in the past. I probably didn't spend two hours a week on it, so there's a great big difference in how much time is being spent on that stuff. Our lead count is up, thanks to Laurie, and our closing ratio, which I give Dan credit for, is going down. And those are two nice things right there."

Founded in 1979, Normandy is a great example of a mature remodeling firm that has benefitted from delegation. This month's Remodelers' Exchange ("Delegation Done Right," page 16) features two relatively young remodelers whose organizations are improving thanks to their willingness and ability to coach their employees and delegate responsibilities.

"In 2004 and 2005, I was the project manager/bookkeeper/plumber/salesperson/carpenter," says Greg Rittler, owner of Kanon Group in Towson, Md. "You name it, and I did it. I was really pulling my hair out."

If this sounds at all like you, maybe your New Year's resolution should be to start delegating in 2008. **PR**



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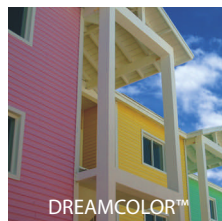
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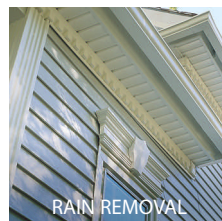
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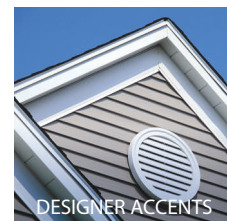
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Making Angie's List work for you

What gets said about your company online can be one of the hardest things to manage. Whether it's comments on a local forum or postings on a national service like Angie's List, you never know what potential clients will see written about your company.

While some companies are scared of that, Remodel Works Bath and Kitchen in Poway, Calif., has embraced Angie's List as an important part of its success. (Angie's List is an online service that homeowners can use to rate their experience with service providers in a number of fields. Companies



are rated from A to F on a variety of factors including quality and customer service. For more information, visit www.angieslist.com.) Last year, the company won the Angie's List Service Provider of the Year award as the highest-rated

company in San Diego.

When Angie's List started out several years ago, the remodeler found that it was getting business from the site because of positive reviews left by past clients.

"This wasn't something we knew about, but once we did, we embraced it," says General Manager Ryan Christenson.

"Now we encourage our clients to use the site to leave feedback for us whether it's good or bad."

Christenson estimates that referrals from Angie's List account for 30 percent of the company's \$6.5 million in annual sales.

>> If you have a **Trade Secret** you would like to share, e-mail Senior Editor Jonathan Sweet at jonathan.sweet@reedbusiness.com.

Seeing the big picture

When Greg Theis brings potential clients into his showroom, he hopes the display separates him from other remodelers.

Theis, president of Greg E. Theis Remodeling in St. Cloud, Minn., recently added a 42-inch television to the showroom that he can use to show clients plans using Chief Architect or visit product Web sites. He's just started using the new television but plans to have his



system running smoothly by the time the slow winter remodeling season is over.

"We try to get them here because they can see we're a serious company," he says. "It's a big difference from the guy working on a tailgate or writing things down on a napkin."

"It's another great tool for the clients," Theis says. "It's better than sitting around in my office or trying to show them everything on my laptop, which is what we have been doing."

A wish book for big kids

When HP Builders decided it was going to focus on the high-end remodeling market, President Terry Keenan knew the company's marketing had to change as well.

"We stopped doing regular advertising because that didn't bring the customers we were looking for," he says of the West Chester, Penn., design/build firm.

Instead, the company put its marketing dollars into a catalog that features a sampling of the company's projects, including captions that describe the remodel. The company eliminated all other advertising, including getting rid of its Yellow Pages listing. Keenan got the idea when

he was looking at a Pottery Barn catalog.

"I realized these were the same customers we were trying to reach, so if a catalog worked for them, it would work for us," he says.

The catalog has been a key component of increasing the company's average job size from \$25,000 to nearly \$500,000 over the last five years. The catalog is mailed to local homes valued at more than \$1 million and distributed to other high-end service providers such as home theater dealers and targeted real-estate agents.

"It's been a great source of referrals, and it's gotten us a lot of business we never would have gotten otherwise," Keenan says.

ONLINE POLL QUESTION

What do you expect to be your biggest challenge for 2008?

To participate in this month's poll and view the results as they are tabulated, visit www.ProRemodeler.com

DELEGATION DONE RIGHT

How do you determine who does what?



PHOTO BY BILL GEIGER

Greg Rittler, Owner Kanon Group

Located just outside Baltimore in Towson, Md., Kanon Group is a mid-sized design/build firm that concentrates on mid- to upper-end additions, bathrooms, kitchens, basements and whole-house renovations. Volume for this year is just over \$1 million; the company's goal is to reach \$2 million in a year or two.

www.kanongroup.com



PHOTO BY MARC BERLOW

Daryl Kemp, Owner Blackberry Builders

Elburn, Ill.-based Blackberry Builders is a full-service design/build remodeling company that also offers maintenance service for both residential and commercial customers. Its residential projects include high-end kitchens, baths and additions. Yearly volume is about \$1 million-plus.

www.blackberrybuilders.com

There comes a time when you'd like to focus on the larger picture — and that means delegating responsibilities. When and how do you start to delegate responsibilities to others in your company?

Jud: Greg, what's your definition of delegating?

Greg: Taking anything that is technical, tactical and things we get paid to do — any office work actually — and giving it over to someone else to do so I don't have to do it. I also encourage my project manager to delegate a lot. It's really pushing responsibilities down as far as we can in our organization.

Jud: Daryl?

Daryl: As far as delegation is concerned, I look at my role as more of a coach than anything else. I will bring my guys to the table, explain to them what the outcome of the situation should be and encourage them to come back with any questions they need to get there. For the most part, we do not micromanage our lead carpenters. They are even versed enough that they can write notes up to \$5,000 for the company in additional work orders. We encourage them to do the best they can. We give them a timeline and we evaluate so they know where their downfalls are and where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

Jud: That's interesting. I have a definition here that came from NAHB: "Delegating is a downward transfer of authority." Daryl, it sounds like you go quite a ways on that. Greg, you don't micromanage but, on the other hand, you keep your finger maybe on a tighter pulse than Daryl does. Does that sound right Greg?

Greg: I actually don't. Even though we're relatively small, I probably go to a job site every other month. About half of our sales are done by me, and the other half is done by project managers. Once the sales are turned over, we set up the budget and schedule. Our project managers coordinate everything from there. In our company, the project managers

are more similar to the lead carpenter role in a lot of other companies.

Jud: Daryl, why do you feel the need to delegate your duties?

Daryl: I lost the ability to be out in the field, which is a passion of mine. Due to an injury and some personal problems, I was kind of forced into the role. I did get some of my education designations through NAHB. I didn't know the reason I got those at first. Once I went through as much trouble as I did, I understood my role more clearly as the coach and delegator of authority to my people. It was something I wasn't expecting. When I got my education, it just kind of popped up on the radar as, "this is the reason why."

Jud: As you stated, your education in this case came through NAHB and the University of Housing area. Is that correct?

Daryl: Yes, that and the college background I had in business.

Jud: Greg, why do you feel the need to delegate?

Greg: In 2004 and 2005, I was the project manager/bookkeeper/plumber/salesperson/carpenter. You name it, and I did it. I was really pulling my hair out, to be honest with you — the 80-hour work week and stuff like that — and I got to the point where I just couldn't keep going that way. It put me on a trajectory to find out what it would be like to build a larger organization. I spent a lot of time talking to a lot of other remodelers. I was inspired by a guy named Steven St. Onge in Rhode Island who has taken his business to the point where he works 10-20 hours a week and spends the rest of his time developing the business and doing other things. I was really inspired to become a better leader of people and also restore some sanity to my life.

Jud: A good answer, that's for sure.

Greg, carrying on with that, what were your goals when you went to delegate? Anything else you can think of right off hand?

Greg: My goal was to become free of the day-to-day business. I really enjoy developing systems and leading people and creating the strategic vision that we're pursuing. I did love being in the field. It was tremendously rewarding to develop other people to be able to do that.

Jud: Daryl, what were your goals when you started delegating?

Daryl: My business is about eight to nine years old now. My first attempt to build the wheel was incorrect. When I got my back surgery, it forced me into the role of delegator. I looked at my role a lot differently than I did before. I was more of a dictator; now I'm more of a coach. Through knowing some of my mentors at NAHB, they showed me that you don't necessarily have to work in the field to get a paycheck or to retire. It's

given me something to shoot for. I would like to be able to have succession in my company. Not only within my own family — I don't know if anyone will take it over. I want to get my guys up and trained enough to where they can take it over from me someday so I can maintain my lifestyle for being the visionary who got them there.

Jud: That's a neat answer, really. What duties do you delegate?

Daryl: I try to delegate as much as I possibly can. I go back to the big picture: problem solving. I will draw a picture for my people and then let them color it in the way they know how. I look to everyone from the salespeople all the way through the laborers who work within the company to do our main focus, which is to keep our customers happy.

Jud: Greg, what duties do you delegate?

Greg: I delegate as much as I possibly can. All field responsibilities are delegated, including materials and everything needed for any job. We're having a meeting tomorrow with the project managers to set goals for 2008. I will say to them, "What do you want to get out of this business next year?" That will let them help me create the vision



Jud Motsenbocker
Contributing Editor

for where we're going. The only thing I do not delegate much, because of my financial background, is a lot of the administrative bookkeeping. I intend to do that; I just haven't found the right person.

Jud: Who do you delegate to? Only trusted employees, new employees or a combination of both? What fits?

Greg: I'm a believer of giving people opportunities very quickly. We'll take a new employee who has been a carpenter and has expressed a desire to learn how to lead a project and we'll fit him quickly, within six months or so, into a modest basement or kitchen, and let him lead it. I don't have anyone in the company who I wouldn't delegate a lot of things to. We find out quickly whether or not people can do that. Quite honestly, we let them go if they can't do that.

Jud: Sink or swim, and then we'll throw you a life raft.

Greg: My philosophy is we want a company full of owners. We want everyone here to feel like they're an owner. I compensate them with the profitability also.

Jud: Daryl, who do you delegate to?

