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MAY 2008

The Future of Remodeling

2018

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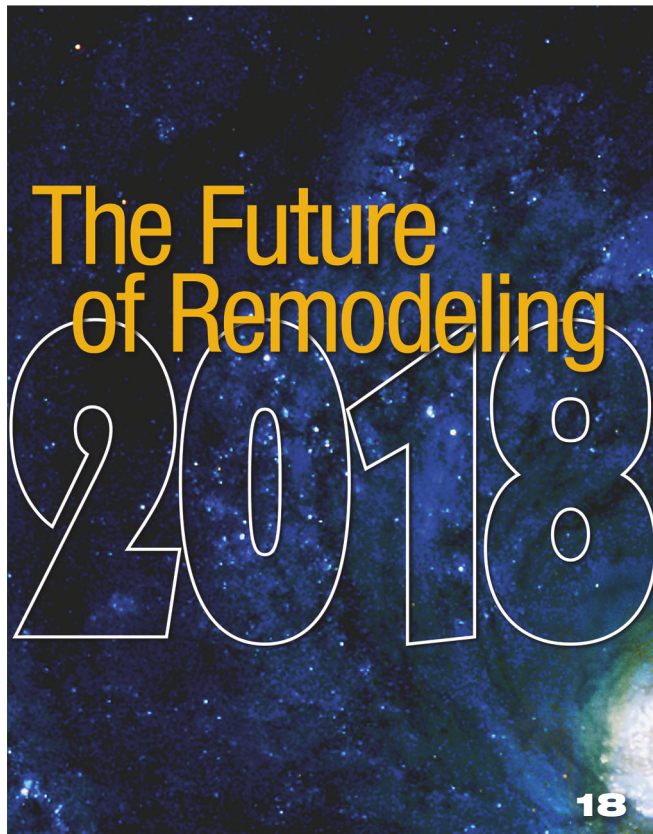
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Remodelers' Exchange

To read the entire discussion on training, educating and certifying remodelers or to listen to the podcast, visit us online.

www.ProRemodeler.com

Visit Our Blogs

Editor in Chief Mike Morris and Senior Editor Jonathan Sweet write about the issues facing remodeling businesses every day.

www.ProRemodeler.com

Best of the Best Design Awards

The deadline for the Best of the Best Design Awards has been extended. The new deadline for entry forms is May 15, 2008, and entry notebooks are due May 30, 2008. E-mail or fax your entry form now. You can't win if you don't enter.

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ONLINE POLL

What do you expect to be your biggest challenge in 2018?

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TIME TO GET BACK TO BASICS

A single theme emerged during our spring Editorial Advisory Board conference call, which we use to share ideas for future articles based on what our board members are experiencing in their businesses.

That theme was simply this: get back to basics.

I have to say, considering the advanced experience level and business acumen of the men and women on our board, I was a little surprised. We pride ourselves here at *Professional Remodeler* on providing a more sophisticated level of business advice for the owners and executives of the country's largest and most successful firms. Our advisory board members are some of the industry's most respected and accomplished contractors, educators and thought leaders.

So when someone suggested during the first few minutes of the call that this was the perfect time for us to focus on getting back to sound business fundamentals, I had to ask why. The discussion made me realize, once again, how valuable a resource we have in our advisory board.

With most remodeling markets in the country going through a down period, it was noted this is not the best time for contractors to spend a lot of time on the cutting edge of innovative and risky business practices. It is, however, a great time for remodelers to bone up on the basics,

like strengthening your financials, fine-tuning your systems, sharpening your sales tactics and focusing more on grass roots marketing efforts.

In this issue, for example, Remodelers' Exchange (see page 14) features a great discussion between

Don Van Cura Sr. and Mike Weiss on why more education will strengthen your business. In case you didn't know, the article itself features only an excerpt of the hour-long conversation between Don and Mike; you'll find the complete transcript and original audio of their discussion on *ProRemodeler.com* under the Archives tab in the upper right corner of our home page.

So, look for more articles that address the basics in the months to come, as we follow the advice of our board and deliver the most up-to-date, meaningful content that reflects what's going on in the market at this very moment.

Of course, we'll continue to bring you the thought-provoking special reports you've come to expect, like this issue's three-article section, The Future of Remodeling (see pages 18-26). Running a professional, profitable remodeling company that will not only survive the current downturn but thrive through the next decade won't be an easy feat.

Oh, hey, did you hear that? Another remodeling company bit the dust.

Let's get back to basics, shall we? **PR**



Michael R. Morris

Editor in Chief

This is not the best time for contractors to spend a lot of time on the cutting edge of innovative and risky business practices.



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ARE YOU PLANNING FOR A REALITY CHECK?

A reality check can apply to a company that is in a growth mode or a company that is experiencing a decrease in sales. The numbers, a strong business plan and a good advisor or business friend can all supply some of the most beneficial reality checks we can find when it comes to managing a business.

Let's suppose you are in a growth mode. When we find ourselves in this situation, it is easy to be optimistic or overspend on the future without truly looking at return on investment (ROI). One thing that is simple to do — yet takes a considerable time investment to do it well — is use a planning timeline for the business. This allows you to make more educated decisions for planning the team's output capability and to foresee potential bottlenecks.

For example, in working through the planning process with my management team a few years back, we identified that, with all the internal innovation we were working on, moving our headquarters would be too big of a strain on the team. Why? Because it would jeopardize the timely completion of other innovation projects scheduled to roll out to our franchise network. So, to keep morale high and our present plans moving forward, we delayed our move.

This is similar to double- or triple-booking your production schedule when you have no competent subcontractors lined up to fill in the gap. Then, you find you and your team are in a very stressful situation you created because you didn't plan. I am continuously amazed how we will better plan for our customers' projects than the operations of our own businesses.

A simple way to create a timeline is to develop a spreadsheet. At the top of each column input the year starting with 2008 — go left to right. (We plan

up to 10 years out, yet five years should suffice for most.) Next, list each department, noting if it includes one person, a group or a part-time person. Then, list all the innovations or changes you have occurring or plan to make. After completing this, you can see any bottlenecks you have. Be sure, just like estimating a job, to assign the appropriate hours to complete each item. Be careful not to overcomplicate this process because it is not an exact science. Review it a minimum of once per quarter because your business and the market are dynamic, and so you should be prepared to be flexible to respond.

Without using a simple tool like this, you're flying blind and could have a close call or collide with a mountaintop hidden in a cloud if you're not careful. That can stress everyone out and doesn't help production, and it could seriously damage your business.

Let's say you're experiencing a 30 percent decrease in sales in comparison to the previous year, and it has now been three to four months in a row that this has happened. It is not time to panic and put your head in the sand. Yes, working hard is a prerequisite to success, but it alone will not navigate you through turbulent times — just like a pilot must know how to read the instruments so he doesn't overreact or under-react. We have to work smart!

Your balance sheet is another important instrument reading like your "current ratio," which is your current

assets versus current liabilities. Knowing what your gross sales numbers, gross profit margins, gross profit dollars, overhead/G&A, and net profit need to be to have a healthy company is critical. A healthy ratio is 2:1, while a ratio of 1:1 is OK, and a 1:2 ratio is

considered unhealthy and some serious changes probably need to be considered. If you don't know these, find a professional business advisor, a CPA or a business friend to help you!

If sales should be at \$150,000 a month and you're at \$75,000 a month for the last three months, it is time to look at making some difficult reductions to your overhead. By tracking your numbers against your budget and/or last year's numbers, you can make educated business decisions — otherwise it is just a guess. When thinking about the flying analogy, guessing if you're parallel to the ground rather than knowing could mean life or death to you, and in this

case your business.

Make time for planning and review it for your team. It is critical in good times and challenging times. Both are necessary to keep your company healthy and fit for flying to new heights! **PR**

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



Doug Dwyer
Contributing Editor

"One thing that is simple to do — yet takes a considerable time investment to do it well — is use a planning timeline for the business."

>> For more Doug Dwyer on Leadership, visit www.ProRemodeler.com



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IDENTIFYING YOUR COMPANY'S VALUES

In my previous column I talked about the importance of defining the mission and vision for your company, absent that the company is really a collection of companies, with each individual employed there personally deciding what the mission and vision is for "his" or "her" company.

As part of a fully developed business plan, your company needs to define its values. Values are those guiding principles that do not change over time, even while an individual or business changes.

Many of us live our lives without really addressing our personal values. We do what we do because "that is the way I am." That lack of self-reflection diminishes an individual's ability to effectively lead those he works with. And without understanding your own values it is difficult, if not impossible, to codify the values of your company. The reason this is true is that all companies reflect the values of the owner.

But what if you haven't yet formulated your personal values and are stuck? Consider these exercises.

Stephen Covey suggests in "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" that you imagine you are at your own funeral, listening to what the attendees are saying about you. What do you think they would say? What do you want them to say? Write down what comes to mind, and look for the values embedded therein.

Carry a piece of paper and a pen with you for a week. As you are faced with decisions and choices, consider the legacy you are creating. Who you are is what you do. What did you reference when you were faced with a tough choice? What comes to mind is often what you really are about.

Ask those who love and care about you what their thoughts are regarding

your values. Who do they think you are? Just listen, don't respond. Note what you hear and then reflect on it.

You might be surprised by what you hear. If you are not hearing what you think about yourself and you don't like what you are hearing, consider it an opportunity. We are the choices we make. Values are why we make the choices we do. The clearer you are about yours, the better you feel about the choices you make.

OK, so you have your values clearly defined. It might look like a list of four or seven touch points, possibly with some explanation attached. Words like integrity and caring might be on the list.

Now you are ready to work on the values of your company.

To get this process started, ask the people who are part of your company, what do they think the values of the company are. This can be done a couple of ways.

One way is you can ask them to write their thoughts down and give them to you. If you take this route, arrange to meet with them individually to hear their thoughts. As part of each of these meetings, thank the person for taking the time to do what you asked. Then ask them to talk about what they wrote and why they wrote what they did. Listen, don't correct. Take notes.

As part of this process you might

interact with your very best clients, trade contractors and suppliers. They are all part of your company. Doing so makes them feel even better about your company and gives them a story to tell.

Compare what you have heard from everyone. Distill it. These are the company's values.

Once you have the values in hand, present them to your employees. As you present each value, ask your employees for examples of how it is brought to life on a day-to-day basis. Doing so will help all connect the dots from this session to everyday business.

Another way to approach this process is to engage a facilitator who would work with you and your people typically over a day away from the business. The facilitator will then work with the group to distill the resulting information into the company's values.

Either way helps to create a wonderful sense of team. Your company is clearer about its drivers, the non-negotiable principles that make it what it is. And you are ready to

take the next step in building your business plan. **PR**

Paul Winans CR works with Remodelers Advantage. He is a founder of Winans Construction, which he and his wife, Nina, sold in 2007. He can be reached at paul@remodelersadvantage.com.



Paul Winans
Contributing Editor

"Ask those who love and care about you what their thoughts are regarding your values. Who do they think you are? Just listen, don't respond. Note what you hear and then reflect on it."

>> Look for Paul's next column, "What Could Be Better?" in the August issue.

EDUCATING REMODELERS

To stay on top of the game, remodelers need training and certification

WITH ALL OF THE CHANGES occurring in the remodeling industry — going green, energy-efficiency, new rules and regulations — how important is it for your team to stay on top of the game and be able to differentiate yourself from your competitors? Today, we learn from two industry leaders.

Jud: From past experiences, what are the top two or three educational opportunities for remodelers here in the country?

Don: The Certified Remodeler (CR) is what NARI is offering. In my mind, I don't know how you could survive without that type of information. For the field individuals, there's a Certified Lead Carpenter course, which is something our company emphasizes if anyone starts with us. If they're not interested in going through that course, we're actually not interested in hiring them.

Jud: Mike, same question.

This month featuring:

Don Van Cura Sr., CR, CKBR, CLC - Owner

Don Van Cura Construction, Chicago

The company is a small, full-service remodeling firm that has been in business for 35 years. There are 10 employees; 2½ in the office, the rest in the field. The firm is very involved in NARI.

Mike Weiss, CGR, GMB, CGB, CAPS - Owner

Weiss RCMI (Residential Construction Management Institute), Carmel, Ind.

Weiss RCMI has been in business for two years and is focused on teaching, writing and course development for NAHB. He's also the incoming education committee chairman for NAHB. Mike's former company, Weiss & Co., has been in business for 35 years.

