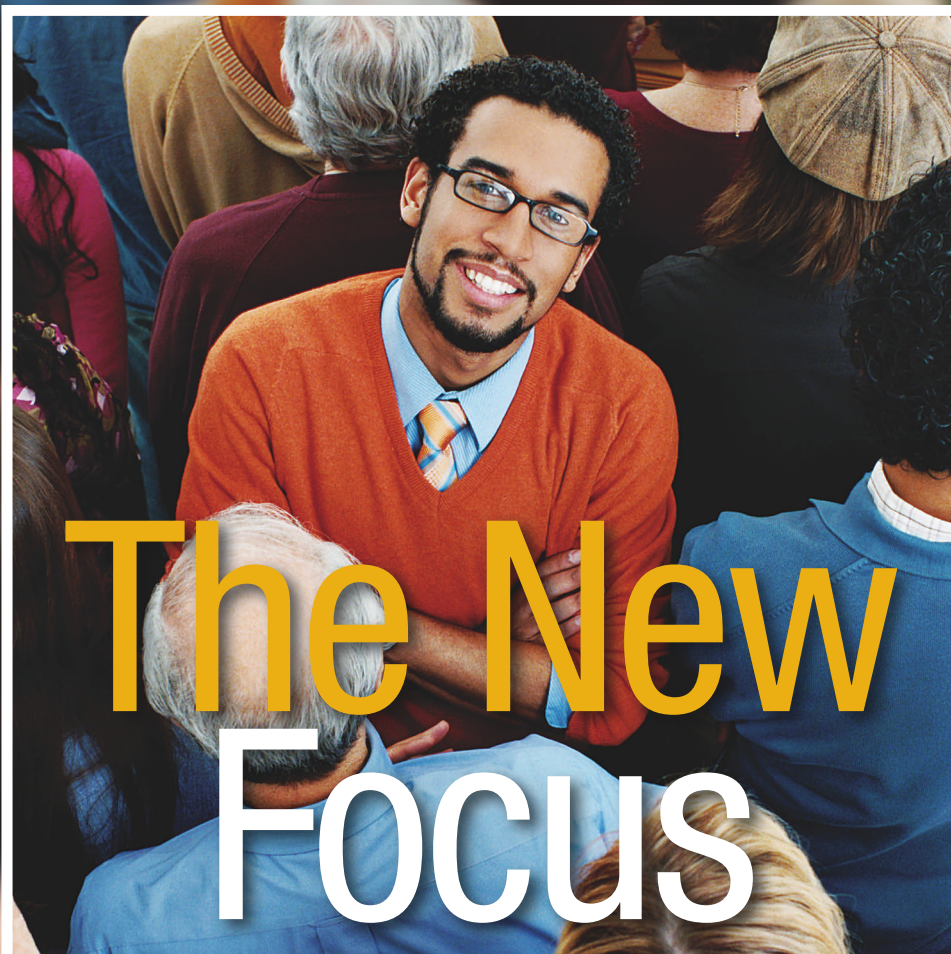


Professional Remodeler®

JUNE 2009

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**IMMIGRANTS SPEND MORE ON REMODELING.
DO YOU REACH THEM? / 14**

Remodeler navigates sea-side codes / 18

Bay Area shows signs of recovery / 11

Market your post-project surveys / 13

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JUNE 2009
VOLUME 13 NUMBER 6



14

FEATURES

COVER STORY

The New Focus/14

Research reveals that immigrants spend more on remodeling projects than native-born homeowners. Are you engaging this group?

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

By the Book/18

A company navigates a remodel in a seashore community laden with continually changing regulations.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIGITAL VISION



18

table of Contents

JUNE 2009

DEPARTMENTS

best practices

Trade Secrets **13**
Marketing customer surveys

GUILD QUALITY			
Weidmann Remodeling		GuildQuality provides highly customized performance reporting for quality help builders improve the way they do business and enable themselves for their hard-earned business.	
Report Type	Shortly After Closing	Percentage of customers indicating they were satisfied	
99.0%	Recommendation Rate	Expertise	
99 of 100 customers would recommend this company to a friend or family member. Nationally, an estimated 80% of customers could		Professional & Organized	
		Innovation	

columns

From the Editor **7**
On Customer Satisfaction **9**
The Professional Remodeler **34**

the market

The San Francisco Bay Area **11**

innovations

Product Preview **24**
New Products



24

Interior Products **27**
Millwork & Molding

Exterior Products **29**
Siding & Trim



27

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Best of the Best Design Awards

Submissions for the 2009 Best of Best Design Awards are due June 15.

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ONLINE POLL

How much of your remodeling business is generated by minority clients?

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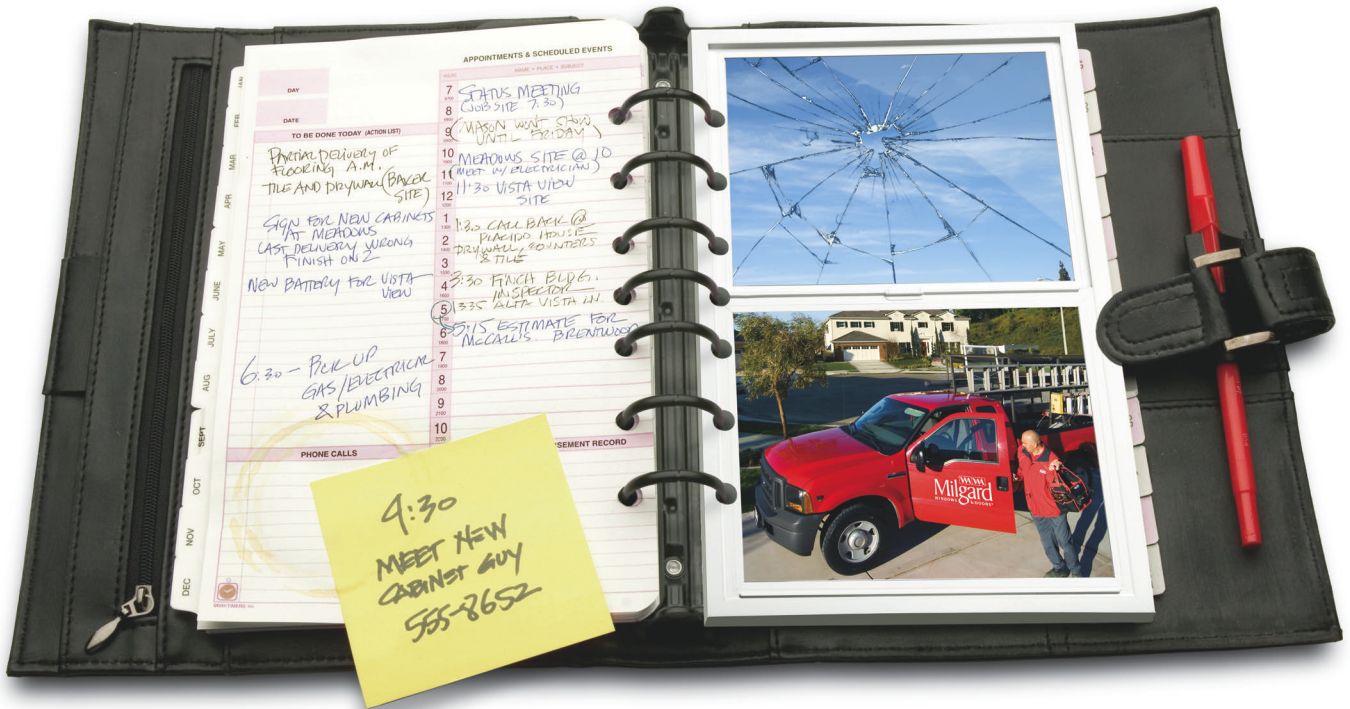
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YOUR NEW CLIENTS

Running a successful remodeling business often is about finding a comfortable spot and working it. That spot can be a neighbor-

hood, a niche, a price point or a demographic. Once you've staked that out, you work it like a farm, sowing the seeds and reaping the value.