Daryl: We keep a pretty tight reign on the financial end of it. We have someone trusted who does the bookkeeping for us. I oversee a little bit of the sales to make sure those are happening at a profitable rate. Next year we'll be moving into a "shared profit" ability more so for my field personnel than I had expected we would ever do. It's just a matter of getting them to learn the system to see, "If I can turn this job quicker and get one more job in this year, I may have a bigger payday by the end of the year." I'm trying to get all my people to be forward thinking in that. Delegating? We will bring in someone. We have one lead carpenter who knows what his role is. When we do fill up enough positions behind him, we'll move him into a production manager role. That will be a huge step for the company; we've never had that before. It's not only delegating to the people but giving

them a career pathway. Sitting down with them regularly and giving them reviews, asking them where they want to be in the company, where they see themselves in three to five years. It's hugely important to get the right people in the right positions. We have one guy right now who is in the field. He wants to be in sales. I'm going to move heaven and earth to make that happen for him before he's done with this company.

Jud: That will pay dividends in the long

"They know their responsibilities within the company as it is today. They know which sector is theirs; they know if a job comes in in their sector they'll probably be the ones leading it."

run, I think. Because you have learned to delegate, what areas has that allowed you to focus on more?

Daryl: Because I come from the field side of it, I really didn't trust the delegation. It was kind of thrust upon me. I had the numbers to make it work, but I never trusted the system. What has it freed me to do? It has freed me into diversification and creating long-term relationships with not only my subcontractors — I call them my trade partners — but with the representatives from manufacturers, window companies, etc. It's freed me up to give back to the industry that has made this possible for me. I try to do as much as I possibly can for the industry as time will allow.

Jud: Greg, what has this allowed you to focus more on?

Greg: It has really restored some sanity to my life. When I first started delegating, one of my first goals was to go on a two-week vacation without working. The first six or seven years in the company, I'd gone on long weekends, but never really took a full week. There's a certain amount of preparation that went into it. I did it, and it was tremendously freeing for me and for my family. It cut my workweek down to a reasonable level.

Jud: You went from 80 to 50 didn't you?

Greg: I went from probably 80 to 40. And I'm also coaching some other small contractors in my area. When I started the business, I wish I'd only known about the resources and the way to do things right. I can relate to Daryl saying he did it wrong the first time. I sure have done that! I get a lot of fulfillment out of helping smaller guys who are getting started, whether they're subcontractors or other contractors, to figure out the right way to do it.

Daryl: That's admirable, Greg. That's what we should all be doing.

Jud: Absolutely. That's a big help. I teach seminars across the country. And, yes I get paid for it. But, when someone comes up to me a year later and says, "Jud, I was at your seminar and this really helped," that's why I was really interested in both your comments in regard to the education side of this. Whenever I train someone in my own company, especially the people out in the field, it pays dividends 10 times over.

Daryl: You've been training your competition, Jud.

Jud: Well, to some degree. We haven't had that problem; the people have stayed with us. I've got guys who have been here for 30 years.

Daryl: Even through your HBA, help to train your competition. We're not competing at a different level; we're all competing at the same level. I do run the education for the state of Illinois.

Jud: Greg, when do you delegate?

Before you need to, or do you see that you have it in place when you have to? Do you set it up ahead of time, when you get a new job, you're going to delegate that



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authority or do you try to push it as far as you can and then delegate when you have to delegate?

Greg: I did a year-long training program with a company called E-myth Worldwide. It's really about how to develop systems and delegation. We've developed a five-year plan for almost every area of our business: for sales and marketing; production; and administration. We're trying to execute according to our plan. We've got a fully developed organizational chart for that five-year vision.

Jud: You're delegating before you have to.

Greg: Yes. I'm saying, "Here's where we're going," similar to Daryl. "What's your three to five year plan? Which of these boxes would you like to be in at three, four or five years?" I think that process, five years, will be much faster than that.

Jud: That's good. Daryl, when do you delegate?

Daryl: Always before I have to. We set goals for our employees. They know their responsibilities within the company as it is today. They know which sector is theirs; they know if a job comes in in their sector they'll probably be the ones leading it. As far as in the office, we have done some diversification this year and have hit our bumps. We have projections for next year that far exceed what my business plan alluded to. It's growing exponentially. We already see a need to put on more personnel. We're going to get proactive with it. We have a busy time coming up after the 1st of the year. We should have someone in place before the end of January to address our needs. We're very proactive in the fact that we hire and give people the authority to do what they need to do and the tools to do it with.

Jud: Daryl, what has been the impact on your company?

Daryl: You can't believe what a positive impact it's had. Everyone has a sense of ownership. Instead of owners, I want all my personnel to be enthusiastic salespeople

for our company. Who better to sell our company and what our beliefs and goals are than the people who work for it? If they're not happy, they can't be in that role. We have our company meetings; we address issues in a timely fashion; we take care of our employees and compensate them well. We couldn't have a better core group of people to go into the next year with.

Jud: Daryl, would you say that this affected the financial and production of

"I was so convinced that I was the only one who could do something right. To have guys producing who really know what they're doing...has been incredibly healthy for everyone."

your company in a good way?

Daryl: If we were talking about this two years ago, we were probably \$150,000 in the red. After coming out of the surgery, we were probably not even thinking about continuing the business. Positive? Yes, this couldn't get more positive.

Jud: That's great. Greg, what impact has it had on your company?

Greg: We came from a similar condition: it was "close the doors." Rallying the troops and getting alignment from everyone from me down to the assistant trucker in the field has had an enormously positive benefit. I was at a Remodelers Advantage roundtable meeting when I got a call from one of my carpenters. He was on a job and looked around and saw a whole neighborhood of houses that needed roofing and siding done. It was a lot of replacement work. He said, "Why don't I give a knock on some doors and pass out cards to someone in the neighborhood?" I knew when that happened that I'd taken them to a new level of how they think about the company. They're looking to how they can grow with the best for the company as a whole.

Daryl: Greg, when you have an employee that steps out like this, how is this type of

employee rewarded? We have our own system in place for rewarding that kind of action.

Greg: He will get a commission on any sales that come from that. They're generating a lead. We'll give 5 percent for that. We try to acknowledge the people. We all have blackberries and e-mail. I'll send an e-mail out right away, "Great job thinking of an opportunity for us!" The overall company profitability is divided monthly — it's a semi-convoluted system. There are three main traits that we reward for field staff:

doing things in the Kanon way; doing things safely; and having the right tools, equipment and skills to bring to the table. They get a monetary reward for that. And for project managers, their incentive program is based on producing \$50,000 per month installed on time, on budget, with a good customer satisfaction rating. If they do that again, they get \$1,000 per month every month they do it.

Jud: Do you both feel that, because you delegate and give them the authority, that it has helped you to mature those guys and obviously make more money for yourself?

Greg: Absolutely. One of the things I learned is that I was being so afraid of doing things over. I was so convinced that I was the only one who could do something right. To have guys producing who really know what they're doing and who are really invested because they have been given the authority and have been delegated the responsibility, taking ownership of it has been incredibly healthy for everyone. **PR**

>> For the rest of the discussion on this topic and more Best Practices, visit www.ProRemodeler.com/bestpractices

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THE S-CURVE

Know your business growth cycle to profit from change

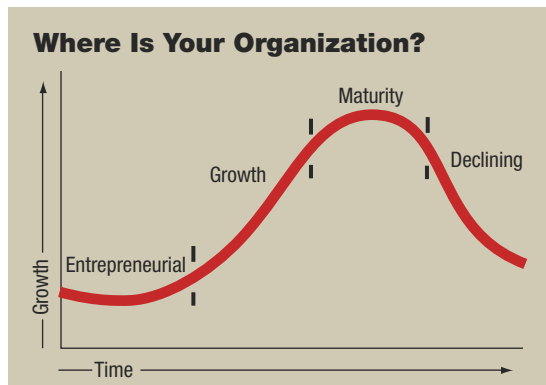
AS WE MATURE IN OUR LEADERSHIP

and management skills, the need for proven business models, systems and tools is necessary to maintain momentum in our business growth and maturity. I would like to share with you one of these models, known as the S-curve.

This model is segmented into four phases. The first is the entrepreneurial phase, the second is the growth phase, the third is the maturity phase and the fourth is the declining phase. All businesses will experience each phase at some point.

So, what is the key to capturing and sustaining a healthy growth in your business? One way to do this is to innovate or reinvent your business model, system and/or tools while in the growth and maturity phase, thereby bypassing the declining phase and the negative consequences that go with it, i.e. downsizing, being in a fire drill of innovation or closing the business.

The first phase — the entrepreneurial phase — is when the owner and others wear multiple hats. This is usually a small and very close team that just gets things done. It is typical for the majority of the key players to know almost everything that's going on in the business.



S-Curve Chart

Source: University of St. Thomas Graduate School of Business

“Is this information telling you that you will need to diversify, focus on niches, stay the current course or reinvent your business completely?”

Then, the business enters the growth phase, when some basic systems may or may not be in place but the need for them is becoming more apparent to keep up with growth and maintain a reasonable quality of life. It is an exciting and challenging time that must be managed to avoid getting overwhelmed and prematurely accelerating into the declining phase, because your business implodes under the weight of growth.

If you successfully survive, navigate or even thrive through the growth phase, then you have graduated into the maturity phase. As you arrive at the end of the growth phase and start the maturity phase, this is considered the “life is good” stage.

So, healthy growth plus maturity equals strong margins and quality of life.

As I said earlier, you will want to innovate or reinvent your business during this time to avoid the declining phase, because this is when you have the greatest resources and capacity to champion significant innovation or possibly reinvent your business.

So as you're putting your strategic business plans in



Doug Dwyer
Contributing Editor

place for 2008, you will want to ask yourself, “What phase of growth am I in?” Then, “What will I need to do to experience or to continue positive growth?”

As you are probably aware, the current state of our economy is slow in many markets, while some markets are in a growth mode. That said, this model can also

be applied to our industry's overall performance and to your local economy. Keeping an eye on these factors can help you maximize growth and profits while minimizing losses, because you'll be able to better predict when to be aggressive or conservative with growth and innovation.

Is this information telling you that you will need to diversify, focus on niches, stay the current course or reinvent your business completely? The key is to be proactive and seek business counsel, which I discussed in the April 2007 issue, to accelerate your ability to create, capture or sustain success in your business.

Have a blessed New Year. **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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Andy Wells, Jack Steindl and Reg Marzec (left to right) led Normandy Builders through a growth phase in 2007 after a significant downturn in business in 2006.

