

# Professional Remodeler

FEBRUARY 2008

**10**  
**MOST INFLUENTIAL  
PEOPLE IN REMODELING**



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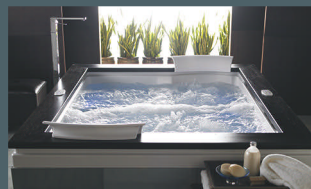
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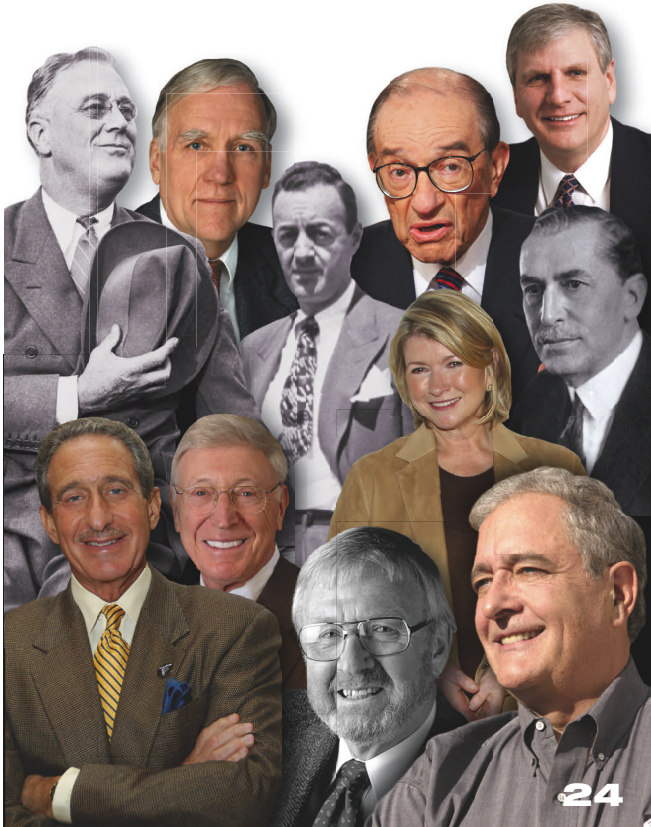
Vinyl Pocket Single-Hung Window

Clad-Wood Pocket Double-Hung Window



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### Remodelers' Exchange

To read the entire discussion on outsourcing home technology and hear the complete podcast, visit us online.

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## staff

### EDITOR IN CHIEF

**Michael R. Morris**  
630/288-8057; michael.morris@reedbusiness.com

### SENIOR EDITOR

**Jonathan Sweet**  
630/288-8170; jonathan.sweet@reedbusiness.com

### MANAGING EDITOR

**Judi Damm**  
630/288-8193; judi.damm@reedbusiness.com

### ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR

**Sara Zailskas**  
630/288-8197; sara.zailskas@reedbusiness.com

### PRODUCTS EDITOR

**Nick Bajzek**  
630/288-8187; nicholas.bajzek@reedbusiness.com

### SENIOR EDITOR, E-MEDIA

**Mark Jarasek**  
630/288-8171; mark.jarasek@reedbusiness.com

### SENIOR CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

**Wendy A. Jordan, Ann Matesi**

### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

**Doug Dwyer, Jud Motsenbocker, Tom Swartz, Rebecca Bryant, Allison P. Iantosca, Bob DuBree**

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### VICE PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

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**Tony Mancini**

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### SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES

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**CEO, REED BUSINESS INFORMATION**

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## WE ARE ALL INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

I love history. Always have. Most of my favorite kinds of books tend to be about prehistoric times, ancient civilizations, early explorers and historical figures.

That's probably why I was so drawn to the topic of this month's cover story, "10 Most Influential People in Remodeling." Not only would a project of this magnitude require us to look back over years of our country's history, but it would give us the opportunity to learn more about the evolution of this great industry we serve and the people who shaped it.

My further desire was that this type of article, which is quite a departure from our usual strategic business-related fare, might serve an even higher purpose by stimulating passionate debate and thoughtful discussion.

History has proven time and again that change often occurs when well-intentioned members of a particular community get involved in discussing important topics and exchanging their diverse ideas and opinions.

So, as much as our staff has enjoyed researching, debating and discussing which individuals would eventually end up on our list, my true hope is that by broaching subjects such as this, we can be a proponent of something even bigger by causing you to join the conversation.

One of the things I believe has hindered the growth of professionalism

in this industry is the fact that remodeling is such a local business that the widespread dispersal of great ideas — potentially revolutionary ideas — has always been a painfully slow process.

That doesn't have to be the case anymore, however, as the emergence of the Internet has provided us with an easily accessible meeting place where we can all join the conversation and influence improvement and change.

Imagine where we'd be today if a guy like Walt Stoeppelwerth, who is on our list and was one of the earliest stewards of professionalism in the remodeling industry, had a tool as powerful as the Internet at his disposal.

Walt's message of charging what you're worth was as important — and controversial — a concept as this industry has ever seen. And still, more than 30 years later, the concept is lost on many who either haven't heard it or have chosen to ignore it out of fear or ignorance.

Whether you agree with our list of influential people is not the point, really. I honestly hope you disagree with at least one of our choices. Maybe in that way, you will be motivated to log on to our Web site at [www.ProRemodeler.com](http://www.ProRemodeler.com) and let your opinion be known. Get involved. This is your industry, after all.

One of our duties as an industry leader is to help remodelers build more professionally run businesses. Won't you join us in this worthy cause? **PR**



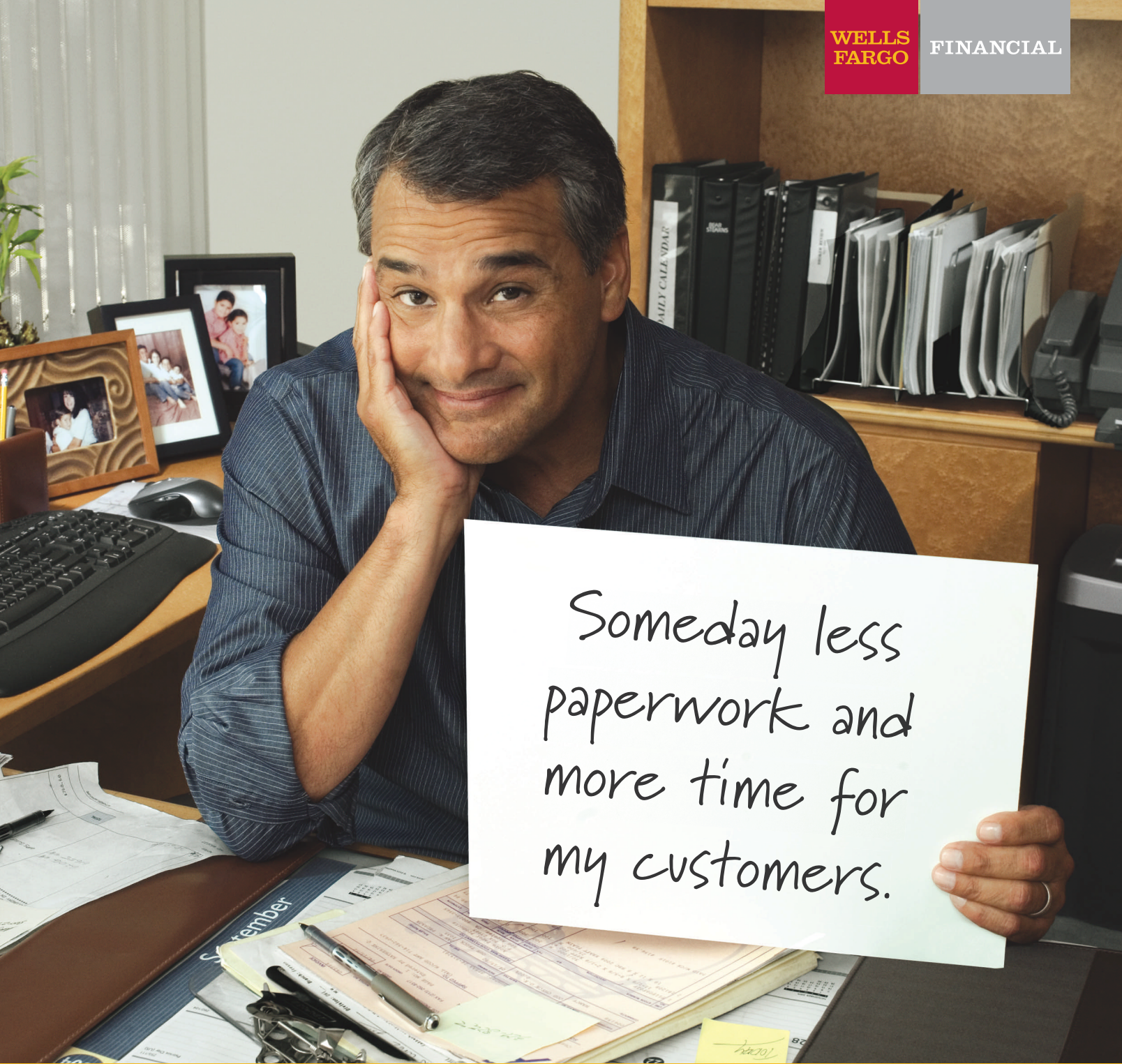
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Editor in Chief

**"One of our duties as an industry leader is to help remodelers build more professionally run businesses. Won't you join us in this worthy cause?"**

>> Contact me at [michael.morris@reedbusiness.com](mailto:michael.morris@reedbusiness.com) or 630/288-8057

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## TAILOR YOUR MARKETING TO YOUR NEEDS

As you know, marketing is a key component of any successful business. Although marketing is often overwhelming, it can be a logical and manageable process.

When evaluating your marketing strategy, it's important to remember that marketing is full of infinite possibilities and endless opportunities. The challenge is to determine what tactics to employ so that you are strategic and intentional with your decisions.

The key to effective marketing is identifying which marketing activities best support your business. There are three key factors to consider when determining your ideal marketing approach: 1) Where you stand in terms of your marketing budget, competitors and emerging opportunities 2) Your stage in the business life cycle — start-up, growth, mature or declining and 3) Your business mix.

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis offers a systematic approach for understanding your business. The SWOT analysis provides a baseline tool for determining where you are now and what you need to address. Ask yourself, in what areas are we stronger than our competition? And in what areas are we weak? Also assess opportunities, such as where there might be a market your competition is ignoring, and threats, such as an economic slowdown or a competitor who is targeting your same customer demographic.

After conducting the SWOT analysis and identifying where your business is in terms of marketing threats and opportunities, it is important to identify where your business is in the business life cycle. Various stages of growth require different marketing tactics. For example, if you manage a more mature, established business, image marketing tactics will be

more effective for maintaining your established referral base. Or, if you manage a young, start-up company, focusing on marketing tactics such as direct mail with a call to action will be necessary to facilitate immediate lead generation.

Additionally, your company's business mix will influence your marketing activities. Take a look at your business mix as it relates to job size and percentage of jobs that involve significant structural changes versus little or no structural changes. This drives the decisions that you make about target demographics, marketing tactics and message. For example, a high-end job might have a more image-driven marketing tactic, whereas a pull-and-replace bathroom advertisement might contain an immediate call to action containing a specific price point.

Remember, it can take three to six months or even a year for some marketing tactics to take root. When crafting your plan, evaluate each tactic to see if you can afford it given what resources you need to invest to make it successful. For example, running a radio commercial for one day won't help to build your brand; you would need to commit to a long-term strategy with enough frequency to establish your brand through radio. However, you might be able to employ a more short-term radio tactic if you simply need to drive consumers to your showroom

for a one-weekend event.

Once you have determined where your business is, you can begin to map out a marketing strategy to take your company where you want to go. If you haven't done so already, put together a 2008 marketing plan. Even the best

written marketing plan needs to be evaluated on a regular basis, at least monthly, to monitor its effectiveness. If you are a small company, you might not have the capacity (manpower) to do this monthly — if so, don't be discouraged. Reviewing your plan every three to four months will be better than not doing it at all.

With that said, don't be too risky by investing in large and very expensive campaigns if you cannot track the results closely. Much like any other budget, it can be adapted as the year progresses: if business revenue increases or decreases, or if a marketing tactic needs to be added or removed. It's an evolution, which always needs changes.

Taking the time to evaluate your marketing strategy and develop a solid marketing plan will pay off in the end. **PR**

*Doug Dwyer is president*

*and chief stewarding officer of Dream-Maker Bath & Kitchen by Worldwide, one of the nation's largest remodeling franchises. He can be reached at [doug.dwyer@dwyergroup.com](mailto:doug.dwyer@dwyergroup.com).*



Doug Dwyer  
Contributing Editor

**“It can take three to six months or even a year for some marketing tactics to take root. When crafting your plan, evaluate each tactic to see if you can afford it given what resources you need to invest to make it successful.”**

**>> For more Doug Dwyer on Leadership, visit [www.ProRemodeler.com](http://www.ProRemodeler.com)**





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## SALES TRAINING: THE BEST MOVE I EVER MADE

A little over six months ago my bare calves were sticking (it was late June in New England) to the thick plastic cover of the dentist chair.