Mike: As far as educational opportunities, there's a wide range from what NKBA offers to CKR, CBD and their Master series. Also NARI has the Certified Lead Carpenter program which is widely recognized as very good. The training opportunities that the University of Housing at the NAHB offers have been very effective and well received, primarily because it's been developed by and is largely taught by people "from the trenches." That gives it a great deal of credibility on the inside. There's a broad range of management seminars, whether it's Peters, Lee Evans, or Zig Ziglar and those motivational speakers. There's something about the interest to attend that kind of training or educational experience that tells you something about the person who is working for you or if you're in the hiring format, that they've attended that. I was always disappointed, over the last 20 years of my company experience. We at one time had 19 employees. I was disappointed that they didn't pursue more education than they did. I offered to pay for it if they went for a designation. I would pay for the whole thing provided they stayed three years from the time they took it.

Jud: Don, do you have any rules and regulations as far as what you'll pay for, such as Mike just stated, as far as the time, two or three years, or some number?

Don: We use a little incentive. I don't believe in anything for nothing. It needs to be an equitable arrangement. If we have someone who wants to take the Certified Remodeler course, or Certified Kitchen and Bath, Certified Lead Carpenter, or whatever the program, we will pay for that course in total. We tell them to purchase the publica-



PHOTO: MARC BERLOW

DON: "People do have a better comfort level when they see that there's some symbol that this person has had a background and education."

tions. If they fail the course, they pay for the publications. Either way, we're paying for the program. If they successfully pass, we automatically give them an increase in wage, over and above anything else they would have accrued. It's financially rewarding. I believe that for anyone who goes through these programs, when they come

MIKE: “The return on the investment is paid for in one \$32,000 job. I can’t come up with anything that’s anywhere near that good a return in the market.”



PHOTO: MARC BERLOW

out, their vision is such that they’re easily worth the increase.

Jud: Taking education and certification together, how do you use that in your marketing to differentiate you from everyone else as far as competition is concerned?

Don: We had a call from a lady who found us by looking through the Internet and looked at our Web site. We always ask what lead them to call us and if they know someone that we’ve worked for. She said, “You were the only one I saw who was a Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler, and that’s what I want to do.” People do have a better comfort level when they see there’s some symbol that this person has had a background and education. I could think of numerous situations like that where people that we work for know that our people are

educated. They know about the certifications. We let them know. Prior to a project, we send out mini-dossiers on each lead person. It has a photograph and a little bit of history about them. It explains what it means for them to have gone through the education and the continuing educational requirements.

Jud: Mike, what do you do in marketing as far as certification and/or education were concerned?

Mike: We’ve certainly always listed both the certifications or designations as well as our memberships in professional trade associations. It did a great deal to establish the legitimacy. A certain portion of the investigating public, if you will, will look at the alphabet-soup and will assume that it means some kind of attainment, which indicates a higher level of proficiency, knowledge, quality, or you name it. We wanted to take advantage of that. We remarked several times that we had several CGRs in the company. Then I lost someone, and I stopped marketing it. In 20-some years that I’ve been a CGR, I’ve only had two people ask me what those stood for!

I don’t think that they fail to recognize it. They just didn’t ask what it is. We believe very much in marketing it.

Jud: Don, what sort of return on investment, or what can remodelers expect when they go for certifications or training?

Don: We have discussion with all of the guys that go through the process. We let them know, life is uncertain. I hope I’m in the industry for many years to come. I also let them know that, for whatever reason, I leave the country, they are a much more marketable individual. Not only does it help them while they’re with us, it also gives them a better position in the market. People are happy with that. We don’t lose people because of the education and training. It does help them feel a better sense of security. They’re more likely to stay in the trade

if they feel as though they’re actually going somewhere.

Jud: Don, do you think you can command a better margin from those hourly employees than you can if they don’t have that.

Don: No question about it. We have a significantly higher rate for people that are certified. I know in general just from hearing what the going rates are that we’re not the cheapest person in town, for sure. We do charge more. We feel we can command that because we feel we’re giving a better

product. Everyone in this business has to have a bit of an ego. It looks nice if you’ve got something to base it on.

Jud: Mike, what kind of return on investment have you seen or heard of?

Mike: On average, when someone takes the prep, which is the predecessor to becoming a CGR, and say, for example, they have to

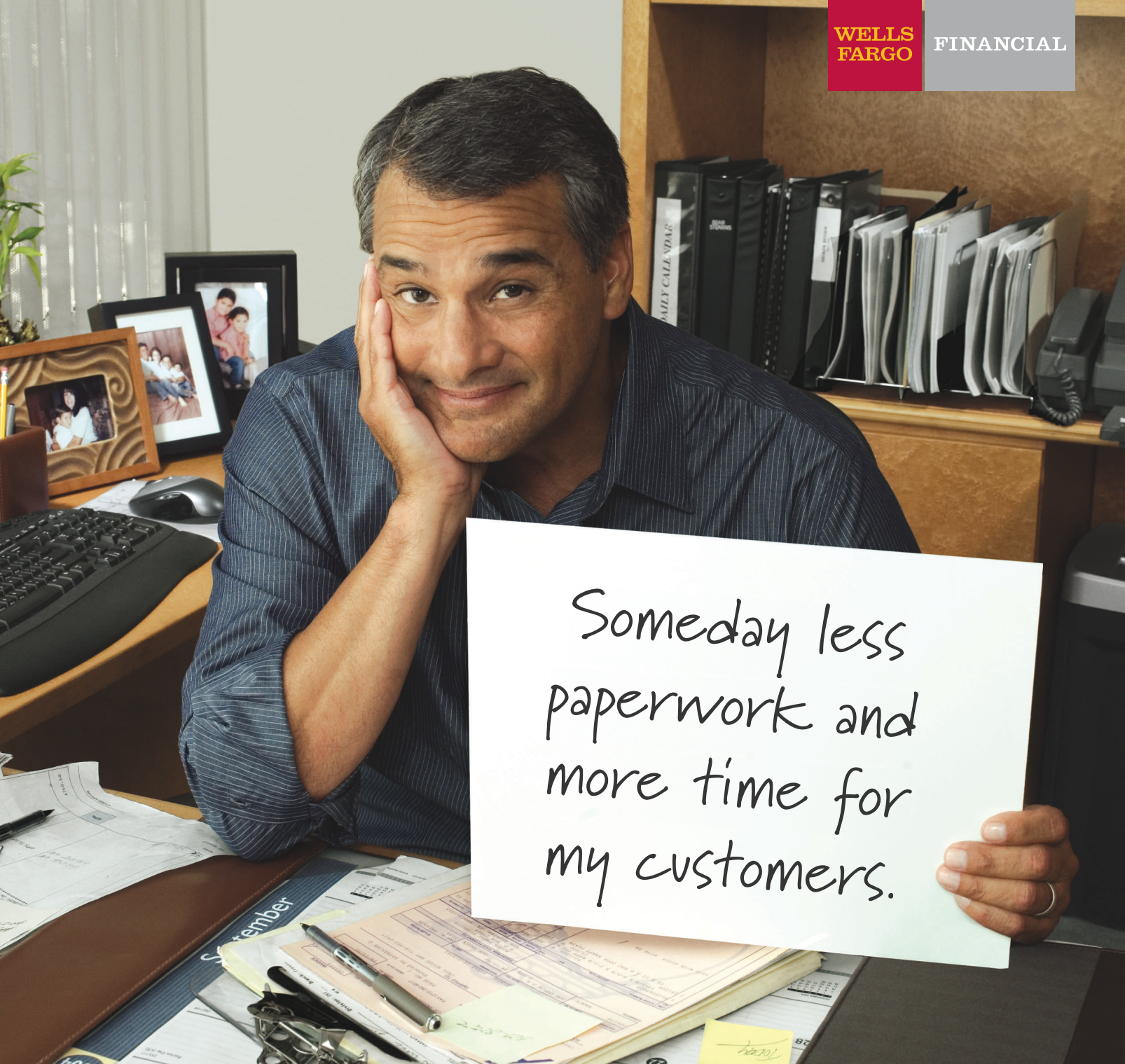
take 6 courses. That’s looking at a cost, or the investment if I’m paying for it, of \$1,500 to \$1,800 for the actual academic part of it, the workbook, class time, etc. Also, I’m sending them there instead of getting the productivity with them having a day at work. On a burden rate would probably be another \$1,800. I’m looking at somewhere in the neighborhood of from \$2,700 to as much as \$3,200. If I’m getting a 10 percent net before taxes, that’s just one \$32,000 job that I have to get because they’re good enough as a result of becoming a CGR to help me make that job happen. That’s cheap. The return on the investment is paid for in one \$32,000 job. And, I’ve got them for the rest of their active career. I can’t come up with anything that’s anywhere near that good a return in the market, or 401K or anything else. **PR**



Jud Motsenbocker
Contributing Editor

TALK BACK

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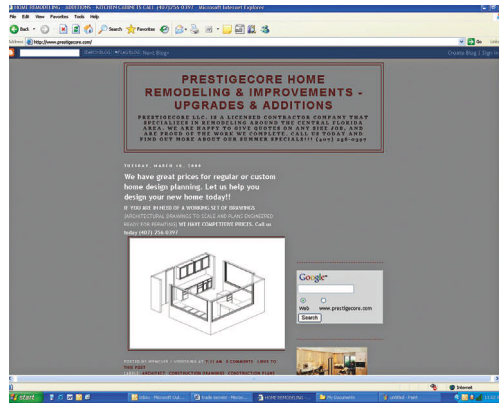


Blogging to Success

It's no secret that consumers are looking to the Web to inform their buying decisions for just about everything, including remodeling. Remodelers who aren't online do themselves a tremendous disservice with most serious buyers.

Wayne Morris, president of PrestigeCore, an Orlando, Fla., remodeling company, has taken things a step further by blogging to his audience at www.prestigecore.com.

He has been blogging since he started his company last year, opting for that instead of a traditional Web site. Morris uses Google Blogger. If you've read many blogs, you've almost certainly looked at one that was created with the free software, which is one of the most popu-



lar blog platforms out there.

He says he decided to use a blog instead of a Web site because he can more quickly update information and post photos without having to rely on a Webmaster or other bulky software. Because he is using the Blogger software, part of the Google family, the most popular search engine instantly recognizes it.

He can track traffic using

Google's AdSense, so he knows he's getting good exposure.

"I also can spend a little more time worrying about print marketing since I feel like I get enough exposure on the Internet," he says.

Although the majority of his business comes from word-of-mouth, he feels having the blog gives his clients

confidence that he is not a fly-by-night contractor.

It "gives my clients a better peace of mind knowing that I am not just a handyman with tools; we are a company that is trying to grow using all media types," he says.

Some services worth checking if you're going to blog:

- Blogger – www.blogger.com. Free, but Google gets to place ads on your blog

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

- WordPress – www.wordpress.com. Free, but also might include text ads
- Blog.com – www.blog.com. Offers free or paid blogs, with ads on the free ones
- TypePad – www.typepad.com. Monthly or annual fees, but you control the content

If you already have a Web site, you can also consider putting the blog directly on the site using a variety of software programs.

(We found out about Morris' blog when he responded to a post on Senior Editor Jonathan Sweet's blog. Join the discussion at www.proremolder.com/blogs/.)

THE GREEN PIECE

Backing Up the Hype

Everywhere you look these days you'll hear a green message, whether it's TV ads for cars and trucks or on the floor of the latest trade show.

With nearly every building products manufacturer touting the environmentally friendly aspects of their goods, it can be difficult for both remodelers and homeowners to evaluate just how green something is.

So Doug Selby, president of Meadowlark Builders, takes matters into his own hands, testing and tracking the performance of every green product the Ann Arbor, Mich., company installs.

"We try to be fairly scientific with our work and make sure it performs as it is supposed to perform," Selby says.

Meadowlark has been building and remodeling green for years and has accumulated statistics and information, using real-life Michigan applications, to show the impact the work can make. The company also uses computer modeling for its heating and air conditioning systems to make them as efficient as possible.

The research not only helps Selby choose products to use but also makes the clients feel confident in choosing Meadowlark for their green project. The

company has developed a group of easy-to-understand charts and graphs that it uses with clients to show reduced energy costs, healthier indoor air and material conservation. The company works in several aspects of green, but energy efficiency and indoor air quality are of the most interest to clients, Selby says.

Meadowlark also has an extensive green section on its Web site, www.meadowlarkbuilders.com, that shares information with potential customers. The approach has also gotten Meadowlark coverage in the local paper as a green construction expert.

THE CHANGES
THAT WILL
SHAPE THE
NEXT 10 YEARS

The Remodeling Market

2018

THE FUTURE OF REMODELING

The
remodeling
market will
be more than
\$350 billion
by 2018.