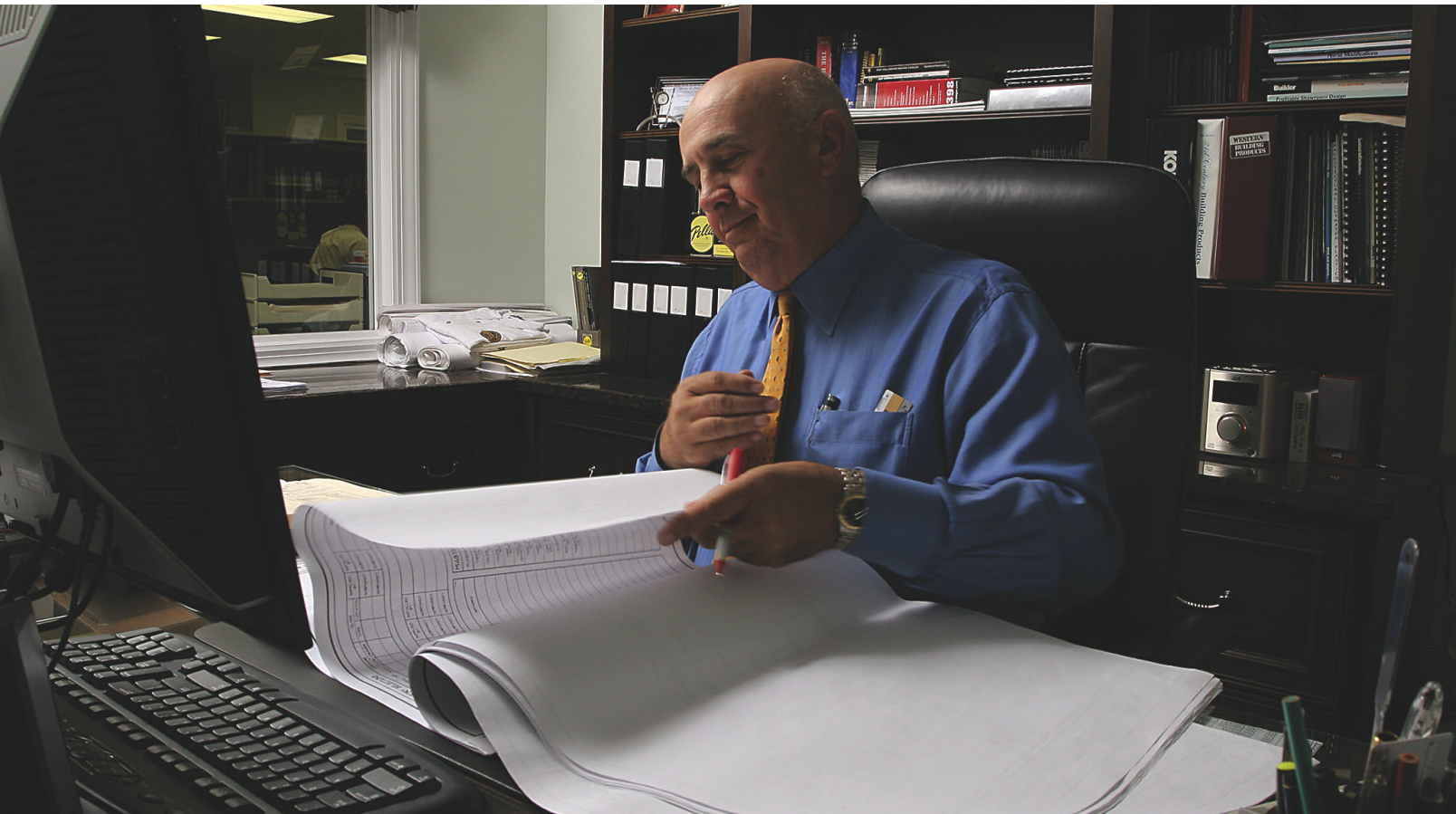
Growth BY DESIGN

NORMANDY BUILDERS OVERCOMES REMODELING SLOWDOWN WITH REVAMPED MARKETING, SALES STRATEGY

By Michael R. Morris, Editor in Chief

WHEN REG MARZEC AND JACK STEINDL founded Normandy Builders in 1979, they had a fairly straightforward business plan: provide a high-quality remodeling experience and charge a fair price for their work. That simple approach gained them more than a few happy customers over the years, and in 2005 they reached a hefty \$25 million in sales in the burgeoning Chicago market.

In 2006, however, the two found themselves in a rather precarious situation. Leads had decreased, sales were slowing; in the midst of a nationwide housing slump, some tough decisions needed to be made. With their projected annual volume down to just over \$20 million — a nearly \$5 million decline from the previous year — they made the bold decision to grow the company.



“We have confidence in what we do, and we hope that people can appreciate good work. But there’s more to it than just doing good work. It’s the relationships with the customers that make the difference.”

Reg Marzec, a licensed architect, still approves every blueprint for every project Normandy Builders produces.

One year later and still in the midst of a soft economic forecast for remodeling, that growth initiative has Normandy on the verge of a \$30 million rebound year. The strategy behind Normandy’s success has earned them the honor of *Professional Remodeler’s* 2007 Remodeler of the Year.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The first step Marzec and Steindl took was to confirm their belief that the downturn in business was due to market conditions and not because of a decrease in customer satisfaction with their work.

So, for the first time in the company’s history, they hired an outside consultant, GuildQuality, to conduct customer satisfaction research. The research confirmed that the key areas of Normandy’s business — trustworthiness, construction quality and professionalism, among others — were still considered company strengths in their customers’ eyes. In fact, GuildQuality found that 95 percent of Normandy’s almost 200 customers

Jack Steindl handled all the sales duties for Normandy after he and Marzec met at their previous employer and decided to start their own company.

surveyed said they would recommend the company to a friend or family member.

“The GuildQuality survey provided us with verification of how we were doing as a company, as perceived by the public,” says Marzec, a licensed architect with a degree from the University of Illinois. “But it’s not just about whether we’ve got happy customers. It’s also about finding out if we’re doing something wrong and having the chance and the ability to correct what we might be doing wrong. If we have a weak link, we should try to do something about it. And that has been a real side benefit that I never really thought of.”

While there weren’t any glaring areas of weakness in Normandy’s operation, the fact that the company’s customer satisfaction rating was still healthy solidified their plan to leverage their large base of satisfied past customers and devise a steady, sustainable growth plan.

THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

To execute their plan, the partners knew they would need to rely more heavily on a strong leadership team that could help them run what had become one of the largest remodeling companies in the country.

Andy Wells — who had been promoted from salesperson to sales manager to general manager and most recently to vice president and “partner-in-training” over his 10-year career at Normandy — was already handling most of the day-to-day duties of running the company, so they turned to him first. Wells’ accounting degree from the University of Illinois and background

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Normandy Builders

Location: Hinsdale, Ill.

Principals: Reg Marzec, Jack Steindl, Andy Wells

Business model: High-end residential remodeling, focused on additions and kitchens

Years in business: 28

Employees: 54

2007 sales volume: \$30 million (projected)

Mission statement: “To provide our customers with an exceptional home remodeling experience. We are successful when our customers are satisfied and are willing to refer us to others.”



“We’ve always been a business that rewards its employees handsomely; our people all make good money. And the fact is that if Reg and I quit or died or retired, the company’s going to go on.”



Andy Wells handles the day-to-day operations at Normandy, although most high-level decisions are made in collaboration with Steindl and Marzec.

as a CPA had prepared him well for handling the financial management of a growth initiative.

"I approached Reg about four years ago, and I said, 'You know, we're not getting any younger and our company would be worth more if we had young blood mixed in with ours,'" recalls Steindl. "So I said, 'If Andy came to us with X number of dollars, would you take him as a partner?' And he said, 'yeah.' We both felt the same way about Andy."

In October 2006, Wells, who is Steindl's son-in-law, fulfilled his financial obligation to the two original partners and became a full partner. It was just in time to oversee in an official capacity as part owner what he had already been doing as vice president: Normandy's growth plan in full bloom.

"He's got a lot more of the work ethic of our generation than of the younger generation," says Steindl. "And I think that probably has to do with being a CPA. At tax time, those poor guys work like 12 hours a day, six days a week. And I think that was good training for him. If he needs to do something, he comes in early, he stays late; he's got that kind of drive like we used to have."

They started by hiring a new marketing director, sales director and internal operations director, among other additions that

brought their full-time company roster up to 54.

THE MARKETING STRATEGY

Because Normandy's market already included most of Chicagoland, the growth plan was centered around increasing leads without expanding its geographic area. Marketing Director Laurie Camp oversaw the revamped marketing plan, which included cutting costly broad-reach television ads to focus on more targeted, low-cost vehicles. Improved job site signs that included "Take One" boxes filled with sales brochures caused an immediate increase in leads.

"Laurie had a wonderful idea with the 'Take Ones' at the job sites," says Marzec. "That was a clever idea on her part that's worked pretty well."

They also introduced new print ads, which featured watercolor illustrations that differentiated them from their numerous competitors' print ads.

To leverage the relationship they had developed with hundreds of satisfied past clients over the years, they also launched a Referral Rewards Program: if a past client referred them to a friend, they earned a \$100 gift certificate; if that referral signed

“It’s more of a rifle shot approach than a shotgun approach in targeting potential clients. We’ve actually spent less on marketing than in the past, but we’ve increased our marketing effectiveness.”

a contract, they got their choice of a \$500 gift. By the time they were done reworking their marketing strategy, Normandy had seen a whopping 25 percent increase in leads.

“She’s done a good job of focusing our energies and our money to spots that are aimed directly at people who are going to be our potential clients,” says Wells. “It’s more of a rifle shot approach than a shotgun approach in targeting potential clients. We’ve actually spent less on marketing than in the past, but we’ve increased our marketing effectiveness.”

THE SALES STRUCTURE

The firm’s growth plan also included revamping its sales strategy significantly, under the direction of new sales director Dan Schoendorff.

To help prospects better visualize the projects they were proposing, Normandy added color renderings and interactive 3D computer drawings to the mix.

“That has really helped customers envision what it is we’re proposing to them,” says Wells. “Our customers aren’t reading blueprints everyday like we are, and they can’t visualize the way we can, so we needed to help them do that.”

They also launched an on-time, on-budget guarantee and a five-

year construction warranty program to help ease customers’ fears.

Additionally, they expanded and redesigned their existing showroom to 8,000 square feet (with another 3,000 square feet being added), including more gourmet kitchen vignettes, luxury baths, entertainment rooms and home offices. Finally, they instituted weekly sales meetings and design reviews to tighten the communication loop among departments and help some of the newer salespeople — Normandy calls salespeople designers — gain experience from the veterans. Three of Normandy’s 17 designers are new this year, yet their closing rate has improved to 1 out of 4.5 compared with 1 out of 6.

