

Qualified Remodeler

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March 2018

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PROJECTS



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Design Solutions: Historic Renovation

Sullivan Building & Design Group consolidates colonial farmhouses into contemporary residence with rustic appeal.
(Cover photo: Cider Press Woodworks)



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Designer's Notebook

A couple's California retirement home undergoes a major remodel to better fit their intention to live and age in place.



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QR Outdoors

Cabinetry plays an important—and preliminary—role in the planning and design of an outdoor kitchen.

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Albeit a surface-level look, marketing experts share tips for making sure your company's website is eye-catching to potential clients and to Google.

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Focused on brand and a seamless platform, Treeium is a full-service remodeler with the zeal of a specialty contractor for marketing and lead generation.

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The Next-Level Client Experience



Patrick L. O'Toole

There are moments when the efficiency of online purchasing with Amazon, or even ordering a sandwich for delivery, amazes all of us. It's so intuitive and fast these days. Service by service, user experience is improving beyond all previous expectations, continually raising the bar. And frankly, there appears to be no end in sight.

Bit by bit, it is happening in our business. We use marketing and lead-generation software to enable us to quickly respond to inquiries coming from all directions. We use an app to qualify clients for on-the-spot financing. We create a sophisticated room-addition design and allow clients to experience the finished product well in advance using virtual reality goggles, thereby allowing important last-minutes changes before construction begins. We stay in touch with prospects and past clients with personalized CRM-generated messages. Remodelers now offer much richer and more efficient client experiences than ever before.

Earl Rahn, founder of NewSouth Windows, was recently attending a Harvard Business School seminar, and he sent me a random message on Facebook IM. (Thank you, Earl.) "Something to think about," Rahn wrote, "within THREE years 'we are told' that the customer experience will rival, if not surpass, the product and performance. Are you ready?"

Remodelers and home improvement contractors add considerable value with their product—whether it's a new roof, a new kitchen, a new bath, etc.—so if Rahn's information is correct, we all have some work to do on the experience side of things. Some are already heading that direction.

Our story this month about Treeium Inc., a fast-growing Los Angeles-based remodeler, is a good example. At first they evaluated software vendors for different parts of the remodeling process, but the experience of everyone involved was filled with transitions from one platform to the next. So they commissioned and built their own proprietary software platform over several years, and now boast a system that gives clients and all outside stakeholders (trades, suppliers) a very intuitive mobile user-interface that starts with inquiries and leads feeding their call center to design, electronic contracts, online payments, production and completion.

Their system enables busy Angelinos (and clients in other Treeium locations around California) to pursue home improvement work in a fashion they do with other purchases, namely online—reviewing information, granting approvals and making payments as their schedules allow. Indeed, Treeium is a remodeling company to watch because they have focused hard on making the user experience seamless and better overall.

This same goal is also at work for EverCommerce, a new tech-based player in the industry, backed by private equity funding, who until now has been quietly buying remodeling industry software and solution providers such as ImproveIt360, Keyword Connects, and GuildQuality. In an interview on pg. 12, CEO Eric Remer outlines a vision for a seamless client experience in remodeling (and other verticals), one that rivals the ever-improving experiences we're coming to expect. Remodeling will never be as easy as using Amazon, but that is the direction we are heading.

Patrick O'Toole

Qualified Remodeler

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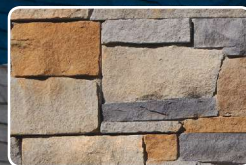


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LEGISLATION

Interest on Home Equity Loans Often Still Deductible Under New Tax Law

The Internal Revenue Service has advised taxpayers that in many cases they can continue to deduct interest paid on home equity loans.

Responding to many questions received from taxpayers and tax professionals, the IRS said that despite newly enacted restrictions on home mortgages, taxpayers can often still deduct interest on a home equity loan, home equity line of credit (HELOC) or second mortgage, regardless of how the loan is labeled.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, enacted Dec. 22, 2017, suspends from 2018 until 2026 the deduction for interest paid on home equity loans and lines of credit, unless they are used to buy, build or substantially improve the taxpayer's home that secures the loan.

Under the new law, for example, interest on a home equity loan used to build an addition to an existing home is typically deductible, while interest on the same loan used to pay personal living expenses, such as credit card debts, is not. As under prior law, the loan must be secured by the taxpayer's main home or second home (known as a qualified residence), not exceed the cost of the home, and meet other requirements.

NEW DOLLAR LIMIT ON TOTAL QUALIFIED RESIDENCE LOAN BALANCE

For anyone considering taking out a mortgage, the new law imposes a lower dollar limit on mortgages qualifying for the home mortgage interest deduction. Beginning in 2018, taxpayers may only deduct interest on \$750,000 of qualified residence loans. The limit is \$375,000 for a married taxpayer filing a separate return.

These are down from the prior limits of \$1 million, or \$500,000 for a married taxpayer filing a separate return. The limits apply to the combined amount of loans used to buy, build or substantially improve the taxpayer's main home and second home.

The following examples illustrate these points:

- **Example 1:** In January 2018, a taxpayer takes out a \$500,000 mortgage to purchase a main home with a fair market value of \$800,000. In February 2018, the taxpayer takes out a \$250,000 home equity loan to put an addition on the main home. Both loans are secured by the main home and the total does not exceed the cost of the home. Because the total amount of both loans does not exceed \$750,000, all of the interest paid on the loans is deductible. However, if the taxpayer used the home equity loan proceeds for personal expenses, such as paying off student loans and credit cards, then the interest on the home equity loan would not be deductible.
- **Example 2:** In January 2018, a taxpayer takes out a \$500,000 mortgage to purchase a main home. The loan is secured by the main home. In February 2018, the taxpayer takes out a \$250,000 loan to purchase a vacation home. The loan is secured by the vacation home. Because the total amount of both mortgages does not exceed \$750,000, all of the interest paid on both mortgages is deductible. However, if the taxpayer took out a \$250,000 home equity loan on the main home to purchase the vacation home, then the interest on the home equity loan would not be deductible.
- **Example 3:** In January 2018, a taxpayer takes out a \$500,000 mortgage to purchase a main home. The loan is secured by the main home. In February 2018, the taxpayer takes out a \$500,000 loan to purchase a vacation home. The loan is secured by the vacation home. Because the total amount of both mortgages exceeds \$750,000, not all of the interest paid on the mortgages is deductible. A percentage of the total interest paid is deductible.