There are, of course, things that push you beyond that comfort zone. A tough customer. A challenging build. A meticulous design. Sometimes that discomfort is less tangible, less remodeling related and more cultural.

I remember when I sold remodeling projects and visited a prospect whose kitchen and family room were filled with junk floor to ceiling. They wanted a new kitchen, and all I could imagine was how they would trash the beautiful cabinets we would install. My sales visits with them became extraordinary efforts of discipline where I tried to focus on their needs and not shout out that what they really needed was a professional organizer. To make matters worse, the dining and living rooms were decorated with large, porcelain dolls. I

was completely unnerved by the dolls. In fact, they scared me.

Senior Editor Jonathan Sweet has written a great feature in this issue

about what is probably the ultimate discomfort zone for most remodelers: the immigrant client. Immigrants bring widely varied cultural practices to our shores, including cooking different foods that create different smells, restrictions on communication between the sexes and significant differences in the nature of negotiation.

There are reasons to pursue these clients. As research from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University points out, immigrant homeowners spend more on remodeling and have higher value homes. They

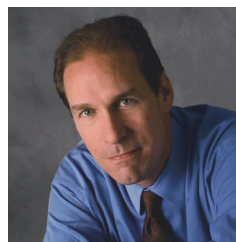
are clearly good prospects for professional remodelers.

It's time to push beyond the comfort zone. It's just smart business. **PR**

Contact me at paul.deffenbaugh@reedbusiness.com or 630/288-8190.

>> Read my blog at

www.HousingZone.com/blogs.



Paul Deffenbaugh
Editorial Director

Immigrants bring widely varied cultural practices to our shores. There are reasons to pursue these clients.

Our Mission

Professional Remodeler challenges, inspires and engages owners and top executives of established, successful remodeling firms by delivering vital, trusted information.

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YOUR WARRANTY IS CRITICAL

Ultimately, when you stop and think about it, isn't satisfying our clients about doing the right thing?

We are smack in the middle of the most challenging economic times our 20-year-old company ever has seen. Sales are hard to come by, and overhead reductions and layoffs have left an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. It is just this sort of atmosphere that can create the perfect storm for reduced client satisfaction. This situation is not unique to us; companies all over the country are feeling the pinch, and none that I know of are immune.

THE WARRANTY REALITY

Recently, every time an issue or problem has popped (on either a current job or a past project), a part of me cringes. Some of our hard-earned gross profit is now going to be redirected to address an issue rather than fuel our operations. Or so it may seem. The reality is that, in every company, a certain amount of rework or warranty work exists. There is no avoiding it. Well, check that – there should be no avoiding it. Doing the right thing is not just a choice that we make when things are good. In fact, a measure of company's integrity and commitment to clients is how it responds when revenue and profits are down.

Many companies in our industry are struggling for survival, no longer enjoying the relative excesses of years past. It is during times like these that it takes foresight, well-planned cash reserves and, most importantly, internal fortitude for leaders to see the big picture and do the right thing.

What kind of warranty does your

company offer? About 10 years ago we extended ours, so that now we provide an industry-leading three years on all material and labor, and I know of no other companies in our market that meet or beat it.

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Often, a one-year warranty is looked at as a "must provide" to clients, and companies breathe a sigh of relief when that year goes by without a call. This is a lost opportunity! We use our warranty as just one more reason to partner with our clients. We tout the fact that we have a dedicated handyman who, in addition to doing small projects for us, also quickly and efficiently handles warranty calls. We have made the investment in this person because it shows commitment to our clients and ensures that we can walk our talk.

Recently we ripped out a custom tile shower that was eight (!) years old, well over our generous warranty period. However, there had been a recurring problem, and while we had always addressed the issues, we ultimately realized there were some underlying problems in the installation that we could not properly address unless we removed everything. The client was blown away and has talked

to us about doing more work for him, and he even referred other clients.

All the industry pundits advise

maintaining a commitment to a disciplined and well-funded marketing program, especially when times are tough and leads are thin. This commitment to marketing is the same as committing to maintaining and even stepping up your warranty. Saying you will take care of something and then getting it done in a timely and efficient manner will generate business for you (and take it away from your less-than-accommodating competitors). But it takes discipline and a long-term view.

Every referral is like water in the desert, especially in a down market. Doing the right thing — even when it is tough — will ensure your clients' long-term satisfaction and faithfulness.

They'll come back to you and send others in your direction as well. **PR**

Dave Bryan is the president and CEO of Blackdog design/build/remodel in Salem, N.H. He is also a facilitator for Remodelers Advantage. You can reach him at dbryan@blackdogbuilders.com.



Dave Bryan
Contributing Editor

Often, a one-year warranty is looked at as a "must provide" to clients, and companies breathe a sign of relief when that year goes by without a call. This is a lost opportunity!

>> For more Dave Bryan on Customer Satisfaction, visit ProRemodeler.com.



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EARLY SIGNS OF RECOVERY IN BAY AREA

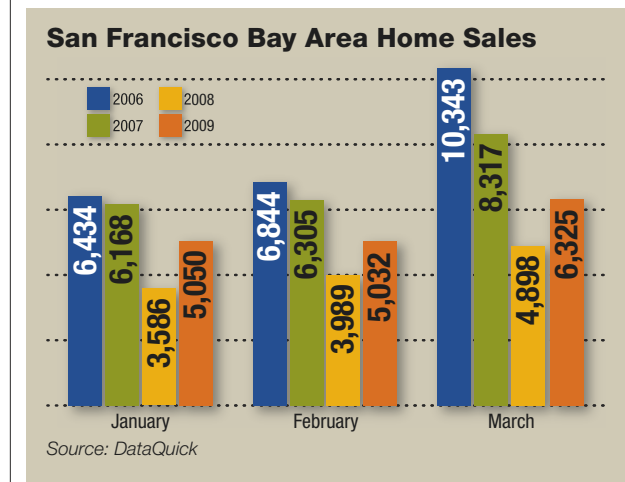
By Jonathan Sweet,
Senior Editor

It's almost a tale of two markets in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Closer to the city, home sales continue to drop, down 20 to 30 percent from a year ago, but in outlying areas sales are up by as much as 100 percent from a year ago, according to DataQuick. Much of that sales increase in the outlying areas has been driven by foreclosures, which are pushing prices down by close to 50 percent in some suburbs.