“The remodeling business is riddled with problems, so we try to anticipate problems based on the experiences we’ve had with the more than 4,000 jobs we’ve done over the years,” says Wells. “So, on every job, we go through an intensive review process, where we now bring in all the parties involved in a project and go through a checklist. Now, it doesn’t solve all our problems, but it definitely helps. That’s half the story. The other half is that if there are problems that some of our younger staff haven’t encountered, they can get educated on these things without having to actually experience the problem.”

COMPANY CULTURE

One of the ownership trio’s main concerns with growing the business was whether they could maintain the customer-focused company culture that had allowed for the 95 percent customer satisfaction rating — the foundation of Normandy’s success all along.

Marzec believes they have succeeded in this area.

“We have confidence in what we do, and we hope that people can appreciate good work,” says Marzec. “But there’s more to it than just doing good work. It’s the relationships with the customers that make the difference. That gets reaffirmed when we get a good rating, and it feels good.”

Steindl agrees and predicts the best is yet to come for Normandy. “We’ve always been a business that rewards its employees handsomely; our people all make good money,” he says. “And the fact is that if Reg and I quit or died or retired, the company’s going go on. I don’t need to have my name immortalized or anything like that, but it’s nice to see that it’s not just gonna fade away because the founders are gone. And people will not be out of jobs because we’re not at the helm anymore.”

“It’s so nice to be able to wake up every day and want to race in to the office,” says Wells. “And I think a lot of our people feel that way, too. It’s a fun business. A difficult, challenging, fun business.” **PR**

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A CONTRACTOR TURNS HIS OWN HOUSE INTO AN ACCESSIBLE HOME AND A REMODELING SHOWPLACE

UNIVERSAL ATTRACTION

By Wendy A. Jordan
Senior Contributing Editor

BRIAN AND KAREN SHUSTAR'S REMODELED HOUSE is multi-talented. It's a great home for the Shustars and their three teenagers; it provides easy living for Karen's resident parents; it's accessible for guests, including children and Karen's wheelchair-bound aunt; and it's an impressive showroom for the Shustars' Glen Ellyn, Ill., design build company. And the remodel accomplished all this at an unbeatable price.

After watching his elderly in-laws struggle with the stairs in the family's former tri-level house, Brian became a believer in residential universal design. As the name implies, universal design makes homes accessible and easy to use regardless of people's age, size

or ability. Universal design also makes houses easy to maintain and adaptable to the changing needs of residents as they grow older, enabling them to "age in place" rather than move.

To create a safer, more comfortable living environment for his in-laws and to establish a universal design niche for his suburban Chicago company, Shustar Construction, Brian earned his Certified Aging-in-Place designation from the NAHB in 2006. Soon after, he and Karen bought a two-story, 1984 house that, with addition of a first-floor bedroom and bath suite, would incorporate all his in-laws' living needs on one floor. Even before breaking ground on the remodel, the Shustars signed up to display the house as a uni-



PHOTOS BY SHUSTAR CONSTRUCTION



Before

Flamingo Landscaping raised part of the yard to reduce the swale and built a concrete walkway with mild incline that connects the house to the driveway and the sidewalk without any steps. Interlocking pavers form a smooth surface; 4-inch-high borders keep wheels and feet safely on the walk.

versal design model in the May 2007 Remodel Chicagoland weekend home tour sponsored by the local NAHB Remodelers chapter.

BUMPY START

Though the tour was almost a year away, there was no time to lose. Karen's parents needed to move into the remodeled house by Christmas and the house had to be ready for pre-tour photography by Feb. 1. "We bought the house on June 24, 2006," says Brian, "and a couple of days later had a building permit."

Architect David Kennedy of PPKS Architects in Glen Ellyn, had already drafted a design for the addition. He carefully positioned the 280-square-foot bedroom within the property setback line, reusing a 120-square-foot strip of existing kitchen and laundry room space to expand the bedroom and dressing area.

Excavation began mid-July. Just before the foundation pour, a village inspector examined the soil. He found what looked like unstable organic soil and halted the pour. Brian quickly called an engineer, who deemed the soil conditions safe but recommended adding rebar to the footings as a precaution.

Once the stem walls were poured, town rules required that the building site be resurveyed. Brian was shocked when the surveyor reported that the addition encroached one or two inches over the setback line. "I called my concrete contractor out and we remeasured over and over," he says, repeatedly finding the addition to be within the setback. Brian contacted the surveyor, who discovered that his equipment had been out of calibration that day. After a tense week of delay, the project moved forward.

The scope of the project expanded during production. The Shustars ultimately added a maintenance-free composite deck between addition and sunroom; updated most of the first-floor rooms; widened doorways; installed easy-to-operate casement windows; replaced warped cedar siding in the back with a maintenance-free cement composite; put in a step-free front walkway and low-maintenance plantings; and converted the living room to a company office that, along with the other remodeled spaces, doubles as a showroom.

CONVENIENCE, SAFETY AND STYLE

In the best universal design tradition, the accessible features of the house blend in, adding safety and convenience without looking "different." Many of the products also were bargains found at deep discounts available to Remodel Chicagoland tour houses.

PRODUCTS LIST

Bath fixtures: Kohler Cabinets: Omega Cooktop, oven, microwave, dishwasher drawers, warming drawer: DCS Decking: Evergrain Pavers: UniLock Refrigerator: KitchenAid Shower door: Basco Walkway lights: Kichler Washer and Dryer: Fisher & Paykel Windows: Marvin



PHOTO BY SHUSTAR CONSTRUCTION



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH TERRY OF IMAGE PROS PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH TERRY OF IMAGE PROS PHOTOGRAPHY

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Shustar Construction

Owners: Brian and Karen Shustar

Location: Glen Ellyn, Ill.

2006 volume: \$450,000

Projected 2007 volume: \$575,000

Biggest challenge: Completing the project on time and on budget

Contact: 630/790-0571

The stylish shower in the addition features a flat threshold for easy entry and built-in bench seating. Both overhead and adjustable hand-held shower sprays offer flexibility. Legroom under the bathroom vanity will accommodate a seated user once the pipes are shielded.

The new bedroom has plenty of clear circulation space. Its smooth, easy-to-negotiate hardwood flooring matches the flooring throughout the house. At 34 inches wide, the doorways can accommodate wheelchairs and walkers. French doors fill the room with light and open wide to a landing; two steps lead down to the deck (necessary because the sunroom is lower than the rest of the house), but they have sturdy handrails on each side.

A wide-entry dressing area links bedroom and bath and provides a 5-foot diameter turning radius for wheelchair users to maneuver in and around the bath. Closets have bi-fold doors, which don't hog circulation space, plus adjustable shelving and rods at two heights.

The bright bathroom has a non-slip, radiant-heated tile floor. The luxurious shower features a wide doorway with flat threshold, built-in bench seating, and two sprays — one overhead and the other an adjustable handheld — for tall, short, seated or standing users.

THE FINANCIALS

The Shustars budgeted \$150,000 for the initial phase of their home remodel: the bedroom and bath addition and the kitchen modernization. That figure excluded profit and overhead but included vendor discounts, which ranged from 10 to a whopping 50 percent for Remodel Chicagoland tour homes.

The Shustars' addition and kitchen work came in within 7 percent of budget, at \$160,000. Substantial increases in project scope doubled the size of the job, bringing the final tab to \$310,000. Incorporating gross profit but not the special, deep discounts from vendors, the Shustars estimate retail price for their remodel at \$450,000.

Budget History

Original budget:	\$150,000
Budget for changes to project scope:	\$150,000
(Update remainder of first floor; convert living room to office; replace second floor doors, trim and hardware; replace windows and siding; landscape)	
Price reductions:	10-50 %
(Vendor discounts for Remodel Chicagoland projects)	
Final cost to produce:	\$310,000
Estimated retail price of job:	\$450,000

Legroom under the sink suits a seated user; a 3-foot space between toilet and wall allows room for a walker or wheelchair; and the linen cabinet is wall-hung 36 inches above the floor to leave legroom for someone in a wheelchair to approach. Blocking behind the bathroom walls will make installing grab bars simple and inexpensive.

Kitchen specialist Ron Brands of Pearl Design Group in Bloomington, Ill., helped the Shustars design an accessible, affordable, classy kitchen. The granite-top island has two counter heights: a standard 36-inch-high section and a table height section that works as an eating area and a station for seated cooks. A single post supports the end of the table, leaving clear space for chairs.

Dishwasher drawers, a double oven, and a cooktop with front-mounted controls can be used without bending or stretching. The under-counter microwave is convenient for all. Pullout shelves and full-extension drawer glides bring kitchen supplies into easy reach. Overhead fixtures and under-cabinet lighting provide broad, shadow-free lighting.

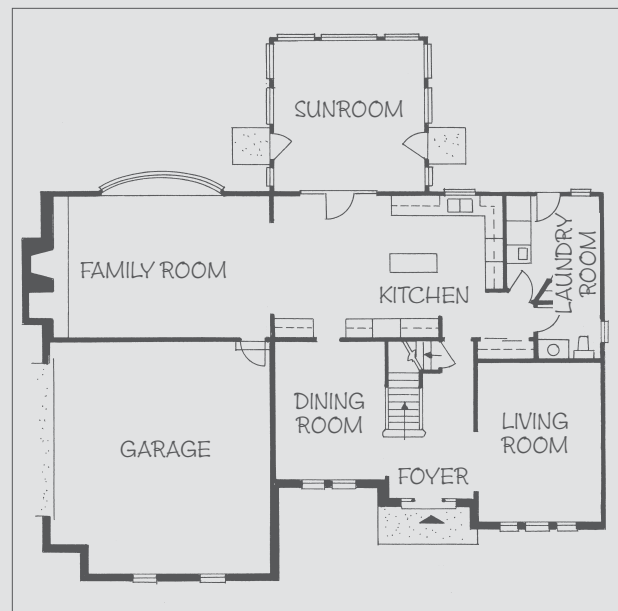
The alder cabinets look much like cherry but cost less. Combining semi-custom cabinets with a few custom pieces from the same manufacturer saved money, as did ordering a generic oven cabinet and modifying it on site to accommodate the warming drawer. Cabinetry panels and moldings cover a soffit that hides pipes, and leftover cabinet pieces nicely trim the cook top hood.