By Jonathan Sweet, Senior Editor

FLYING PICKUP TRUCKS. ROBOT LABOR. MCMANSIONS ON THE MOON.

We won't be ready for those things in the next 10 years, but remodeling in 2018 will certainly be different from today. The housing stock will be older, the workforce and customer base will be different and the competition will change. Universal design and green remodeling will be more prevalent. In other words, it'll be a whole new world.

How much can change in 10 years? Consider that in 1998 the remodeling market was estimated at less than \$150 billion. Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) now puts the market at \$280 billion. You probably didn't have a Web site, and if you did it had to be basic enough to load with the average 28.8 dial-up modem most people were sporting. Your cell phone bore a striking resemblance to a bowling pin. As for your customers, the average baby boomer was under 50, the oldest Gen Xers were buying their first homes and most echo boomers were still in elementary school.

So we decided to take our best stab at what the market will look like in 2018. We've talked to leading remodelers and thought leaders both inside and outside the industry and combined that with research from NAHB, JCHS and the U.S. Census Bureau to paint a picture of what we can expect to see over the next 10 years.

And while we probably won't see flying cars, General Motors did announce recently they plan to debut their first driverless vehicles in 2018, so who knows?

ECONOMICS Market will keep growing

This year is not looking like a good one for remodeling. After staying relatively strong in 2006 and 2007, the effects of the collapse of the new residential construction market have finally trickled down to remodeling. Money's tight, consumers are anxious and sales are slow.

That's the bad news. The good news is that the long-term outlook for remodeling is all good. Both NAHB and JCHS economists are estimating the market will be more than

\$350 billion within the next 10 years and could be nearing \$400 billion. Even a temporary slowdown won't change the needs of the market.

"There's not going to be a difference in the fundamental demand for remodeling," says Kermit Baker, director of the Remodeling Futures program at JCHS. "Historically, a downturn doesn't affect homeowners' willingness to invest; it only affects the timing of the growth."

In its 2007 report on the market, "Foundations for Future Growth in the Remodeling Industry," JCHS predicted 3.7 percent annual growth in remodeling for the coming decade. Nothing that has happened over the last few years has changed that expectation, Baker says.

"When we make long-term projections we take cyclical downturns into consideration," he says. "We entirely expected to experience a downturn now."

Remodelers echo that sentiment, saying they expect the current slowdown to be short-lived.

"When the recovery comes the problems we're experiencing now will be quickly forgotten," says Seymour Turner, executive vice president for Airoom Custom Remodeling Specialists in Lincolnwood, Ill. "It's not going to affect how people think of their homes."

What we shouldn't expect, though, is a return to the high-flying days of the last few years, which included types of work and a level of investment that was unusually high. Instead, the strong fundamentals of the market should lead to more steady growth like we saw from 1995 to 2000, Baker says.

Those fundamentals include an aging housing stock and a growing population. By 2018, the average home will be more than 35 years old and about a third will be more than 50

Minorities will make up 39 percent of the population by 2020.

years old. Not surprisingly, spending on home improvement rises as a home ages and essential systems such as roofing, HVAC and plumbing begin to fail or require upgrades for modern life.

Besides the aging stock, a growing population means more opportunities. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts a population of 335 million by 2020, compared with the roughly 303 million Americans today. At the same time, Harvard estimates that there will be more than 86 million homeowners in 2015, up from 74 million in 2005.

HOT MARKETS

Which markets are poised for the most growth? The housing stock is the oldest in the Midwest and Northeast, but the South and West will easily outstrip them in population growth. For the decade from 2010 to 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau projects a 2.4 percent increase in population in the Northeast and 3.1 percent in the Midwest. Conversely, the South will grow by 12.3 percent and the West by 13.1 percent.

States expected to see the biggest increases are Nevada (28 percent), Arizona (27 percent) and Florida (22 percent). While those states have some of the worst building and remodeling markets right now, it looks like they will play a big role in future growth. The only states outside the South and West expected to see growth above 5 percent are New Hampshire (10 percent) and Minnesota (9 percent.) With their older, established housing stock, those states will probably see a robust remodeling market.

CLIENTS

Shifting demographics means new customers

As the baby boomers age and minorities continue to grow as a percentage of the population, remodelers can expect to be dealing with a different customer in 2018 than today.

For almost 20 years, the baby boomers have been the drivers behind the remodeling market, but by 2018 the average boomer will be over 60. The typical Gen Xer will be in their 40s and the average echo boomer will be about 30, just coming into their prime homeownership years.

At the same time, minorities will be a larger part of the market, an estimated 39 percent of the population by 2020, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Harvard projects that they'll represent nearly a quarter of all home improvement spending by 2015, up from 15.9 percent in 2005. The fastest growing portion of that will come from Hispanic households.

Both of these changes, along with the rise in single homeowners, will mean differences in the way remodelers have to build, market and sell their services.

GENERATIONAL CHANGES

By 2018, Generation X and the echo boomers will be the key demographic for remodeling. They expect different things from the companies they work with. Today, the Internet is an important marketing tool for many companies, but in the future that won't be enough.

"We have to develop ways of truly allowing people to buy on the Internet," says Sal Ferro, CEO of Alure Home Improvements, East Meadow, N.Y. "It can't just be a way of contacting people. We have to provide ease of sale because they've been using this technology their entire lives."

That ability to make selections online, using 3-D modeling and other technology, will be widely available in 2018 if remodelers are willing to embrace it.

"With technology being what it is, I fully expect we'll be able to make all of those decisions online — we can design our home from our home," says Steve Lewkowitz, the home building and real-estate director for CDC Software, a customer relationship management software company.

"(Younger homeowners) really want to minimize the decisions they have to make in a showroom," he says. "If remodelers don't have these abilities, they're going to get taken right off the list."

At the same time, they want personal contact. When they make a request for information, they expect to hear back quickly with an answer to their specific problem, not a general marketing response, Lewkowitz says. That means remodelers need to be able to quickly respond to an instant message or e-mail query.

And if you don't respond well and they're unhappy with your service, they use technology to quickly spread the message.

"Social media is very important to them," says Steve Kleber,

By 2018, the average baby boomer will be over 60.

Fastest growing states	Slowest growing states
1. Nevada	1. West Virginia
2. Arizona	2. North Dakota
3. Florida	3. Iowa
4. Texas	4. Ohio
5. Utah	5. New York

Source: US Census Bureau

president of Kleber & Associates, a marketing firm that works for several clients in the residential construction industry. "If they have a bad experience, 1,000 people can know about it very quickly. Your reputation becomes huge. Now you're graded publicly and it never goes away."

That's because more than any previous generation the echo boomers rely on their peers when making decisions.

"When they're looking to make any buying decision, they want to talk to people who are buying or who have already bought," says Neil Howe, founding partner of LifeCourse Associates, a company that studies generational differences. "They want to know what people their age think about it."

While similar in their embrace of technology, there are also some differences between Generation X and echo boomers as consumers. While Xers were likely to move away from home, echo boomers want to stay close to their parents. More echo boomers are moving back home to live with their parents than any earlier generation.

"They tend to be very close with their parents," Howe says. "They stay in touch with them to the point of 10 to 15 phone calls a week."

Even many of those who don't continue to live at home are choosing to live near their parents and refusing to take jobs that require them to move to other parts of the country, Howe says.

One of the biggest differences between the baby boomers and their younger cohorts may end up being how they invest in their homes. According to a recent government report, the baby boomers are the richest generation ever, continuing a long trend of every generation outdoing its parents. Unfortunately, that trend doesn't carry over to future generations.

"We see a huge decline in household net worth as we move from the oldest baby boomers to younger baby boomers," Howe says.

"They'll never get up to where the people now retiring are. Generation X's story has been the same, and they're struggling with it."

That could mean that although the number of projects will continue to be steady, size may decrease as the more pragmatic Xers and echo boomers become the driving force in the industry.

"The baby boomers were financially able to do these big projects," Ferro says. "Those resources are what built our business and a lot of remodeling businesses. The next level may or may not have the same level of financial success, so this could change the industry."

That's a trend that some remodelers are already seeing.

"We are dealing with Generation X now, and they are just a little more reserved in how they spend their money," says Doug Dewhurst, president of Dewhurst & Associates, a design/build remodeling firm in La Jolla, Calif. "They know they may move three to five years down the road and want to make sure their remodel makes sense financially."

The recent downturn in the market has made everyone nervous about remodeling now, but the impact may be more long-term for Xers and echo boomers who may have bought their first homes during the housing bubble and are now dealing with losses.

"It will recover, but people are likely to be more discerning in making that decision," says Kenneth Sekley, CEO of Patio Enclosures, a national remodeling firm headquartered in Macedonia, Ohio. "I think what we'll increasingly see is people being more specific and thoughtful about how they make their investments. We have to sell the benefits we can provide beyond the investment benefit."

(For more on generational differences, see our May 2007 article "Generation X" at www.ProRemodeler.com.)

RISING MINORITY INFLUENCE

Second- and third-generation immigrants, especially those of Asian and Hispanic origin, are big believers in the American dream of homeownership, Ferro says.

"They've started to accumulate the ability to do things like remodel and they are willing to spend the money to do it," he says.

Reaching those audiences requires focused marketing that goes beyond the traditional methods.

"We have to reach them through specialty niches — Hispanic

The key to keeping young employees: Show them a career path.

radio stations, Hispanic newspapers, TV stations,” Ferro says. “They are most comfortable within their own culture. We have to have marketing campaigns keyed around that specific demographic.”

Once a remodeler has reached those clients, it’s also important to have employees that they can relate to.

“My feeling is there’s going to certainly be some affinity to stay with your roots,” says Turner. “For us, that means we need to be looking for Spanish speaking personnel in customer relations, sales and other places, not just in the field.”

Companies also need to be aware of cultural differences, such as nonverbal cues and important holidays and events. For example, in Hispanic cultures, a girl’s 15th birthday, or la quinceañera, is an important event that some clients have planned large remodels around, Turner says.

“We’re in a very touchy-feely business,” he says. “Not understanding those cultural differences can impact how a community looks at you.”

WORKFORCE Dealing with new expectations

Finding a good workforce has been a challenge for years and is unlikely to be any easier in 10 years. The trades are already dominated by baby boomers and with most of them over 60 by 2018, the industry could be in a crisis mode. The opportunity to attract Generation X to construction may have come and gone, but the echo boomers offer a glimmer of hope.

As a group, Generation Xers have been likely to move around from job to job. Having come of age during the era of corporate downsizing, they have taken a “free agent” approach to their careers, says Howe.

While Xers think short-term, echo boomers are more likely to take a long-term approach to their careers.

“Xers want to get paid right now,” Howe says. “(Echo boomers) are different. They want to know what they can expect to get five, six or seven years from now.”

The key to successfully keeping young employees may be showing them that there’s a future in the remodeling industry.

If remodelers show them a career path that leads to management and increasing responsibility, that will be attractive to echo boomers. They want to feel they are making a difference, says Kleber.

“Get them involved in the future of the company,” he says. “Ask them where they see the company going in the future. If they can affect the company’s direction, that shows respect.”

Howe also recommends using training programs, such as professional certifications, to motivate them.

“Give them a credential — they want that gold star,” he says. “They’ve been recognized for everything they’ve done their entire lives, so this generation wants that.”

Despite all those things, remodelers still need to expect to see a lot of employee turnover.

“The average relationship with an employee of that generation is two years,” Kleber says. “Do everything you can to keep them, but don’t build up unrealistic expectations.”

It’s also not realistic to ever again expect a mostly native-born labor force.

“There’s no vocational training of any sort in the United States, so that problem isn’t going away,” says Turner, “Nobody as they enter high school is sitting there saying, ‘I want to be a plumber.’”

Building an immigrant labor force could also become more difficult in the future depending on what happens over the next 10 years with immigration reform at the federal, state and local level. Another challenge may be that as immigrants become more established they will open their own remodeling companies.

“Within the next 10 years they are going to become the bosses,” says Ferro. “That labor pool is going to become more educated, become a bigger part of our culture and catch that capitalistic bug.”

Once that happens, those companies will probably find it easier to attract employees of the same ethnicity.

“We’ll be competing with the very people who are working for us today for labor tomorrow and we’ll be at a disadvantage,” he says.

The answer to that will be to make sure qualified minority employees are recognized and given management opportunities to try to create an environment where other employees feel more comfortable, Ferro says.

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DESIGN Green leads the way

Green remodeling is the hot subject of the moment and it appears unlikely to go away.

“Green is just going to grow,” says Ferro. “I don’t think we’ve really touched the tip of the iceberg in green.”