For more information about the new tax law, visit the Tax Reform page at [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov).

NEWS

Forecasts suggest typical mortgage payment could rise more than 15 percent

By Andrew LePage, professional, Research Analysis, Economics at CoreLogic

The CoreLogic Home Price Index Forecast suggests U.S. home prices will rise less than 5 percent this year, but if

some 2018 mortgage rate forecasts pan out, the mortgage payments homebuyers face could increase closer to 15 percent.

One way to measure the impact of inflation, mortgage rates and home prices on affordability over time is to use what we call the "typical mortgage payment." It's a mortgage-rate-adjusted monthly payment based on each month's U.S. median home sale price. It is calculated using Freddie Mac's average rate on a

30-year fixed-rate mortgage with a 20 percent down payment.

It does not include taxes or insurance. The typical mortgage payment is a good proxy for affordability because it shows the monthly amount that a borrower would have to qualify for in order to get a mortgage to buy the median-priced U.S. home.

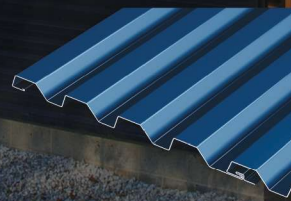
A consensus forecast suggests mortgage rates will rise by about 0.85 percentage points, or 85 "basis

continued ►

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Architect: Torchio Architects
Installing contractor: CitiRoof Corp.
Profile: Precision Series HWP panel
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Photo: Buchanan Studios Inc.



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points," between November 2017 and November 2018. The CoreLogic HPI Forecast suggests the median sale price will rise 2.6 percent in real terms over the same period (or 4.6 percent in nominal terms).

Based on these projections, the inflation-adjusted typical mortgage payment would rise from \$804 in November 2017 to \$910 by November 2018, a 13.3 percent year-over-year gain. In nominal terms, the typical mortgage payment's year-over-year gain would be 15.5 percent.

An IHS Markit forecast calls for real disposable income to rise by just under 4 percent this year, meaning homebuyers would see a larger chunk of their incomes devoted to mortgage payments.

When adjusted for inflation, the typical mortgage payment puts homebuyers' current costs in the proper historical context. While the inflation-adjusted typical mortgage payment has trended higher in recent years, in November 2017 it remained 36.4 percent below the all-time peak of \$1,263 in June 2006.

That's because the average mortgage rate back in June 2006 was about 6.7 percent, compared with an average rate of 3.9 percent in November 2017, and the inflation-adjusted median sale price in June 2006 was \$245,259 (or \$199,900 in 2006 dollars), compared with a November 2017 median of \$212,460.

Remodeler named one of Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For

Power Home Remodeling, an exterior home remodeling company, has been named to the 2018 *Fortune* "100 Best Companies to Work For" list, ranking No. 87. With more than 97 percent of employees saying their workplace is great, Power is the most unexpected of the four Philadelphia region-based companies to be named to the prestigious list this year, which ranks the top employers in the nation.

"It is an honor to be named to the Fortune 100 Best list this year," says Asher Raphael, Power's co-CEO. "Power is committed to creating positive change for its employees, customers, and communities and this is a reflection of that commitment, but we aren't done yet. We understand that our 2,400 employees are our

most valuable assets, and it is because of their daily contributions to our business that we've been able to successfully build a professionally rewarding, inclusive and innovative workplace."

"The 2018 100 Best are true leaders," says Michael C. Bush, CEO of Great Place to Work. "In the face of competition, change, and financial constraints, they consistently prioritize building the trust, pride and camaraderie that fuels business performance. And they're doing it at scale for everyone, regardless of who they are or what they do for the organization."

Developed on a foundation of a people-first culture, the company has expanded by focusing on the growth and happiness of its customers and employees. Instead of placing a premium on individual perks, Power creates initiatives to help teams find more meaningful purpose in their work.

The company's most successful efforts include programs that promote diversity, female leadership, veterans and a proven commitment to develop talent across the company—even if employees' skills are unexpected for their roles. With its unique approach to employee career growth, Power Home Remodeling continues to find ways to innovate internally, accelerating its overall business growth and expanding to 14 offices across the country.

"At Power, we are laser-focused on developing our people to be leaders inside and outside of our walls," says Adam Kaliner, co-founder and president. "We foster this daily through mentorship and internal communications, but we see it truly flourish through our events. We host more than 200 events a year, from quarterly leadership conferences to new hire orientations at headquarters to three-day summits focused on our initiatives, such as Cultural Diversity & Inclusion, Women's Summit, and Veterans Programs. We see the trajectory of our teams change as a direct result of these development conferences, which become more critical as our expansion continues."

Produced by *Fortune* and global research and consulting firm Great Place to Work, the "100 Best Companies to Work For" list is based on survey responses from more than 310,000 employees rating their workplace culture on 50-plus elements including leadership, camaraderie and professional development. To

view the complete list, visit fortune.com/best-companies.

This ranking follows previous No. 1 rankings on *Fortune's* Best Workplaces for Millennials and Best Workplaces for Camaraderie lists. Power also was recently named one of Glassdoor's Top 100 Best Places to Work. For more information about Power and available career opportunities, visit powerhr.com.

Georgia-Pacific to build new lumber plant

Georgia-Pacific has announced it will build a new softwood lumber production facility in Warren County, Georgia, on property adjacent to its existing lumber mill there. Construction of the \$135 million, 340,000-square-foot, technologically advanced plant is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2018, with an anticipated startup in spring 2019.

Georgia-Pacific's existing lumber plant in Warren County will continue full operations until the new facility is completed. After startup of the new plant, Georgia-Pacific estimates hiring an additional 30 to 40 employees, bringing its workforce in Warren County to approximately 150 people.

The new facility will be capable of over three times the output of the current facility. The existing facility has been operating since the early 1970s, and technology in the lumber production business has changed significantly since that time.

Georgia-Pacific employs more than 7,200 people at 18 locations in Georgia. Those jobs create an additional 21,440 indirect jobs. Since 2006, the company has invested approximately \$1.9 billion in additional capital and acquisitions in Georgia.

Once in production, the new facility will receive approximately 185 truckloads of pine logs a day and produce approximately 350 million board-feet of lumber per year.