Tod Stanton of Design Perspectives in Naperville, Ill., designed

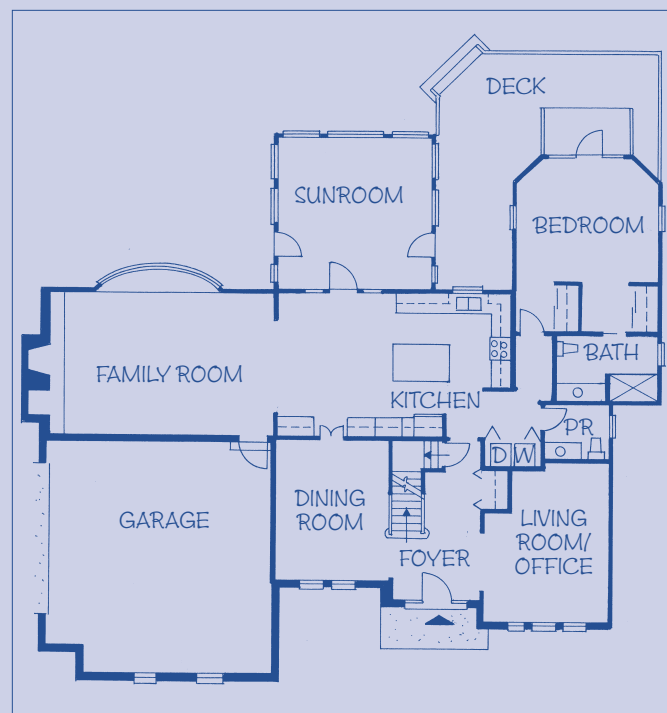
PROJECT TIMELINE

2006	Stage of Project
June 21	Permit issued
July 17	Begin excavation for addition
July 25	Pour foundation
July 31	Spot survey
Aug. 10	Survey corrected
Aug. 17	Begin kitchen tear out
Aug. 23	Begin framing
Sept. 13	Begin kitchen drywall
Oct. 2	Install cabinets
Nov. 6	Begin addition drywall
Nov. 15	Begin painting family room and kitchen
Dec. 11	Tile bath in addition
2007	Stage of Project
Jan. 30	Final interior inspection
April 9	Begin grading for walkway
April 10	Begin deck
May 3	Complete landscaping
May 4	Remodel Chicagoland party
May 31	Final inspections

Before



After



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PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



Originally a dim space with tall, sharp-cornered counters and a high, hard-to-reach microwave, the remodeled kitchen is organized into easy-access activity areas, including a cooking area with under-counter microwave and stacked ovens and an island with a standard, 36-inch-high section. A table height section doubles as an eating area or a food prep station for seated users.

a smooth, wide front walkway that runs without steps, curbs or stoops from the driveway and street to the door. Flamingo Landscaping of Crystal Lake, Ill., built the walkway as a concrete platform with drain tiles below, a tiny slope to aid run-off, and non-skid, interlocking pavers on top. The walkway inclines only 2.5 per-cent, so handrails were unnecessary.



The living room became the company's office. It doubles as a showroom, displaying varied finish treatments such as oak-banded, walnut-faced drawers; walnut-banded oak cabinet doors; and oak-trimmed walnut wainscoting.

LASTING IMPACT

The Shustars crossed the finish line on their project the Thursday before Remodel Chicagoland weekend. Friday evening 100 neighbors, vendors, clients and prospects came to an invitation-only open house. Scores of visitors toured the house Saturday and Sunday, admiring the Shustars' work and learning about universal design.

Thousands of free Remodel Chicagoland promotional magazines have been distributed through a local grocery chain, product vendors, real-estate agents, bankers and other remodeling contacts as well as by the participating remodelers themselves. The Shustars have picked up numerous leads and have spread the word about the possibilities and benefits of universal design. When homeowners are ready for a universal design remodel, they'll know to call Shustar Construction. Says Brian, "It's by far the best marketing we've done." **PR**

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AFTER PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH TERRY OF IMAGE PROS PHOTOGRAPHY

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BETTER CONNECTIONS



Although the original design for the kitchen included a skylight, it did little to brighten the closed in space. With the improved visual connection between the kitchen and adjoining great room, the skylight works with all the glass to bring in the light and the views.



A kitchen remodel gives this home's entire entertaining space a big helping of contemporary flavor

KITCHEN REMODEL

REMODELER AND ARCHITECT: Landis Construction

PROJECT LOCATION: Potomac, Md.

AGE OF HOME: 42 years

SCOPE OF WORK: Kitchen remodel that was part of a larger project including a master suite and great room

By Ann Matesi
Senior Contributing Editor

MOVING ONE WALL AND PARTIALLY

removing several others transformed the dark and cramped kitchen in this 42-year-old residence into a bright and inviting social center for its owners, who are thrilled with their modern Zen-inspired space.

"This kitchen remodel was part of a larger overall project that we were doing for these clients," says Chris Landis of Washington, D.C.-based Landis Construction. In addition to redoing the kitchen, the remodeler also completely reconfigured the couple's adjoining main-floor master suite, reversing the bedroom and study locations and adding a spa-like bath and large walk-in closet. The moves finally created a direct connection that links the two areas of the home.

One major design flaw of the original

kitchen, says Armin Bondoc, director of design for Landis Construction, was that it was very narrow. "It did contain a center island, but it was not wide enough to function well for the homeowners. With only 13 feet of space to work with, there was not really enough room to give them a larger one."

Because the areas being remodeled in the Potomac, Md., home were side-by-side, Bondoc's solution was to borrow space from the master suite and add it to the kitchen by moving the wall that divided the rooms by two feet. "It was amazing how much of a difference this made in the kitchen," he says. "It allowed us to enlarge the island and reconfigure the arrangement of the cabinetry so that everything works much better for them."

The second element to be addressed was that the kitchen's central location on the main floor was isolated visually from the rest of the home's entertaining space. The living and dining rooms were contained in a single, large combined area that the homeowners use as the great room. Both shared a volume ceiling and a dramatic view of the outdoors through a triangular wall of glass, "but they could not



AFTER PHOTOS BY YERKO PALLOMINY

PRODUCTS LIST

Cabinets: Aristokraft, Well's Woodworking (custom) **Ceramic tile:** American Marazzi, Porcelanosa **Countertops:** granite (Giallo ornamentale) **Built-in coffee center:** Miele **Windows and doors:** Pella **Faucets:** Kohler, Grohe **HVAC:** Bryant **Flooring:** Atlas Floors **Lighting fixtures:** Lightolier **House wrap:** Tyvek **Kitchen appliances:** Sub-Zero, Ferguson, Dacor **Millwork and molding:** Architectural Products by Outwater



The kitchen's new design features a multi-level island and a pair of elevated snack bars.



The new kitchen cabinetry was chosen to complement the homeowner's furnishings in the great room that is now a part of its visual space.

really enjoy this from their kitchen because there was only a single doorway opening connecting the two areas," Bondoc says. "This design also made the room feel dark and closed in."

By removing the upper portion of the walls on either side of the doorway, the two areas became connected. The remaining half walls were capped with granite counters that match the kitchen's new countertops. Designed with a slight overhang that extends into the great room, these counters can now be used as a serving buffet, snack bar or conversation center. A portion of the full-height existing wall was retained to provide space for a new, commercial-style stainless steel refrigerator. A steel beam wrapped in drywall was installed in the ceiling to provide support for the span where the original wall sections stood.

The variation in ceiling height, now vis-

Supporting cast

To increase the width of the kitchen so that it would accommodate a larger island and the amenities the clients desired, Landis Construction borrowed space from a second remodeling project that involved the adjoining master suite.

The redesigned master retreat featured a separate bedroom and study linked by a hallway and a central, dual-access walk-in closet. By recessing a portion of the kitchen wall into this space, Landis Construction designer Armin Bondoc was able to increase the width of the kitchen by an extra 2 feet without significantly affecting the size of the bedroom or study.

Shifting the wall did pose some significant structural issues, says remodeler Chris Landis. A dropped header, required after the initial demolition, made a portion of the structure visible. A double laminated veneer lumber (LVL) beam supported with two intermediate steel columns was used to maximize the height. The columns themselves were concealed within 3-inch-wide fillers located on either side of the new TV niche in the kitchen.

"Without the structural solution, we would not have been able to achieve our cabinetry and appliance goals," Landis says.



The existing range hood was replaced with a sleek stainless steel version above the new island. Although the hood had to be relocated slightly, the remodeler was able to tie it into the existing vent ductwork that ran through the attic space directly above it.

ible throughout the kitchen and entertaining areas because of the expanded views, offers a very dynamic feel, says Bondoc. “The new arrangement definitely brings a lot more light into the interior of the home.”

The deep finish on the new cabinetry in the new kitchen was selected to coordinate with the couple’s Asian-inspired furnishings in their newly exposed great room. Stainless steel appliances along with door and drawer pulls complement the kitchen’s sophisticated contemporary style.

The couple each had a personal requirement for the new kitchen, says Bondoc.

“One big thing that the husband wanted was a built-in coffee center. The wife, who loves to bake, wanted a workspace with a lower counter height to accommodate her small stature. We were able to give them both.”

The coffee maker is incorporated into a new wall of cabinetry that also includes double ovens and a TV niche flanked by a pair of pantries with frosted glass doors. The new island’s lower extension is convenient to the ovens as well as a food prep sink.

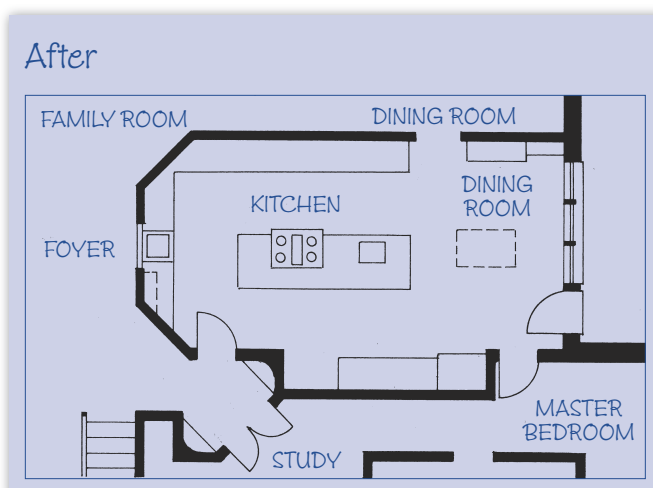
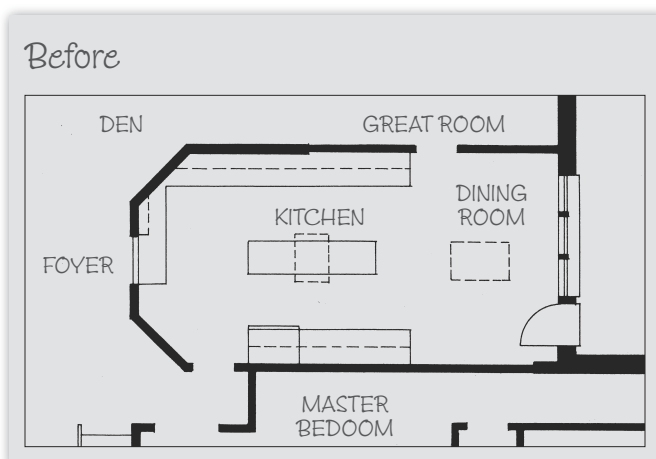
The kitchen also features a pass-through opening in the wall above the main sink.