I remember wondering if plaque was reinventing itself in my mouth while I sat there. The chipper hygienist seemed to think it was sport to combat the build up with an array of stainless steel tools.

Just when I thought she was done, she'd pop up from her scraping, peruse her options, select another pick — which, in my opinion, looked exactly the same as the one she had just put down — and dive back in again.

I recall thinking it extraordinary that I willingly put myself in the position of feeling completely helpless, unable to direct any form of dialogue, and hoping mightily that in the end it would all be good news and worth the tortuous 60 minutes — much like how I felt about making a sales call.

Unlike the dentist visits that I only have to face every six months, sales calls were becoming more and more frequent for me. “Good news” friends would say. “Clearly the company trusts you to be the face of the firm.”

Yes, it was very good news, and exactly where my over-achiever, competitive-as-hell self wanted to be. Yet I would find myself praying to the gods of all things sales that the phone wouldn't ring. Last time I checked, this wasn't the best way to perpetuate a business.

Luckily, I wouldn't be solely responsible for sales in our company. I'd done well positioning the firm's brand, which earned me a spot on the leadership team. That's great news for my self image, but this meant selling became a right and a duty.

At the time of my promotion, I forced myself to make the decision

that of all the things in life that might slow me down, being intimidated by selling was not going to be one of them. I needed to find a trainer.

The first time I met with George, he asked me to describe my sales strategy. In short order, it became painfully clear that I relied heavily on a lot of free consulting and on going to as many sales calls as humanly possible in hopes of occasionally beating the odds to land a new project. He, quite bluntly, pointed out that I was expending ridiculous amounts of energy for very little return.

The rest of our first visit went something like a magic show. I went from fury to fatigue to fortitude before my coffee got cold.

I had expected George to pepper me with “features and benefits” and to expertly tease me with just a wisp of a promise that he could change me into the deal maker of the century. Instead, he made me do all of the talking.

He had a list of questions to ask me. Each time I tried to turn the conversation back to him, he bounced it back to me. I tried to be a hard sell, to test his ability, but I couldn't hold my footing.

In the end, he uncovered my deepest fear: “I'm afraid that I can't sell and I will fail to perpetuate my family business into the next generation.” And from there, all he had to do was to rescue me.

And rescue me he did. I am learn-

ing how to do this very process with my prospects. I am learning how to keep my mouth shut except for a few leading questions and how to approach each sales visit as a business meeting attended

by colleagues. I am learning to spot typical buyer behavior patterns and to not be derailed by them. I am learning how to set agendas at the beginning of meetings to get to an agreed upon outcome. In such a short time, I've strapped on a heavy tool belt that poises me as an offensive player.

For anyone familiar with the training program I am describing, you will be able to name it quickly. It's sales training and the point is not the particular program, but finding one that suits you. This one happens to work for me.

I am now actually hungry for selling opportunities. The sweet notes of the Hallelujah Chorus are working out the ancient

knots that have accumulated in my stomach all these long years.

Now if they would just offer training on how to make dentist visits less painful.

*Allison Perry Iantosca is vice president of marketing and sales for F.H. Perry Builder, a preeminent custom builder and remodeler in the Boston market. She can be reached at [aiantosca@fhperry.com](mailto:aiantosca@fhperry.com). PR*



Allison P. Iantosca  
Contributing Editor

**“I am learning how to keep my mouth shut except for a few leading questions and how to approach each sales visit as a business meeting attended by colleagues.”**

**>> Coming in June: Marketing Identity Crisis; Implementing two golden rules: ask questions and be consistent**



# KEEPING UP WITH HOME TECHNOLOGY

Outsourcing allows remodelers to manage homeowners' needs

**HOME TECHNOLOGY IS NO LONGER** a future concept; we use it now. So how does a remodeling firm handle this technology: in-house techies or outsourced to technology gurus? Remodelers Harry Poehlmann and David Pikel discuss their strategy for coping with the latest technology for the home.

**Jud:** The first thing I want to try to do is define what we're calling "technology." What type of technology are your clients looking for?

**Harry:** With the clients, the minimum they want is to be able to network all their computers. A lot of them have flex time with their jobs and work anywhere from one, two or three days a week from their homes. One client of ours has gone so far as home automation. He can control his entire house from his BlackBerry while traveling.

**David:** With our clientele, a given with any project has been putting in basic structured wiring to accommodate data and communication. Being that we're a remodel-

ing company only, we don't always have access to the whole house. It's infrequent that we're talking about an entirely integrated system. That being said, things like lighting control, security and some home automation, data communication and video are generally components that many of our clients are requiring for their specific element of the project.

**Jud:** Harry, do you do this in-house, or do you outsource it?

**Harry:** Outsource. The technology changes so fast, there are so many things to offer. I don't feel I can adequately keep up and do a good job. I think it's better to outsource it in that regard. That's what the people that we outsource to do; they focus strictly on that. They're able to keep up with what's available currently, the current trends and the best way to approach different problems when it comes to the remodel side, where wireless might be better than a hard-wire structure, and what's available.

**Jud:** On the reverse of that, what's the disadvantage of outsourcing?

**Harry:** The disadvantage of outsourcing is that you're taking the clientele to someone, and you're marrying into them almost as a joint package. If they stumble, it can reflect badly on us.

**Jud:** David, in-house or outsource?

**David:** Outsource. In the case of home automation, from a holistic standpoint there is, in my opinion, too much information to try to stay on top of while trying to run this business as a design/build firm as well. We've aligned ourselves with two specific companies that have two different approaches to home automation. They've been well trained by us as to how our



PHOTO: MARC BERLOW

**DAVID:** "Largely, our experience has been that our clients are looking to us as professionals to say, 'Are you aware that this capability might exist for you?'"

clients expect to be treated. They are pre-conditioned before they are even exposed to the client in terms of to what extent should they go with them; what is the level of understanding that this client presents? What is the level of expectation that this client has? Our consultants don't walk away leaving their heads spinning.

## This month featuring:

### Harry Poehlmann, Owner

Poehlmann Construction, Loveland, Colo., and Basements for You, Fort Collins, Colo.

For more than 30 years, Poehlmann Construction has done high-end remodels and new construction. Remodels average from \$300,000 to \$1 million and the homes are \$1 million and up.

### David Pikel, Owner

Pikel Construction & Remodeling, Wauwatosa, Wis. In business for over three generations, the firm focuses on high-end design/build with an in-house design staff as well as all of the carpentry.



**HARRY:** “The technology changes so fast, there are so many things to offer. I don’t think I can adequately keep up and do a good job. I think it’s better to outsource it in that regard.”



PHOTO: SUSAN GODDARD

**Jud:** Do either one of you have or look at an electrical contractor who will do high voltage and low voltage both? Have you seen combinations and stayed away from them, David?

**David:** Yes. We’ve seen combinations and yes, we do have electricians who will, on a limited basis, handle elements of this. The only other element beside the electrical would be specific to lighting control. Beyond that, there is nothing else that they would handle or that we would expect them to include, for the exact reasons Harry mentioned. It’s too specialized. We’ve run into exactly the same situation and we’ve done exactly the same thing.

**Jud:** Harry, got a combination electrician doing this, too?

**Harry:** Yes, we do. They’ll do low voltage

via phone, cable and lighting. Beyond that, they’re not going to do surround-sound, or anything to do with hi-fi. Once that’s involved, then they’re out of the picture or working with and providing a source of power for that equipment. The key is you need both. You can’t get rid of one. You need them to work together well. That’s something that can take some time, and you’ve got to have a lot of pre-construction meetings to make sure those two identities are really on the same page.

**Jud:** Harry, one of your specifics in your comment — lets bring this out more so people understand — this is a combination low voltage and high voltage. Those two companies have to work together and you found that to be a very important element, is that true?

**Harry:** Yes. A simple example is they may say they need a 110 line coming into the box. Maybe it has to be on a direct breaker so it’s on circuit. Or maybe they need that wire to be 10 feet long because they’re going to wire that into their equipment and it’s going to go from there. If you don’t have simple things like that coordinated out early, it can lead to problems down the road.

**Jud:** When your client comes to you, what are they coming to you with? General ideas or more specific things?

**Harry:** Actually, it’s all over the board. Some come with just general ideas; they want to be able to have their computers talk to each other. We also get those who travel a lot. They’ll have seen it in a friend’s house and say, “They used this system and have an OnQ box.” They know a lot about the system and are very specific about the items they want to use.

**David:** Largely, our experience has been that our clients are looking to us as professionals to say, “Are you aware that this capability might exist for you?” That’s where the consulting element of the design process comes in with our initial consulta-

tion. We’re making them aware of things that they may not even suspect are available to them, much less how they might be able to use them in their home.

**Jud:** Harry, how do you keep up with technology? I understand you don’t know all the fine details, and that’s why you’re outsourcing. On the other hand, how do you keep up with what these folks offer?

**Harry:** A lot of it is through trade magazines. I think David brought up a good point. A lot of the people we use are in the

same HBA with us, and affiliates like that. You tend to ask them a lot of questions.

**Jud:** David, how do you keep up with technology?

**David:** I’m a gadget freak myself. I tend to have an affinity toward those things. I don’t get into all the technical aspects, the frequency aspects or those elements that the techie guys do.

**Jud:** Do you ever see yourself getting large enough where you would have in-house people doing this?

**Harry:** No. It’s such a specialized field. You’d have to be quite large, and it takes a whole lot of focus. It’s one of those fields that takes almost continuous education. Technology changes too much. When we first started out, we tried to do our surround-sound wiring in-house. It’s a very simple thing, just run a few wires and connect everything. We learned in a hurry that one company would come in, and if it’s pre-wired they’ll say it’s wrong. The next will say, “No that should have been bell wire.” The next guy will come in and say, “No, that should have been copper wire!” It’s an industry that doesn’t seem to have a standard on some of the wiring. We learned quickly to get ourselves out of that picture and start teaming up with someone to offer that. **PR**



Jud Motsenbocker  
Contributing Editor

**TALK BACK**

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## Make a smooth exit

Selling a remodeling company can be a difficult undertaking. It can be tough to find an exit strategy that not only allows a remodeler freedom, but also makes it possible to profit from the experience.

But through hard work and careful planning, Paul and Nina

their first tentative steps by advertising the company for sale but quickly pulled it off the market when they realized they weren't ready to sell.

In November 2006, they decided to hire a broker after hearing consultant Kraig Kramers speak at a Remodelers

Advantage meeting. The Winans decided they would look for a consultant that was based in California and had experience selling small service businesses, Nina says. They found four companies that met their requirements, talked

with two of them and eventually ended up hiring one from the Bay Area.

"We chose her because she was in our area, and we only had to pay her if the company sold," Nina says. "The others wanted money up front."

From that point, things moved swiftly. The company was listed

in January 2007, a successful offer was made in May and the sale closed Aug. 1.

Besides working with a broker, several other things were key in making the company attractive to a buyer. The Winans paired the real estate where the office was located with the business, a move that made the investment more attractive to a lender, Paul says. It also helped that the company's brand had been built for years by quality work, seminars for consumers and Paul's writing articles in the local paper.

The Winans' frequent travels for vacations and industry events had also shown the company could run without them because of the extensive systems and procedures they had put in place. And most importantly, the company made a good profit.

"We were working reasonable hours and making good money, which is what made it an attractive company," Paul says. "If

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

we were running more volume at a lower margin or doing the same volume and working 60 to 80 hours a week, it would have been less attractive."

Despite the sale, the Winans are both keeping busy, Paul as a facilitator with Remodelers Advantage and Nina as a membership coordinator with the local NARI chapter.

"It's really key if somebody is selling the business that they have an idea of what they're going to do with their lives," Nina says. "Otherwise, I think you could be sitting there wondering if you made a big mistake, because it is a big change."

For more information, e-mail Paul at [paul@remodelersadvantage.com](mailto:paul@remodelersadvantage.com).



Winans were able to do just that. After running Winans Construction in Oakland for nearly 30 years, the couple sold the company last year.

One of the key decisions the Winans made was to use a broker to sell the company rather than go it on their own. In February 2006, they made

## THE GREEN PIECE Invest in a 'Green Guy'

For years, Landis Construction in Washington, D.C., has been experimenting with various green remodeling practices, but as customer interest has increased over the last year, the company looked for a way to improve its ability to meet its green needs.

Enter the "Green Guy," as principal Chris Landis calls him. Russell Clark came on board last fall as a project manager to lead the company's green efforts.

"The goal is to green all aspects of

the operation, from marketing to sales to production to our office," Clark says. "Even after the project is finished, we leave clients information on how to green their homes."

Clark has an extensive background in environmental work and construction. In 1995, he founded GreenHOME, a local non-profit that focuses on green construction and methods, and he also spent several years working for the Environmental Protection Agency.

Clark is charged with finding new green

suppliers and green trade partners, as well as with evaluating products. He's already helped make significant differences in the products the company uses on projects and in the company, such as replacing the cleaning products used in the office with green supplies, Landis says.

"We want to be on the leading edge, and he acts as a conduit for all that green information," Landis says. "By having one person responsible for managing this, it's made us much more efficient."