According to Dr. Wes Clarke at the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, the project will support 454 direct full-time construction jobs in Warren County, another 41 full-time indirect jobs supporting the project, and 42 induced jobs in the community during the construction period.

This construction activity will have a positive economic impact of more than \$28 million added to Warren County during construction. | **QR**

A black and white photograph of a man with a mustache, wearing a heavy jacket and jeans, standing in a workshop or garage. The background shows various tools and equipment. A large red outline of a speech bubble is positioned to the right of the man, containing the main headline.

I'mpossible:
is knowing
an 8-hour day
is only half
the story

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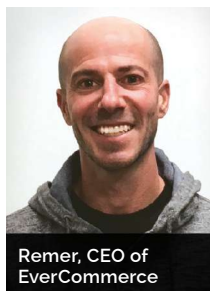

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Creating Flow

By acquiring some of the industry's top technology firms, Eric Remer, CEO of EverCommerce, is a new force shaping home improvement.

Interviewed by Patrick O'Toole

Eric Remer, CEO of Denver-based EverCommerce, is a technology entrepreneur whose previous work with payment-system solutions, namely PaySimple (the platform for EverCommerce), brought him into contact with remodelers and home improvement companies who use the service. In 2016, EverCommerce received a \$115 million investment from Providence Equity Partners to expand as a digital-services platform, with Remer at the helm.



Remer, CEO of EverCommerce

In March of 2017, EverCommerce began acquiring firms such as ImproveIt 360, Keyword Connects, MarketSharp and GuildQuality, just to name a few. The goal is to find new efficiencies and create a better, more seamless end-to-end experience for customers, not only in this industry but in others as well.

Remer explains the vision on the heels of news that Providence will be providing another \$200 million to fund further acquisitions going forward.

QR: Tell us a little bit about you and your background.

Remer: I've started four companies in the past 20 years. The main theme and vision is creating solutions that make the lives of business owners easier. How do we build the platforms that improve the life of the people we serve?

QR: What types of businesses are ideal EverCommerce companies?

Remer: First and foremost, the businesses

we look for are all run by very high-quality, very high-integrity leaders that have a shared vision of creating the best products and the best experiences for their customers. So we are looking for strong teams. That is really the high-level view of the businesses that we are looking for.

QR: Have all of your acquisitions to date been related to home improvement?

Remer: No. We call it home services, so we think of it a little more broadly. I think there are eight in that category and four or five directly in home improvement. The other three or four are in HVAC, plumbing and electrical. By the end of next week [mid-February 2018], we will have completed 13 acquisitions, and 10 will have been in home services, broadly speaking.

QR: What role will EverCommerce play in the home improvement industry?

Remer: Our goal is to create an ecosystem of leading software solutions and services for the home improvement industry. We want to make it easy for contractors to connect the dots with the tools they need to be successful. And ultimately, we want to know what we can do to better support their growth. We do believe in an open network, and we will work with and partner with companies—whether we own them or not—if it creates a better experience for our end customer.

QR: What types of technologies should home improvement companies be adopting?

Remer: Each company is different and has different needs. I want to be careful not to give an overriding statement at all—that a whole group of companies need X, Y and Z. But I will say that they should focus on adopting technologies that focus on three main things: 1) They want to create efficiencies in sales,

marketing and operations. 2) Make it easier for their employees to provide greater value to their end customers and be more successful in the field, and 3) Use software and solutions that help them, the contractors, provide the best experience for their customers.

This goes back to your question earlier: Who is your end customer? To us, there is not necessarily a delineation, except that we only touch the contractor and the pro, so we have to focus on giving them what they need. We know that if we do a really good job, then they can provide the best experience to their end customer, the homeowner.

QR: What does the long-term vision for EverCommerce look like?

Remer: As far as the long-term vision, I touched on it above. Our vision is really for EverCommerce to be the leading commerce platform in the world, helping millions of service-based businesses thrive. We will keep buying software services and solutions that accomplish that goal.

QR: Why the name EverCommerce? You picked the name right?

Remer: Every interaction that a home improvement company has with their customer is a transaction. That transaction may or may not be an economic transaction, but it's an interaction. So a commerce platform is really something that facilitates those interactions that are so vital to the growth of a service-based entity. You need word-of-mouth, repeat customers and long-term customers—all the things you don't have if you think about other forms of commerce, which have been historically retail and e-commerce. We really believe that we haven't really scratched the surface on being able to create the platform, connect the dots and provide greater value to

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our end customers. We love our vertical focus because we learn more and more about each vertical. But you start going into different verticals, and you are able to find solutions and tools that technically were built for a particular vertical, but the applicability of that tool is just as relevant in different verticals. And so we are able to learn the best flows, best systems and often best software that may or may not be in different verticals.

QR: *Why did you choose the home-improvement industry as your first target for M&A?*

Remer: When we were at PaySimple, which is the predecessor to EverCommerce, we were already working with more than 1,000 home improvement companies, so we understood the market at a high level. And we understood the customer. And most importantly, we understood the limitations of our product offering to provide the best value to our customers. So we wanted to find companies that could provide more value directly to our end customer: contractors. The market for software solutions was very fragmented. One of our second thoughts was, 'OK, we know we can't build something as good as they've already built, because we don't know some of the subtleties these companies may know.'

QR: *There must be some overwhelming opportunity in home improvement. Can you explain further?*

Remer: Our view of the home improvement space was that there is going to be, over the next several years, a technology transition utilizing more software and tech-enabled services to make home-improvement businesses more effective. It's our hope that we can provide enough value that it helps accelerate the pace of technology adoption. We think of adoption not in a self-serving way, but as just a positive. It is positive for everybody in the home improvement ecosystem. Homeowners continue to gravitate to technology in all aspects of their lives, and maintaining their home is no different. It is with that mindset that we thought we could make a difference and

we could add value. So we've put a flag down in the home services sector as a place where we wanted to go and make an impact early.

QR: *Why the overlap in services by some of the companies that have been acquired by EverCommerce? What is the thought there?*

Remer: A lot of them, from the outside, seem more overlapped. However, each of these organizations has subtle differences—some greater than the others. And we think the value they provide to their end customer is unique. Each of these organizations, in our view, will continue to operate independently and provide value with connecting integrations where it makes sense. We've connected marketing services, payments and customer-retention tools into some of these organizations to create more of an end-to-end experience. So we believe that most of these organizations will continue to remain independent with their own brands, but hopefully provide even more value to their customers for many years to come.