This lets anyone working in the kitchen see into the home’s main entry foyer. “The wife is a clothing designer who works primarily from home, and this allows her to keep an eye on who is entering the home throughout the day,” says Bondoc. “On the other hand, those coming in do not have a direct view into the kitchen itself.”

The beautifully executed project met all the client’s expectations in terms of style and function. **PR**

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GRAPHIC COURTESY OF PATH PARTNERS

TOP 10 TECHNOLOGIES FOR REMODELERS

Innovations you can incorporate easily

By Glen Salas
PATH Partners

WANT TO RISE ABOVE the competition?

Bring your business and your clients' best interests into the 21st century with products and practices that will improve the durability, efficiency, affordability and environmental performance of your projects.

The Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing's list of Top 10 Remodeling Technologies for 2007 offers something to

improve almost every area of the home: the building envelope, lighting, HVAC, plumbing, floors and beyond.

Although some of them are relatively new, most have been around for a while, but for various reasons haven't been widely adopted.

All of the Top 10 technologies are resource-efficient, and most can dramati-

- 1 Air sealing (using spray foam insulation)
- 2 Smart ventilation/ventilation control Systems
- 3 HVAC sizing – right-sized HVAC
- 4 High-efficiency toilets
- 5 Compact fluorescent lighting
- 6 High performance windows/storm windows
- 7 Wireless lighting, thermostats, and other controls
- 8 Solar hot water
- 9 Recycled/renewable flooring options
- 10 Tubular skylights

cally improve a home's energy efficiency. This is important because, according to "Foundations for Future Growth in the Remodeling Industry," a 2007 publication from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, "homeowners are now putting energy efficiency near the top of their remodeling concerns." The report also states that "products with higher energy-efficiency ratings have shown the fastest rise in popularity. Indeed, residential architects and remodeling contractors have noted a growing interest in sustainable design features."

Air Sealing

Seal it tight, ventilate it right

Air infiltration may contribute to as much as 30 percent of a home's heating and cooling costs. Infiltration wastes energy and money and contributes to moisture, noise and dust problems. Openings may also serve as an entryway for unwanted pests. By properly sealing the home and controlling ventilation, the HVAC can be downsized, resulting in a smaller, quieter and less costly system.

If you're moving walls, building an addition or stripping walls to the studs, consider spray-foam insulation, which makes it easy to insulate and air-seal in the same step. It's sprayed into wall cavities and expands to fill all the nooks and crannies. Excess foam is scraped off the studs.

Ventilation Control Systems

Smart ventilation, comfortable clients

Properly sealing for comfort and energy efficiency is a great way to keep conditioned air inside. But the downside of reduced airflow can be poor indoor air quality, which may lead to moisture problems and affect your customers' health. Even conventional systems that are designed with a fresh air intake often don't ventilate when they're not operating.

Economical ventilation controls are ideal for use with exhaust or supply fans, air handlers, heat recovery ventilators, intermittent whole-house exhaust systems or anywhere specific ventilation rates are desired. Mixing the indoor air with fresh outdoor air can

reduce moisture and contaminants and revitalize the indoor air's oxygen content.

Compact Fluorescent Lighting

Change a light now

Entire countries are mandating the end of conventional incandescent bulbs. Surely, any new lighting scheme you install could include Energy Star-qualified CFLs. Just think: if every American home replaced just one light bulb with an Energy Star qualified bulb, the U.S. would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year, with savings exceeding \$600 million in annual energy costs, and greenhouse gas reductions equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars. Multiply those benefits by the numbers of bulbs that can be changed in each of your projects. You can make a difference.

Tubular Skylights

Let the sun shine in

Tubular skylights, or solar tubes, use the sun for lighting interiors without the drawbacks of conventional skylights, which often don't distribute light evenly, are a significant source of energy loss and can cause ultraviolet damage to carpets and furniture.

Tubular skylights are ideal for remodeling projects. Compared to typical skylights, tubular skylights are generally easier and less costly to install. They're lightweight and don't usually require modifications to the structure because they fit between rafters and other structural elements. Their simple design, complete with self-flashing kits, leads to excellent durability.

High-Performance Windows

Lighting and insulation all in one

Today, you can select windows not only for their aesthetics, but also for their performance. For energy efficiency, comfort and quality, specify Energy Star anytime you are replacing or adding windows. Energy Star-qualified windows will cut heating and cooling loads and even reduce draftiness and moisture condensation.

If new windows are too expensive, not really necessary or are difficult to match with the existing windows, consider tight-fitting interior storm windows. They increase the energy performance of a home for significantly less money than replacing windows. They are also particularly suited to historic homes because they improve efficiency without altering the home's exterior appearance. In addition to energy benefits, interior



Tubular skylights are generally easier and less costly to install than conventional skylights.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PATH PARTNERS

storms can improve sound resistance, decrease window condensation, and reduce furniture and floor fading from UV light.

Right-Sized HVAC

Where size matters

Forget those rules of thumb from the old days when fuel oil was 50 cents a gallon and electricity was two cents a kilowatt-hour.

Use the Air Conditioning Contractors of America guidelines for sizing HVAC equipment. ACCA's "Manual J Residential Load Calculation" allows contractors to estimate heating and air conditioning loads much more accurately. The benefits:

- Smaller, quieter systems can often be specified, reducing the initial cost.
- A right-sized system will operate for long periods of time, rather than frequently cycling on and off. This results in the optimum equipment operating efficiency with fewer annoying drafts.
- Less short-cycling of equipment results in longer equipment life and better control over indoor environmental conditions.

Solar Water Heating

Solar power for the shower

Solar water heaters have been commercially available since the 1800s, and they're still an environmentally sound way to reduce energy bills. While everyone talks about solar photovoltaic (PV) systems that produce electricity, solar water heaters are much more cost effective. An active, flat-plate system costs about \$2,500 to \$3,500 installed and heats about 80 to 100 gallons of water a day. A passive system costs about \$1,000 to \$2,000, but has less capacity. Until Dec. 31, 2007, homeowners can also get a federal tax credit equal to 30 percent of the installed cost.

High Efficiency Toilets

Always go with low-flow

The typical toilet uses more water than any other item in a home. High-efficiency toilets (HETs), on the other hand, use an average 20 percent less water per flush than the industry standard. An HET can save up to 8,760 gallons of water each year for a fam-



PHOTO COURTESY OF TOTO

High-efficiency toilets like this Toto Aquia use an average of 20 percent less water per flush than the industry standard.

ily of four. They are very reliable and don't require multiple flushes like the first wave of low-flow toilets sold years ago.

Several types of HETs are available, including gravity-fed, single-flush toilets, dual-flush toilets, pressure-assist toilets, and power-assist toilets. Dual-flush, power-assist models are also available, and are even more efficient.

Wireless Controls

22nd century technology today

Hard-wired connections for lighting, thermostats and other controls have many limitations that wireless technology has now overcome. Wireless systems require less installation time; make coordinating with tradespeople easier; and add flexibility in how you control lighting, temperature and

ventilation. These attributes make wireless controls ideal for equipment retrofits and additions.

To control multiple pieces of equipment or temperature from multiple locations, just wall mount additional wireless controls, plugs and switches. The physical installation of the receivers and sensor units is simple. The details are in properly programming and setting the system up for operation.

Recycled and Renewable Flooring Options

Feel-good woods and grasses

There are affordable, durable and rich-looking flooring options that come from two non-conventional sources. The first is old wood that's recycled into "new" wood flooring; the second is flooring made from sustainably grown grasses and trees that mature to market size in roughly half the time it takes hardwoods.

Recycled wood flooring is made from salvaged boards or trees that have been remilled into a product suitable for residential use. Because this wood often comes from America's old-growth forests, it is often harder, denser and more attractive than new growth wood. And recycling wood uses fewer resources than making new wood flooring.

Bamboo, cork and eucalyptus flooring products are a sustainable alternative to traditional hardwoods. They are available in traditional flooring thicknesses and lengths for installation as tongue-and-groove planks either fastened to the subfloor or floating above padding. Properly installed and maintained floors made of sustainable species will last as long as hardwood flooring. Many types can be sanded and sealed, like the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch hardwood installations.

For detailed descriptions of these technologies and practices, visit www.toolbase.org, then click on Technology Inventory. **PR**

Glen Salas 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.

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The Results Are In

THE ANNUAL BEST IN CLASS SURVEY conducted by the research staff of *Professional Remodeler* magazine shows how the industry's leading manufacturers carve up the market. Although mainstays like Tyvek, James Hardie and Owens Corning top our lists, there are some upstarts that have been turning out innovative products and eroding some of the market share the big names have enjoyed for so long. The

survey focused on brand awareness, use and preference of the products made by the top manufacturers in the building and remodeling industry.

Between Aug. 22 and Sept. 17, 2007, survey invitations were e-mailed to randomly selected remodelers who are recipients of *Professional Remodeler* magazine. A total 352 remodelers or restorers from every major region in the U.S. completed

the survey via the Internet. Of those surveyed, 44 percent listed themselves as both a residential and commercial contractor; 21 percent specified as residential-only; and 19 percent referred to themselves simply as a general contractor. Also surveyed were kitchen and bath specialists; residential fire damage or insurance restoration contractors; and historical renovators. Most of the respondents identified themselves as president, owner or CEO, but we got down into the trenches and found supervisors, foremen, purchasing directors and estimators to chime in.

The survey was conducted in a similar fashion to our sibling publications *Professional Builder* and *Custom Builder* magazines. Although remodelers are traditionally quicker to embrace newer products and technologies than production builders, the responses were remarkably similar, suggesting the major manufacturers are getting their message out quite effectively — which is encouraging news for the big players in a down market.



Overhead Door — Ranked highest in awareness, use and preference for garages.