Not surprisingly, those declining prices have helped to slow remodeling activity, even in the more stable areas, say local Market Leaders.

"Even though people have equity, they know their homes aren't worth as much," says Michael McCutcheon, president of McCutcheon Construction in Berkeley, Calif. "Right where I am, the houses have declined 5 or 10 percent, but a 15 to 30-minute drive will bring you to places where the houses are off 30 to 50 percent."



Home sales have started to rebound in the far suburbs of the Bay Area, as rising foreclosures bring people back into the market.

The biggest issue is confidence, says Iris Harrell, CEO of Harrell Remodeling in Mountain View, Calif. People are worried about declining home prices, but more importantly they are concerned about their jobs, she says. Homeowners are holding off on all but the most necessary projects as they wait for positive signs from the economy.

"We're seeing a lot of maintenance and repair work," she says. "There has to be a really compelling reason for people to go ahead and start now."

SIGNS OF HOPE

That said, both Harrell and McCutcheon see reasons for optimism in the market. In the liberal-leaning Bay Area, there's a renewed sense of enthusiasm since President Obama was elected, McCutcheon notices. Lead activity has also started to pick up, Harrell says, as homeowners start to feel that the worst may have passed.

"The feeling of panic and things continuing to go down, I think that's over," she says. "I think the bottom has definitely been hit." **PR**

Market Update

Some of the key data from the San Francisco market.

Metro area population:

4,203,898 (1.9 percent increase since 2000)

Change in home values:

Down 7.86 percent since 2007; up 25.98 percent over last five years

Home sales: Down 34.6

percent in San Francisco over the last year, but up 29.1 percent for the entire Bay Area

Median household income:

\$74,560

Unemployment rate:

9.5 percent (up from 4.9 percent in 2008)

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight, DataQuick

"We're seeing a lot of maintenance and repair work. There has to be a compelling reason for people to go ahead and start [a project] now."

— Iris Harrell

San Francisco Market Leaders

	Specialty	Installed volume
American Home Renewal	Exterior remodeler	\$14 million
Harrell Remodeling	Design/build remodeler	\$11,039,000
McCutcheon Construction	Design/build remodeler	\$6,452,645
Schiller Construction	Design/build remodeler	\$4,070,530
Creative Spaces	Full-service remodeler	\$2.5 million

*The 2009 Market Leaders list will appear in the October issue.

Professional
market
LEADERS

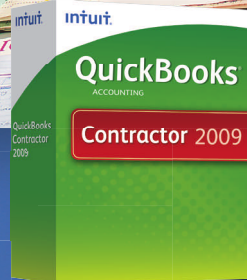


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Marketing Customer Surveys

Every remodeler boasts of good customer service, but Weidmann & Associates backs it up with cold, hard data.

For the last two decades, Weidmann has conducted post-project customer surveys, but it wasn't until four years ago that the Roswell, Ga., design/build firm started working with GuildQuality to deliver third-party results.

Now, Weidmann posts the results of its surveys right on its home page (www.weidmannremodeling.com). With a 99 percent recommendation rate, that gives clients confidence that Weidmann is a company they want to work with, says President Dan Weidmann.

"It's helped us tremendously," Weidmann says. "I get calls

GUILD QUALITY	
Weidmann Remodeling	
Report Type	Shortly After Closing
99.0%	Recommendation Rate
99 of 100 customers would recommend this company to a friend or family member. Nationally, an estimated 50% of customers would recommend their builder to a friend or family member.	
82.7%	Easier Than Expected Rate
81 of 98 of your previous customers indicated the overall experience was easier than expected.	
85.1%	Response Rate
103 of 121 of previous customers responded to the GuildQuality survey.	

from people who have gone to our Web site first and based on the recommendation have put us on the list of contractors they want to talk to."

Having the information come from an outside firm makes it more credible than anything

Weidmann & Associates could come up with on its own, Weidmann says.

At the same time, the surveys allow Weidmann to monitor the company's customer service performance and keep an eye out for any trends. Over the years, the surveys have also prompted him to make changes in response to client comments. For example, a client expressed concerns about being able to reach people involved in the project. In response, the company instituted a best practice on all projects in which the client gets a laminated card with contact information for everyone they'll work with, from Weidmann and his brother and co-owner, Bill, to the project manager and production coordinator.

Building a Green Dream

When Murphy Brothers Contracting purchased a property in Westchester County, N.Y., the remodeler intended to build a spec home.

At the same time, Westchester Magazine was looking for a company to partner with to build a model green "Dream Home." For Murphy Brothers, it was a chance to take advantage of rising interest in green and to hedge their bets against the declining home market.

"We knew this would help us market the house and sell it a little faster in this economy," says Vice President Sean Murphy.

The home has proven to be a marketing boon as well, with leads coming in before the home was even completed thanks to extensive coverage in the magazine and other local media.

Although the company has been remodeling and building green since before it had a name, Murphy says, this is the first time the firm has

put a big marketing push behind sustainable construction.

The home was open to public for four weeks starting May 1, with 3,000 to 4,000 people expected to come through on tours. Proceeds from tour ticket sales benefit a local medical center that provides care to low-income patients.

The Craftsman-style home showcases eco-friendly features throughout, including floors of reclaimed lumber; PaperStone countertops made from recycled paper; low-VOC paints and sealants; and spray-foam insulation. The best aspect of the home, Murphy says, is that it shows green can go hand-in-hand with luxury.

"The neat part is how we blended it all into the house without jeopardizing the design," he says. "It didn't have to be designed around the green aspects."

For more on the "Dream Home," visit dream-home.westchestermagazine.com.

THE SWEET SPOT BLOG

ProRemodeler.com/sweet

Reduce Client Risk

It started with Hyundai Assurance, the automaker's program that lets you walk away from your loan if you lose your income in the first 12 months you own it.

That idea's been adopted by many other companies in a variety of industries. We've even seen variations of this in construction, with several builders offering to make payments if homeowners lose their jobs.