QR: *How will contractors benefit from this undertaking?*

Remer: Home improvement businesses will benefit because many of them are currently piecing their technology solutions together. As we continue to evolve the platform, there is going to be more integrated and complementary flow, from lead generation to the sales process, to installation, to payments reporting, to ongoing customer retention, to truly make it easier for the professional, the contractor, to just focus on the business without having to piece together a solution. And as I said earlier, those can be our end-to-end solution tools, which some people are looking for, but we are not a closed loop. We definitely see the value in the partnerships that each of our companies have outside of the companies we own. Because our end focus is providing the best experience for our customers. Sometimes those experiences will be with companies in our ecosystem, and sometimes they won't. | **QR**

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 22-24

**JLC Live New England
Providence, R.I.**

Informa Exhibitions
nejlclive.com

April 18-21

**NARI 2018 Spring Business
Meeting, Charlotte, N.C.**

NARI
nari.org/sbm18/

May 8-11

Coverings 2018, Atlanta

Ceramics of Italy, TCNA, Tile of Spain,
CTDA, NTCA
coverings.com

May 10

NARI Legislative Fly-in

NARI Government Advocacy Committee
nari.org/industry/advocacy/fly-in/

May 17-18

**Home Improvement Economic
Summit, Chicago**

Dave Yoho Associates
hipsummit.com

June 4-6

Truckee, Calif.

2018 Dream Bigger Conference

Certified Contractors Network
tinyurl.com/2018-dream-bigger-conference/

June 14-15

**East Coast Builders Conference
Nashville, Tenn.**

VP Management Services
ebcshow.com

June 21-23

**AIA Conference on Architecture
2018, New York City**

The American Institute of Architects
conferenceonarchitecture.com

June 27-28

PCBC 2018, San Francisco

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Online Exclusives/News

During the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show in January, HomeAdvisor hosted a panel entitled, "The Secrets of (Smart) Home Remodeling." Moderator Dan DiClerico, smart home strategist for HomeAdvisor, with insights from the panelists, highlights five takeaways and trends remodelers can leverage to grow their businesses. Learn trends to watch from DiClerico at QualifiedRemodeler.com/5-smart-home-trends-to-watch-in-2018/.

INSPIRE



The **Daniel Contelmo Architects'** project featured in our February issue has been our most "liked" post amongst recent Instagram coverage. Fun fact that, at time of publication, the #remodeling has been used with 510,600 posts—including our post of the exterior facelift project.

Find and follow us to see what we feature next!



► Photo: Daniel Contelmo Jr.

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"Like" us today and keep up to date on the latest news, articles and more from our magazine and website.

Find us at facebook.com/QualifiedRemodeler.

Smart Vent Products, Inc. posted: "Hurribond, a product of Smart Vent and our specified adhesive and caulk was featured in the January 2018 issue of *Qualified Remodeler* magazine!"



Treeium posted: "The best of home improvement minds are back! We're so excited for our CEO Moty Ginsburg, who will be speaking at *Qualified Remodeler's* Top 500 Live this year! #QRTop500Live #QualifiedRemodeler <http://goo.gl/kNtXFD>."



Photo: Smart Vent Products

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Don't Wait To Find Your Sweet Spot—Create It

By Shawn McCadden, CR, CLC, CAPS

Industry experts have forever been telling remodelers to find their sweet spot. Great advice? Maybe, maybe not. How are you supposed to find it? Should you do business for five years first, try every job type and size possible, so you can then compare results and find your sweet spot?

Suppose you wait the five years; do you have adequate metrics in place to track what was really happening in an accurate way during that time? You might want to see which job types have been the most profitable. But do you accurately do your job-costing with the ability to compare estimated costs to actual costs? OK, and if you estimate labor with an assumed labor-burden cost (assuming it is accurate), do you also job-cost the actual labor cost assuming those same burdens? Specific by each employee? I bet not.

Not one contractor client I have worked with since 1996 has been doing it, or could figure out how to do so, until they sought outside help. In fact, most didn't even know, and were embarrassed to admit, that they were comparing apples to cumquats for years. One described it as feeling like a 2x4 across the side of his head.

If your current method of determining your sweet spot is limited to the most profitable jobs as the main characteristic, you might be missing out on other considerations that could benefit your business in many undiscovered ways. Unless you are already aware of other considerations you could use, how could you put them in place and measure to see if they make sense?

EASE OF ESTIMATING AND SELLING

Finding good salespeople who can sell remodeling is a big problem that will only get bigger as the demand for salespeople naturally increases. With the increase that is expected in remodeling spending in the next few years, finding a salesperson with construction as well

as estimating expertise will be almost impossible. Especially finding someone who already knows how to use the existing, homegrown, estimating system you have in place and have been using at your business. But deciding to sell jobs that can be estimated using a simple template that already contains unit costs and is just waiting for quantities could help you create a sweet spot. Basic 40-square-foot bathrooms or modest galley kitchens could be examples fitting into this category. With the right approach, you can promise your prospects they, too, will have a completely unique bathroom or kitchen in their home, just like their neighbors down the street.

Add the right showroom setup with an adequate depth of products and price points, and now you can control all the products, speed up the selection process, and eliminate the middle man so you can keep all the margin to be earned for your business. In addition to being profitable, it can also be sold, pre-staged and managed with far less overhead than more complex project types. That kind of sweet spot could add lots of dollars to your bottom line.

CONSIDER THE FUTURE

I believe professionals begin with the end in mind. When deciding your sweet spot, it is also wise to consider who will be selling, managing and producing these projects in the future. If you plan to keep your business small and self-perform most of these activities, then choose profitable job types you like to sell and manage. However, if your goal is to grow your business and step back

at some point, should you sell what you like or want to do, or what your future employees will want and like to do every day? If you want to sell complex projects no one else in town can figure out because that is what gives you energy, will you ever be able to

find someone who will be able to replace you in that role in the future? Rather than settle on a sweet spot that works for today, I think you should prioritize creating a sweet spot that sets you, your business and your employees up for a sweet future. Creating a vision for that future, as well as

a path to get there, can also be a powerful way to attract and keep great employees, because great employees typically think ahead, too, both at work and in their personal lives.

Prioritize creating a sweet spot that sets you, your business and your employees up for a sweet future.