Two major factors will combine to make green have staying power: rising energy costs and the more environmentally friendly attitudes of younger consumers — the homeowners of the future.

“This is certainly not the end of rising energy costs, so people will continue to be looking at energy efficiency,” says Sekley. “It appeals to people who are more environmentally conscious and there’s a dollar and cents benefit.”

Many of today’s homeowners aren’t willing to spend more on green remodeling that doesn’t have an economic benefit, but that will change, Ferro says.

“Green remodeling is going to become more and more the norm,” he says. “It does have staying power with the young generation.”

Turner agrees with that sentiment.

“The kids in college now, when they are buying homes, they’re just going to expect it,” he says. “People are just expecting things to last forever now.”

Airoom is working to have its entire staff certified using the NAHB’s new green program, and Turner has been attending numerous seminars on the subject.

“My daughters told me I had to go, but that’s just a great example of what’s going to happen,” he says. “People are going to be looking at greener features because their kids are talking about it.”

While green will continue to grow in importance, in many ways, what echo boomers and Xers want won’t be that different than what the baby boomers desire. Projects like kitchens, additions and bathrooms will still lead the way, but younger generations will be looking for more technology and changes that reflect their lifestyles.

Both generations put a stronger emphasis on family life than the boomers, but at the same time want to be successful in their

The average home of the future

- 2,330 square feet
- 2½ to 3½ bathrooms
- 4 bedrooms
- Front porch and patio
- Both shower stall and tub in master bathroom
- Toilet in master bathroom will have separate enclosure
- 9-foot ceilings on first floor
- One-story entry foyer
- Living room will be replaced by parlor/retreat/library

Source: NAHB

careers. Trying to meet that dual need will mean more home offices and technology at home. They will want technology in every aspect of the house, from WiFi networks to wired kitchens to home theaters.

“Two full-blown home offices could become the norm,” Turner says. “They’re much more demanding of that than the baby boomers.”

Of course, the baby boomers will still be a part of the market in 2018. As such a large generation, they are expected to be a significant segment of the market, so remodelers can probably expect to be doing lots of universal design projects and first-floor master suites.

“There’s still going to be a highly concentrated amount of wealth there,” Turner says. “A lot of these people are not moving to Arizona and Florida anymore. They’re staying where they are.”

One of the most significant differences between Hispanic and Asian households and white ones is size. In 2005, the average white household was 2.5 people, compared with 3.5 for the average Hispanic or Asian one, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“There are many societies where multiple generations live in one household, and we could see more of that,” says Kleber. “It wouldn’t be unusual to see multiple master suites in a home to meet those needs.” **PR**



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Baby boomers use the Internet, but we live it.

The Next Generation

By Jonathan Sweet, Senior Editor

SAY HELLO TO YOUR CUSTOMER OF 2018.

I'll be 42 and in my prime remodeling years by then. (Take the picture here, recede the hairline, gray the temples a bit and you've probably got the idea.) The baby boomers? They're yesterday's news. It's my Generation X brethren and the echo boomers coming up behind us you really have to worry about.

The most obvious change is technology. Baby boomers use the Internet, but we live it. Before I do business with anyone, I visit their Web site. If the site doesn't have what I want or — God forbid — they don't have a site, they're off the list. And compared to most people my age, I'm a virtual Luddite — I still get a daily newspaper delivered to the house every morning. We expect to communicate with you by e-mail and instant message — and get an instant response.

We also have a different attitude about housing than the baby boomers, who were much more likely to buy a home and stay there for 20 years than most Xers and echo boomers are. Some of this is by choice, but a lot of it is the realities of the job market in the modern economy.

We're buying houses at a younger age than the baby boomers and we're investing heavily in those homes. While available data is limited, Harvard research shows we spend more on remodeling than previous generations did at our age.

The bad news is that we're getting burned out on homeownership. We bought into the "home as an investment" sales pitch lock, stock and barrel ... and we've seen that investment take a beating. We've tried to sell houses and had to take losses or watched new homes go up next to ours at a fraction of what we paid.

The investment idea will take care of itself over the next few

years as the market straightens out, but there's a bigger problem — but possible opportunity — with my generation and the next one. There's no nice way to say this, so I'll just say it — we're lazy.



We've gotten tired of taking care of houses, of making long commutes into work from far-flung exurbs. We're willing to trade the big yard and house to be closer to work and for a low-maintenance lifestyle. I can't believe how many people I've talked to in the last year who are ready to downsize. And these aren't retirees. These are my friends, the parents of my daughter's classmates, my coworkers — Xers and echo boomers all.

On the surface, this looks like bad news. As demographer Neil Howe said when I interviewed him for the article, the McMansions of the baby boomers won't cut it for the echo boomers. So the \$200,000 kitchen in the cookie-cutter subdivision probably won't be as common, but if we want to live closer to the cities, we're going to be buying older homes that will still need work.

The reality is we, as a group, don't have as much money as the baby boomers and probably never will. So the projected growth in remodeling's going to have to come from smaller projects and more of them. The good news is that seems probable.

On the other hand, the crazy years from 2000 to 2005 aren't likely to be repeated. In fact, when Harvard made their projections for the future they didn't use those years to do it because a lot of that work was "unusual," according to Kermit Baker.

So for those of you waiting to get back to "normal," just remember what normal was before the last few years. Remodeling's not going away in the next 10 years, but it will be different.

Senior Editor Jonathan Sweet also writes several times a week on the *Remodeling Notes* blog at www.proremodeler.com/blogs. **PR**



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The Family Business

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THIS CORNERSTONE OF THE REMODELING INDUSTRY?

By Michael R. Morris, Editor in Chief

THE VERY FIRST REMODELING COMPANY was a family business. As long as there's a remodeling industry, there will be family businesses.

But as more corporate entities, franchises and large regional firms emerge on the landscape, the question begs to be asked: what is the future of the small, family-run remodeling business? And what strategies can help these businesses succeed in an increasingly competitive and professionally run marketplace?

Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies reports that only 12 percent of the full-service remodeling contractors in the U.S. generate more than \$1 million in volume annually. These larger contractors, however, account for more than 40 percent of total employment and almost 60 percent of volume industry-wide. Most family-run remodeling businesses are relatively small operations, so although they still make up the lion's share of the industry's companies, they continue to produce a very small portion of the industry's total revenue pie.

Will there be a day in the not-too-distant future when these small, family businesses are being driven out of the industry by larger, more professionally run companies? Unlikely, say industry experts.

Mark Richardson, president of full-service Case Design/Remod-

eling and franchise Case Handyman and Remodeling, sees three areas for concern: "One, the number of home-related franchise services has increased by many times over the last few years. ... Two, with the complexity of technology and the growing importance in business, the larger companies will be able to invest and differentiate themselves in the future. Three, business in general today requires more sophisticated management training and systems which the smaller family businesses are less likely to possess."

Doug Dwyer, chief stewarding officer of remodeling franchise DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen by Worldwide, agrees.

"I don't necessarily see a major shift but I do see fewer family-owned and operated remodeling businesses [in the future]," Dwyer said. "I also see more professionally run operations, meaning the caliber and the expectation of a higher level of performance will continue to increase."

HIRING & TRAINING

Family remodeling business owners have basically two options when it comes to bolstering their companies for increased competition: rely on family members or hire from outside the family.

With family, what you see is what you get, and frequently their business knowledge is lacking compared to what an out-

side hire could do. That's where education comes in. Both NAHB and NARI offer business courses and certifications, and small companies can also join one of the industry peer groups such as Remodelers Advantage or Business Networks.

Another option, which more small companies are doing with success, is to make the transition to larger operations by relying more heavily on employees and ownership partners that are not blood relatives. Alure Home Improvements in East Meadow, N.Y., one of the nation's largest remodeling firms, is one such company.

"Our competition is going to change quite a bit," says Sal Ferro, president of Alure and part owner hired by Carl Hyman, whose father founded the company. "Traditionally, this has been an industry of mom-and-pop companies, guys who grew up swinging a hammer. We are getting more profitable as an industry and that means we're going to see more owners who are business oriented.

the going gets rough, as is happening in today's economy.

"The biggest business problem that remodelers face is managing the company through business cycles," says Kermit Baker, director of JCHS's Remodeling Futures Committee. "They expand their operations during the good times and get caught with too much overhead and payrolls that are too large when the downturn hits. Alternatively, they don't expand during the upturns and then are unable to manage the growing workloads and increasing customer demands."

THE FUTURE

All agree that small, family-run remodeling businesses will be able to survive the industry's growing trend toward larger, more professionally managed firms. But because the failure rate of small remodeling companies, according to JCHS research, is

"Family-run business can compete with corporate entities." — Victoria Downing, *president of Remodelers Advantage*

"It's no longer the guys who swung a hammer. We're going to have more businessmen who see this as a way to make good money. This is going to force remodelers to become more professional."

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Both Victoria Downing, president of Remodelers Advantage, and Les Cunningham, CEO and president of Business Networks, believe the small family companies will be able to not only compete but thrive in the same markets as larger remodeling firms.

"Family-run business can compete with corporate entities because they have advantages that larger, more corporate companies do not have," Downing said. "They are more nimble; they have personal relationships that they can leverage; they can stay lean and mean and outsource areas of the business like HR, legal, etc., so that their overhead does not balloon."

"I believe the family unit is always able to beat a large firm, especially because of the fact that family members have a lot more skin in the game and usually a lot more to lose," says Cunningham. "Smaller companies are usually able to move much more quickly than large companies when they see a need to respond to what is going on in the daily stream of business."

One factor that can't be overcome by outsourcing, however, is the advantage larger firms get from efficiencies of scale. Larger operations garner many savings in overhead costs that can't be made up easily, leading to smaller net profits and less available capital when

much higher than larger ones, the trend likely will continue toward fewer family businesses overall.

"I believe that the tide will turn toward larger businesses overall in this industry, leaving the traditional mom-and-pop operation as a smaller niche player," says Baker.

Dwyer compares the future of the remodeling industry to what has happened in the real-estate industry.

"I believe the remodeling industry will be much like the real-estate industry where there are companies like Coldwell Banker, Century 21 and Re/Max, who have captured a major portion of the market," he says. "Yet there are still the well-run, locally-owned real-estate companies that have good market share and visibility."

Downing, again, points toward the differentiating factor of strong systems and business management as the wild card, but a long time down the road, if at all.

"Perhaps in 20-25 years," she says, "the owners of these professional companies that rely less and less on the owner's personality and more and more on systems and business practices will see the advantages of banding together for the growth, profits and success of all."

"No matter the scenario — corporate, franchise, or locally-owned family business," says Dwyer, "those owning a remodeling company will have to make an investment of time, money and hiring strong talent to stay competitive and/or capture greater market share as the bar continues to be raised in this industry." **PR**

Future Focused

**CRAWFORD
RENOVATION PLANS
TO BE A BIG PART
OF THE FUTURE
OF REMODELING**

THE FUTURE OF REMODELING

By Jonathan Sweet, Senior Editor

BEN CRAWFORD SAYS IT'S A FOOTRACE to see who can build the first national brand in the remodeling industry. And he plans to get there first.

Armed with a background as a former executive at GE, Crawford has quickly built Crawford Renovation into Houston's Market Leader. The design/build firm started with \$2.8 million in business in 2003 and has already grown to a projected volume of \$18.5 million this year with much bigger plans for the future.

"There's not a segment out there in the U.S. economy that hasn't either seen consolidation or doesn't have a national brand in place," Crawford says. "You couple that with the aging housing stock in America. You couple that with six out of 10 people at purchase will do a major renovation — that's why I say it's a footrace for somebody smart to come in here and build a national brand."

Crawford's plan is to roll out a series of company-owned "experience centers" throughout the country where customers can sample the lifestyle they can get with a Crawford remodel. Crawford has identified 25 markets where he thinks the model the company uses in Houston would work. The Crawford plan is to open four or five of these centers over the next five years, with each one generating \$25 million in business.

"CATEGORY KILLER"

It's an ambitious plan, to say the least, but one Crawford had from the moment he started the company.

In 2002, after years of flying around the country looking for acquisition targets for GE, he quit with the idea of spending more time with his family. It was his wife who came up with the idea of starting a remodeling firm — even taking it to the point of printing up business cards with the name Crawford Renovation. He had learned some remodeling skills while growing up, and over the years he had remodeled a handful of homes for himself and his friends. But beyond that he knew very little about the remodeling market. After analyzing the data from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies and other sources, he was shocked by the size of the market and that nobody had come up with a national company beyond a few franchise models.

"I came into it with the idea of building a category killer," he

Crawford plans to be running several locations in the next five years from the company's Houston headquarters.

says. "After all the research, I saw this is an industry that is ripe for a national brand."