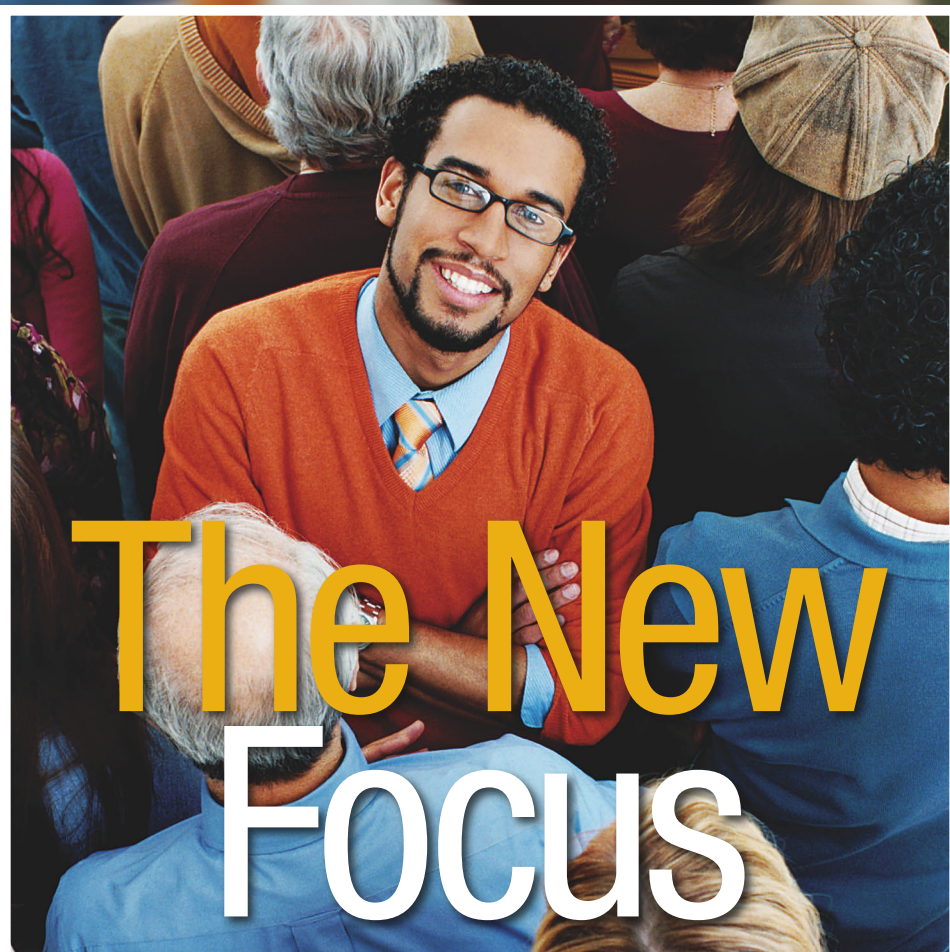
Now, the first remodeler I've heard about is going down that road: Renewal Design-Build, a Decatur, Ga.-based firm. Under its new money-back guarantee, if a client signs a design contract then experiences a loss of income, job relocation or the inability to secure funding, Renewal will refund 50 percent of their retainer fee.

It's not the same deal that the builders and automakers are offering, but it is a way of reassuring clients who are nervous about making a big decision these days.

Condensed from a blog post at www.proremodeler.com.



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



The New Focus

IT'S TIME
TO GET OUTSIDE
YOUR COMFORT ZONE
AND ENGAGE THE
IMMIGRANT
MARKET

Foreign-born homeowners have a higher median income and higher home values than native-born homeowners.*

By Jonathan Sweet, Senior Editor

FOR YEARS, REMODELERS HAVE BEEN HEARING that they should start paying attention to the minority and immigrant market. And for just as long, many have resisted, using reasons ranging from, “They won’t pay for professional remodeling,” to “They don’t have the money to buy from us.”

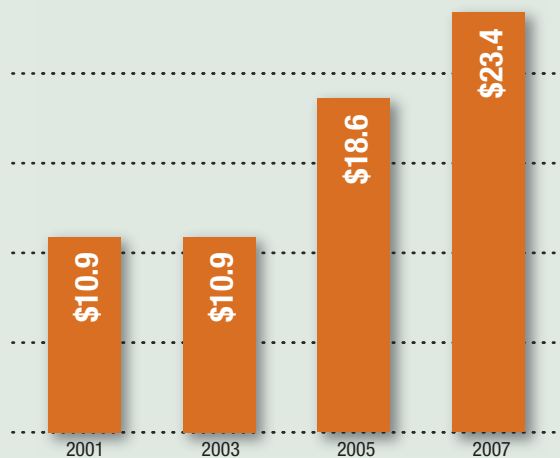
But the excuses don’t stand up to the numbers. Consider the latest data from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. According to JCHS’s analysis of the American Housing Survey, foreign-born homeowners demonstrate spending patterns very similar to native-born homeowners. From 2000 to 2007, the average native homeowner spent \$2,300 a year on remodeling. Immigrants spent \$2,360 a year.

From a monetary standpoint, they should be even more attractive. Median income of foreign-born homeowners in 2007 was \$57,600, compared with \$53,700 for native homeowners. Median home values? \$210,000 for foreign-born homeowners and \$140,000 for natives.

“We did try to see if we could find a difference between types of projects, level of expenditure, and we couldn’t find anything at all in terms of that,” says Kermit Baker, the director of the Remodeling Futures Program at JCHS. “What we’re finding is that this population doesn’t have lower incomes on average, this population overall lives in higher-valued homes than

Immigrant Spending Continues to Increase

Improvement spending by foreign-born homeowners in billions of dollars



Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University

Spending by foreign-born homeowners has grown in real dollars and as percentage of total spending over the last decade.

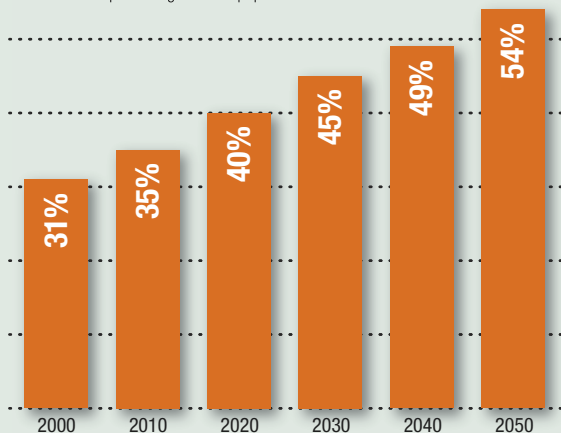
the domestic population and spends a higher portion of their income on housing.”

It is worth noting that one of the reasons there is such a stark difference in home values is that the immigrant population is concentrated in what Harvard has dubbed “gateway cities” such as San Diego, Miami and San Francisco that have higher home prices. However, every year that population disperses to more housing markets. At the same time, the

*Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University

Minority Population Growing

Minorities as a percentage of total population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The minority population will be the majority by the middle of this century, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

THE EFFECT OF THE DOWNTURN

There is limited data available on the impact of the economic downturn and housing crash on minorities and immigrants, but what is available indicates slight declines in their effect on the housing market.

According to a recent Pew Research Center study, the white homeownership rate has dropped from 76.1 percent in 2004 to 74.9 percent in 2008, a decline of 1.2 points. The Hispanic homeownership rate has dropped 2.6 percentage points from peak, and the homeownership rate for blacks has dropped by 1.9 percentage points from its peak. The Asian homeownership rate is down 1.7 points. However, the immigrant homeownership rate has dropped only 0.4 points, less than the overall rate.

Immigration also seems to have slowed with the declining economy, but that is almost certainly a temporary condition that will end when the economy recovers, says Kermit Baker, the director of the Remodeling Futures Program at the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.

"We're talking about something that's been going on for 30 or 40 years, in terms of the upward trend in immigration," Baker says. "I haven't heard anything or seen anything that indicates we're going to move off that path anytime soon."

longer an immigrant lives in the country, the greater his or her remodeling spending, according to the JCHS. That means more opportunities in a wider variety of cities.