WHAT TO DO NOW

If what I have been sharing here makes sense, consider whether you want to—and can—figure out all this stuff on your own or if an outside expert is required. Knowing the characteristics to consider can help you proactively create that sweet spot, so you don't have to wait to find it. The expense of time and lost profits while you search for your sweet spot will be far more expensive over the long-term than the short-term investment of working with a professional and proactively deciding so you can get started on it today. | **QR**



McCadden is a speaker, business trainer, columnist and award-winning remodeler with more than 35 years of experience. He can be reached at shawnmccadden.com.

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Tools Measure Up

Laser measures go beyond computing room dimensions with features that further enhance the user experience.

By Kacey Larsen

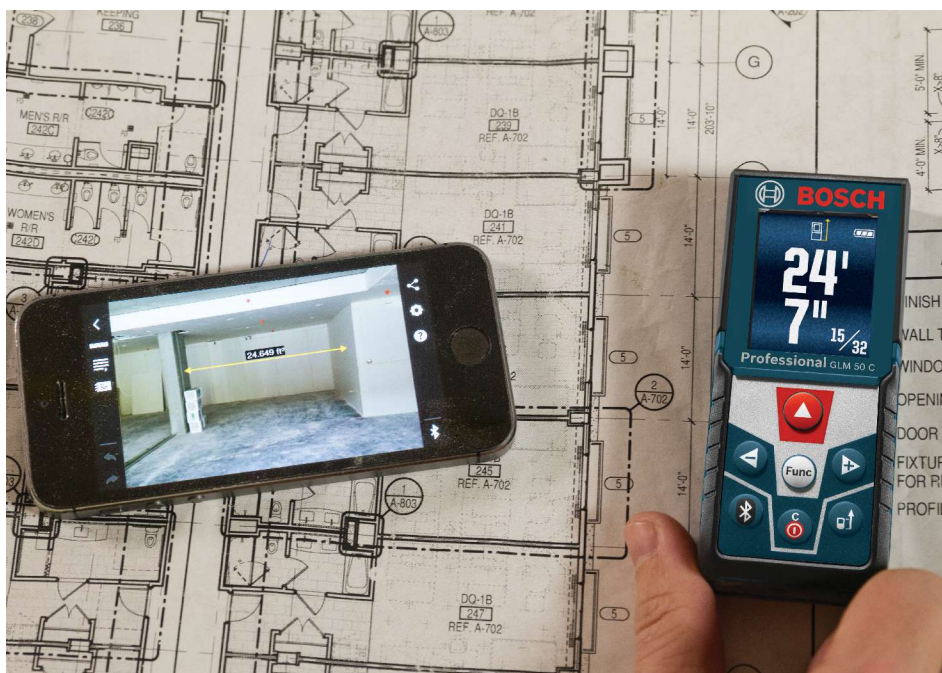
While there is no denying the place of a tape measure in a toolbox, many of today's laser measure tools are vying for space as well. A number of them incorporate Bluetooth functionality that makes the collected measurements easily accessible for use in a variety of formats. Plus, the accuracy—not to mention reduced human reading error—makes laser measuring devices perhaps even more appealing.

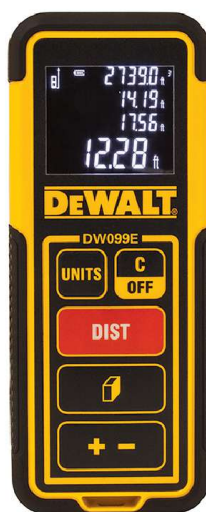
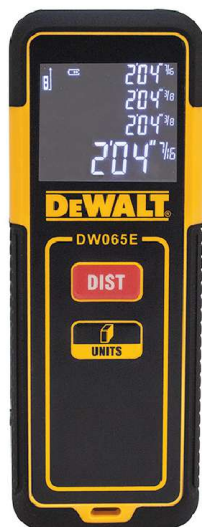
Read on for a roundup of laser measuring tools that feature Bluetooth and other connectivity options.

BOSCH

Keeping user experience in mind, the Bosch GLM 50 C Bluetooth Laser Measure features a backlit color display with large numbers and full-word function descriptions to ensure measurements captured are easily readable and its use is intuitive. The full-feature laser measure with easy-to-use keypad can toggle between length, area, volume, three indirect measurement modes and other functions. A built-in inclinometer can determine the angle of pitch, minimum/maximum, stake out and double indirect; a stake out measurement can pinpoint recurring marks along a line, such as every 6 inches. With a range of 165 feet and an accuracy of $\pm 1/16$ of an inch, the Bosch GLM 50 C's square shape ensures the unit can measure in any direction from a flat surface. Like all the company's laser measures, the default real-time measurement can show how measurements move in relation to a target.

An extension of the consideration toward user experience is the tool's Bluetooth functionality, allowing measurements to be digitally transferred to a smartphone or tablet. Additionally, the laser measure connects to the Bosch MeasureOn app to create floor plans,





photos and notes. Visit boschtools.com for more information on the Bosch GLM 50 C.

DEWALT

To support a broad range of leveling and layout applications, the DeWalt Laser Distance Measurer (LDM) line can size-up projects with ranges up to 330 feet. One of the recent additions to the lineup is the DeWalt Bluetooth Enabled 100-Foot Laser Distance Measurer (DW099S). The laser distance measurer can find distance from a target as well as distance, area and volume in feet, inches and meters. It can provide historical measurement for reference to the last three measurements. Additionally, its functions include performing simple addition and subtraction, and the laser measurer lists its accuracy as $\pm 3/32$ of an inch.

The 100-Foot Laser Distance Measurer's 1-1/2-inch black backlit, high-contrast LCD screen remains readable in various lighting conditions and displays continuous measurement tracking. The tool connects via Bluetooth to store measurements, mark up photos and be able to save both on the DeWalt Tool Connect app. Data from the Tool Connect mobile app automatically updates in an Inventory Manager port—part of the Tool Connect inventory management solution—to give real-time information back to the home base.

Also recently introduced are the DeWalt 65-Foot Laser Distance Measurer (DW065E)

and DeWalt 30-Foot Pocket Laser Distance Measurer (DW030PL. Visit dewalt.com for more information on DeWalt's LDM line.