Tyvek is the #1 housewrap on the market, but Owens Corning and Typar are gaining market share.



Andersen Windows ranks slightly higher than its chief competitor, Pella.

Survey Says!

For each product, respondents were presented with a list of brands and manufacturer names and were asked three questions:

1) Of the brands/manufacturers listed, which are you aware of?

2) Which of these brands/manufacturers has your company used in the past 18 months? (This question was asked only of those respondents aware of at least one of the listed brands/manufacturers in the product category.)

3) Which one is your preferred brand/manufacturer of? (This question was asked only of those respondents aware of at least one of the listed brands/manufacturers in the product category.)

Best in Class Survey Results

		Aware	Used (Past 18 mos.)	Prefer			Aware	Used (Past 18 mos.)	Prefer
Brick & Stone	Total (Base)	104	85	85	Exterior Molding	Total (Base)	101	99	99
	Owens Corning	67%	56%	27%		James Hardie	56%	34%	16%
	Eldorado Stone	48%	27%	16%		Fypon	55%	26%	11%
	Boral Bricks	27%	14%	13%		Azek Trimboards	59%	34%	23%
	Hanson Bricks	12%	6%	1%		Georgia-Pacific	64%	24%	8%
Decking	Total (Base)	130	127	127	Interior Molding	CertainTeed	59%	30%	11%
	Trex	77%	55%	40%		Total (Base)	117	108	108
	Georgia-Pacific	52%	17%	9%		Georgia-Pacific	62%	29%	17%
	CertainTeed	60%	8%	9%		Fypon	50%	25%	10%
	Weyerhaeuser	50%	14%	7%		Azek Trimboards	49%	21%	6%
	TimberTech Limited	37%	17%	10%		CertainTeed	46%	27%	9%
Entry Doors	Total (Base)	133	133	133	Roofing	James Hardie	44%	23%	4%
	Jeld-Wen	79%	34%	11%		Total (Base)	139	138	138
	Pella	81%	32%	17%		CertainTeed	81%	47%	27%
	Therma-Tru	71%	46%	29%		Owens Corning	72%	30%	10%
	Marvin	74%	15%	4%		GAF	73%	34%	14%
	Peachtree	68%	13%	4%		Georgia-Pacific	64%	15%	4%
Garage Doors	Total (Base)	118	116	116	Siding	Timberline	57%	19%	8%
	Overhead Door	75%	40%	34%		Johns Manville	45%	9%	4%
	Wayne-Dalton	61%	25%	17%		Elk	53%	28%	14%
	Clopay	58%	32%	22%		TAMKO	42%	17%	9%
	Jeld-Wen	45%	10%	5%		Total (Base)	120	119	119
	Housewrap	Total (Base)	112	112		112	Alcoa	74%	18%
Insulation	Tyvek	98%	87%	74%	Windows	CertainTeed	84%	41%	19%
	Owens Corning	56%	17%	4%		Georgia-Pacific	68%	17%	6%
	Typar	47%	18%	7%		James Hardie	74%	50%	37%
	Total (Base)	114	114	114		Lousiana-Pacific	51%	8%	2%
	Owens Corning	96%	78%	55%		Owens Corning	58%	11%	2%
	CertainTeed	71%	35%	7%		Weyerhaeuser	54%	10%	0%
Interior Doors	Johns Manville	72%	27%	8%		Total (Base)	152	151	151
	Dow Styrofoam	63%	29%	5%		Andersen	92%	58%	30%
	Total (Base)	144	141	141		Jeld-Wen	81%	32%	7%
	Jeld-Wen	78%	40%	26%		Marvin	82%	25%	8%
	Masonite	75%	49%	34%		Pella	90%	52%	20%
	Pella	58%	23%	13%					
	Peachtree	49%	13%	5%					



Owens Corning — The pink stuff is still the top dog in the insulation market.



James Hardie — Ranked best in use and preference among siding manufacturers.

Respondents identified the products they evaluate, recommend, specify, approve or purchase for use in the homes they work on. To minimize respondent fatigue, each survey participant was asked brand questions for no more than six products for which he or she has purchasing involvement. The following are the results of 2007's Best In Class Survey.

Results

Awareness and preference of Cultured Stone tops the brick and stone category. Owens Corning and Eldorado Stone are

almost even on use, with Owens Corning maintaining a slight lead in user preference.

Like the results in our sister publications, composite board manufacturer Trex holds a distinct advantage in brand awareness, use and preference in decking. Georgia-Pacific holds a solid second place in use, though TimberTech has the slight upper hand in preference.

Entry doors is an extremely competitive category. Most of the companies are within a point or two for brand awareness. As such, few of the major manufacturers enjoy a commanding lead over their competitors in use.

Therma-Tru doors, interestingly, ranks slightly behind others in awareness, yet 46 percent of those surveyed reported using a Therma-Tru entry door. Jeld-Wen and Pella, at 34 and 32 percent respectively, account for most of the rest of the market.

Exterior and interior molding manufacturers are in a dead heat across all categories. It appears Georgia-Pacific is slightly better in getting the word out, but there isn't more than six percentage points difference in the usage. On the exterior side, most remodelers preferred using AZEK trim products.

Similarly competitive is the garage door market. Manufacturers have been stepping up style and durability in their products, such as carriage style doors. Forty percent of our respondents used Overhead Doors on the job within the past year and a half.

All three magazines report Tyvek still has the housewrap segment all wrapped up, with nearly all of those surveyed reporting brand awareness and 87 percent reporting using the venerable product. Tyvar and Owens Corning housewrap products still hold significant market share.

Windows are probably the first thing your customers are concerned with when it comes to remodeling their homes. Andersen and Pella are locked tightly in awareness, with Andersen being used and preferred slightly more often. Marvin and Jeld-Wen are dead-even in awareness, though Jeld-Wen appears to have been used slightly more often by remodelers.

R-values are a chief concern among homeowners, respondents report. Although newer alternative-material insulation products have hit the market, Owens Corning's old-fashioned "pink stuff" enjoys the highest awareness (98 percent), use (78 percent) and preference (55 percent). CertainTeed, Johns Manville and Dow's Styrofoam share the remaining market.

According to our research, higher wind resistance, greater durability and decades-long guarantees are the hallmarks of the latest roofing products. CertainTeed, GAF and Owens Corning snag most use in the field, but innovation is high and the competition is fierce as more manufacturers have entered the fray in recent years. **PR**

How successful remodelers navigate the road ahead.

Now there's a powerful new way to anonymously benchmark your business metrics against your competition, track your performance against regional and national building industry trends, gain deeper insights from industry experts and confidentially connect with peers, lenders and financial advisors.

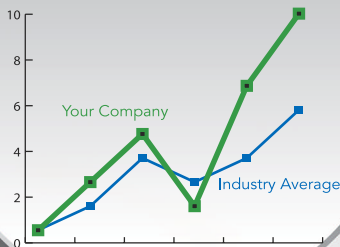
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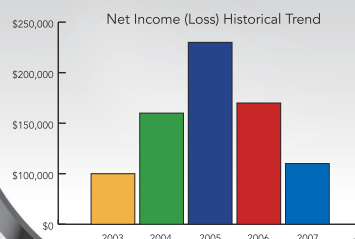
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Revenue, expenses and margins compared to a peer group you define



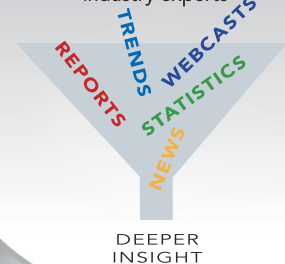
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Your trends and ratios illustrated by quarter, month, or year.



Industry Intelligence

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TIMBERLAND

It's getting colder out there, and Timberland's Thermal Force is out to keep your toes toasty.

The steel toe of the Thermal Force boot is coated with a ceramic-based material to add a layer of insulation. In both the steel and non-steel toe versions, Aerogel nanotechnology is applied for warmth.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5352-125>



CAMBRIA

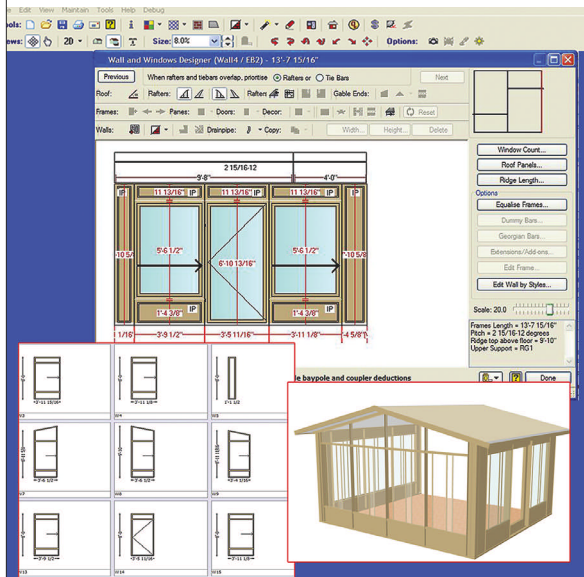
Cambria has added six new colors to its palette of stain-resistant, nonporous quartz surfaces in the Desert Collection and another six to the company's Quarry Collection. The company also added 20 colors to its 1-centimeter products for walls, showers and fireplace surrounds.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5352-126>

PLANRIGHT

Specifically designed to help builders and remodelers create sunrooms, the PlanRight software system allows users to provide a 3-D sunroom design in seconds. The software has a customizable sales tool and provides detailed drawings for making the permit process easier.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-127>



PULSE SHOWERSPAS

With a Hawaiian-inspired name, the Kauai Rain Shower System from Pulse Showerspases is easy to install and offers a drenching shower. The company claims the unit can be roughed into existing pipe work in about 20 minutes. The Kauai has an 8-inch brass showerhead and a multi-function hand-held spray.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5352-128>





WILSONART

The Gibraltar and Earthstone solid surfaces from Wilsonart are the company's latest ½-inch, 100 percent nonporous acrylic-based surface products. Both the new lines have waterproof seams ideal for custom designs and are approved by the FDA for food contact and preparation areas. The products are naturally mold-, mildew- and stain-resistant and carry a 10-year limited warranty.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-129>



STUDIO BECKER

Studio Becker boasts the electric Smart Drawer will know when to stop and won't move a single item. These pull-less cabinets open and close at the slightest touch of a hip or tap of an elbow. The company also offers wardrobes and other storage options.