His outsider perspective has allowed him to have a different view of the industry than someone who has grown up in remodeling.

The model he has used to succeed in Houston is one Crawford is confident can be replicated throughout the country.

PARTNERING WITH AGENTS

While making his plans in 2002, Crawford knew he needed a model that would allow him to quickly make inroads against his more established competition. So he hit on the idea of marketing his services to the top real-estate firms in Houston.

Crawford sets up open houses, breakfasts and lunches to get in front of agents. The company caters weekly chef's breakfasts at local real-estate offices. It's all about building relationships.

"Week in, week out, we put ourselves in front of them," Crawford says.

Crawford uses those opportunities to deliver the company's message: Crawford Renovation is a professional firm that can help the agents sell more homes.

"We always ask if they had a home that needed to be renovated, and of course they say yes," he says. "We tell them we're the obvious choice. We're white collar guys, we wear nice slacks, we wear nice shoes like their clients wear and we drive up in clean white trucks — and we have a process to help them sell that home, and we're not going to screw their deal up."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Crawford Renovation, Houston

President: Ben Crawford

2007 projects: 38

2007 volume: \$14.1 million

Projected 2008 volume: \$18.5 million

Employees: 23

Founded: 2003

Biggest challenge: Finding the right people to lead "experience centers" throughout the country.

Web site: www.crghomes.com

“We know at the end of the day when they have the need, they have to think of Crawford Renovation.”

That idea of directly marketing to agents allowed the company to grow swiftly. Doing almost \$3 million in business out of the gate already made it one of the largest remodeling firms in Houston.

“Our sales force is the best and brightest of Houston’s Realtors,” Crawford says. “They’re selling for us; they introduce us to clients before anyone else ever gets to them.”

At one point, real-estate agents represented almost all of the company’s business but now are only responsible for about 60 percent, as the company begins to realize dividends from referrals and other marketing efforts aimed at consumers.

Every part of the consumer marketing program is designed with the idea of creating the message that Crawford is a professional, high-quality firm — that if you’re hiring the company you’ve reached a level of success.

“We don’t sell kitchen remodels, we don’t sell bathroom remodels; we sell a lifestyle that depicts a picture-perfect family living in an awesome, award-winning kitchen, and people look at that and go, ‘I want that.’ I think because we get that piece of it we do very well,” Crawford says.

The company has covered the basics like truck and job signage, direct mail and print advertising, but also does a lot of community-based marketing. Crawford has donated bathroom remodels to schools for raffles, sponsored Fourth of July events where kids can build toolboxes and birdhouses (with the Crawford logo on them) and provided photos with Santa and his reindeer at local churches. The company spends about 4 percent of its gross profits on marketing.

“We’re trying to touch that consumer seven to 10 times, because we know at the end of the day when they have the need, they have to think Crawford Renovation; they can think of no one else,” Crawford says.

(For more on Crawford’s marketing strategy, visit www.ProRemodeler.com for exclusive online content.)

TAKING THEIR LUMPS

It hasn’t all been easy for Crawford to get to this point. Although volume has steadily increased, a few years ago the company found that gross profits had gotten painfully low, down to about 23 percent. Cash flow was tight and the company wasn’t getting the returns that the leadership had planned.

At the time, project managers were handling all the estimating on top of their other production responsibilities. Realizing this was an inefficient way of doing business, Crawford conducted a national search and found an experienced estimator who, although he had to learn the remodeling market, was able to bring the core skills to the company and set up the entire estimating department. The company is now generating 33 to 34 percent gross profit.

Another challenge was client satisfaction. Until last year, the company didn’t know how customers felt unless they provided unsolicited feedback. So one of the company’s 2007 initiatives was to create a metric to measure that. That revealed a shocking number — only 83 percent of clients were satisfied.

“What we realized is that we have to protect our brand at all costs, so in ’08 one of our initiatives is to increase client satisfaction to 98 percent,” Crawford says.

Once again, the company found it necessary to add more staff.

“We learned that you can’t run a project manager into the ground where he’s running six to seven \$300,000 transactions at once,” he says. “He can’t do it. Client satisfaction goes down.”

So now project managers only work on three projects at a time. If the project is from \$600,000 to \$1 million, it’ll be the only one a project manager works on. And for jobs over \$1 million, it’s a project manager plus an area manager.

“The client now sees that we’re spending a greater amount of time at the job,” Crawford says. “We’re preventing problems from happening with unsupervised subs, and our costs are in line because there’s someone there around the clock. Even our project managers are happier now because they’re not so strung out.”

Both problems stemmed from staffing — finding the right people to put in place. And that’s what Crawford expects to be the biggest challenge for the company going forward.

“Our future growth is a function of human capital, not money,” he says. “Anyone can build the sticks and bricks retail locations, but how fast can we find the right talented leaders to put into these experience centers?” **PR**

A WEEK IN THE LIFE

How Ben Crawford spends his average week

General management oversight	20 hours
Marketing activities	4 hours
Executive meeting	4 hours
Hallway discussions with employees	2 hours
Mentoring employees	10 hours
Strategic planning	10 hours
E-mail	5 hours

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Rx for an Old House

A REMODELER TURNS A HISTORIC DOCTOR'S OFFICE SPACE INTO AN OPEN, FINELY CRAFTED KITCHEN-FAMILY AREA

By Wendy A. Jordan, Senior Contributing Editor

FOR DECADES, WHEN RESIDENTS OF NORTH ANDOVER, Mass., were pregnant or sick they went to the town doctor at his home office on Main Street. Both the doctor and his stately turn-of-the-century house were beloved local treasures. Amy Mabley fondly recalls playing in the doctor's yard with his grandchildren when she was growing up. So in 1999, when the late doctor's family told her they planned to sell the place, she and her husband, Eric, snapped it up before it could even be listed.

For several years, the couple lived in the three-story, 4,000-square-foot house with their small daughter, savoring its assets — such as the large, high-ceiling living spaces, fine built-in cabinetry

and handsome decorative trim — and becoming increasingly dissatisfied with its flaws. Particularly frustrating were the dark, sorely dated kitchen; the unheated mudroom; and the useless warren of tiny rooms that once constituted the doctor's office. The Mableys wanted to cure all those ills without scarring the house's historical spirit. After getting opinions from several remodeling contractors who, Eric says, “were not as open to retaining the character of the house,” they called Howell Design & Build.

In September 2005, Steve Howell, owner of the Lawrence, Mass., company, met the Mableys at the house for an initial walk-through. He returned soon after, bringing Tom Peterman of McMa-



An airy, two-cook kitchen with an island replaces the dark, dated and cramped 1950s kitchen.

nus Peterman Architects, Concord, Mass., whose space planning skill, structural knowledge, and experience with historic house remodeling made him a good fit to design the Mabley project as a subcontractor. The Mableys were impressed with both men's "willingness to listen to us and work with us" to design a bright, open, functional new space that respected the house's vintage character, Eric says. That can-do attitude, plus visits to past and current Howell clients, sealed the deal.

OLD HOUSE WOES

The dark kitchen — a 1950s "improvement" — was virtually non-functional. It had one small window, an oven that didn't work, "a refrigerator that burned electricity, and two lights, if you count the refrigerator light," says Eric. Adjacent storage and laundry rooms took too much space. As for the bare, unheated mudroom, it was so cold that snow often collected on the floor.

Peterman solved all those problems with a design that involved removing several walls — two of them load-bearing — to make way for an open, skylighted kitchen with bump-out breakfast bay; a small but efficient laundry room; a walk-through pantry; and a larger, heated mudroom. A deck gives the Mableys space to cook outdoors.

In place of bearing walls that supported second floor and roof loads, Peterman's open plan called for the beams to be buried in the ceiling cavity. Project manager Lawrence Howell (Steve's brother) knew it would be tricky to install 16-foot-long engineered steel beams flush with the ceiling within the confines of the existing walls. What he didn't know was that a horsehair-plaster dropped ceiling over the kitchen hid fire-scorched framing. Demolition revealed the original ceiling was a foot above the newer one. The structure uncovered was not only scorched but "very under-framed," says Lawrence. Plumbing, wiring and radiator heat pipes snaked through the poor framing, weakening it further. And the ceiling heights over the old medical suite varied from room to room.

Lead carpenter Brad Powers propped up the second floor, managing to reinforce the framing; move and replace pipes and insert the

AFTER PHOTO: DICK SHELTON PHOTOGRAPHY



PRODUCTS LIST

Basement windows: Harvey **Boiler:** Buderus **Cabinets:** Beaulieu Cabinetry **Cooktop, microwave and oven:** GE Appliances **Custom molding:** Anderson & McQuaid **Dishwasher:** Kenmore **Kitchen faucets:** Rohl **Laundry counter:** Wilsonart **Laundry faucet and sink:** Kohler **Oil burner:** Riello **Paint:** Sherwin-Williams **Pendant lighting:** Murray Feiss **Radiant heat:** Staedler Climate Panels and Tubing **Refrigerator:** KitchenAid **Spray-in insulation:** Icynene **Under-cabinet, hutch and deck lighting:** Kichler **Windows:** Marvin

PHOTO: DAVID PRATT PHOTOGRAPHY



The baseboard trim profile continues across the built-in bench in the mudroom for a traditional look.

beams without disturbing the bedroom and tiled bath overhead. “A lot of lumber went into that ceiling,” he says. Howell Design & Build’s engineer detailed all the steel beam-to-beam and beam-to-post connections.

The basement presented additional old-house issues. The new steel posts carry through the floor framing to the existing stone foundation or new footings poured in the basement. Digging the footings meant chopping through a wildly uneven concrete floor. “The old floor was poured over rocks,” explains Lawrence. “It ranged from 2 inches to 10 inches thick.” One footing had to be

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Howell Design & Build

Owners: Stephen and Susan Howell

Location: Lawrence, Mass.

2007 volume: \$4.9 million

Projected 2008 volume: \$4 million

Web site: www.howelldesignbuild.com

Biggest challenge: Replacing the first-floor doctor’s suite with an open kitchen-family area without disturbing the living spaces overhead

wedged in at the end of the basement stairs without destroying existing closet space. The firm dug under the closet without disturbing the closet wall finishes and installed the post tight to the wall. Elsewhere in the basement, the firm discovered an old beam that had split and sagged 2 inches; Powers added concrete footings and a support post to jack it up.

REMAKING HISTORY

North Andover established the Main Street area as a historic district soon after the Mabley project was complete. “We just squeaked in” before remodeling restrictions went into effect but the project would have met the requirements anyway, says Lawrence. “We kept the character of the house.” From the front, the

THE FINANCIALS

Steve Howell avoids bidding on jobs: “The levels of service can be completely different,” he explains, “and that’s not reflected in a numbers comparison.” So, like most Howell Design & Build clients, the Mableys simply signed a design agreement that paid the firm to develop both a design and a highly detailed estimate. “I think it builds trust” with clients, Steve says, and the architect and homeowners can use it to guide the project to budget.

The line item estimate is open book, showing all raw costs including contractor discounts and a 22 percent gross profit broken out as 12 percent overhead and 10 percent profit. “An

Budget History

Initial estimate:	\$225,813
Add-ons (replace heating system; add radiant heating; winterize mudroom; replace basement windows; enlarge deck; add skylight; island sink; increase estimate based on detailed plans)	\$118,936
Contract price:	\$344,749
Change orders and allotment overages: (Change orders: deck pergola; PVC paneling and trim for bump-out; icynene insulation; water filtration system; numerous upgrades, replacements and repairs)	\$87,760
Final price of job:	\$432,509
Cost to produce:	\$333,034
Gross profit:	\$99,475
Budgeted gross profit:	22%
Actual gross profit:	23%

open book process is so much easier to work with in the budgeting phase,” says Howell. “We’re not trying to hide anything.”

But is he concerned about revealing the numbers to other contractors? No. “I don’t imagine that our competitors know our numbers,” Steve explains, and even if they did “everybody calculates profit and overhead differently.”

The actual cost on the Mabley project came in a few thousand dollars under budget, yielding a gross profit 1 percent better than projected. Generally, “our projects are within 2 percent of the estimate,” Steve says. “Averaged together, our last 40 projects came out right on estimate.”

house looks unchanged. The new breakfast bay extends only 18 inches into the side yard and echoes the geometry of the clip-cornered dining and living rooms.

Off the kitchen in back, the new deck repeats those angles. Howell's mill shop machined the posts of the deck rail to match those on the front porch. A senior carpenter used a template of the house's decorative eave brackets to fashion matching rafter tails for the deck pergola. When it came to the deck size, the house's age was a benefit; grandfather clauses in the zoning setback regulations allowed Howell to bump out the deck 15 feet into the yard.