"That's where the growth is, pretty clearly," Baker says. "Minority households are going to account for two-thirds to three-quarters of the population growth over the coming decade. You're limiting yourself to an increasingly small part of the population if you don't branch out."

NO TIME TO BE PICKY

If nothing else pushes you off the fence into the minority market, simple economics should do it. In the current climate, remodelers shouldn't be ignoring any viable customer base, says Bill Carter, president of the William E. Carter Co., a design/build firm in Sacramento, Calif.

"It's important because if you limit yourself to one specific thing, you're not going to grow, you're going to die," Carter says. "It's a different world today. You have to market to everybody."

Whether it's adding a maintenance and repair division or targeting new clients, remodelers need to be open to finding business wherever they can, says Carter, who is also national NARI president.

Carter has worked with a diverse immigrant customer base for years, from Hispanic to Asian to Eastern European. It's just a matter of finding the business where it is.

"This is the biggest thing that guys need to do going forward: capturing the entire market," Carter says. "The market is there. They can borrow money. They've got incomes. It's the real deal."

Tucson, Ariz., remodeler Greg Miedema says the changing demographics of the country make the minority customer important for the future of the remodeling industry.

"It's as important to think about that client base as it is to think about aging-in-place projects," Miedema says. "They're both growing, and they're going to continue to grow, and you can't ignore that fact."

That's already the case for Miedema's company, Dakota Builders, which has a large Hispanic customer base.

"A minority client for other folks might be our majority client," he says. "Almost every client I work with, if they're not Hispanic, they might be married to a Hispanic or are second-generation with a Hispanic parent."

CUSTOMER APPROACH

The biggest challenge in working with clients of a different culture is establishing trust, say both Carter and Miedema.

"It can be a little tougher to break into as an outsider, but once you do you're in," Miedema says. "Once you earn their trust, you really get it."

3 MISTAKES NOT TO MAKE WITH MULTICULTURAL CLIENTS

Multicultural marketing adviser Michael Lee, president of EthnoConnect, says there are several common mistakes remodelers and other salespeople make when meeting with minority clients.

"We tend to insult our customers from the moment we meet them by making certain assumptions," Lee says.

Here are the three big mistakes remodelers can make in the first 30 seconds they spend with a client, according to Lee:

1. Shaking hands – The first assumption is that everybody wants to shake hands, but that's not the case. In some cultures, it can be offensive for a man to touch a woman

who is not his wife, so remodelers should always wait and see what the client does. If they don't offer their hand, don't offer yours.

2. Eye contact – In the United States, solid eye contact signifies respect. However, in many Asian cultures, for example, respect is shown by looking down. If the client isn't making eye contact, don't try to force it.

3. Personal space – Two to three feet is considered a "normal" amount of personal space for most Americans. In other cultures, they need more space, while some cultures want less space. If the customer moves back or forward, don't adjust. They're trying to get comfortable, and a remodeler should

do what's comfortable for the client.

"Just follow the lead of the client, but you have to give them the opportunity," Lee says. "These little things can speak volumes about how the relationship is going to go."

Sometimes the best way to avoid problems is simply to ask clients about their background and culture. While many Americans fear offending people when asking this question, it's actually the best way to get to know them, Lee says.

"What it says to the person is, 'I'm interested in your culture and I'm not going to make assumptions,'" Lee says.

Lee is the author of "Cross-Cultural Selling For Dummies" and a frequent speaker at industry events.

The issue of trust is a common one for companies trying to reach out to multicultural clients, says Michael Lee, president of EthnoConnect, a firm that helps companies increase sales to that market. EthnoConnect works with remodelers, builders and a variety of other industries.

"As much as you have to talk about the job, you also need to talk about yourself and your company, because you have to build a trusting relationship," Lee says.

That may mean more meetings, and longer ones, than a remodeler is used to with the average client. The advantage is that because many minority communities are close-knit, there is a much better chance for referrals once you establish that trust with one member, Lee says.

Even more than with the average remodeling client, spending time in the community is the best way to get to know minority clients. It's also a good way to learn cultural norms and avoid offending potential clients. (For Lee's tips on common cultural mistakes, see the sidebar on this page.)

A common mistake that companies make is assuming that minorities only want to work with someone of their own cul-

ture. While that is true to a certain extent, remodeling is such a large purchase that most homeowners want to make sure the job is done right regardless of who does the work.

"What they do look for is someone who treats them with respect," Lee says. "When that doesn't happen is when they'll go

Minorities make up about a third of the U.S. population. That number is projected to top 50 percent in 2042.*

to somebody else and be willing to pay more for inferior work."

That trend is most common on smaller projects, where minorities, like many homeowners, will choose a relative or somebody else they know, Miedema says.

"People who have a real asset and want to protect it are going to choose a qualified contractor," he says. "They don't care what the color of your skin is or where you come from." **PR**

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* U.S. Census Bureau



DON PEARSE PHOTOGRAPHERS

By the Book

A COMPANY ACES THE JOB OF REMODELING ALONG A REGULATION-LADEN SEASHORE

By Wendy A. Jordan, Senior Contributing Editor

VINCENT AVERNA GOT BURNED THE FIRST TIME he remodeled his Jersey Shore vacation house, and he was determined not to let it happen again. After he inherited the 1950s ranch house several years ago and began using it as a weekend getaway, the Virginia resident added a master bathroom and closet to the back. He went by the book, researching remodelers, requesting estimates and choosing the mid-priced contractor. But the job put him in the middle of a finger-pointing scenario between contractor and architect, and it took twice as long.

Later, when he decided to transform the home to a two-story beach house with water views and more space, he rewrote the book on selecting a remodeler. And his choice, Todd Miller of QMA Design+Build, could write a book himself about getting remodeling work done in the demanding construction environment of Absecon Island, N.J.

EXPERT SOURCES

Having shepherded the bathroom addition through a headache-causing approvals process, Averna knew the permit officials and building inspectors in the island town of Longport all too well. Figuring that nobody knew remodelers in Longport better than those officials, he asked them for recommendations.

An inspector recommended QMA based on his work on other projects and gave the company high marks. So did the appraiser who had assessed the house for the first remodel. Another

PRODUCTS LIST

Acrylic block windows: Hy-Lite **Bathroom cabinetry:** Elmwood Kitchens **Deck surface:** Val-spar **Exterior doors and windows:** Andersen **Exterior trim boards:** Azek **Exterior porcelain tile:** Edicoughi **Faucets, shower controls, tub fillers:** Moen **Hardwood flooring:** Clear oak **Interior doors:** CraftMaster **Tub, toilet, bidet:** Kohler **Roofing:** GAF **Siding:** CertainTeed



LENNY CASPER

A cathedral ceiling, generous windows and sliding glass doors brighten the master bedroom (left) and open it to breezes and views. Once a modest, brick-fronted ranch, the house (above) now is a two-story beach property with crisp, white trim and gray siding, deep verandas on both floors and columns that tie the two stories together in a commanding façade.

plus: because QMA is a design-build company, tension between designer and builder would not arise.