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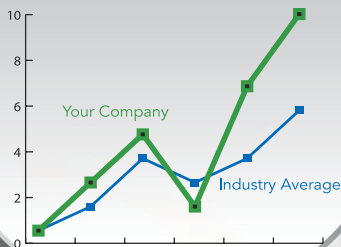
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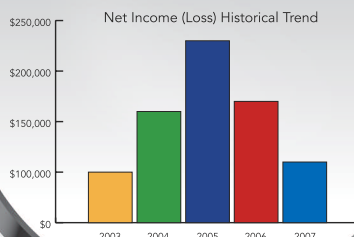
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# 10 Most Influential

THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
MADE THE REMODELING  
INDUSTRY WHAT IT IS TODAY

By Jonathan Sweet, Senior Editor

**AS LONG AS THERE HAVE BEEN HOMES**, there's been remodeling. So when the staff of *Professional Remodeler* sat down to pick the 10 most influential people in the history of remodeling, we knew it wouldn't be an easy task.

From dozens of ideas, we, along with input from others, winnowed the list down to the 10 (actually 11 — we counted Home Depot founders Arthur Blank and Bernie Marcus as one) individuals on the following pages. These are the people we believe have shaped the industry, for better or worse — the individuals who had the most to do with the creation of the modern remodeling industry.

We don't expect everyone to agree, and frankly we'd be a little disappointed if you did. So let us know what you think by posting your thoughts using the Talk Back section on [www.ProRemodeler.com](http://www.ProRemodeler.com).





## KERMIT BAKER

As the director of the Remodeling Futures Program at Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, Kermit Baker has elevated the image of remodelers and demonstrated that remodeling is a separate industry from home building.

"Before Kermit, there was not a spokesman for the industry that could put it in economic terms," says John Gordon, director of contractor business at Home Depot and a past NARI national officer.

"He shed a light on how the economy affects remodeling and how remodeling affects the economy."

The center's biennial reports have changed the way those within and those outside the industry look at remodeling. Baker also developed the Leading Indicator for Remodeling Activity, the only index to report remodeling volume on a timely basis.

"A lot of people think of remodeling as a fly-by-night industry and Kermit has helped give it legitimacy," Gordon says.

Besides his role at Harvard, Baker is also the chief economist for the American Institute of Architects. Prior to his work at Harvard, Baker spent 10 years with the economics department at Cahn-ers (now Reed Business Information, the parent company of *Professional Remodeler*), where he developed several important construction industry measurements. He was inducted into the NAHB Remodeling Hall of Fame in 2006.

## ARTHUR BLANK & BERNIE MARCUS

For better or worse, the big boxes changed remodeling forever. And with

more than 2,000 locations throughout North America, Home Depot, the company Blank and Marcus started is a ubiquitous presence.

Home Depot, Lowes and other smaller chains have become in some cases competitors and in others partners for remodelers. While some complain about competing with installed sales from the boxes, others have built their businesses through alliances with them. For many, Home Depot and their ilk have become the supplier of choice, even as the company has had its problems reaching the pro market.

One thing is undeniable: Home Depot has raised the profile of home improvement in this country through its extensive marketing and advertising. By doing so, the company has increased interest in remodeling in general.

"We basically changed the way America lives," Bernie Marcus said in a 2006 speech at Dartmouth College. "People bought houses because they could go to Home Depot and figure out how to fix problems in their houses."

Although Lowe's came first in 1946 (Blank and Marcus started Home Depot

in 1979), by 1990 Home Depot had passed Lowe's in sales and become the dominant brand in home improvement retailing. The company's focus on installed sales and the pro customer has made it the public face of home improvement in America.

Marcus retired from Home Depot in 1997 after 17 years as CEO and was followed by Blank five years later. Since then, both have started philanthropical foundations, although Marcus has kept a lower profile

**"We basically changed the way America lives. People bought houses because they could go to Home Depot and figure out how to fix problems in their houses."  
— Bernie Marcus**





than Blank, who frequently finds himself in the news due to his ownership of the Atlanta Falcons.



PHOTO: COURTESY CASE DESIGN/REMODELING, INC.

## FRED CASE

Over the last 46 years, Case Design/Remodeling has grown to be probably the best-known name in remodeling. Between its local remodeling business in the Washington, D.C., area, and franchise locations throughout the country, the company generated more than \$100 million in revenue last year.

"In the case of Case, Fred is very much the heart and soul of who we are," says Mark Richardson, who has been president of Case for more than a decade and worked for the company since 1980. "What differentiates Case from the hundreds of thousands of other remodelers out there is that when Fred started the company he approached it as building a business instead of building a practice."

Case has affected the industry

in a number of ways since he started the company as Case Construction in 1961 out of his basement. He is credited as one of the pioneers of the design/build process, which revolutionized residential remodeling.

"Many clients were saying to him, 'Wouldn't it be great if you could handle both the design and the construction,'" Richardson says. "Moving into design/build was very market driven. What people wanted was a one-stop shop."

Besides being a model of a large successful remodeling firm on a local scale, the company's handyman division (launched in 1992 when traditional remodeling slowed) led to a large franchise operation that now has locations in more than 60 cities.

"Fred has always believed that you invest in growth in challenging times," Richardson says. "If you look historically at Case's growth, we've gained market share in slow times because we don't slow down when the market slows down."

Case was also a leader in education and associations, helping to develop NARI's CR certification and serving on the board of directors of both NARI and one of its forerunners, the National Remodeling Asso-

ciation. He was inducted into the NAHB Remodeling Hall of Fame in 2002. Case still serves the company he founded as CEO.

## ALAN GREENSPAN

Like with Blank and Marcus, there can be a lot of disagreement about whether Greenspan's influence on remodeling was positive or negative. Regardless, the actions of the Federal Reserve Board during his tenure as chairman have played a huge role in creating the housing market of today.

On the positive side, the Fed's moves to manage interest rates in the late '90s and early part of this decade made money readily available for many homeowners. As mortgage rates dropped, home values increased, leading to more home equity that could be pulled out for remodeling projects and other spending.

At the same time, though, Greenspan was one of the biggest proponents of adjustable rate mortgages, telling Congress and business groups that they represented a smart investment for many consumers.

"Many homeowners might have saved tens of thousands of dollars had they held adjustable-rate-mortgages rather than

**"Many homeowners might have saved tens of thousands of dollars had they held adjustable-rate mortgages rather than fixed-rate mortgages during the past decade."  
— Alan Greenspan**



PHOTO: ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES NEWS



fixed-rate mortgages during the past decade. ... American consumers might benefit if lenders provided greater mortgage product alternatives to the traditional fixed-rate mortgage," he said in 2004.

In recent months, as the housing crisis has deepened, many economists and pundits have blamed the Fed — and Greenspan in particular — citing his support for ARMs and his inability or unwillingness to slow home price growth.

Late last year, in advance of the release of his memoirs, Greenspan gave several interviews where he admitted the Fed didn't necessarily understand everything that was going on in the mortgage market during his tenure.

"I really didn't get it until very late in 2005 or 2006," he told "60 Minutes."

## NEIL KELLY

Kelly started the Neil Kelly Company in 1947 with only \$100 after becoming disenchanted with the selling practices of the siding company for which he was working.

"He worked for the classic tinman operation," says Tom Kelly, Neil's son and current president of the Neil Kelly Company. "That really turned him off. He believed there was a better way to do business."

From that point on, Neil dedicated himself to improving the professionalism of the industry.

"Neil really felt it was important that contractors work together for the common good," Tom says.

Early on, Neil was heavily involved in the Oregon Home Builders Association and helped get laws passed in the state to regulate remodeling and clean up the industry. He was a member of some of

**"Any fool can build homes. What counts is how many you can sell for how little."  
— William Levitt**

the earliest remodeling peer groups. He was also instrumental in the merger of the National Remodelers Association and the National Home Improvement Council into NARI in 1982. He was the first president of the group and the only to serve two terms.

"In those days it was a pretty difficult thing to get those groups together," Tom says. "There was a lot of politics involved, and he had to rise above it. It took a strong leader to get that merger to hold."

Neil was also a pioneer in bringing women into construction. From the early

1970s, he had women working in sales, design and other non-traditional roles.

Neil served as company president until 1979 when health problems forced him to retire from day-to-day management, but he spent the rest of his life improving the industry and working on charitable causes in the Portland area. Neil, who died in 1995, was part of the NAHB Remodeling Hall of Fame's inaugural class in 2001.

## WILLIAM LEVITT

In 1947, Levitt and Sons began construction of Levittown, N.Y. The housing industry was never the same.

For all intents and purposes, the suburb and production home building was born there on 1,200 acres of potato fields on Long Island. William Levitt applied the techniques of assembly line production to housing. In an era when most builders were constructing a handful of homes a year, he wanted to build 30 a day.

By opening up affordable homeownership to a large segment of the population, he made the modern remodeling market. And after all, where would remodelers be without production homes to improve, upgrade and repair?

Levitt and his brother Alfred ended up building 17,000 homes in Levittown, N.Y., before going on to build Levittowns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, along with other suburban developments. In 1950, Time magazine estimated that one of every eight homes built in the United States was a Levitt house.

In 1968, the Levitts sold Levitt and Sons to ITT Corp. Over the years, Levitt and



PHOTO: TONY LINCKTIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES



PHOTO: COURTESY NEIL KELLY COMPANY



Sons went through a succession of owners and late last year became the biggest home builder — so far — to file for bankruptcy during the current slump.

William Levitt continued to invest in real estate and housing developments in both the United States and overseas, usually unsuccessfully, until his death in 1994.

### EDWIN MEREDITH

If your response was, “Who?” you wouldn’t be alone. Meredith isn’t a household name, but he has had a significant influence on the remodeling market all the same.

He was the founder, in 1922, of Fruit, Garden and Home magazine, which two years later would become Better Homes and Gardens. Before there was HGTV, before there was “Extreme Makeover,” homeowners turned to Better Homes and Gardens for ideas to renovate their homes. The first issue cost 10 cents and a year’s subscription was 35 cents.

It tapped into the desire of middle class Americans to improve their homes and their lives. Every day a client comes to a remodeler with a picture torn out of a magazine or a Web site and says, “I want that.”

Although Meredith died in 1928, the company he founded has gone on to



PHOTO: HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

**“The provision of a decent home for every family is a national necessity, if this country is to be worthy of its greatness.”**  
**— Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

become a huge force in the consumer publishing industry with dozens of titles spinning off of the original. Besides publishing, Meredith was also active in politics, as a candidate for the U.S. Senate, governor of Iowa and president. He also served as Secretary of Agriculture under Woodrow Wilson.

### FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

Franklin Delano Roosevelt may not immediately leap to mind when one thinks of those who influenced the industry, but there were several important decisions during his time as president that profoundly affected the industry.

Two parts of the New Deal legislation have played major roles in shaping

remodeling. In 1935, Roosevelt’s National Recovery Act established the beginnings of the North East Roofing, Siding and Insulation Contractors Association. NERSICA eventually became the National Remodelers Association, which, in 1982, joined with the National Home Improvement Council to form NARI. Throughout the years, those associations have played important roles in increasing the professionalism of the industry.

The New Deal also created the Federal National Mortgage Association (or Fannie Mae) in 1938. Along with its younger sibling, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae has been crucial in providing mortgage funds to millions of homeowners.

But most importantly, in 1944, Roosevelt signed the GI Bill of Rights, which



PHOTO: COURTESY AMERICAN ADVERTISING FEDERATION HALL OF FAME



essentially created the middle class by paying for education and offering guaranteed home loans for soldiers returning from World War II. From 1944 to 1952, the government backed nearly 2.4 million home loans for World War II veterans. By 1956, 7.8 million veterans had taken advantage of the education benefits of the program.

## MARTHA STEWART

Over the last 20 years, Americans have taken more pride in their homes, and Martha Stewart is a big part of the reason why. From her various television shows to magazines to product lines, she's become the face of that movement as she's encouraged homeowners to make their house a home. And that has meant more money spent on furnishings, decorating and remodeling.

Perhaps more importantly, she has helped raise the profile of the woman of the house, putting her in a position of decision maker when it comes to all things home. While Stewart may have focused on decorating and interior design, that trend has carried over into remodeling, with most studies showing that the woman is now the key influencer in making remodeling decisions.

## WALT STOEPPELWERTH

Walt Stoeppelwerth was one of the earliest proponents of professionalism in the



remodeling industry. Since the 1970s he has told remodelers about the importance of charging enough to make a profit.

"He was the first one to define markups and margins in the remodeling industry," says Tom Swartz, the third-generation owner of J.J. Swartz Co. in Decatur, Ill., and a friend of Stoeppelwerth's. "People said the numbers he was talking about we're outrageous, but countless remodelers are successful today because of Walt Stoeppelwerth."

Through his books, magazine articles and workshops, Stoeppelwerth has reached thousands of remodelers over the last 30-plus years. His 1985 book, "Professional Remodeling Management," was one of the first on managing a remodeling business. It was at about that time that Swartz met Stoeppelwerth when Swartz attended his two-day workshop, "How to Make Money in Remodeling."

"After that, I went back to our company and rewrote our whole business plan, rewrote where this company was going," says Swartz, a past chairman of the NAHB Remodelers Council. "We've been around since 1921 and we've had our share of good years, but a lot of those good years are due to Walt Stoeppelwerth."