New details inside the remodeled space also blend with the old.

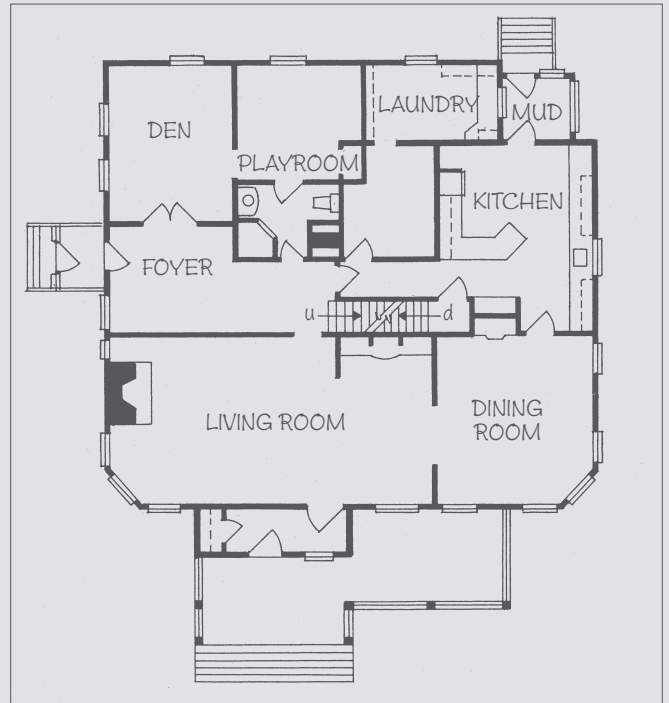
PROJECT TIMELINE

2005	Stage of Project
Sept. 8	Initial meeting
Nov. 18	Design agreement signed
Dec. 2005-Jan. 2006	Schematic design
2006	Stage of Project
Feb. 21	Initial preliminary estimate
March-May	Design development and estimating
May 31	Preliminary estimate and design approved
June-July	Construction drawings, detailed estimates
Aug. 1	Detailed estimate and design approved
Aug. 23	Construction contract signed
Sept. 1	Begin demolition
Sept. 22	Demolition and site work complete
Oct. 17	Interior framing complete
Oct. 31	Rough mechanicals complete
Nov. 30	Wall insulation, plasterwork, deck framing, exterior painting complete
2007	Stage of Project
Jan. 8	Hardwood floors installed
Feb. 5	Exterior painting complete, cabinets installed
Feb. 17	Kitchen backsplash installed
Feb. 20	Wood floor finish coats applied
Feb. 21	Substantial completion
March 2	Final painting, punch list completed

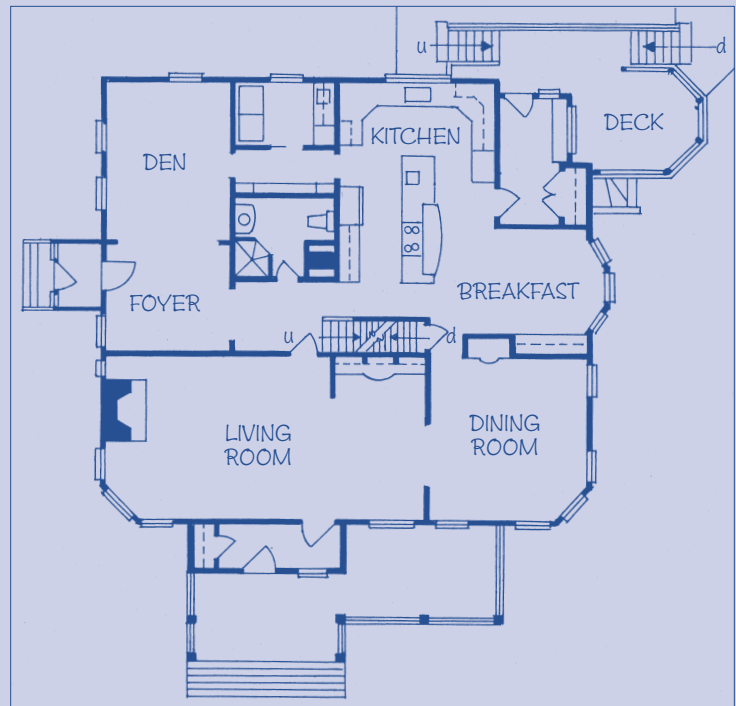
Construction Payments:

2006	2007
Sept. 6	Jan. 8
Sept. 22	Jan. 24
Oct. 17	Feb. 5
Oct. 31	Feb. 22
Nov. 16	March 22
Nov. 30	
Dec. 14	

Before



After



Designed as a doctor's office, the maze of small rooms at the back of the old house failed as a family area. Howell Design & Build removed walls and rearranged the space to create an open kitchen/breakfast area, a walk-through pantry, a well-organized laundry room, and a warm, welcoming mudroom attached to a deck conveniently located for cookouts.

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PHOTO: DICK SHELTON PHOTOGRAPHY



Designed to blend with the house's original built-ins, the pantry cabinetry lines a corridor that connects the kitchen, laundry room and den. Dave Beaulieu of Beaulieu Cabinetry designed the layout of the kitchen cabinetry, customized it and installed it.

Custom cherry cabinetry with glass doors resembles the house's built-in dining room china cabinet. Featuring economical adhesive "leading" that resembles the leading in the old cabinet, a sliding transom window in the mudroom wall brings traditional patina as well as light to the breakfast room. Custom fabricated molding in the new space matches the house's elegant turn-of-the-century trim. Even the built-in bench that the mill shop crafted for the mudroom sports baseboard trim across the drawers to continue the traditional styling.

For interior doors, Howell found crystal doorknobs that replicate those on the front door. And Eric Mabley, a skilled amateur woodworker, made the rail, balusters and newel for the newly opened staircase in the same profile as those upstairs.

Behind that traditional appearance are some very contemporary conveniences. Radiant heating warms the floor throughout the remodeled space. Icynene insulation and traditional-look windows meet modern energy efficiency standards. One kitchen cabinet houses a recycling drawer that slides open in the mudroom for easy trash disposal. A built-in hutch in the breakfast nook conceals hanging file drawers plus plugs and wires for cell phones and other modern-day electronics. "We're very pleased with that," Eric says. As pleased as they are with the bright, two-cook kitchen. And the toasty mudroom. And the storage-rich laundry room. And the corridor-style pantry. And the deck. This remodel is just what the doctor ordered. **PR**



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THREE-SEASON SPECIAL

A new screen room gives homeowners an irresistible invitation to step outside

OUTDOOR LIVING

REMODELER AND ARCHITECT: TreHus

Builders, Minneapolis

PROJECT LOCATION: Minneapolis

AGE OF HOME: 95 years old

SCOPE OF WORK: Add a screened porch that could be used most of the year

By Ann Matesi,
Senior Contributing Editor

WITH ITS COMBINATION OF RUSTIC

finishes and discrete modern amenities, the new screen porch on this Minnesota bungalow is designed to provide the home's owners with a truly functional indoor/outdoor retreat that complements the century-old home's architectural style and meets their entertaining needs.

A natural stone hearth fireplace serves as the focal point for the 260-square-foot addition that directly connects to the main house's family room via a set of French doors. Floor-to-ceiling screen panels ensure that, when the weather is mild, the homeowners will be able to enjoy the sights and sounds of their young family at play in their back yard. Storm windows are designed to replace the screens during the fall so the family can use the space throughout the year.

The simple, almost cabin-like character

BEFORE



A natural palette of materials adds rustic charm to the screen room addition on this early 1900s bungalow. This includes clear cedar trim, Chilton stone for the fireplace and a bluestone terrace. The porches on the nearly 100-year-old home were also updated with new cedar trim to match the addition.

PRODUCTS LIST

Doors: Simpson **Fireplace:** Majestic **Lighting fixtures:** W.A.C. **Paints & stains:** Benjamin Moore **Windows:** Marvin





Take a Master Plan Approach

Architect Meriwether Felt recommends that remodeling projects always be considered in the context of a “master plan” for a home even when some elements of that plan may only be hopes and dreams of the homeowners.

“Not only does the client achieve the best overall results this way,” she says, “but it can actually be a much more economical approach for them in the long run because you are getting them to think in terms of remodeling as part of a program in progress. This makes it possible to build upon what has been done and not to work backward by having to redo areas that have already been addressed.”

Felt, the lead architect of design/build firm Tre-Hus Builders in Minneapolis, says that during the initial planning meeting with new clients she always begins by asking them about their intentions not only in terms of the immediate project but also about their future plans for their home.

“Not only do I ask them what they want to do, what they hope to accomplish,” she says, “but I ask them ‘Is this the last project you are planning? What would you like to do in the future?’”

But what happens when the architect’s vision is different than the client’s?

“Remember that the client is the very most important element of every project,” she advises. “We are doing all of this work for them, and the goal is to give them what they want.”

She starts her design process by guiding them to think about what will best suit their needs. She then offers suggestions on how to accomplish that.

During her schematic design meeting with a client Felt says she typically offers three or more options. This encourages them to explore the possibilities and merits of each and opens a valuable dialogue.

“Usually a light bulb goes off in their head at this point,” she says, “and one or two really good options will emerge that we can go forward with.”

AFTER PHOTOS BY JOHN REED FORSMAN



The wood-burning fireplace, which features a battered design, was a high priority of the homeowners. The fireplace serves as the focal point for the new indoor/outdoor room and provides texture and interest to the home's rear elevation.

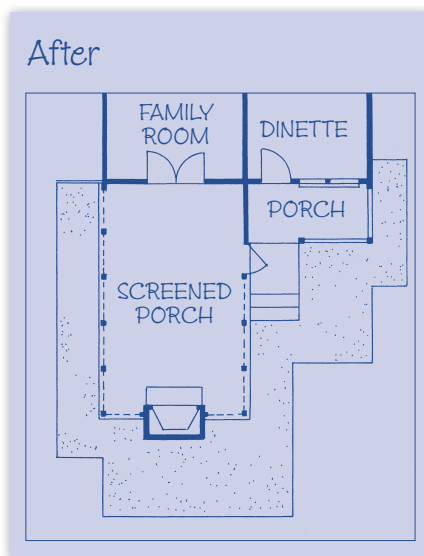
of the screen porch belies the complex planning that went into its design and construction, says Meriwether Felt, project architect for the Minneapolis-based design/build firm, TreHus.

The first thing Felt addressed with her clients was the best location for the new room.

"The homeowners originally intended the addition to be an extension of their kitchen," says Felt. "They had done extensive landscaping in their rear yard five years earlier and had installed a bluestone patio next to their family room that they did not want to disturb."

This location, however, proved to be a poor option for two reasons. First, the two existing gables, kitchen porch roofline and a second-floor bedroom window on the back of the home made the option architecturally challenging.

"It just was not going to work there aesthetically," she says. The other drawback to this location was that the team would have to reposition the children's play



space to the yard's shady and damp north side of the home.

Ultimately, the homeowners recognized the sense of Felt's solution. And the patio pavers that were removed to make way for

the new living space were used as a terrace surrounding the screen room and a pathway leading to the garage.

In addition to its direct connection to the family room, the screen room also has its own transition to the existing porch off the kitchen, which makes sense architecturally and functionally for the family. Felt modified the original kitchen porch with similar cedar detailing as the new space for continuity.

Felt's next challenge was to design a space that combined a rustic character with modern conveniences.

"Our clients wanted to enjoy all of the same modern amenities in their new outdoor room as they had indoors," she says. This included electricity, low-voltage lighting, a plasma television and surround sound.

"But they also really wanted to capitalize on the feeling of being outdoors at the same time," she continued. Felt faced the challenge of incorporating electrical outlets, wiring runs, lighting and speakers that were convenient, unobtrusive and sheltered from the elements.

"With the room's oversized wall screens there was really no simple way to run the electricity around the space without impacting its open-air character. There just was no good place for the electrical outlets."

Her solution was to incorporate the electrical runs for the room into the space beneath the floor and use 4-inch by 6-inch hinged-cover electrical outlets which were recessed into the flooring planks to conceal the outlets. Similarly, she hid the wiring for the overhead lighting in the room's ceiling beams, the speakers for the surround sound system were mounted in between the ceiling joists where they are barely noticeable.