HILTI

Aiming to eliminate the need for multiple devices—including paper and pencil—the Hilti laser range meter PD-CS measures distances to 656 feet with an accuracy of ± 1

millimeter. An integrated laser module captures and saves measurement data directly onto photographs taken by its internal digital camera, helping add context to stored data with pictures and/or text. Using an Android-based technology, the Hilti PD-CS has a color touch screen that is usable even while wearing work gloves, and it includes 8 GB of memory that can store more than 6,000 measurements with photos.

Its two 5 MP cameras with zooming capabilities help locate a target outdoors or at long distances. Direct and indirect measurements can be taken, area and volume can be calculated, and notes can be added to measurements and photos. Measurements can then be exported in a single PDF report or spreadsheet from the Hilti PD-CS using Bluetooth, a Cloud App over a Wi-Fi connection or a Micro USB connection. Its integrated lithium-ion battery provides 10 hours of battery life.

Additionally, the Hilti laser ranger meter PD-CS is covered by the company's Tool Warranty 20/2/1. Visit hilti.com for more information on the Hilti PD-CD. | **QR**



CERTIFIED REMODELING PROJECT MANAGER: Project Management: Planning Schedule

In part one, we discussed the project management concepts of Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and project scope development—or the “what” of the project. In this part, we will discuss the schedule, or the “when” of planning. The typical steps to create a schedule include: defining the task, sequence of tasks, estimate resources, estimate durations, develop the schedule and manage the schedule.

DEFINE THE TASKS

Use the WBS as a starting point for this task. You will need to take input from other sources, such as the contract, building plans and local codes. Once you’ve defined all tasks, define the actual activities required to create each set of deliverables. You may also consider expanding the number of activities required, especially for complex or involved tasks.

SEQUENCE TASKS

Based on past experience, or because the relationships are fairly clear, you may have a good idea of the sequence of tasks. [Examples include pulling permits, demolition, plumbing and electrical.] Before starting any work, understand how the schedule will be used, who will be using it and how it will be updated.

When selecting a presentation method, you need to consider project complexity; which planning software you are using, if any; and how to share the schedule. Some common display types include a flow chart (also called a network diagram) or a bar chart/Gantt chart.

Prior to laying out the schedule, you will need to classify your tasks as predecessor or successor tasks. Predecessor tasks are those that occur before another task, while a successor task is one that occurs after another task. These relationships generally reflect the required sequence that will be applied in the schedule. Task dependencies can have one of four different conditions:

- **Finish to Start (F-S)**

The first task must finish before the second task can start. F-S is the most common task.

- **Finish to Finish (F-F)**

The first task must finish before the second task can finish.

- **Start to Start (S-S)**

The first task must start before the second task can start.

- **Start to Finish (S-F)**

The first task must start before the second task finishes.

ESTIMATE RESOURCES

Next determine the resources required/available for the project, including funds, workers and equipment. If you use trade contractors, factor in their capability and availability at this point. If you find gaps in resource availability, now is the time to resolve.

ESTIMATE DURATION

Determine the time required to complete a task and assign it in the duration. The methods used to arrive at these values can range from a guess based on past experience—e.g., “It always takes a week to hang cabinets”—to other more complex techniques. You can also make an estimate and add a safety buffer or average the best and worst case times.

DEVELOP A SCHEDULE

First lay out the tasks, then factor in labor and trade contractor availability, and make adjustments. If a project can be affected by outside conditions like weather, material shortages or trade contractor delays, factor that in as well.

CRITICAL PATH METHOD (CPM)

In this method, you plan tasks by duration and dependencies. The longest path becomes the critical path because it defines when the project can be completed. It should be noted that as the project moves forward, changes to

tasks’ lengths due to unforeseen issues may extend an alternate path and make that the critical path. It is very important to manage each path and understand the current critical path to ensure completion dates stay on track.

BAR CHART/GANTT CHART

This is a common presentation tool and is often the default for software tools. It provides differing levels of detail and can be compact, showing a lot of data on a page. However, it can be harder to show the task dependencies than a project flow chart or network diagram.

MILESTONE SCHEDULE

Milestones are major deliverables or decision points of a project and may include completion points, transitions in work, or phases related to payment. [Examples would include design completion, pulling permits, demolition starts and framing inspection.] A milestone schedule provides a concise view of the entire schedule by identifying these key events.

MANAGE THE SCHEDULE

Once the preliminary project plan is completed, you have a baseline schedule, but it is a living document. Once work begins, it should be referred to and updated as changes occur.

DOCUMENT

Things happen, like weather, product delivery delays, sometimes a sickness or other unforeseen issues. It’s important to document any situations that may result in a change in schedule. Approved change orders or a rain delay require an update to the project timeline. | QR



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Forward Thinking

Myllymaki plans and monitors benchmarks for his business as well as his goals for the local council.

Compiled by Kacey Larsen

QR: *Who started your company?*

DM: I did, with the support and assistance of my wife, Kristi.

QR: *How did you choose this career?*

DM: You might say that this career chose me! I've been involved in remodeling and residential construction since my early childhood. When I was 2 years old, my parents bought a home with a never-ending list of remodeling projects to be done. I learned a lot about the process of remodeling growing up, and this career has been a natural fit for me.

QR: *What is a favorite item in your office?*

DM: My MacBook Pro. Ten years ago I didn't know how to operate a Mac, but after my wife bought one and I learned how to use it, I was sold. Today, we use all Mac computers and have assembled a great suite of software products that fully integrate our business systems.

QR: *What does being part of NAHB Remodelers mean to you?*

DM: NAHB involvement really helps us small

contractors find a voice and achieve a level of professionalism that we would not be able to enjoy on our own. We have a great group of contractors in our local association who work well together; spur each other on; and protect, educate and promote our industry. The staff at our [local] BIA is very helpful in leveraging the strengths of the NAHB to help us all be more effective and valuable in the community.

QR: *In your position as chair of the Remodelers of Clark County, what goals do you have personally and for the group?*

DM: Personally, I would love to see more young contractors join our Remodelers of Clark County (ROCC) group so we can assist them to grow and strengthen our council. For our ROCC group as a whole, I think our biggest goal for 2018 is to continue working with our local building department to revise and streamline the permitting process for remodeling projects in our county. We began a dialogue with some of our head officials last summer, and we are currently following up with them to see our proposal through. This would bring benefits to contractors, homeowners and county government alike by simplifying and standardizing some of the process that seems misaligned in our county today.