Stoeppelwerth also predicted many of the changes that would come to the industry, from the impact of the big boxes to the growth of the lead carpenter system.

"Walt Stoeppelwerth was probably the most clairvoyant person in the remodel-

ing industry," Swartz says. "He saw the changes that were coming, and he taught us what needed to be done."

Stoeppelwerth has retired from writing and teaching, but is still involved with HomeTech, the remodeling education company he founded in 1967 with Henry Reynolds. In 2001, he was among the first six inductees to the NAHB Remodeling Hall of Fame. **PR**



PHOTO: COURTESY HOMETECH ONLINE

**"The No. 1 problem in the remodeling industry is that relatively few feel confident enough to charge customers what their work is worth."  
— Walt Stoeppelwerth**





# Out of the Office

MARROKAL  
SHOWS THAT  
GROWTH CAN  
COME WITH  
LETTING GO



By Jonathan Sweet, Senior Editor

**AFTER ALMOST 30 YEARS IN BUSINESS**, most companies have settled in to one of two modes: a growth model with a president or CEO who is putting in 60 or more hours a week or a comfortable, stable stage where the chief has greatly reduced his involvement in the day-to-day operations.

Gary Marrokal of Marrokal Construction Co. has managed to find the best of both worlds, with a company that is projecting growth of nearly 20 percent in volume this year. At the same time, Marrokal is putting in only 20 to 25 hours a week in the office and taking a week off every month to spend at his vacation home in central coast California.

A decade ago, when he was working 70 to 80 hours a week, Marrokal decided that he wanted to get to a point where the company can, for the most part, run without him.

"I knew that as I got older there was no way I could keep going at 60 to 70 to 80 hours per week," he says. "I never really pushed for growth, but it happened because we had good people and did good work."

### RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Marrokal has seen plenty of remodelers burn out from heavy workloads and didn't want that to happen to him. He also knew that moving slowly would help the company — and him — adjust to the changes. He started out taking every other Monday off, then every Monday, then other days. Now, he's scheduled to be in the office only three days a week. "Every year I want the company to rely on me less."

Starting with small steps is the key to succeeding, he says. For example, if you have 10 duties that are part of your everyday responsibilities, rank those in importance from one to 10 and give Nos. 9 and 10 to someone else, Marrokal says. To make the transition work, a company has to have good people on board, from the top management all the way down.

"It means those directly below you will have more work, so they need to delegate to people below them," Marrokal says. "You have to have the right people in all those positions or it won't work."

**Getting the right people and systems in place has allowed Marrokal Construction President Gary Marrokal to reduce his day-to-day involvement and still lead the company to strong growth.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Marrokal Construction Co.**, Lakeside, Calif.

**President:** Gary Marrokal

**2007 projects:** 85

**2007 volume:** \$15.1 million

**Projected 2008 volume:** \$18 million

**Employees:** 30

**Founded:** 1981

**Biggest challenge:** Keeping an eye on marketing. "The same things that worked 10, 15 years ago don't work today," Marrokal says.

**Web site:** [www.marrokal.com](http://www.marrokal.com)

For Marrokal Construction Co., the upper management comprises a vice president of administration, a vice president of production, a director of design and Marrokal, who still personally oversees the seven design consultants who make up the sales department.

"I had to learn to let go and not micromanage," he says. "It was important to accept that they might do things differently than me — and it might be better."

That makes finding the right employees especially important. Marrokal doesn't hire every employee anymore but does interview potential managers and design consultants. Candidates are interviewed at least twice by two different employees. If Marrokal is hiring a manager, he will meet with them several times, including in non-work settings. For example, when considering one recent hire, Marrokal and his wife took him and his wife out to dinner.

"No matter what we do, it's still a flip of the coin," he says. "We don't really know until they get here."

Marrokal also tries to create a positive work environment to entice new employees and keep the good ones he already has.

"We have good compensation, good benefits, but more importantly we have a group of people who fit together as a team," he says. "That gets everyone excited."

That doesn't mean you can ignore the basics, though. Marrokal pays its employees more than what the competition does for comparable positions and pays major medical for employees and their families. The company also has profit sharing in which the company pays into the plan an amount equal to



15 percent of an employee's salary.

Treating people with respect extends to trade contractors, who Marrokal uses for almost all field work.

"There's a learning curve, so we want to keep the good ones," Marrokal says. "For 27 years, I've paid more quickly than anyone in town. No one has to ever ask me for their money."

Marrokal also rates his trade contractors on a variety of factors, including quality of work, timeliness and cleanliness. (*Professional Remodeler* recognized Marrokal as a 2007 Innovator for how he manages the trade contractor relationship. See the January 2007 issue or visit [www.proremodeler.com](http://www.proremodeler.com).)

## LETTING GO WITHOUT LOSING CONTROL

While the company does have standard procedures in place for many things, Marrokal also believes he has to trust in his management to make the right decisions without being overly constrained by too many systems. "You have to have some, but if you have too many systems, you become government," he says. "If a business runs like the government, you're going to go under."

Instead, Marrokal watches several key indicators through weekly and monthly reports to make sure the company is staying on course. Every week, he gets a list of leads that tells him about the project, which design consultant was assigned the lead and what happened to it. This allows him to see if leads are increasing or dropping and if the company's close rate is slipping. Another important number for Marrokal is "prelims," people who have paid the company a retainer for design. Because he knows that 85 to 90 percent of those clients will eventually sign construction contracts, Marrokal can predict the company's future volume. For example, if the pace is for 110 to 120 prelims, that tells Marrokal that the company will have 100 jobs for the year. With an average job size of \$200,000, that means \$20 million in volume.

By tracking the trends and cost per lead and cost per sale, Marrokal can see problems coming well before they develop. It was this data and his experience that prompted Marrokal to start increasing his marketing budget two years ago, putting the company in a better position than the competition when the market slowdown hit.

"Our marketing budget is 100 percent more than it was a couple of years ago," he says. "Even so, leads were down 30 percent this year, but we sold more than ever. We're spending more to get fewer leads, but we're closing better."

**"I'm getting a different level of enjoyment from the company now."**

## A WEEK IN THE LIFE

How Marrokal Construction Co. President Gary Marrokal spends his 20- to 25-hour week in the office.

Reviewing agreements and coaching sales	5 hours
Meetings with entire team and key managers	10 hours
Reviewing company numbers	2 hours
Handling personal matters	5 hours

Marrokal credits that, once again, to the good team he has in place and an emphasis on working every lead.

"The jobs are still there — it just takes a little more work to get them," he says.

Carefully watching the numbers is also an important part of planning growth. At each level of growth, the company added new layers of overhead, and it became important to know what that growth would cost and how much more Marrokal had to sell to pay for it.

"You have to know what your sweet spot is — where you want to be and just as importantly where not to be," Marrokal says. "For example, when we were in the \$7 million to \$9 million range, that was a bad spot. We had to add overhead at \$7 million, but we had to get to \$9 million to pay for it."

That's why it has been important to manage growth and make sure the company was ready to make the jump to the next level.

"You need to know those markers the year before you get there," he says. "You've got to jump real quick."

As he continues to position the company for future growth, Marrokal has no intention of entirely removing himself from the management.

"I really enjoy what I do, so I don't see any need to do that," he says. "I'm getting a different level of enjoyment from the company now. I really enjoy watching the team work. It's like if you've raised children and now you're watching them raise their own."

While he doesn't have a succession plan in place yet, he would like to see key people from the company take over one day. He expects that to happen as he continues to reduce his day-to-day involvement. He and his wife plan to spend even more time at their vacation home, perhaps two weeks a month.

"My goal is for it to continue on with the people here," he says. "Down the road, I hope to see another generation benefit from this company." **PR**

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# Peak Performance

By Wendy A. Jordan, Senior Contributing Editor

**REFERRALS ARE IMPORTANT FOR ANY REMODELER**, but for Pete Olson they hold special weight. Why? Because 80 percent of his clients don't live in or anywhere near town, so they rely heavily on any recommendations they can get their hands on.

Olson's company, PJ Builders, remodels and builds in the greater Park City, Utah, area.

A silver mining boomtown in the late 1800s, Park City was reborn as a ski center 100 years later. It hit the big time as a mountain resort destination when it hosted the 2002 Winter Olympics.

These days the population swells from less than 10,000 to 25,000 or more during the ski season. To be at the top of the "try this guy" list for seasonal residents planning vacation home projects, Pete

**The tiny, 1900s miner's cottage consisted of three rooms; a 1950s addition provided elbow room and indoor plumbing. Pete Olson of PJ Builders converted the cottage to an open living-dining area and replaced the 1950s addition with a two-story, four-bedroom structure. The narrow profile hides the addition from the street.**



# REMODELING THIS MOUNTAIN RESORT VACATION HOME CALLED FOR PRESERVATION SMARTS, CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND A KNACK FOR WORKING WITH OUT-OF-TOWN CLIENTS



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PJ BUILDERS



Turned posts and a decorative gable end add Victorian charm to the cottage. To avoid time-consuming approvals, Olson advised Smith to retain the original paint color. With just a bit of the addition's roof visible, the cottage still dominates the street view.

Olson has fine-tuned the art of working with absentee clients and of remodeling miners' cottages in historic Old Town Park City.

Pete Smith and his family live in California but have been vacationing in Park City for years. In 2005, they bought a historic tiny miner's cottage just steps from a ski lift. They soon realized that the five-room, 864-square-foot house (432 square-foot 1900s original with a 432 square-foot 1950s extension) was too small. As things go in Park City, Smith asked his real-estate agent to recommend some local architects. She directed him to Jonathan DeGray, who's designed many renovations and knows the ropes of remodeling in Old Town. Smith then asked DeGray to recommend contractors.

Having worked with DeGray on several projects, PJ Builders made the list. One of the other two recommended contractors fell out of contention quickly, in part because he couldn't start the job for a year, and in part because he was uncomfortable communicating by computer. "I e-mailed my specs to the three companies," Smith says. "Two responded in the time I requested." Of those two,

## PRODUCTS LIST

**Appliances:** KitchenAid **Custom cabinets:** The Cabinet Company, (Heber City, Utah) **Door hardware:** Emtek **Heating and cooling:** Lennox **Knotty alder doors:** Krosswood **Lighting:** Cooper Lighting, Lutron dimmers **Plumbing fixtures:** Kohler, Plumbtrim **Radiant heating:** Lochinvar **Roofing:** CertainTeed **Siding:** J.M. Thomas Forest Products **Snow melting system for driveway, walkway:** Triangle Tube **Steam shower:** Steamist **Vapor barrier:** Styrofoam and DuPont **Windows:** Windsor **Wood flooring:** Masterpiece Hardwood Floors (Salt Lake City, Utah)





one was much bigger than PJ Builders and had just finished a similar job down the street. But Smith leaned toward Olson. "His estimate was considerably lower and he was much faster to respond," says Smith. "I liked Pete's enthusiasm. And though he hadn't done anything this size, I'd seen some of his work and was impressed."

## FLYING HOUSE

"I was really interested in this job, and the challenges involved," Olson says. Chief among those challenges was that the house had to be craned off the lot. Like most Park City miner's cottages, the 1900s house had been built quickly as tem-

**The open, "mountain contemporary" interior features custom cabinetry, granite counters and a corner fireplace with rustic stone surround. Brightly colored walls define spaces, and a sweep of hand-hewn hickory flooring connects them. Hickory not only fits the mountain setting but also is hard and grainy enough to absorb the abuse of ski boots.**

porary housing, and had no foundation. It sat on 6 by 6 posts in the dirt. A neighbor planned to remodel his cottage too, so Olson and he split the crane costs and minimized street closings for crane operation. Another neighbor had a big, overgrown backyard. In exchange for clearing and re-grading the yard, Olson arranged to park the cottage there while excavating and

## THE FINANCIALS

**PJ** Builders bills most remodeling projects on a cost-plus basis because, owner Pete Olson says, "it helps us keep on schedule and keep progressing on the job." Bills go to the client every two weeks "so we're current [on costs] and keep everybody informed of where we are." Client Pete Smith liked both the cost-plus billing and the biweekly invoicing. Cost plus "forces us as consumers to keep an eye on things," he explains.

### Budget History

Initial estimate:	<b>\$485,700</b>
Bid add-ons:	
\$123,200 (\$48,000 framing and siding; \$11,900 excavation; \$10,600 permits and surveys; \$19,600 material price increases by subcontractors; \$33,100 client upgrades)	
Change orders:	<b>\$36,900</b>
(gutters; picket fence; electrical changes; relocating of gas line and meter; concrete driveway; paint exterior)	
Costs that came in below estimate:	<b>-\$9,800</b>
(-\$2,000 mechanical, -\$2,400 granite counters, -\$2,300 closets, -\$3,100 punch list work)	
Final price of job:	<b>\$636,000</b>
Cost to produce:	<b>\$553,000</b>
Gross profit:	<b>\$83,000</b>
Budgeted gross profit:	<b>15%</b>
Actual gross profit:	<b>15%</b>

And the biweekly bills made this easy for Smith, because they tracked costs against the spreadsheet Olson provided with his initial estimate.