They chose the materials based on durability, quality and beauty, says the architect. "The clients wanted finishes that would last a long time and age well. The extensive detailing that they were looking for made the project slightly more expensive in terms of budget than they were expecting but, ultimately, they were really happy with the way everything turned out. We gave them the space they wanted and one that they will continue to enjoy for years to come." **PR**

EVEN SMALL JOBS AFFECT THE WHOLE HOUSE

What every remodeler should know about whole-house design

By Glen Salas, P.E.
PATH Partners

IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR A GOOD sports team to do OK, then trade for a blue-chip star to take them to the playoffs. Instead of a playoff run, the team tanks.

It's proof that one good piece doesn't always improve the whole.

It's the same with a house, whose skin and bones work together as a system. The windows, walls, roof, foundation, ventilation, heating, cooling, lighting, and cooking are all related. Understanding how systems work together is more important now than ever, because energy prices are through the roof and construction and product tolerances are geared toward saving energy. Homes are tighter. Mechanical systems are more precise.

It's not just about matching the components. In an integrated, whole-house system, everything must be installed and hooked up properly so its effects on the rest of the home, both good and bad, are predictable and controlled.

A house that works as an integrated system is not only more efficient, it's more comfortable — free of drafts, mold and “too-something” (too hot, cold, uneven,



Always remember to slope finished grading away from the foundation.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PATH PARTNERS

humid, dry or stuffy) rooms. It costs less to condition the living space, and the home is healthier and easier to maintain. Customers are happy and glad to be the remodeler's reference for future work.

What to Consider

Just because a project you're working on only directly involves one or a few systems doesn't mean that you can ignore the rest. In any home, these nine components are too closely interrelated to ignore how they work together:

Stormwater management. A new addition, a pop-out and even a new type or configuration of roof can affect water intrusion. Proper stormwater management controls moisture problems that come from outside the home. Don't forget to regrade as necessary so water flows away from the home. Incorporate a capillary break over the footing, perimeter footing drains, and

drainage planes for walls. Appropriate flashings are a must.

Proper framing practices. Easily implemented changes to traditional stick building practices can improve the envelope considerably. Use engineered lumber or even panelized prefabricated walls. Both tighten the building because tolerances are tighter. Another minor innovation, advanced framing, allows more insulation, uses less material and takes less time. The improved air sealing and insulation resulting from these practices means the heating and cooling systems can be sized smaller. The result is better moisture management and energy performance.

Interior water vapor management. Properly installed interior air barriers avoid moisture problems. Don't forget to install air barriers in crawl spaces; tubs and showers; fireplaces; dropped soffits; and floor systems' interior to rim joists. And remember that ventilation fans — and fan control — are important

in bathrooms and the kitchen. Local ventilation affects the home's bulk ventilation system and the associated air handlers.

Insulation only performs to its R-value (i.e. insulation level) if it is properly installed. Fiberglass batts that have been crushed and compressed into the wall spaces or that are not backed up with proper air barriers — thus allowing outside air to pass around or through the insulation — will not provide optimal thermal control. In such cases, HVAC systems have to work harder and consume more energy to keep a home comfortable. The home is less comfortable because it's draftier.

Good, tight construction. As with insulation, a leaky house will unnecessarily tax an HVAC system and can lead to drafts from leaks or oversized air handlers. It's always good to run a blower door test, which identifies how large a cumulative "hole" is in the home based on how many

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air changes per hour (ACH) naturally occur. [Note: The International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) targets 0.35 ACH. High performance homes aim for .22 ACH.]

Windows should have the right U-value (insulating value) and solar heat gain coefficient. These values vary depending on climate. Ample, properly located windows provide good daylighting so less artificial light is required. They also provide free solar heating. Without daylighting, some rooms will be too dark during the day or difficult to heat or cool. Find recommended U-factors and SHGCs at www.energystar.gov and click on "Products," then "Windows."

Mechanical ventilation is key to providing fresh air for healthy, comfortable homes. Ventilation requirements vary for kitchens, baths, bedrooms and general conditioned spaces, yet these spaces are all interrelated. Ventilation components must be sized to properly ventilate the local space without

overwhelming the whole-house supply system. They should also be quiet and easy to operate, either by easily accessed switches or automatic timers, to make sure homeowners use them properly. Choose Energy Star-qualified fans for superior energy performance and quiet operation.

Combustion appliances must be direct- or power-vented directly to the outside — NOT near the intake for the home's ventilation system — or the appliance must have sealed combustion. Otherwise, the home can develop two serious problems: 1) inefficiently operating combustion appliances due to inadequate fresh air supply; and 2) a build-up of poisonous carbon monoxide. Again, the tightness of the home's construction and ventilation of combustion appliances are interrelated.

HVAC and ductwork. Properly size the HVAC and ductwork, then seal the ductwork. Size and design ducts using ASHRAE






Right-size the new HVAC system to handle the loads of the remodeled home.



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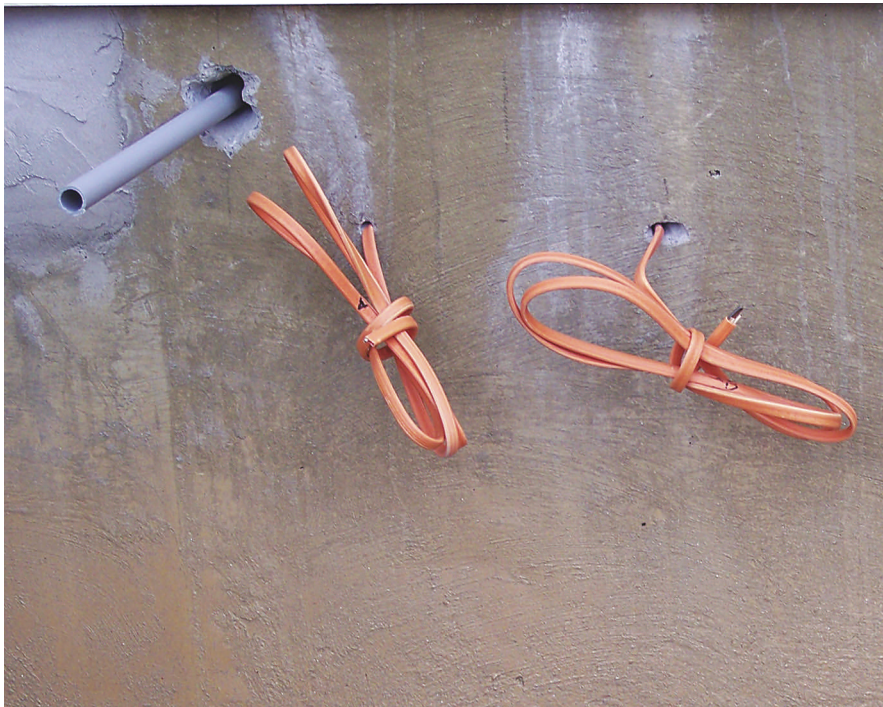
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Seal penetrations to keep conditioned air in and varmints out.



It is easy and cost-effective to add Low-E storm windows rather than replace the entire window, especially when aesthetics aren't a consideration.

Manual J and D calculations. Rule-of-thumb sizing doesn't work because the home's solar orientation, windows and insulation can make a big difference. Insulate the outside of a duct when it is located in an attic or outside wall. Leaky or inadequately insulated ducts greatly diminish energy efficiency and comfort and, as with other poorly designed systems, unnecessarily overwork HVAC equipment.

Prove It with Performance Testing

So how do you show the owners that you've left them with a truly efficient home? You can wait to see how happy they are with their upgrades, but more immediate proof of the house-as-a-system approach is available from performance testing. Energy raters use scientific methods to determine the energy performance of the home. You can either hire a rater to do the work, or learn how to do it yourself. **PR**

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

Resources

Useful resources for your project:

- Storm management: Find proper grades and drainage requirements in PATH's report, *Durability by Design*. Visit www.PATHnet.org and click on "Publications."
- Proper framing practices: Visit www.Toolbase.org and click on "Technology Inventory," then "Whole-House Systems."
- Insulation: For guidance on proper air barrier installation, visit www.energystar.gov and search for "Thermal Bypass Checklist Guide."
- Insulation: Find proper insulation values at www.energystar.gov. Click on "Home Improvement," then "Air Seal and Insulate."
- Performance testing: Find out more from Energy Star. Visit www.energystar.gov and click on "Home Improvement," then "Home Performance with Energy Star." To learn about training, visit the Building Performance Institute at www.bpi.org.

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You or your company could be selected as one of our *Professional Remodeler* Innovators if you:

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Describe what makes you or your company an Innovator:

Type of remodeling: (check all that apply)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Design/build | <input type="checkbox"/> Custom Homes | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Repair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen/bath | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

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GETTING GREEN CERTIFIED: A LOOK AT REMODELER OPTIONS

Building green doesn't require professional certification. However, when clients ask why they should hire you, it's nice to point to a sprawl of acronyms behind your name. (GCP, LEED AP, and CGP are a few of the options.) With several organizations vying for your business, *Professional Remodeler* takes a hard look at your choices.

Green Certified Professional

NARI launched its Green Certified Professional (GCP) program last August. Tailored to remodelers, the curriculum has been refined over a period of years. The requirements are tough. The testing process is complicated (in person, via proctored exam). Few consumers have heard of NARI, but they'll be impressed, if you pull out a chart comparing the NARI curriculum to others.

To qualify for the exam, you need five years of experience in the remodeling industry, three years doing green projects and 16 hours of related education. The 200-question, multiple-choice test covers topics such as building science, indoor air quality, concrete, efficient use of resources and solar energy.

The best way to prepare? NARI's "Green Education Program," a 12-week teleseminar. The estimated investment: 88-148 hours and \$1,045 for the course and fees for NARI members. (Costs increase if you have to travel to sit with a proctor.) Annual renewal requires 10 hours of education and a \$75 fee. Based on other NARI education programs, the estimated failure rate will be 10 to 20 percent.

www.greenremodeling.org/

LEED AP

The U.S. Green Building Council launched its LEED Accredited Professionals (LEED AP) program in 2001. About 50,000 people have been certified.

The extremely difficult 80-question, multiple-choice test, which has a high failure rate, is heavily weighted toward competency in LEED's rating system for commercial, institutional and high-rise residential buildings. Look for a new professional track in the next few years to complement LEED for Homes, which encompasses new construction and full gut remodels. (LEED REGREEN is a set of remodeling guidelines, not a rating system.)

Until those new guidelines are available, the LEED AP credential makes little sense for builders or remodelers of single-family homes.

www.gbci.org



Certified Green Professional Program

In February 2008, NAHB launched a Certified Green Professional (CGP) program.

The targeted audience is broad: salespeople, appraisers, real-estate brokers, contractors and builders. The requirements are minimal: two years of building industry experience and two NAHB educational modules — Green Building for Building Professionals (16 hours) and Business Management for Business Professionals (8 hours), a standard requirement for all NAHB certifications.

The CGP program is available at NAHB conferences, or chapters can hire an instructor to teach the course locally.