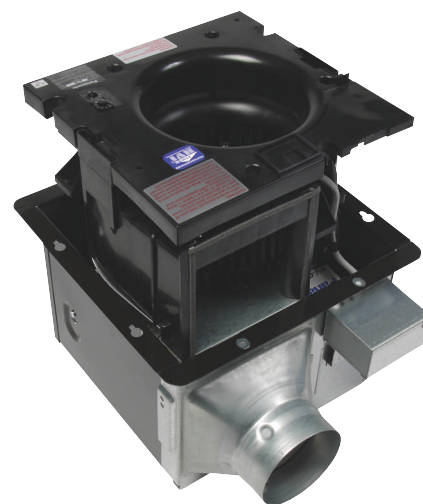
For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-131>



CERTAINTEED

Solid finish PVC trim from CertainTeed's Restoration Millwork line includes nine new profiles. Made in natural white, the line now has 15 shapes such as crown molds and rakes as well as quarter round, base cap, bed cap and sill noses. A variety of dimensional lumber and sheer widths and thicknesses are available.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-130>



PANASONIC

Getting behind the green movement is Panasonic's WhisperGreen single-speed ventilation fans. Three new models include the 50 CFM, 80 CFM and 80 CFM with an Energy Star-rated light and night light. The company's DC motor provides 75 to 400 percent more energy efficiency than the minimum Energy Star requirements.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-132>

BADEN BATH

Sporting features not normally seen in a jet tub, Baden Bath offers its two-person tub with a DVD player and wine cooler along with a heater and self-cleaning functions as standard. The tub's coordinating standing shower has an attached sauna room. The company also has saunas, sink basins and faucets.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5352-133>



HANSGRÖHE

The SideWay is Hansgrohe's latest shower panel. Ideal for either remodeling or new construction, the SideWay integrates the showerhead, hand shower, body sprays and temperature controls into a single, easy-to-install fixture. With its thin profile and recessed body jets, the new SideWay is designed to minimize visual clutter and to fit into even the smallest of bathrooms.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5352-134>



CALIFORNIA FAUCETS

Part of the company's Mix-and-Match faucet line is California Faucets' San Clemente, shown with sapphire blue crystal and satin nickel finish. The company encourages its clients to swap out handles, finishes and spout styles to create a unique piece for each customer. Twenty-five styles and 30 decorative finishes are offered.

For FREE information,
visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-135>



MOEN

Moen's newest collection is the Rothbury. Branded as a full bath suite of faucets, showerheads and accessories, the line features a cottage-style design with low-arc faucet spouts, crisp lines and stylish handles and hubs. The collection is the first to offer the company's water-saving 1½ gallon-per-minute aerator for environmentally conscious homeowners and remodelers.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-136>





TOTO

Effective flushing and water conservation aren't always good bedfellows. The Eco UltraMax by Toto reconciles the two with the company's 1.28 gallon-per-flush E-Max flushing system, which uses 20 percent less than standard toilets. Unlike pressure-assist or dual flush options, the UltraMax is gravity-fed and uses a regular trip lever.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-137>



SYMMONS

The Ultra-Sense S-6050 sensor-activated faucet is designed for commercial and residential use. Made by Symmons, the S-6050 is battery-powered and equipped with self-adjusting infrared technology. It has a high-arc, long-reach profile for recessed mountings and features a 10-second factory-set cycle time that will automatically shut the water off if the sensor is blocked.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-138>



PRICE PFISTER

Broadening the company's bath series is the Santiago Collection from Price Pfister. Available in Tuscan bronze, chrome and satin nickel, the faucet family features traditional styling and accent touches along with a unique handle design. The aged and weathered Tuscan bronze, according to the company, is growing in popularity.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-139>



DANZE

Translated as "Beautiful Flower," the Bellefleur faucet collection from Danze has an organic-shaped base in both kitchen and convenience sink faucets. They are available with a two-function pull-down spray spout fashioned into the flared end of the spout. A conventional high arcing kitchen faucet is offered with brass vegetable spray.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-140>



TIMBERLAKE

A new finish added to Timberlake's repertoire is cognac, now available in the company's Portfolio Select series, which includes the Sierra Vista, Rushmore and Wyoming styles. Made specifically for maple cabinets, the finish leaves a furniture-like look to complement the rest of the home's décor.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-141>



PLAIN & FANCY

Calling their latest cabinetry line "a mix of uptown elegance blended with a relaxed rural feel," Plain & Fancy's Town & Country kitchen cabinets feature a mix-and-match style for creating something between a rustic brownstone and an urban farmhouse. Shown is the company's brushmark crackle and white wash finish with mullion-windowed cabinets.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-142>



ARMSTRONG CABINETS

Looking after the kids at home can drive caregivers nuts, especially if they have a meal to cook. At least homeowners can keep an eye on the tots with the KidZone cabinets from Armstrong. The cabinets stand 36 inches tall and offer child-friendly storage spots, an adjustable pull-out activity table and chrome wire bins for toys and games.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-143>



ARISTOKRAFT

White kitchen cabinets are still in high demand, and Aristokraft's Durham offers homeowners the timeless look they're after. The Durham has a recessed laminated center panel and a five-piece square mitered style with full overlay. The company recommends pairing the doors with their toasted antique glaze.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-144>

ST. CHARLES CABINETRY/VIKING

Touted as recyclable, hypoallergenic and colorful, the all-metal cabinets from St. Charles Cabinetry come in 23 powder coated colors. St. Charles Cabinetry, a division of Viking Range Corp., made the cold-rolled steel doors frameless and full-overlay with soft-close hinges and slides. Colors include matte, iridescent and designer shades.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5352-145>



QUALITY CABINETS

Versatile enough for most kitchen and bath themes, Quality Cabinet's Quincy line features a flat, recessed-panel door with wide stiles and rails offering a transitional look. According to the company, the Quincy is a contemporary door that hints toward traditional styling. It's offered in cherry or maple.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5352-146>



KRAFTMAID

The latest glazes from KraftMaid include the butter rum, dove white, canvas and biscotti (shown). According to the company, the finishes complement most flooring, surfaces, furnishings and appliances. For two-toned kitchens, the company recommends pairing the biscotti with sages, rusts and other muted tones.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5352-147>



KITCHEN CRAFT

The aXesso line from Kitchen Craft has a new addition in the Le Mans Blind Corner Pullout storage option. The pullout rolls and pivots inside a cabinet, allowing the entire shelf to shift outward for full access. It is constructed of gray melamine with chrome guardrails to keep pots and pans in place.

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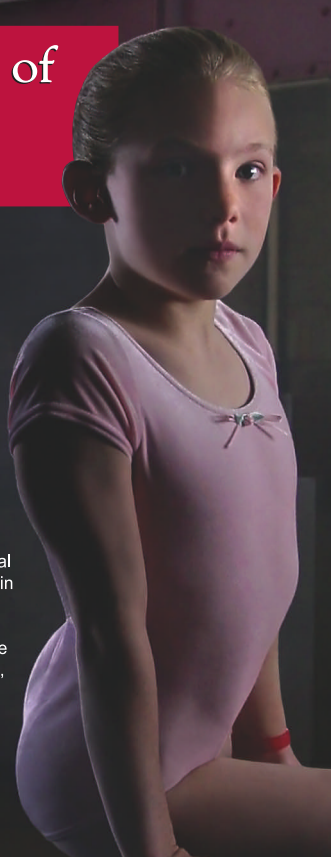
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A SIMPLE PLAN FOR 2008

There may be a few remodelers who have built a project without plans, but having done it once I'll bet

they would never want to repeat that mistake. A good set of plans provides direction for the project, helps resolve problems during construction and sets resource needs and schedules. When things change (as they surely will) the plans can identify areas that will be affected and ensure the project is finished as intended. While a well-developed set of plans is best, even a simple sketch is better than no plan at all.

Assuming we all accept the need for a plan before beginning construction, shouldn't it also hold true for our businesses? A simple business plan can help to set goals, control growth, provide guidance for decision making and establish benchmarks to monitor our progress.

What keeps most remodelers from creating a business plan each year? The most common reason is a perceived lack of time. The very reason they don't have time is because they lack the control that would result from a plan. Start with a very simple

plan that can be created in about four hours. Now is the perfect time to put your plan together for 2008.

Set Goals

Your business should help you achieve your personal goals. Start by listing five short-term (12-18 month) and five long-term (2-5 year) personal goals. Next, create a similar list of short- and long-term business goals. Make sure your short-term goals help achieve the long-term ones and that the business goals support the personal. You should involve your spouse or partner in setting personal goals, and if you have people in the business, be sure to get their input for the business goals as well.

Create a Budget

A budget is the most important part of a simple business plan and is not as hard as you might assume. If you have at least one year's financial history for your business, you have the template for next year's budget. Make sure your books are in an accepted format such as the NAHB Chart of Accounts and confirm that you are using the accrual method. Your accountant can help if

you are not comfortable with the concepts. Now create a profit and loss statement for the last 12 months. Using this P&L, make some predictions about next year's revenue and overhead.

Plan Your Marketing

The final section of your plan is a marketing and lead projection. Be realistic about your close rate and create a marketing plan to generate the leads you will need to meet your revenue goals. Chart these lead goals over the year to create benchmarks to confirm you are on plan.

Allow for "What-ifs"

Always include best- and worst-case scenarios in your plan. Calculate the effect of lower or higher sales revenue. Plan for how you will deal with these outcomes such as cutting overhead, postponing new purchases or changing your markup.

Now with a simple plan for your business you have a much better opportunity to achieve your goals. I'm sure once you experience the effect of this simple plan you will want to create a more detailed business plan for the future. **PR**



Vince Butler

Advisory Board Columnist

Birth Date: July 26, 1961

Company: Butler Brothers

Location: Clifton, Va.

Greatest Industry Involvement/

Position: 2006 Chair of NAHBR

If I Weren't a Remodeler...:

I wouldn't be my father's son.

Greatest Business Achievement:

Twenty years of profitability after being on the edge of bankruptcy.

Hobbies: Hiking, family travel and golf

Favorite Sports Team:

Virginia Tech Hokies

Favorite Athlete: Johnny Bench (that shows my age)

Favorite Musical Group:

The Eagles

Favorite Comedians:

The Marx Bros.

Favorite Meal: Prime rib

Favorite Drink: Fine Kentucky bourbon

Best Memory from Childhood:

Working with my Dad

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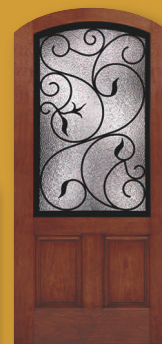
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