Averna checked around and found that QMA's good reputation was solid. Averna believed he could rely on QMA, an established local company, to maintain high standards. He bypassed the

three-bids step and went straight to Todd Miller, telling him that if he came up with a concept he liked, he'd likely get the contract. He did.

The house sits on a finger of land between ocean and bay, so to capture views of the water on both sides, a second-floor pop-up design was essential. With its brick front and skimpy deck, the old house clearly needed a face-lift as well. Averna's wife had collected ideas on new exterior finishes, opting for crisp, white vinyl siding, but was even more inspired when Miller drove around the island with her, pointing out features on other houses. He suggested



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

QMA Design+Build

Owner: Todd Allen Miller, AIA

Location: Ventnor, N.J.

2008 sales volume: \$2 million

Projected 2009 sales volume: \$1.9 million

Web site: QMAdesignbuild.com

Biggest challenge of the project: Moving forward with construction while reconciling plans with changing FEMA and building code requirements.

Product Trends

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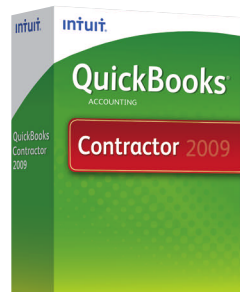
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PROJECT TIMELINE

Phase 1

June 12, 2005	Preliminary design and cost feasibility analysis signed
Aug. 19, 2005	Construction agreement signed
Sept. 28, 2005	Construction drawings completed
Nov. 3, 2005	Building permit issued
June 19, 2006	Construction completed

Phase 2

April 1, 2008	Preliminary design and cost feasibility analysis signed
May 2	Construction agreement signed
May 16	Construction drawings completed; materials for construction dry-in and cabinets ordered
June 16	Building permit issued
July 8	Roof removed, framing started
July 12	Framing completed; roofing, windows, doors, sheathing installed
July 19	Rough mechanicals completed
Aug. 15	Interior finishes completed
Aug. 22	Internal punch list completed; all inspections passed
Aug. 27	Construction completed

extending deep decks across both the first and second floors. The Avernas loved the idea. His proposal to unify the decks visually with columns “sold us,” says Averna.

With three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a combination living-dining-entry, the existing 1,333-square-foot house was tight quarters for the Avernas and their children and grandchildren who visited often. Miller’s design called for a 140-square-foot extension to the first floor deck and a new second floor that encompasses 832 square feet of living space plus 651 square feet of wraparound deck. He found room for the stairway by converting the smallest bedroom on the first floor — a 10-by-10-foot space — into a bright, spacious stair hall. The Avernas would move into a new master bedroom and bathroom suite on the second floor where they could enjoy privacy and views. Guests would have the downstairs bedrooms. Miller designed another upstairs room as a cigar room, a retreat just for Averna.

INTERPRETING THE REGULATIONS

The project began in late 2005. Phase 1 — all but the cigar room and its deck — was completed in about seven months. Because of FEMA code and budget issues, however, it was not until 2008 that Averna got his cigar room.

“Everything here is complicated to deal with in terms of shore construction,” explains Miller. First there are the hurricane loads. Miller met these requirements by specifying windows with a DP (design pressure) upgrade package. Then there are the zoning ordinances. “The zoning departments in urban beach resort areas are very strict about building setbacks and heights,” says Miller. The calculation of lot coverage by buildings and impervious surfaces is down to $\frac{1}{10}$ of a percent, he says; the existing house was

THE FINANCIALS

When QMA Design+Build develops a preliminary design, the company also does a complete cost feasibility analysis that specifies all materials, establishes product allowances and presents a fixed-price construction contract. “There’s a 2.5 percent fee for the design development,” says Todd Miller. “It doesn’t usually cover our design costs, but I’m looking for a commitment,” and it accomplishes that.

To prepare the estimate, says Miller, the company uses an Excel spreadsheet checklist of 200-300 typical purchases for a project

Budget History

Phase 1

Contract price	\$243,000
Change orders (replace rotted sill plate, allowance overage on bathroom cabinets, tile, plumbing fittings)	\$23,104
Final price of job	\$266,104

Phase 2

Contract price	\$95,000
Final price of job	\$95,000
Total project cost	\$361,104

that follows a general construction sequence and includes general items such as insurance, management costs and portable toilets. “The list includes about 95 percent of everything that goes into a typical

home,” he says. The rest are items specific to a project. Every item has an account code that ties into QMA’s accounting software.

“We use the software to write purchase orders and track expenses against estimates,” says Miller. Nothing is contracted without a purchase order, including changes to trade contractor assignments.

Clients receive a schedule of construction phases and approximate costs so they can anticipate billings. But bills are not tied to production milestones. Instead, once work is under way, QMA submits monthly invoices that reflect what’s been done.

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out of compliance. Miller set back the cigar room 40 inches to keep the addition within allowable setback limits without the need for a variance, while taking care to maintain a balanced composition for aesthetic appeal.

FEMA rules dictate what percentage of the building's value can be invested in improvements. Complying with FEMA rules is always a challenge, Miller says. "Every town in New Jersey interprets these FEMA rules differently," he says, and that interpretation often changes. "My policy is to go meet with the building inspector [during the project design phase] to make sure our interpretation of those codes agrees with theirs."

While the first phase of the Averno project was being planned, FEMA rules allowed 50 percent of the assessed property value to be invested in improvements. That, plus the client's desire to save some of the job cost until later, precluded construction of Averno's cigar room.

A year and a half after Phase 1, Averno was ready to try again for the cigar room. By then the local implementation of the FEMA codes had changed. Additions could amount to only 40 percent of the value of the structure itself, not including land, and the valuation had to be based strictly on tax assessed value. The assessment was so low, however, that the building officials allowed QMA to obtain a second valuation — this one by a state-certified appraiser based on depreciated replacement cost — and use that instead. Even with some subtractions due to six-year look-back requirements, the appraisal had gone up enough to make the project allowable. The \$95,000 room addition would bring the property right to the building value.

BUILDING AT THE BEACH

Miller designed the house to celebrate the outdoors while minimizing maintenance in a saltwater setting. For light,

breezes and a sense of lofty space, the new master bedroom has a cathedral ceiling plus large windows and glass doors on three sides. Deep decks on both floors offer plenty of space to sit and enjoy the views. Miller covered the first-floor concrete deck with durable, slip- and frost-resistant porcelain tile. The second-floor deck is built like a surfboard, with fiberglass mesh reinforced resin over two layers of ¾-inch PTS Marine grade plywood.

Adding the cigar room more than a year after Phase 1 introduced the challenge of blending finishes inside and outside the house. The specs for the new and 18-month-old siding matched, but the white was a shade off, says Project Manager Jason Zelinka. He hid the difference by running a j-channel at the inside corner where the two sidings meet. Inside the second floor, Zelinka's flooring subcontractor managed to duplicate the tone of the existing red oak strips, selecting pieces that were close in color and working with the oil-based polyurethane coating to match the new to the more seasoned "old."