>> If you have ideas or comments, email the author at GreenRoomDept@mac.com

The cost is \$735 for courses and fees for members. Note: The value of this credential could increase, as NAHB is hoping to soon certify remodeling projects (kitchen updates, room additions, etc).

www.nahb.org

Other Options

There are several other options for green certification. Here are just a few:

For real expertise, the National Sustainable Building Advisor Program has a comprehensive, nine-month training and certification program through local colleges.

www.nasbap.org

California building professionals can take a two-day training/certification program tailored to statewide conditions and opportunities through www.builditgreen.org

The Building Performance Institute focuses on building envelope, performance assessments and retrofit planning.

www.bpi.org

Green Advantage offers a one-day, get-your-toes-wet training/certification.

www.greenadvantage.org

Certification via the Green Builder College takes about 40 hours, using online videos and study guides. The curriculum includes energy, moisture, water efficiency and green building materials.

www.greenbuildercollege.com

Conclusion

Certification is one of several building blocks in training for green remodeling. In the next Green Room department, we'll look at education options for improving your green building skills. **PR**



ARMSTRONG FLOORING

A variety of widths and stains to meet a wide range of tastes can be found in the 3/8-inch Global Exotics engineered hardwood flooring collection. Made by Armstrong, the planks are made in 3½- or 4¾-inch widths. Species include Brazilian cherry, tigerwood, Santos mahogany and African mahogany.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-125>



HUNTER

With mold on the minds of your customers, remodelers need a powerful ventilation fan in the bathroom to prevent moisture build-up. Hunter's Saturn fan does exactly that. The model has three new metal finishes: brushed nickel, imperial bronze and satin white. It is UL-listed for use over showers and tubs and provides 80 cubic-feet per minute of air movement at 2.5 sones.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5659-126>



MERILLAT

Part of the Masterpiece line, Merillat's Verona is incredibly adaptable to many kitchens. The cabinets have a five-piece drawer front, full overlay construction and a veneer raised center panel (available in squared or arched). The maple doors are available in a variety of colors.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-127>



MARVEL

The new technology in Marvel's new stylish undercounter refrigerators includes the MicroSentry temperature monitoring system. The 15-inch model features three fully adjustable interior shelves; the 24-inch model offers an open design with two tempered glass shelves, allowing homeowners to store large items. The models have digital touch-pad controls and an LED readout.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5659-128>

GE

Each model of GE's Monogram refrigerators, much like a vintage wardrobe armoire, has two freezer doors that open at the center and are positioned above two pullout drawers. Professional models feature heavy-duty handles, a louvered grille and hand-finish edges. Integrated models have slimmer handles for a different look.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-129>



ARISTOKRAFT CABINETRY

Designed to complement a traditional home or a city-style loft, Aristokraft Cabinetry's Teagan door offers a blank canvas for those who want to personalize their kitchen. Its simple design allows designers to use a variety textures and finishes. The door style is constructed with a full overlay and veneer slab panel.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-130>



GERBER

Originally offered as a two-piece set, the new Maxwell One-Piece toilet by Gerber is a high performance, gravity-fed toilet that uses 1.6 gallons of water per flush. The Maxwell Flushing Platform features a redesigned well and frontal siphon jet, a large water surface and a glazed trapway.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-132>

METALLO ARTS

Famous for their range hoods, Metallo Arts has released a new countertop line. According to the company, each countertop is hand-made with lead-free metals that are safe for use as a food preparation surface. Built on a custom frame made of solid reclaimed hardwood, these countertops are durable enough for a lifetime of wear.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5659-131>



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Andy Wells, Jack Steindl and Reg Marzec
of Normandy Builders, *Professional Remodeler*
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DACOR

Bring a rebirth to the kitchen with Dacor's Renaissance wall oven in 36-, 30- and 27-inch widths for the Epicure and Millennia Collections. The 30- and 27-inch models feature the company's patented RapidHeat Bake Element to ensure even baking, fast preheating and accurate temperature control.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-133>



ST. CHARLES CABINETRY

These modern-looking cabinets are St. Charles' new wall cabinets. The cabinets are offered in 3-inch increments from 12- to 36-inches with a 13-inch standard depth. All wall cabinets have an integrated interior and under-cabinet lighting using an energy-efficient 7-watt, CFL puck system.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5659-134>



XYLEM

The new Wyncote vanity by Xylem comes in 36- and 48-inch widths. The vanity is complemented by the company's black granite stone top and contrasting white vitreous china sink. Double doors at the center reveal plenty of storage space and drawers feature the company's soft close hardware.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5659-135>



BRIZO

Using Delta's next-generation Diamond Seal Technology is the new Belo faucet line from Brizo. The faucet sports a four-function pull-out wand with adjustable flow controls. The MagneDock magnetic docking technology secures the wand into the faucet.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-136>

Professional Remodeler **LIVE** WEB CAST



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Easy to install and energy-efficient, MI Windows and Doors' 1650 Vinyl Replacement Windows have the company's T-MAX glass package. The T-MAX has two panels of 7/8-inch insulating Low-E glass. The 1650s also have the company's one-piece U-channel Intercept spacer system to prevent intrusion and heat loss.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-137>



OASIS SUNROOMS/JOYCE MANUFACTURING

This sunroom is a green room, too. The Oasis Leisure Room Series by Joyce Manufacturing features a vinyl construction and finishes with no visible screws or fasteners to mar the surface of the interior. The sunrooms feature energy efficient Lo³ glass.

For FREE information, visit <http://pr.ims.ca/5319-138>



APPLIED COATINGS GROUP

Here's something pretty unique: The Color Mirage decorative glass blocks introduced by the Applied Coatings Group transmit or reflect specific wavelengths and appear to change color as lighting conditions or perspectives change. The line was created in conjunction with designer Carrie Fazio.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-139>



FEN-TECH

Made of a co-extruded composite material, Fen-Tech's SuperJamb is intended for high-moisture applications in exterior trim and jamb extensions. The core is a combination of wood material and proprietary blend of thermoplastic resins. The cap is a UV-stabilized, ASA acrylic polymer that is extremely colorfast. It measures 5/8-inch thick with 16-foot lineals.

For FREE information, visit
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WINDOWS

PEACHTREE

Homeowner can choose what they want in their windows and that's what sets Peachtree's 700 Series apart. Virtually any shape or size in quarter-inch increments up to 40 square feet is available. Standard options include double-hung, double-slider, casement, awning and other specialty windows. Casement windows are available in sizes up to 6'7", 7-foot and 7'6" in height.

For FREE information, visit
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WINDSOR WINDOWS & DOORS

With a cPVC frame and clad sash, The Legend HBR by Windsor Windows & Doors combines a warm interior wood with the worry-free maintenance of cPVC. The sash is available in one of the company's seven standard or 30 featured colors or in one of seven anodized finish options.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-142>

WEATHER SHIELD

The last thing you want to do on a remodel is tear apart more than you have to. Weather Shield's Custom Shield replacement windows help you avoid that. The windows are individually built to fit existing window openings. This "frame within a frame" design lets you install them without disturbing existing trim or wall materials. A dearth of window glaze, finish and wood options are available.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-143>

UNITED WINDOW & DOOR

Simulated Divided Lite options by United Window & Door are billed as sculpted dimensional grids that are applied to the exterior surfaces over a simulated spacer to reproduce the traditional look of divided lites. Shown is a simulated divided lite on the company's 4100 Series Flat Cas-ing window with backband and bullnosed sill.

For FREE information, visit
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WAYNE-DALTON

Z-Wave-enabled prodrive openers from Wayne-Dalton offer a great new technology for end users. With the Z-Wave technology integrated into select models, users can open or close doors; control security lights and indoor pathway lighting; adjust the thermostat and even disarm/arm a home security system.

For FREE information, visit
<http://pr.ims.ca/5659-145>



OVERHEAD DOOR

The Carriage style is all the rage, and Overhead Door answers with what homeowners want, the Courtyard Collection 370 series garage door. It uses the company's Thermacore insulation option, which features solid polyurethane insulation and a low air infiltration rating to keep out the elements. The 370 series also has a durable two-coat painted steel exterior and interior finish that resists rust and corrosion.

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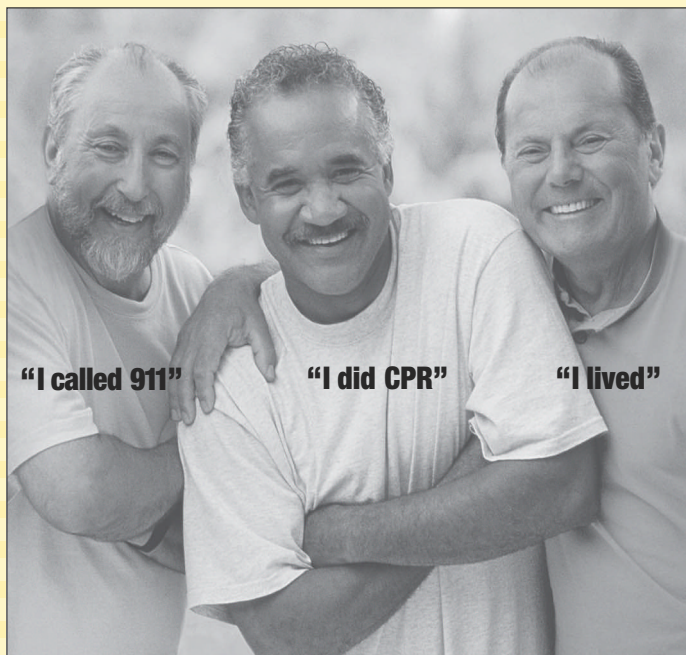


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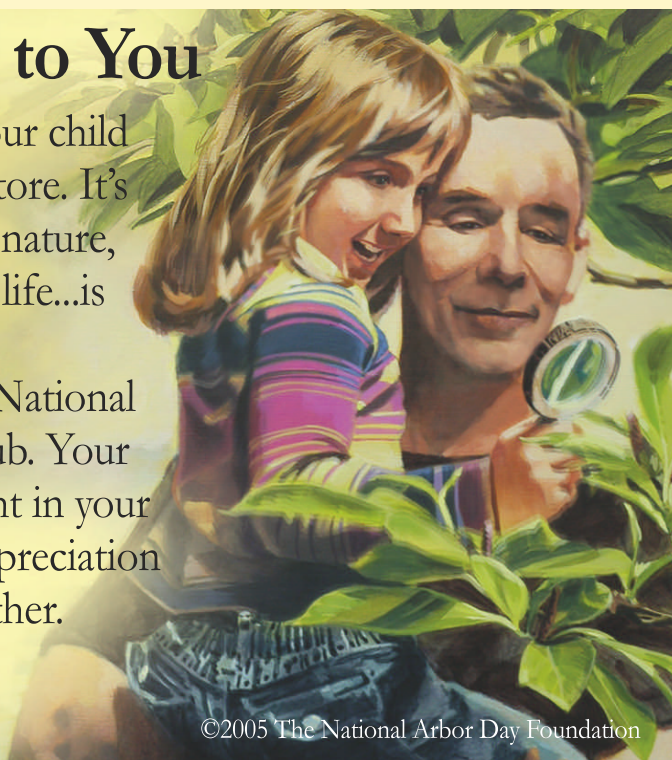
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FLAME-PROOF YOURSELF

How exactly does one avoid the rather trite and clichéd burn-out? It's only expected that, being entrepreneurial in the first place (what makes a lot of us succeed at what we do) we go at everything with, to quote a very old beer commercial, "the gusto."

So as we work hard to build, maintain and grow our business, how do we prevent feeling like we just can't do anymore, can't take another day or can't handle one more phone call, one more customer, one more trade partner, one more building official, ad infinitum?

Sure, it'd be nice to say "just relax and slow down," but that often doesn't meld with reality. And you can't slam on the brakes; slow and steady pressure is the best way to slow any speeding vehicle.

First ask yourself why you're in business? Is it financial gain? Independence? Image? Creative release? No one else will hire you?

Now think about those things that get you that gain, independence, creative release or whatever it is that brought you here in the first place. And then think about what you're doing that is NOT moving you closer to those things.

Then sort them. Throw out what's not helping, reassign what you can, move work assignments where possible, and focus on those things that you like, things that are your key competencies and that not just improve your business but better your person and spirit.

Avoiding burnout to me is finding sat-

isfaction and fun in everything I do. That doesn't mean I love every minute of every day or every contact with every person. But it does mean that at the end of the week, month or year, I am happy with what I do and wouldn't trade it for anything.

There are things you can do that will begin to reflect the satisfaction and enjoyment that first drew you to this field.

Have fun. Greet your prospect or customer with a smile, a joke, a comment to build rapport.

Make lunch time, or break time (here in Arizona we take a couple short breaks during the day rather than lunch, to get us out of the heat sooner) a refreshing break, not just a regimented refueling. Make plans to meet a co-worker, an associate, a vendor or maybe even someone from your local HBA. Don't have a business lunch, have a friendly get-together to share some laughs and light conversation.

Cultivate real friendships among your co-workers, employees, trades and vendors. You'll find business and work run smoother when everyone is concerned about each others' welfare. Take a REAL interest in what's going on in others' lives; adding a personal and human interest side to work makes it

seem more like life — which it is. Remember, we spend more of our active hours working than we do anything else. You better find a way to make that minimally tolerable, better yet satisfying, and even better, fun and enjoyable.

Have a get-together without a holiday — just because it's a good week-end to see each other. Yeah, go ahead, warn me about being too friendly with the help, but I won't listen.

I don't think avoiding burnout is finding that special key release, like the Saturday night keg party but rather finding a job description that includes the words fun, sense of humor, and enjoyment.

I credit the words I live by to what my father taught me: remember every day to love what you

do, do what you love. If you can do that, you'll never work another day in your life.

I don't go to work. I go to have fun and fall into work periodically during the day. **PR**

Greg Miedema is president of Dakota Builders in Tucson, Ariz., and has been designing and remodeling homes in the Tucson area for over 20 years. He can be reached at gam@dakotabuildersinc.com.



By Greg Miedema
Advisory Board
Columnist

"Avoiding burn-out to me is finding satisfaction and fun in everything I do."

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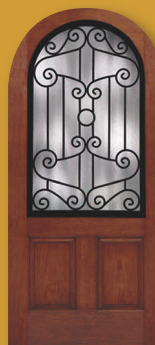


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