QR: *How has the remodeling profession changed since you've been involved?*

DM: In two words: increased regulation. This applies to so many aspects of the business—from permitting requirements and inspections, to the treatment of hazardous materials, to insurance requirements. Of course, each of these is meant to help with some form of safety, protection or societal benefit. The tough thing is to mesh overlapping regulations together in a sensible and workable manner.



DAVE MYLLYMAKI
ReNew Creations, LLC
Battle Ground, Wash.
renewcreations.com

TITLE: Owner
YEAR FOUNDED: 2013
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 4
ASSOCIATION TITLE:
Chair of Remodelers
Council of Clark County



QR: *What have you done to grow your business during the current economy?*

DM: We've learned that it's not any single thing that allows us to grow, but a focus on improving the link that's currently the weakest—there's always a weakest link—and getting all parts of the company running smoothly, so that it leads to strong growth. In business, change is a constant. We've found it helpful to carefully create a forward-thinking plan each year, understand our numbers, and monitor our progress against measurable benchmarks month-by-month and quarter-by-quarter, making adjustments along the way.

QR: *Is your focus as a remodeler on more growth or steady revenue at greater profitability right now?*

DM: Our focus for 2018 is to even out the peaks and valleys in our sales-production pipeline, by steadily filtering through our new leads to bring in a proper flow of jobs with the right scope of work, margin, revenue and timeline to bring us the growth and sales levels we've targeted in our planning. It's really a combination of all three: steady growth, a stable revenue stream and greater profitability overall.

QR: *What motivates you every day?*

DM: In short, I love what I do for a living and feel like this is what I was created to do. Constantly striving to improve is a drive that I am both blessed and cursed with. Every day I seem to find more things to work on than there are hours in the day. The great feeling of accomplishment that comes from a job well done is probably my greatest motivator. | **QR**

+ Read the complete interview at
QualifiedRemodeler.com/NAHBR.



Participation in the community's Remodeled Homes Tour has helped attract some of the company's largest projects, Myllymaki notes.

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Bridging the Gap

Sullivan Building & Design Group consolidates colonial farmhouses into contemporary residence with rustic appeal.

By Kyle Clapham

Two distinct stone buildings, sited just 40 feet apart, had been vacant for years after serving as individual houses on an old peach farm. Zoning for the property allowed only one home on the lot, so the owners wanted to maintain both original structures and create one residence from the two buildings. They solicited Sullivan Building & Design Group in Quakertown, Pennsylvania.

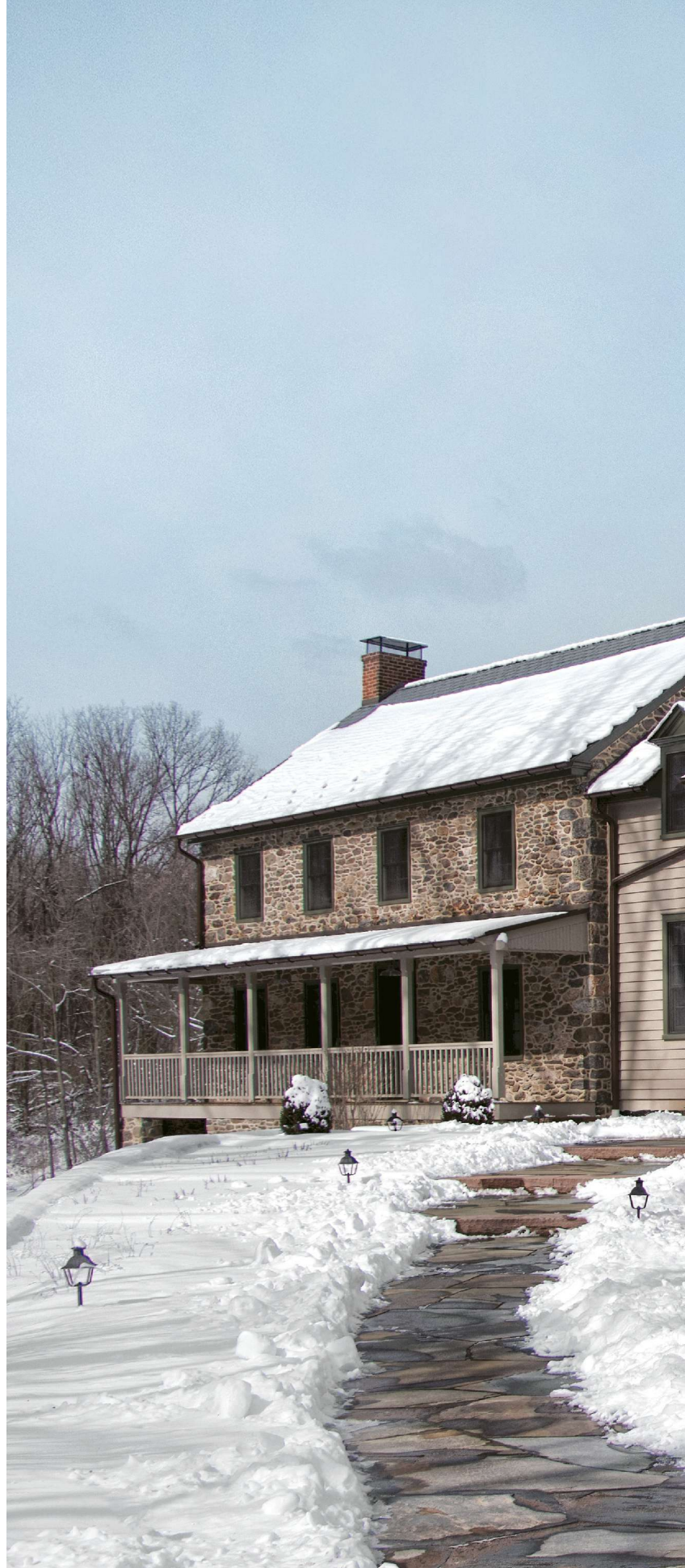
The company previously transformed a barn on the property into a man cave with entertainment space, as well as storage for their motorcycles and four wheelers. This new project required ingenuity because each of the stone structures had functioned as a stand-alone unit complete with kitchens, bathrooms, fireplaces and heating systems. In other words, the two buildings needed to complement one another.

Constructing a new central living area and kitchen between the original structures offset the 200-year-old farmhouse style with a clean, modern look. The company had to consider the scale and proportion of the existing buildings to make sure the addition blends seamlessly. Now, the single-family home appears to be authentic and captures the essence of a traditional colonial farmhouse.