Smith generally paid each invoice before the next bill arrived, though Olson gives clients 30 days to pay. "I have 30 to 45 days to pay my suppliers," Olson says. "By the time their bills come I have money." He covers in-house labor with company funds, but those outlays never extend beyond a month.



pouring the foundation on the permanent site.

Once he razed the 1950s add-on, Olson concentrated on securing the old house for its move. The cottage had thin walls, no insulation and, to everyone's surprise, no framing. The siding was nailed to 1 by 12 vertical strips. The place "was built like a shipping crate," says DeGray. Olson gutted the house to lighten the load before moving it, then reinforced the structure. He needed glulam beams for the remodel and saved money by giving them a dual use. He ordered them two feet longer than required for final installation, inserted them in the house, cut four holes in the roof, and attached cables to the beams. The crane grabbed those cables and lifted the house. "It was like the Wizard of Oz," Olson says. Later he cut the beams down.

DeGray repositioned the house farther forward on the lot than it had been, making room for a large rear addition and lining up the front with other cottages on the street. After the crane deposited the cottage on its footings, Olson faced the challenge

## COMPANY SNAPSHOT

### PJ Builders

**Owner:** Pete Olson

**Location:** Park City, Utah

**2006 volume:** \$500,000

**2007 volume:** \$1 million

**Projected 2008 volume:** \$1 million

**Web site:** www.pjbuilders.com

**Biggest challenge:** Lifting a historic house, excavating the site, replacing the house and framing it from the inside

of framing it. The historic exterior had to be preserved. That meant framing had to be built within the existing shell. Olson did it by making exterior walls inside the house, pushing them against the siding, and attaching them.

## PROJECT TIMELINE

2006	Stage of Project
<b>March 29</b>	Initial phone contact
<b>May 2</b>	Meeting at site
<b>June 22</b>	Contract signed
<b>June 29</b>	Begin demo of existing house interior
<b>Aug. 2</b>	Complete securing of house for move, crane from site
<b>Aug. 29-30</b>	Pour footings
<b>Sept. 11</b>	Pour foundation
<b>Oct. 20</b>	Complete main floor framing
<b>Nov. 16</b>	Crane house to new foundation
<b>Nov. 17</b>	Begin framing old house and addition
2007	
<b>Feb. 15</b>	Begin installing radiant and snow-melting systems
<b>Feb. 19</b>	Begin window installation
<b>March 5</b>	Complete framing, begin siding
<b>March 28</b>	Pass four-way inspection
<b>April 4</b>	Add insulation
<b>May 15</b>	Begin tile installation
<b>June 22</b>	Begin wood floor installation
<b>Aug. 31</b>	Finish interior painting
<b>Sept. 14</b>	Install appliances
<b>Oct. 9</b>	Complete interior finish and trim
<b>Oct. 31</b>	Project complete for homeowner walk-through
<b>Nov. 7</b>	City inspection
<b>Nov. 30</b>	Wood fence finished
Payments	
<b>Clients billed on the 15th and 30th of every month</b>	

### FITTING IN

Though the addition behind the cottage is a large, two-story structure — 1,843 square feet, including a 300-square-foot garage — it is barely visible from the street. DeGray designed a low-pitch roof that hides behind the perky 12/12 roof of the cottage. The city required the cottage's lap siding to be patched where necessary rather than replaced. To blend the addition with the cottage, DeGray specified matching siding and used windows in a proportion and number that harmonize with Park City's old buildings.

Inside, the remodeled cottage contains a cozy living-dining area. The addition provides four bedrooms and bathrooms, plus a second-floor sitting area where Smith's two teenagers and their friends can gather. The kitchen links old and new structures.

Because of the lot characteristics, the design could be reviewed by the city planning staff rather than the board. It sailed through with only minor modifications. Nevertheless, by the time design approval came through and the framing was completed, winter had arrived. And an especially harsh winter it was. "We had several subzero days, and it was below 20 the other days," recalls Olson. Before starting work each day, his crews had to torch the ice and shovel snow off the house. "People work slower when it's cold," he adds. The extreme weather added labor time and cost to the project.

### ADDED VALUE

Shoveling the driveway and walkway of the remodeled house should never be necessary though. That's because Olson installed radiant heating under the concrete. Radiant heat is the sole heat source inside the house too. As year-round residents of Park City, both Olson and DeGray advised Smith not to invest in



supplementary forced air heating (radiant heat is enough, they said) or air conditioning (not necessary). “I’m really pleased with the radiant heat,” Smith says.

Access to such tips proved to be one of the bonuses of working with PJ Builders. Another was resourceful communication. Smith would visit the project every two or three months, and between visits, he and Olson exchanged e-mails regularly. Olson even held a virtual walk-through, putting Smith on the phone from California as Olson and the electrician went around the house to choose locations for lighting and outlets. As the remodel took shape, Office Manager Stacy Kueser transmitted digital photos of the house to Smith. “It was a great way for me to keep an eye on progress,” he says. “Use of communications technology was essential,” observes Smith. “I can’t imagine doing a project like this with quill and paper.”

Kueser helps absentee clients in other ways as well. She

found a leasing agent for Smith, to rent the house when the family’s not using it; managed the house keys; set up house cleaners; and went over to the property to let in the furniture deliverymen. “She did a great job,” says Smith.

The only big mistake on the project, says Smith, was his own. “I gave the contractors very limited specs. I missed a lot” — hence the big differential between estimate and final cost. “The lesson I’ve learned is to make sure all items are in the specs, and that the specs match the bids,” says Smith.

As for the completed project, “Everything seems great,” Smith says. He’s not the only one who thinks so. Park City did too: The house won the 2007 Park City Historic Home Preservation Award. **PR**

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# How to Economy-Proof Your Business

**A GOOD LOOK AT THE INNER-WORKINGS OF YOUR COMPANY CAN KEEP YOU ON TRACK**

By Tommy Strong, PATH Partners

**THESE ARE TRYING TIMES IN THE HOUSING INDUSTRY.** The economy is pinching everyone — remodelers included. Sales are down, gas prices are up, and you are stuck in between.

Get unstuck with some fresh perspective. It's time to examine your business from the inside out — and the outside in. Ask for customer feedback, get professional business counseling — heck, stand in the front yard and take a look at the building! Just find out how the rest of the world sees you. Then find a way to differentiate yourself from the competition.

## **DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF**

Of all the people out there who are taking your clients — and there are plenty — the most dangerous are not the underbidders, but the simply average remodelers. Average remodelers look fine, they say the right things, and they know a thing or two about building. Unfortunately, that's all they know. They can't diagnose their own business and don't know how to focus on new strategies.

Capitalize on your dedication to green remodeling. Green isn't



ILLUSTRATION: TOM RYBARCZYK

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## FEATURE

the wave of the future anymore; it's here right now. So the first strategy is to define what you do that's green. After all, you've been remodeling green for a while now. Analyze the products you are installing and you'll find that many are sustainable and renewable. Energy Star-qualified products, including Low-E windows and doors; low-VOC paint, cabinets, and flooring; good insulation; low-flow toilets and fixtures — they all qualify. Look to Energy Star ([www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)) and the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing ([www.pathnet.org](http://www.pathnet.org)) for other ideas. Just tweaking your standard product sheet can boost efficiency, sustainability and healthy living.

Get certified. Set yourself apart from the pack with certifications like CAPS, which raises your awareness of spaces, lighting and comfort. Brag about how many Certified Graduate Remodelers are on staff and how continuing education proves dedication and commitment. Dan Bawden of Legal Eagle Contractors, Co. does.

"We tell all our prospective clients about our CGR and CAPS designations. You're not even on the playing field of high-end remodeling in this market without certifications. Our clientele is smart and they do their homework. They won't rush the process, and they don't suffer fools."

Define the difference. Differentiating doesn't cost more when you do it right. You have a specialty, maybe two or three. What are they? Ask yourself whether you are better at kitchens and baths or additions. What about basements? Maybe it's condos. Surely there are specific designs you are drawn to, types of work you enjoy the most, or projects you get passionate about. Figure out what defines a successful project for you and your company — and don't take the easy way out by saying "the one that makes me money." Describing your best projects describes who you are. Then all you have to do is tell the world.

## MARKET FOR IT

Once you've identified what makes your company different, follow up with a message that says "different" and "special." Make sure your client base hears it at least four times a year and do it in ways that are different and special. Host a charity project and invite folks to help. Have each member of your team pick their favorite clients to call on Thanksgiving to say how grateful they are. Distribute a professionally photographed calendar featuring your best projects. Raise your profile in the community with aggressive job site marketing before, during and after the project. Send out introductory letters, mid-stream letters and "sweeping up" letters that show you are not just working in the neighborhood but you are neighbors. They'll feel like they know you before they meet you.

And don't forget to stay active in your local remodelers association, chamber of commerce or small business association. This will help build a strong base of referrals that can reap rewards in the shakiest economic landscapes.

"Those who have a marketing plan and implement it are the last ones dragged into a recession and the first ones out," says my brother, Michael Strong.

Brothers Strong has had a marketing plan for years. We consistently implement it, and our steady lead volume year after year is proof that it works. Of course, closing the deal is another matter, and marketing plans won't always improve the closing ratio, Michael points out, "When our sales dipped in 2007, we were forced to look at why, and that's when we transitioned from looking outside our business to looking inside for economy-proofing solutions."

## LOOK INSIDE

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cess between “I Want Remodeling” and “I Accept Your Offer” carefully and realized the bottleneck was in the design process. That allowed us to focus on trimming the turnaround time between the call and the presentation. We unified our sales approach throughout the sales team and streamlined the selections process so it didn’t bog down in administration.

When the contract sells, we immediately start tracking our WIP (work in progress) numbers before the ink dries — not waiting until after something bad happens on the job site. I remember finding 3 percent slippage on a \$25,000 job last year after just a week of construction and thinking the number wasn’t too bad. Then it dawned on me that if we did 10 jobs that size, \$7,000 would be flying out the window! For a company with 7 employees, that kind of money would make a big difference when it came time for Christmas bonuses.

Make hard cuts. Of course, analyzing the numbers is the easy part. If that doesn’t help immunize your company from a downturn, more drastic action may be required — the hard part. Start by looking at the organizational chart to see if there are any soft spots. You may have to combine some responsibilities, outsource them or even eliminate them.

If you have too much overhead or slack in one of your departments, cut the wick quick. One big mistake company leaders make is waiting too long to cut back when times are getting thin. They carry too much staff, especially in the production department, where they may be keeping staff busy but not keeping them effective. Loyal owners tend to think “next month it will get better.” Be forewarned: if you say that for very many months in a row, you won’t have to worry about keeping any of your staff busy.

Do less work in-house. Hire specialists that will give you consistent pricing, carry some of the costs on a project, and

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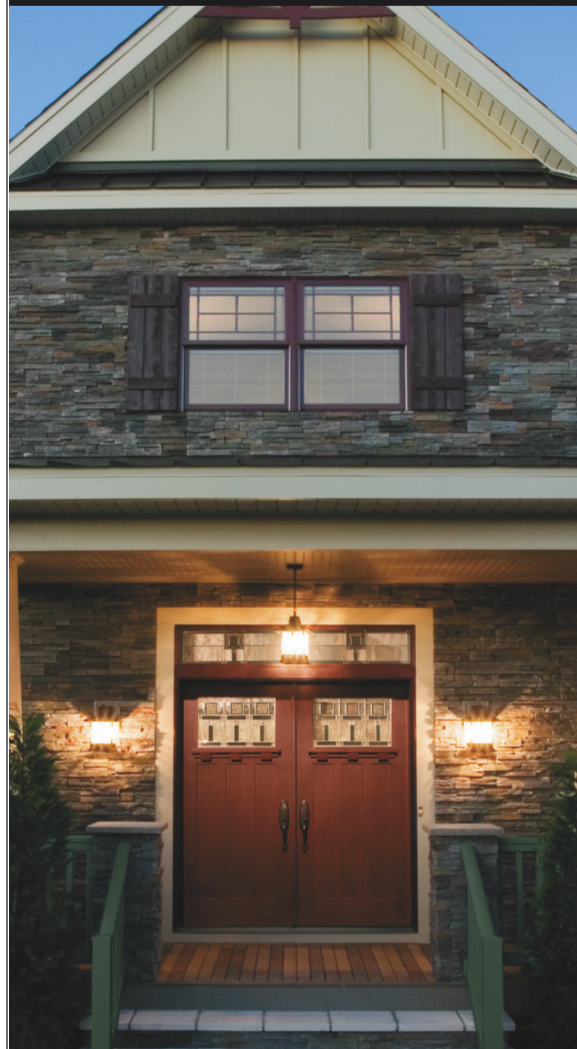
frankly, do the work better than you. It’s all they do, right? If you discover your carpenter can do the backsplash as well as the tile man, well, then, you really need a better tile man. Go find one.

Finally, think long and hard before shaving your margins, even in the short term — it’s often ineffective and sometimes dangerous. Dropping prices will not help you do projects more efficiently, they will only force you to do them with more pressure. And isn’t there enough pressure in the market right now? **PR**

Tommy Strong (CGR, CAPS, CLC) is vice president of construction services and co-founder of Brothers Strong, a design/build firm in Houston. He writes on behalf of the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH), administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Learn more at [www.pathnet.org](http://www.pathnet.org).