Dealing with new and discarded materials required special planning, too. There was no room for a Dumpster or for storage, and building officials frowned upon Dumpsters in the street. Zelinka strategically scheduled deliveries to arrive the day materials were needed and asked his subcontractors to haul trash to other QMA trash bins.

Carting the trash away was inconvenient, but it also was an indicator that Zelinka goes by the same book as Miller. By arranging to dispose of the garbage off site, "I created a relationship with those guys in the building department," Zelinka says. When he needs a favor, he hopes they will remember. **PR**

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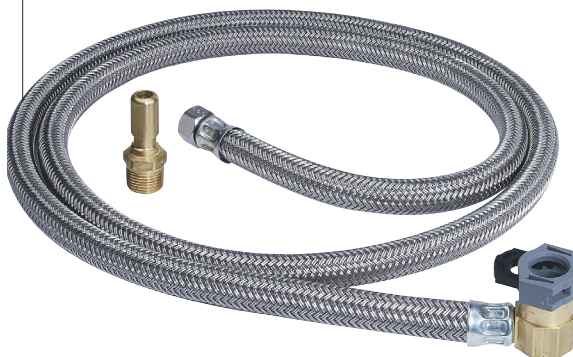
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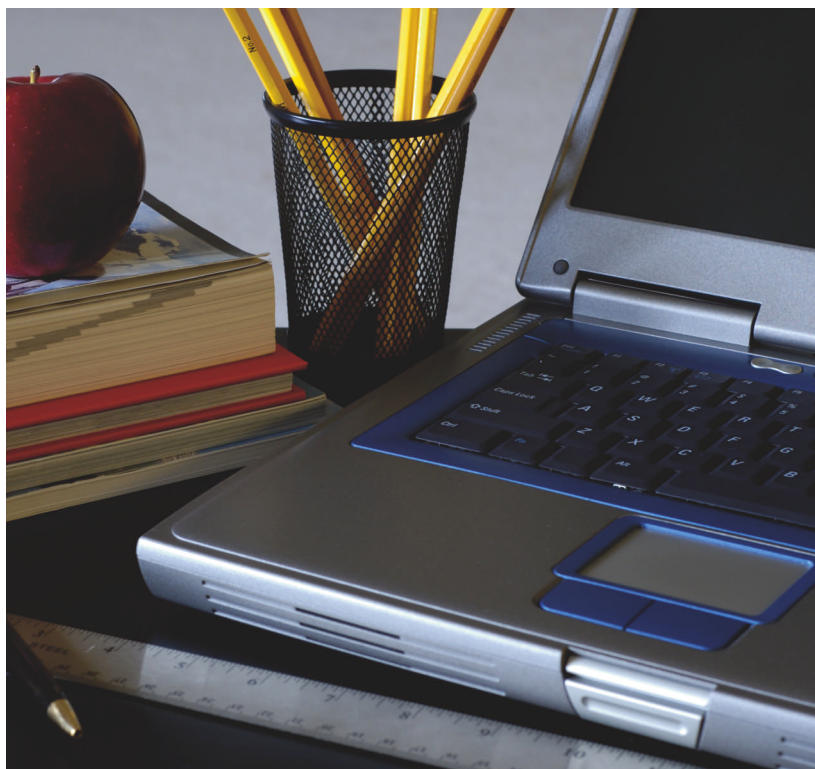
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A man's profile is shown in a three-quarter view, looking upwards and to the left. On top of his head is a small, detailed orange and black construction vehicle, specifically a skid steer loader with a bucket. The background is plain white.

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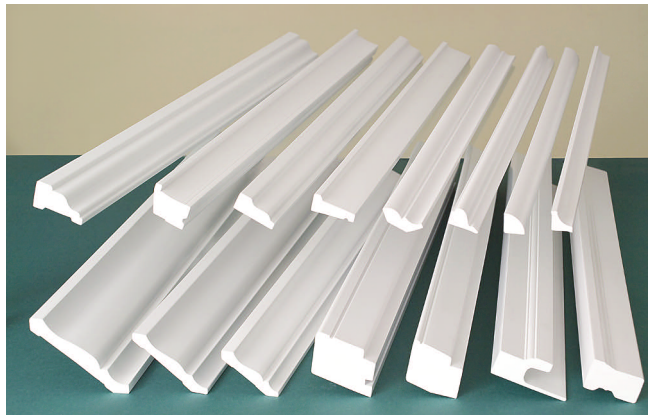
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CPVC trim and molding-maker AZEK has expanded its line with the addition of the new Adams Casing profile. Casings are primarily used to cover the gap between the wall surface and a door or window frame and are the most visible and defining parts of the trim. The Adams Casing is a universal profile for creating detailed shadow lines. It's coming to a lumber yard near you.

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The 35-plus new crown and cornice molding additions by Century Architectural Specialties are versatile enough to offer builders a significant degree of individuality. The new collection is inspired by the classic architectural styles of the ancient Greek and Roman eras. Each of these new molding families is available in 14-foot lengths.

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A REVOLUTIONARY NEW LEADS PROGRAM.

With the change in the economy, lead generation has become more and more important to contractors all across the country. There are a number of lead services which all have delivered varying degrees of success.

But recently, one of the leaders in the contracting industry has taken a brand new look at lead generating programs. Contractors.com, a primary source of leads thru HGTV, HGTV.com, and FineLiving.com, has created a program that saves the best contractors time and money and delivers high-quality, high-paying jobs—the kind of jobs that allow these successful companies to thrive during challenging times. Contractor.com is calling this program the **Free Leads Program**.

Free Leads Program developed from experience.

“We’ve been in the leads business for a long time, and we know the issues that contractors face with traditional leads generating programs. We also know the troubles that homeowners have – getting too many calls, or being connected with the wrong contractor” explains Kurt Reuss, President of Contractors.com. “We’ve taken our experience from the past 11 years and created a program that works better for everyone.”

Just like the name suggests, all the leads are free to participating contractors. All the leads are first verified by phone, then sent out to the three category- and territory-

exclusive contractors. Only the company that wins the job pays a fee, and only after a contract is signed. “We verify all leads before sending them out. Remember, our success depends on the contractor’s success, so if we send out bad leads, we don’t get paid – and we risk losing the interest of our members,” says Reuss.

Traditional lead services have problems.

“A lot of the leads I get from my current leads-generating company are bad leads. The phone number doesn’t work, or the homeowner isn’t interested in doing a job. If I try to get a refund, they give me a run around,” says Ken Porter, owner of Grey Wolf Remodelling in Los Angeles, CA.

Leads are not well screened. “I’ve had times when I call the homeowner within minutes of receiving a lead, and they’ve already hired someone. That doesn’t make any sense. So I just paid for a lead that was a waste of my time,” said Tom Byrum, owner of Farallon Builders in California.

The new **Free Leads Program** from Contractors.com has addressed these concerns by aligning its success with the contractor’s success. Participation is limited to just three contractors in each market, so each of these contractors receives every lead generated in their area.

Better competition!