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AFTER PHOTOS BY PEYTON HOGE PHOTOGRAPHY

# HIDDEN ASSETS

## ADDITION OVER \$100,000

**REMODELER AND ARCHITECT:** The Wills Co., Nashville, Tenn.

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** G.S. Hinsen Company, Nashville, Tenn.

**PROJECT LOCATION:** Nashville, Tenn.

**AGE OF HOME:** Approximately 80 years old

**SCOPE OF WORK:** Build an addition to encompass a new kitchen, recreation room, exercise room, screened-in porch and two-car garage

### PRODUCTS LIST

**Appliances:** Bosch, KitchenAid, Sub-Zero, Thermador, Wolf **Tile:** American Olean **Fixtures:** Kohler, Waterworks  
**Doors:** Simpson **Windows:** Marvin, Velux **Fireplace:** Isokern  
**HVAC:** Carrier **Housewrap:** Tyvek (DuPont) **Insulation:** Owens Corning **Roofing:** CertainTeed **Garage Doors:** Wayne-Dalton **Paints & Stains:** Pratt & Lambert

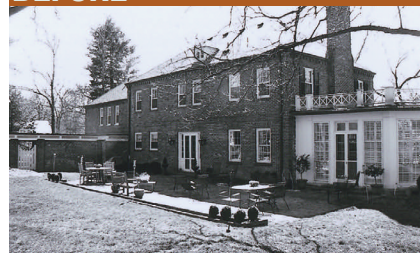
The right materials, detailing and architectural scale create a seamless 2,000-square-foot addition

By Ann Matesi,  
Senior Contributing Editor

**RESIDENTIAL DESIGNER AND remodeler** Ridley Wills worked magic on this 1930s Georgian-style residence in Nashville, Tenn. increasing its living space by more than 2,000 square feet with an addition that blends seamlessly with the existing exterior architecture of the 80-year-old home.

"What made this project particularly challenging was that the homeowners were looking for a really big addition that would

### BEFORE



The new wing on this Nashville country home increases its living space by more than 2,000 square feet but looks as though it were always a part of the home.



involve increasing their living space on both the first and second floors,” says Wills. The scope of the project included replacing the existing kitchen with a home office and butler’s pantry; adding an outdoor-oriented, dine-in kitchen more than twice the size of the original; and a three-season porch on the main floor, as well as a recreation room and exercise room upstairs. Also part of the plan was the construction of an attached, 2½-car garage to replace an open-air carport and a second, separate garage to increase storage opportunity for outdoor equipment.

“It was very important to my clients that their new space would work with their home’s existing style,” says Wills, who has a degree in architectural history and whose 16-year-old design/build firm is a recognized leader in historical home renovation in his Nashville market. “They definitely did not want to have the addition dominate the house — to have the tail wag the dog so to speak.”

Although the addition would not be directly visible from the street, Wills was no less diligent in developing a design that was architecturally sensitive to the style and scale of the original home. “I did not want it to appear as though a huge addition had just landed in their backyard.”

From the rear yard and terrace, which were also relandscaped as part of the overall project improvement, the new kitchen resembles a single-story breezeway that connects the main body of the home with a two-story outbuilding. That contains the three-season porch and garage on the ground level and exercise and recreation rooms above them. The irregular massing of Wills’ design minimizes the bulk of the addition when viewed from any direction.

“The home was built with 9½-foot ceilings,” he says, “but my clients were looking for more drama in their new space. The challenge was to give them the higher ceilings they were looking for inside without having the addition overwhelm the primary structure from the outside.”

Recreating the distinctive rooftop balustrade — originally used above of the home’s solarium to accent elements of the addition



**The ceiling in the home’s new attached garage was kept to 8 feet to provide the game room directly above it with the maximum volume possible.**



**Reclaimed pine paneling adds an element of rustic charm to the game room, which was designed to accommodate the homeowner’s active family.**

— not only promoted visual continuity on the exterior but also allowed the remodeler to downplay the higher roofline created by an 11-foot, barrel-vault in the new kitchen.

“The balustrade made it possible to conceal the pitch of the roof above the kitchen,” he says, “by hiding it behind the railing. At the same time, I could give the indoor space a much more dramatic ceiling treatment.”

The inviting kitchen, with its oversized

island, fireplace and conversation area, serves as the anchor for the home’s new wing. The existing laundry room was also reorganized to create a modern service entry for the homeowners. A recessed side porch now provides access to a family foyer that connects directly to a separate laundry room and the secondary garage. A rear stair hall in the new wing provides another route to the upper floor.

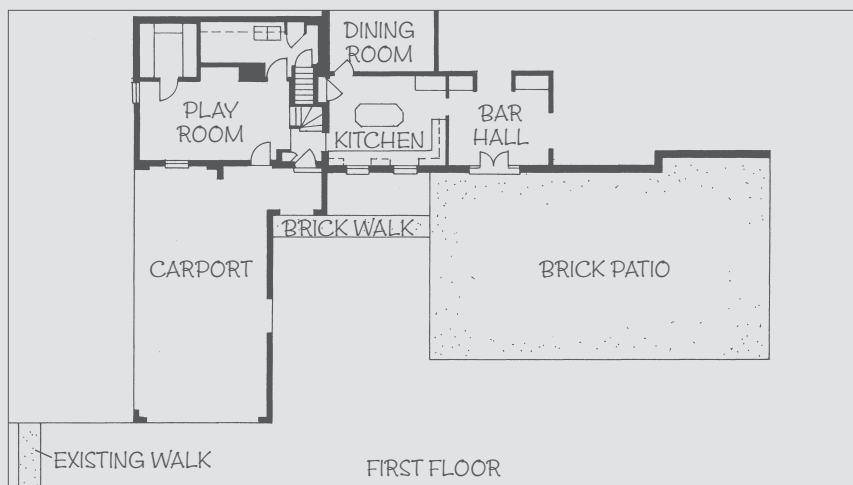
The formal dining room was renovated and enlarged to create a curved back wall with a custom niche that accommodates a large sideboard. “This detail really added a lot of character to the space,” says Wills.

### Blending old and new

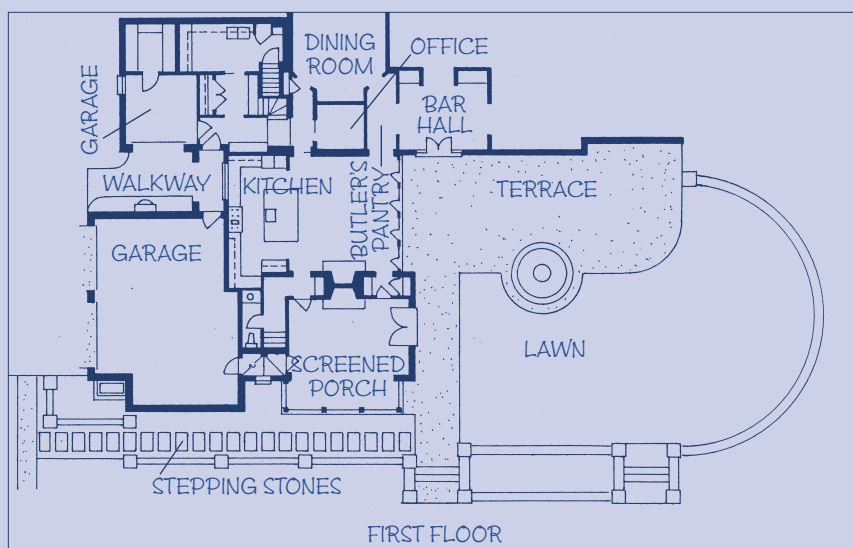
Wills used a number of techniques throughout the project to ensure a smooth transition between old and new. Inside, custom-milled trim; a walnut counter in the office; and reclaimed flooring and paneling recreate an old-fashioned look, he says.

Outside, the two-story portion of the addition features a hip roof and mouse-tooth cornice detail consistent with the home’s original architecture. New brick required for

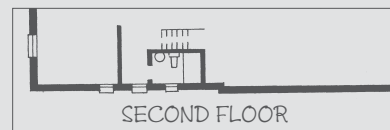
Before



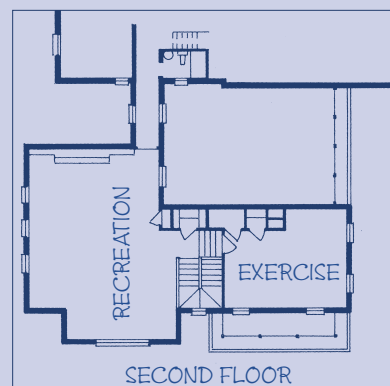
After



Before



After





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The three-season screened porch combines warm finishes, wood floors, plenty of seating space and a wonderful view of the backyard and new terrace.

the exterior finish was carefully matched to the existing brick, and the two were inter-mixed to downplay any variation in appearance. The remodeler also made sure that old and new materials met at right angles so that natural shadow lines would help to mask the transition.

"The addition appears as though it has always been a part of the house. The end result is that the remodeled home not only lives better for its owners, but it looks better than ever, too," says Wills. **PR**

### Open-Air Beauty

With its own inviting fireplace, built-in entertainment center and terrace access, the three-season porch adjacent to the kitchen in this home's new wing has become one of his client's favorite spots for informal entertaining, says Nashville-based remodeler Ridley Wills. Its unique design employs a combination of solid and screened walls and a pair of French doors to provide both desirable privacy and alfresco appeal to the charming and rustic space.

To gain every inch of available ceiling height not only in the porch but also in the new exercise room directly above it, Wills designed the porch floor to sit level with the home's new terrace.

"The homeowners insisted that they wanted a wood floor in this space, and that presented us with two challenges," says Wills. "We had to find flooring material that was very durable, and we had to develop a way to provide drainage for a room that was virtually at ground level."

Wills' solution was to install a poly-vapor barrier on top of the room's concrete slab foundation, which had a drain two inches below the floor height. Next, pressure-treated 2 by 4 boards were used as spacers between the concrete pad and the tongue-and-groove flooring above it. A brick border with weep holes was installed level with the finished floor around the inside perimeter of the room to drain away any remaining moisture.

Although he had never used it before, the remodeler chose ipé, a South American hardwood known for its durability and beauty, for the porch flooring. "It was the ideal material for this application. It turned out really well," he says.

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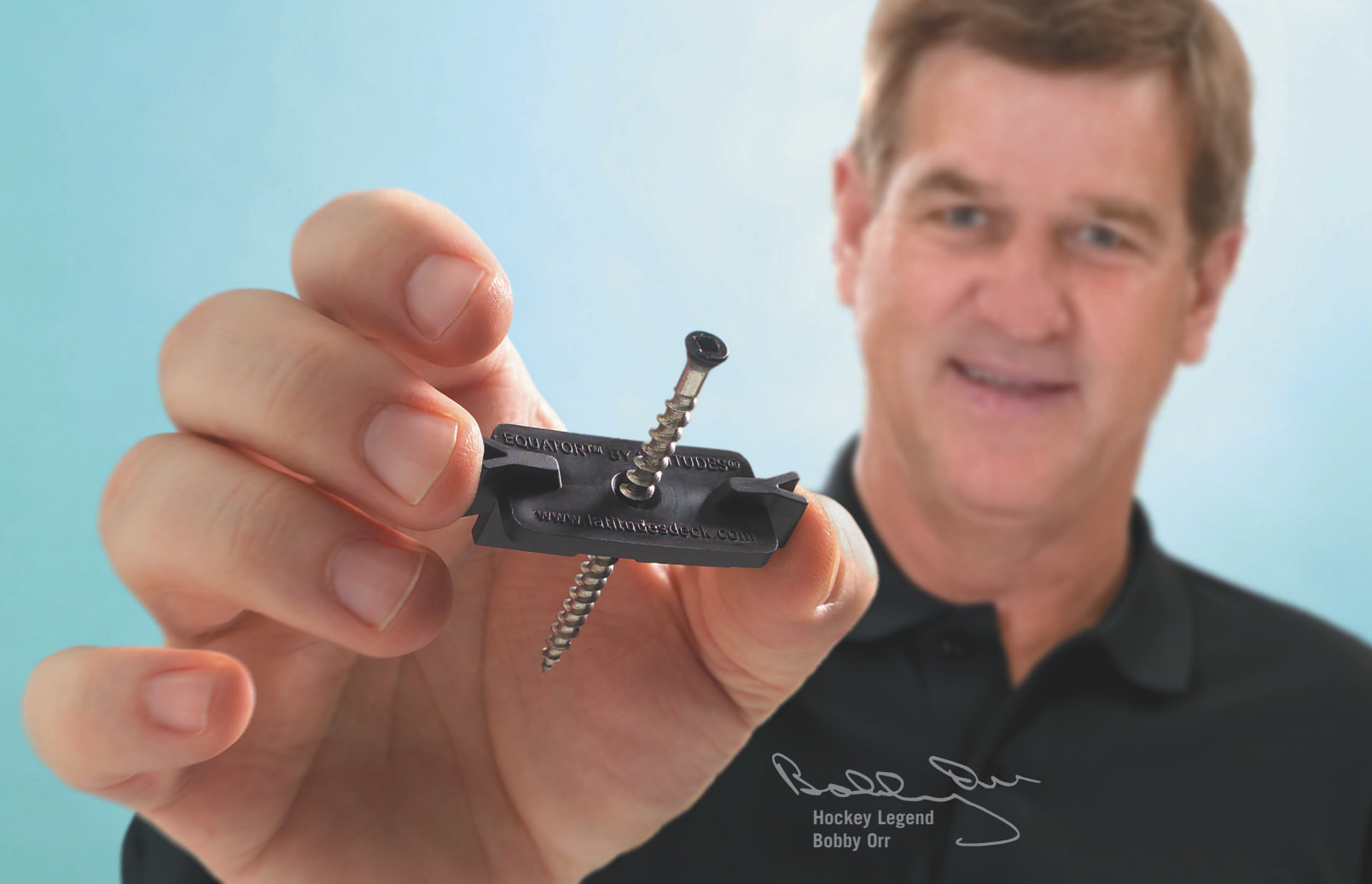


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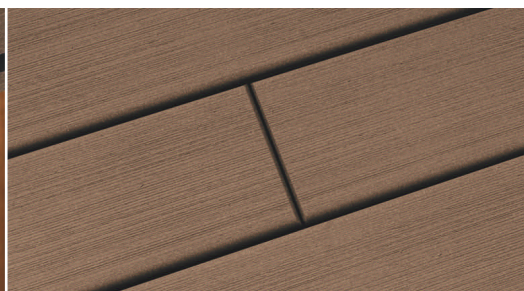
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# THE LOWDOWN ON LOW-E

## Window tune-up

Low-emissivity coatings were a quantum leap in window technology. Thanks to this innovation, the average double-pane window is now twice as resistant to cold or heat as it was in 1980. Even so, windows remain gaping energy wounds. For small projects, the ticket is to upgrade with windows that are tuned to climate and orien-

tation — and install them properly.