Because this program is designed for top-quality contractors, members don’t have to worry about competing against low-budget competitors. In order to be accepted into the Free Leads Program, companies must be Certified by Contractors.com. Because this program is designed for top-quality contractors, members don’t have to worry about competing with unprofessional competitors that provide unrealistic bids. “With traditional lead services,

homeowners typically get quotes that can vary drastically in price. This puts the quality contractor, like me, on the defensive, having to justify my higher quote against some truck and ladder guys. But with the **Free Leads Program**, I’m competing on a level playing field with other quality contractors,” explains Shane Monday of US Home Improvement Brokers. “It’s the higher margin jobs that I want. Plus, I don’t have to pay if I don’t win the job.”

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Free Leads Program Pricing		Notes
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With all these benefits going to a small number of contractors, this revolutionary new program will fill up fast. Call **866-241-9052** right away to see if there is still availability in your area and your specialty. **Go to www.ContractorFreeLeads.com to watch a 6 minute video about this exciting new program.**

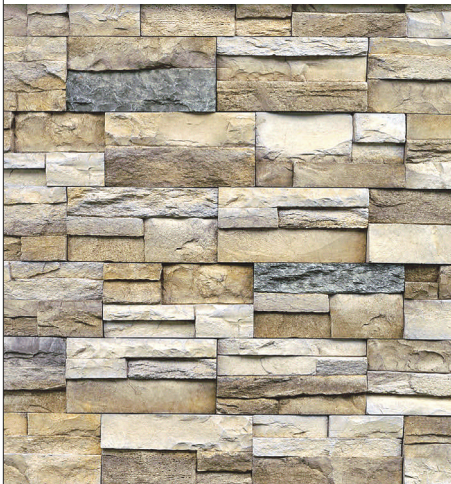


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CERTIFIED TO SUCCEED

Easy Fit Savannah Ledge, pictured here in the Glacier Valley color selection, is the newest texture to join Owens Corning's ProStone line of products. The stone veneers are designed to help builders quickly and easily achieve the look of tight-fitted ledgestones. The line is also Greenguard certified.

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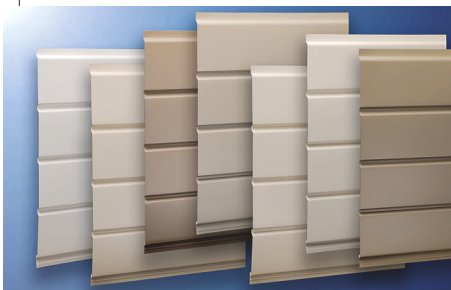
WOOD WITHOUT THE MAINTENANCE

The Classic Perfection Shingle from vinyl siding manufacturer The Foundry balances unique design, uniform texturing and bold color definition. According to the company, the new line falls somewhere in between the company's shingle, which is a naturally-textured flat surface featuring random saw marks, and its split shake, which offers a more rough-hewn look.

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ROLLED OUT

Rollex has expanded its aluminum color palette to offer cost, performance, and easy installation options. It's geared for home builders and contractors who use fiber cement siding as the principal sidewall cladding but would welcome companion products of aluminum in the same colors. Rollex's new hues are the seven most popular colors fiber cement siding companies use. **For FREE information, visit**
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DON'T FADE AWAY

Grab some curb appeal! Alside has introduced seven new dark colors for its Prodigy Next Generation Insulated Siding line to give builders a selling advantage. The fade-resistant shades of charcoal smoke, Somerset wheat, Autumn red, canyon drift, deep moss, midnight blue and English saddle bring the entire palette to 21 subtle low-gloss colors.

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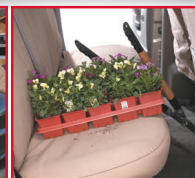
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NARI	25	http://pr.hotims.com/23742-9
Ply Gem Windows	10	http://pr.hotims.com/23742-5
Trex	22, 23	http://pr.hotims.com/23742-7
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THE PERFECT TIME TO GROW MARKET SHARE

If your sales have shrunk by 50 percent in the last 6 months, are you a bad businessperson? It depends. How many remodeling projects are being done in your service area within that niche? Have the total available opportunities for remodeling also shrunk by 50 percent?

This is called market share, and it really matters. Market share is determined by dividing the number of your company's projects by the total number of projects done by all homeowners in your target market, i.e. kitchens and bathrooms for upper-middle-class households. Market share tells you what percentage of the total market you have captured.

It seems sort of philosophical to bring all this up now when we are all fighting for the same jobs, dancing with the temptations to lower margins and trying to hold on to our team members. We should be beating the streets, trying to get every nickel we can and not worrying about data crunching or statistical analysis, right?

But now is precisely the right time to bring this up. Now is the time to gain market share on our competitors so we can help pay the bills in the short term. Competitors have cut back on their marketing budgets, our team members are more eager to participate in their communities (think home shows, parades, seminars, etc.) and we need to be as competitive as possible.

In the mid-term and long-term, market share will rocket our business to new heights. In the short-term, there is less demand for remodeling. Regardless of how much market share we garner we are still shrinking. In the long term when the economy bounces back, any increases in market share we gain now will multiply our revenue

exponentially as the pool of remodeling demand grows.

Cash and corporate energy is tight. So if you buy into this concept of market share, what can you do about it?

Here's a sampling of our initiatives:

1. We spend some of our marketing budget on branding. These efforts, which typically are spent on more traditional forms of marketing (radio, print advertising, etc.), are not expected to generate direct leads. With these we want to build our brand; we want to plant the seeds that grow into future market share.

2. We spend some of our marketing budget on lead generation. These efforts have evolved as traditional marketing avenues have proven ineffective for lead generation. Today, our efforts include home shows, community events, open houses, seminars and, of course, past clients and referrals.

3. We want to hear how we are doing in the eyes of our customers and potential customers. We have surveyed past clients for many years. Three to four years ago we stepped up these efforts by investing in a third-party surveying firm to gather the feedback of our past clients and give it back to us in easily understood and indexed forms. About three months ago, we started surveying leads as well — clients who have not proceeded. It is not to try to change their minds; it is because

we are committed to gaining market share. We want to know if we left a good impression even through they did not proceed with Case.

4. A focus on market share means

a focus on clients, not on projects. Our handyman services give us the ability to get our foot in the door with a prospective client, show our worth and earn that client for life. Our breadth of services (handyman, kitchens, baths, remodeling, design/build) gives us the ability to capture the majority of remodeling dollars spent by that client, assuming we exemplify excellence each step of the way.

We are constantly fighting for market share. With more market share, we have more of a base of clients. With more cli-

ents we are more stable. With stability comes more income potential — short-, medium- and long-term — for our entire Case team. All that means our business is truly a business; it has a brand, and it is valuable because of the awareness customers have about it. **PR**



Bruce Case
Contributing Editor

Now is the time to gain market share on our competitors so we can help pay the bills in the short-term.

Give your input and continue the dialogue on Bruce's blog at www.housingzone.com/brucecase.

Bruce Case is president of Case Design/Remodeling and COO of Case's national franchise organization, Case Handyman & Remodeling. He can be reached at bcase@casedesign.com.

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