Tuning windows takes effort. It means selecting different windows for different orientations. When a remodel involves a change in footprint, the prescription is two-fold: optimize windows for passive heating, cooling and lighting, and — here's the hard part — minimize their use for other purposes.

## A look into the crystal ball

Robert Clarke founded Boulder-based Alpen Energy in 1981, on the heels of Low-E glass. In 2007, BuildingGreen.com selected his windows as a "Top-10 Product." In the table below, Clarke describes windows of today and tomorrow.

Window Component	State-of-the-Art	The Future
Glazing	Ultra-thin metallic coatings on glass/films via vacuum sputtering	Dynamic coatings that change properties in response to light, heat or the turn of a dial
Glazing package	Sandwich of 2 Low-E panes and clear film filled with argon, krypton or xenon gas; 99.5% UV blockage; R-14	Incremental improvements to achieve R-20 (same as 2 by 6 wall)
Window frame	Pultrusion fiberglass frame with hollow or foam core; R-4 to R-8	R-10 performance via deeper windows for 2 by 6 framing, better seal between frame and sash and aerogel core
Flange to wall connection	Enhanced connection geometry, molded returns and zero expansion foams	½-inch R.O. gives way to computer matching of windows to SIP panels and tight, pre-engineered Z flanges

## Energy Star ratings to change?

Colorado green architect John Van Doren notes, "Most 'high-quality' windows in the U.S. are fashion statements, falling far short of the performance of European and Canadian windows." Recognizing this, the Department of Energy is revising its Energy Star ratings. Among the changes that could go into effect in 2009:

- A much lower U-factor and

- a minimum SHGC (for winter heat gain) in northern zones
- A much lower SHGC in southern zones
- SHGC/U-factor trade-offs to expand the range of products
- Establishment of installation procedures to ensure performance
- Exploration of emerging technologies

Meanwhile, Van Doren says,

get the lowest U-factor possible. His selection process starts with these rules of thumb on SHGC:

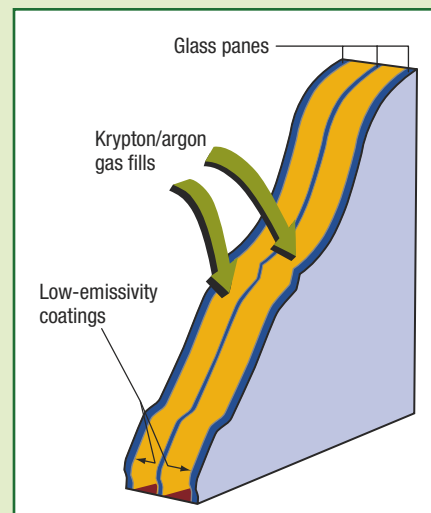
- Use the building code in Department of Energy proposed climatic zones 1, 2 and 3A-B
- In zones 3C and 4, use an SHGC greater than 0.65 on south walls only
- In zones 5-8, use an SHGC greater than 0.65 on all exposures

>> E-mail ideas or comments to the author at [GreenRoomDept@mac.com](mailto:GreenRoomDept@mac.com)

## Picking the right window not easy

Constructing a Low-E window begins by bonding an ultra thin layer of metal or metallic oxide on glass or plastic. This lowers the U-factor by reducing radiant heat transfer. Some coatings are "spectrally selective" — reflecting or admitting segments of the UV spectrum. As coating, glazing, and framing options expand, the selection process becomes more confounding. Further complicating the picture:

- The National Fenestration Rating Council describes energy performance via U-factors (insulating value) and SHGC (amount of heat transmitted). Figuring out the best combination requires interpretation. Too often, it's done incorrectly.
- Although Americans consume far more energy for heating than cooling, there's a bias in IECC, LEED and the Energy Star program toward minimizing AC loads. That makes it hard to find Low-E/high SHGC windows for passive solar heating.



### AXOR/HANSGROHE

Renowned French designer Jean-Marie Massaud helped create Axor/Hansgrohe's tenth American bath collection. Named after the designer, the Massaud bathroom collection encompasses a wide range of fully coordinated components and accessories. The signature piece of the new collection is the lavatory mixer, which features a 16-inch-wide asymmetrical shelf-like surface.

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The 2401-22 by Milwaukee delivers a beefy 100 pounds of torque per inch in a lightweight package — only 2 pounds. It's powerful enough to drive 130 3-inch screws in a single battery charge and provides the speed (0-500 RPM) to finish jobs faster.

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### DEWALT/RADIANS

The Concealer goggles from DeWalt and Radians offer a high level of protection on the job site. It meets ANSI Z87.1+ standards and offers 99.9 percent UVA/UVB protection. The impact-resistant polycarbonate lenses come in clear and smoke. A clip attachment makes replacing lenses easy, while a built-in ventilation channel fights fog.

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### BILCO

Bilco says it was the first to introduce the steel basement door more than 75 years ago. A lot has changed since then. Bilco's new basement doors feature powder-coated steel hardware and high-density polyethylene construction that never needs painting. The molded panels are designed to accept hardware components, and a gas-spring lift assist is included for one-handed operation.

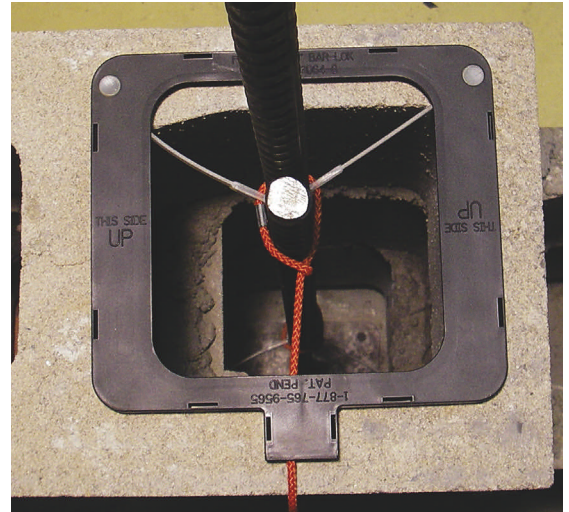
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## PASS & SEYMOUR/ LEGRAND

Keeping little fingers and errant pennies out of the sockets is Pass & Seymour/Legrand's Weather-Resistant Receptacles. They comply with the 2008 National Electrical Code that requires all non-locking 15 and 20-amp and 125- and 250-volt receptacles installed in wet and damp locations to be weather-resistant.

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## POLYLOK

The Rebar-Lok system for concrete masonry unit wall construction by Polylok makes sinking and centering rebar much easier. According to the manufacturer the system features a high-impact polystyrene casing that houses a built-in tie wire in the perimeter of the frame (shown). Masons place the rebar and pull the looped wire to lock the rebar dead center at the core of the block, then pour in the grout.

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## NANAWALL

The SL70 is a monumentally sized, thermally broken aluminum folding panel system designed to provide a glass wall that opens up to 36 feet wide. Made by NanaWall, it is available in various configurations utilizing two to 12 panels. The running astragal design provides extra stability.

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## GRACO

You can use a whole mess of coatings and different spray guns with Graco's new series of GH gas-hydraulic airless sprayers. The offerings include the GH 130 entry-level sprayer, which delivers 1.3 gallons per minute. All GH models feature a high-efficiency hydraulic motor, the company's MaxLife Endurance Pump and crush-proof rock catcher system.

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## NEW PRODUCTS



### STARRETT

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### CAMPBELL HAUSFELD

Manufacturers are starting to gravitate toward a single battery standard for their tools. Campbell Hausfeld follows suit with the 19.2-volt saw kit, which includes a 0-2700 SPM variable-speed reciprocating saw, a 5½-inch circular saw with carbide-tipped blade and a jigsaw with an adjustable bevel.

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### VT INDUSTRIES

The Geneva is a new contoured edge profile from VT Industries, and it joins the company's popular Valencia and Barcelona edge designs. The Geneva edge has a subtle modern drop ogee for a full wrap edge profile. It is available with or without a backsplash and comes in a variety of laminate colors.

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### ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTS BY OUTWATER

The Genuine Stone Tiles from Architectural Products by Outwater are made of 100 percent natural stones. The tiles are individually adhered in mosaic or stacked patterns onto mesh-style backings, which creates easy-to-install, seamless interlocking tiles.

The tiles come in a variety of exotic and traditional round and flat stones to suit vertical or horizontal applications.

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### GRANITIFIANDRE

The GeoStyle is the vanguard of GranitiFiandre's contemporary collections. Five individual product groupings are offered, including the GeoDiamond with jewel-like embellishments; platinum, which features 3-D iridescence; and the mosaic-like GeoDesign. These products are available in a wide variety of colors and in sizes ranging from 4 by 2 feet to 8 by 8 inches, along with coordinating special pieces.

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## ELIANE

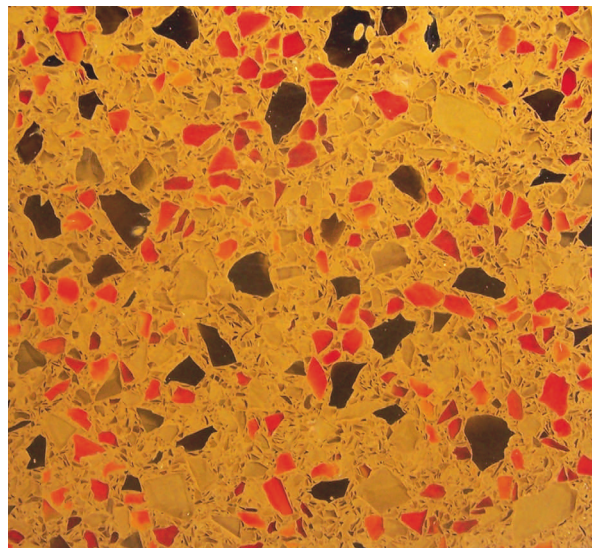
Made in three neutral colors and two distinct surface finishes, the Contemporanea large-format porcelain tiles by Eliane are available in 1 by 2, 2 by 2 or 1½ by 3-foot sizes. Ceramic, glass, resin or metallic inserts and borders with glossy or textured finishes are available.

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## OPUSTONE

Florida-based Opustone, known for its collections of travertine, marble, granite, onyx, limestone, coral and unique stones has a new fall palette of five dramatic colored natural stones to help remodelers revitalize their homes with a new look. Colors include faded Sienna, Mount Caramel, koala antique, dusk gray and imperial suede.

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## VITRA TILES USA

Tile makers Vitra Tiles USA have introduced the bold and flashy Shiba Collection. The Shiba's pattern brings this collection of non-vitreous, high-gloss finished wall tiles and borders to life. The line is available in 30-42 cm with complementing borders in 8 by 42 cm or 3 by 30 cm. Glass borders (8 by 42 cm) are also offered.

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## KENT CABINETRY

Joining the green fray is Kent Cabinetry with a new countertop line. The IceStone offering is a terrazzo-like, nonporous countertop material made from a minimum of 75 percent recycled glass, 17-18 percent Type-3 portland cement, and small quantities of proprietary ingredients.

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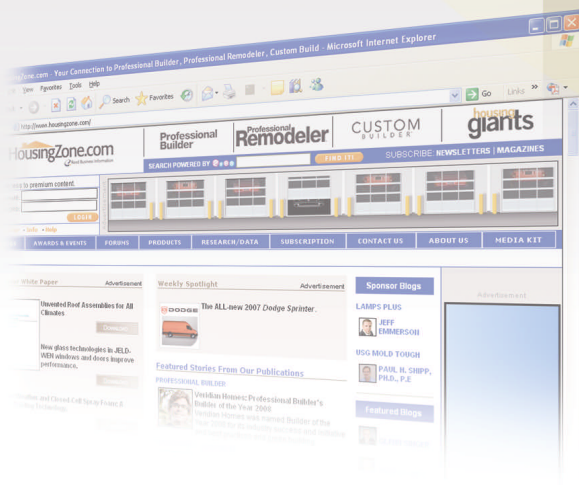
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## CLOPAY

The Gallery Collection from Clopay now has three-layer sandwich construction options. The doors are available in two thicknesses, 1½ and 2 inches, and come in both long and short grooved panels constructed from heavy 24-gauge wood grain textured steel. The doors range in size from 6- to 12-feet high and up to 20-feet wide in white, almond, brown and sand tone.

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Several new species to the exterior frame and component line from Woodgrain Millwork includes mahogany, oak, cherry and maple for a variety for exterior frames, brick-molds, mull posts, exterior components, stops and double rabbet jambs. The new hardwoods can also be mixed with standard primed and solid pine components.

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## WAYNE-DALTON

The Aluminum Full-View garage door by Wayne-Dalton can give homeowners a modern, Asian-inspired look and is available in a variety of colors. Window options include luminescent and clear. The virtually maintenance-free and weather-resistant door is available in standard residential heights.

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## JELD-WEN

The Carriage Style is all the rage in the garage door market. For those who want a little more differentiation, Jeld-Wen's Estate Series can be customized with decorative iron handles, strap hinges, knockers and clavos (metallic buttons designed to look like the heads of oversized iron spikes). The company offers a variety of window insets for its garage doors to allow for natural light or solid styles for privacy.

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### PEACHTREE

The Citadel fiberglass patio doors from Peachtree are made in slider, French or swinger patio styles as well as in a four-panel; bi-parting; or one-, two- and three-wide units. The Citadel has an extruded aluminum clad frame and fiberglass panels with textured oak-grain skins, smooth skins or the company's Duo-Choice skins.

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### AMARR/DYNASTY IRON DOORS

In addition to new construction and modern homes, wrought iron garage doors also work well with the architecture of a wide range of historic homes. With this in mind comes the Milan C from a partnership between Amarr and Phoenix-based Dynasty Iron Doors. The garage doors complement tile roofs, stacked stone exteriors and brick.

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### TAYLOR DOOR

Look to the Country Estates Collection by Taylor Door for a more rural appearance in the driveway. The door panels feature a wood-grain texture finish in white, almond or sandstone colors. They're accented by white vinyl overlays in seven designs. Doors are constructed of galvanized steel panels and 2½-inch solid end stiles, which are bonded together with a polystyrene core for an R-8.3 insulating value.

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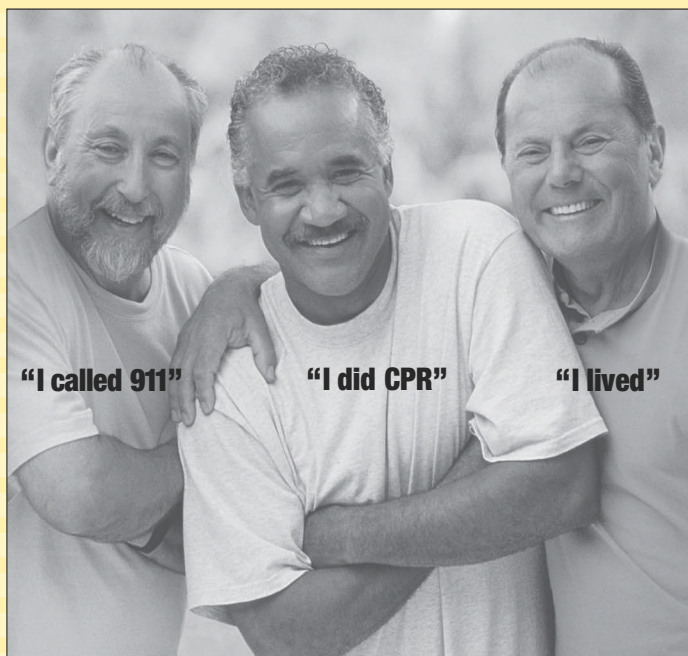


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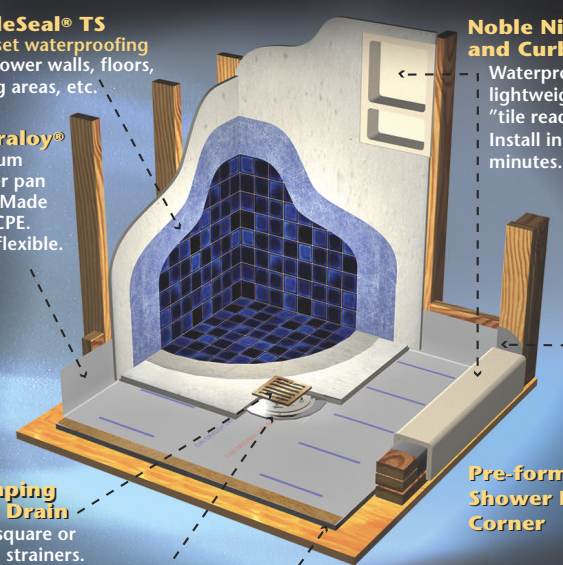
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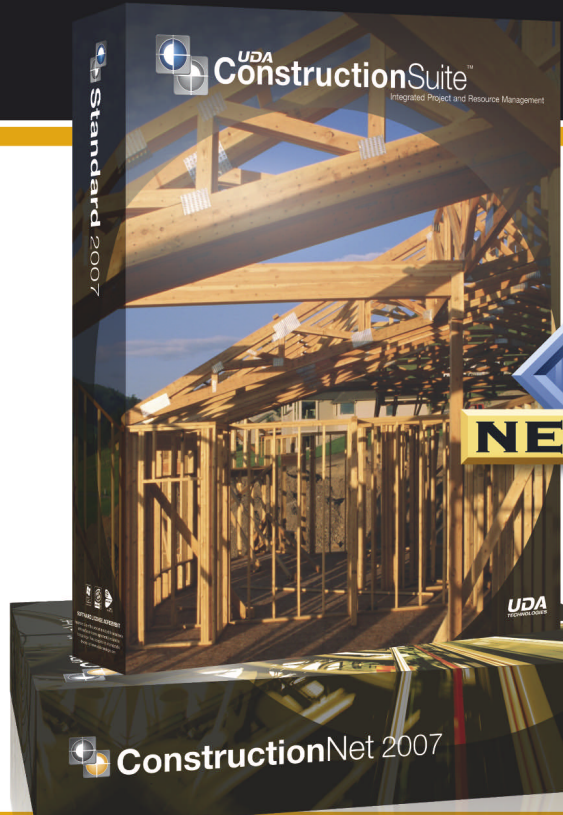
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## CONTACT INFO:

### Publisher

Tony Mancini  
610/205-1180, Fax 610/205-1183  
[armancini@reedbusiness.com](mailto:armancini@reedbusiness.com)

### Sales Director

Jeff Elliott  
616/846-4633, Fax 616/846-4802  
[jelliott@reedbusiness.com](mailto:jelliott@reedbusiness.com)

### E-media Solutions Manager

Shannon Darmody  
630/288-7963, Fax 630/288-8145  
[shannon.darmody@reedbusiness.com](mailto:shannon.darmody@reedbusiness.com)

### Regional Manager Northeast

CT, DC, DE, ME, MD, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, VA, WV

John Huff  
630/288-8189, Fax 630/288-8145  
[john.huff@reedbusiness.com](mailto:john.huff@reedbusiness.com)

### Regional Manager Southeast

AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN

Craig Coale  
630/288-8161, Fax 630/288-8145  
[ccoale@reedbusiness.com](mailto:ccoale@reedbusiness.com)

### Regional Manager Southwest

AZ, AR, Southern California, CO, HI, LA, NM, OK, TX, IN, KY, OH and Eastern Canada

Jessica Elliott  
651/290-7694, Fax 303/265-2064  
[jessica.elliott@reedbusiness.com](mailto:jessica.elliott@reedbusiness.com)

### Regional Manager Midwest

IA, IL, KS, MN, MO, NE, WI

Tim Gillerlain  
630/288-8168, Fax 630/288-8145  
[tim.gillerlain@reedbusiness.com](mailto:tim.gillerlain@reedbusiness.com)

### Regional Manager Northwest

AK, ID, MT, NV, ND, Northern CA, OR, SD, UT, WA, WY, Western Canada

Emily Clay  
503/477-9222, Fax 303/265-3697  
[emily.clay@reedbusiness.com](mailto:emily.clay@reedbusiness.com)

### Senior Account Manager

Rob Bertrand  
630/288-8615, Fax 303/265-2526  
[rob.bertrand@reedbusiness.com](mailto:rob.bertrand@reedbusiness.com)

### Inside Sales

Shelley Perez  
630/288-8022, Fax 630/288-8145  
[shelley.perez@reedbusiness.com](mailto:shelley.perez@reedbusiness.com)

### Director of Events

Judy Brociek  
630/288-8184, Fax 630/288-8145  
[jbrociek@reedbusiness.com](mailto:jbrociek@reedbusiness.com)

### Administrative Support

Rebecca Breskman  
Administrative Assistant  
610/205-1179  
[rebecca.breskman@reedbusiness.com](mailto:rebecca.breskman@reedbusiness.com)

Cheryl Gatewood

Administrative Assistant  
630/288-8183  
[cheryl.gatewood@reedbusiness.com](mailto:cheryl.gatewood@reedbusiness.com)

### Advertising Production Manager

Paul Brouch, 630/288-8074

### Advertising Contracts

Stephanie West, 630/288-8419  
[stephanie.west@reedbusiness.com](mailto:stephanie.west@reedbusiness.com)

### Graphic Production Manager

Rick Lesser, 630/288-8443  
[rick.lesser@reedbusiness.com](mailto:rick.lesser@reedbusiness.com)

### Editorial & Publishing Office

Professional Remodeler  
2000 Clearwater Drive, Oak Brook, IL 60523  
Phone: 630/288-8000, Fax: 630/288-8145

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## MARKETING IN A DOWN CYCLE: BACK TO BASICS

**A**s a new year begins, it's a time for planning, setting up annual goals and evaluating our performance from the previous year. Many of us have likely had marketing and sales on the mind for a few months now. With the real-estate industry being as slow as it is and the fact it's nearly impossible to sell a home for top dollar unless it's in pristine condition, our industry benefits. Some people planning to sell are considering major updates and remodels to add value and set their home apart from the rest on the market. Plus, people are staying put and are more apt to consider remodeling their homes to meet their changing needs.

### THE VALUE OF MARKETING

Effective marketing is vital to growing our businesses and achieving our sales and growth goals. One key is to learn where and when to spend your marketing dollars to best reach your target market. Print advertising needs to be carefully considered: look at your budget and what your target markets' interests are, and figure out what they read and where they reside. It's also important to understand that with any marketing, it takes repetition and consistency to get the message across. With print advertising in mind, the best bet is to carefully select publications that truly target your clientele and consistently advertise with them. Think long-term, but plan to evaluate results and return on investment at the six-month mark and annually. You may find that one publication brings more traffic than

another. In this case, it's a good idea to reconsider where you are spending your advertising dollars and invest more in the publication that's yielding the best results.

### SOLICIT INPUT FROM YOUR TEAM

Whether you're a veteran or novice in this industry, it's critical to determine your target clientele; figure out where they live, work and play; and visit them in that environment. Even if you've done this in the past, it's wise to start each year reevaluating your target client. Ask your team questions like: What is their annual household income? What kind of homes do they own? Who is the decision maker? Do we want to market to a different demographic this year?

In asking your team these questions, you are giving them a voice and learning from them who they consider the target client to be. Additionally, if you solicit input from them and involve them in the process, everyone will be on the same page and can work together toward monthly, quarterly and annual goals.

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Who hasn't heard that word-of-mouth is the best, most cost-effective form of

marketing? If you get back to basics and reach out to past clients, letting them know you're still there and interested in learning from past projects, they will take notice. Showing past clients you are interested in what they have to say and

asking them for feedback is a great relationship-building process as well as a way to build on the "know, like, trust" factor. If they liked the work you did for them, it's likely they've mentioned it to their friends, neighbors and family. Touching base with past clients and communicating openly with them is a great, cost-effective piece of the marketing puzzle.

Increasing activity and involvement within the community you serve is another great way to build relationships and market your business.

### BOTTOM LINE

The idea is to wisely invest your marketing dollars, while hopefully increasing the payoff. **PR**

*Bob DuBree, CR is the president of Creative Contracting, located in North Wales, Pa. Bob and his wife Kim founded Creative Contracting and along with their entire staff are celebrating their 20 year business anniversary this year. Bob can be reached at bob@creativecontracting.biz.*



Bob DuBree  
Advisory Board  
Columnist

**"It's also important to understand that with any marketing, it takes repetition and consistency to get the message across."**

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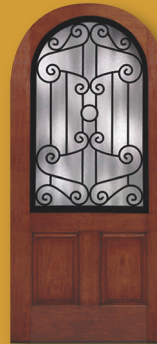


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