INSIDE OUT

From the beginning, the company anticipated a modern renovation that would connect the 1800s structures and merge the different styles. Focusing on the living space between the two buildings presented an opportunity to design an upgraded core for the home. A walnut kitchen and custom-made staircase with built-in storage—plus a glass and metal railing—help generate a warm ambience.

“The way we developed the space between them [meant] the stone walls [became] interior walls, so the interior of the house is actually exposing the exterior of the original houses,”



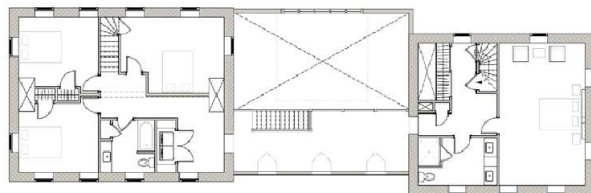
Photos: Cider Press Woodworks



BEFORE



1ST FLOOR PLAN



2ND FLOOR PLAN

explains Neil Sullivan, owner of Sullivan Building & Design Group. “We had a number of openings [in the existing walls] that were changed to accommodate the new addition that joined them [together].”

The challenge for Morris and Bailey Stonework centered on making the exterior gable walls look normal in an interior setting. The full-service masonry contractor converted some of the windows into doorways and left others alone, such as the one above the new kitchen. Carving out openings in the 18-inch-thick stone walls permitted access to the addition from both the original structures.

✓ The back of the home incorporates porches on both the original farmhouses.



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REMODELER INFORMATION

Sullivan Building & Design Group
Quakertown, Pa.
sullivanbuildinganddesigngroup.com

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project name: Spinnerstown Stone House
Project location: Spinnerstown, Pa.
Square footage before: 3,576
Square footage after: 4,568
Project cost: \$1.2 million

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Countertops: Calacatta marble
Kitchen sink: Clayburn
Powder room sink: Danby marble
Plumbing fixtures: Waterworks
Tile: Waterworks
Porch: Ipe decking
Cabinets: Cider Press Woodworks
Stairs: Cider Press Woodworks
Railing: Cider Press Woodworks

“The stone masons did a fabulous job of making sure the holes that we cut were sound, and the way they interlaced the new stone to fix the openings that we created was superb,” Sullivan says. “It was a combination of our stone masons and interior plastering contractor [developing] a way to make that opening blend the old plaster and be able to visibly see the stone that’s beneath it.”

An existing fireplace opened into one of the farmhouses, but Morris and Bailey cut a hole in the stone wall so that the fireplace could turn around and face the new living space. “The height of the hearth is the height that it would’ve been if it was on the other side, where it originally was,” says Sullivan, who has remodeled many historic stone farmhouses in southeastern Pennsylvania.

OFF KILTER

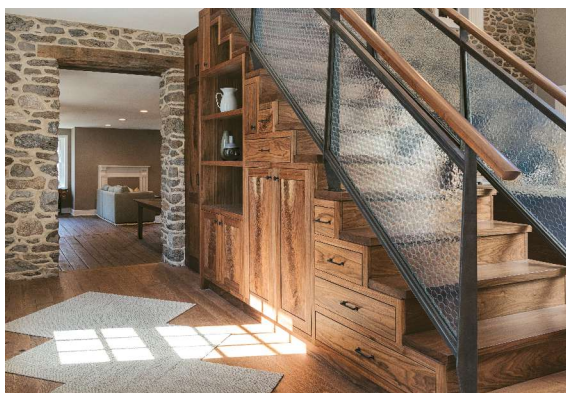
The original structures contain different floor elevations, which required Sullivan and his team to compensate for that disparity in the addition. First, they determined the existing grade and forged a level area for the new living space. Then they used the thickness of the old stone walls to install stair treads on each side to facilitate traffic flow through the addition from both the existing buildings.

“These are old farmhouses that generally have a rustic feel, and we wanted to create an overall effect that was relatively seamless, even though the interior of the new



↑ Stone masons left an original window above the new kitchen space.

↓ The custom-made staircase in the addition includes built-in storage.



part is clearly a lot more contemporary than the other two sides, which [were] pretty much restored,” Sullivan says. “The main rustic details of the 1800s farmhouse are still firmly intact—a lot of exposed beams and wood floors.”

The company gutted both the original structures and refurbished the historical details through its millwork division, Cider Press Woodworks. Some of the existing wood floors remained in place and did not necessitate much repair. Cider Press Woodworks also handmade all the components for the walnut kitchen, staircase and the glass and metal railing that runs throughout the addition.

“The continuity [and] the softness of the wood clearly lends itself to putting a project together,” Sullivan explains. “We did very little to [the floors] in order to create that softness and original feel of the wood. [The boards we did install] are what we call character-grade, so there are some knots in them and they tend to look like they’ve been there a long time, but they’re brand new.”

Before the project, the existing buildings displayed exterior façades that did not match exactly despite their comparable composition. After sandblasting, the structures show more similarity. “Stone farmhouses in our region typically are done by collecting stones from the surrounding areas,” Sullivan says. “It may look different [over time], but the stone is pretty consistent throughout.”



↑ The addition exposes the exterior walls of the original farmhouses and blends divergent styles.

← An old fireplace that opened into one of the farmhouses now faces the new living space.

FINAL TOUCH

One of the buildings already incorporated a front porch, but the attachment did not include a roof and appeared particularly weather-beaten. Sullivan inferred the structure had been covered in the past, so the company updated the platform with a roof and expanded the depth of the space slightly. The back of the building also encompasses a porch now after being added during the construction process.

“There was evidence of the anchored bolts—the brackets—that would’ve been on the beam that held up the porch [in front]. And there’s always marks from old plaster that you can identify that can help you [determine] what would’ve been there,” Sullivan explains. “From our



↑ Some of the windows in the stone walls were enlarged into doorways on the second level.

➔ Trade contractors blended the plaster to make the stone underneath visible.

▣ Each of the original stone farmhouses were restored and updated for energy efficiency.



↑ The furniture in both of the original structures melds a farmhouse style with the more contemporary design feel of the new living space.

experience in dealing with these kind of houses, we're pretty familiar with what would've been there [before]."

The company needed to combine the utilities of both structures into one building because each of them contained a complete system. Sullivan housed many of the utilities in an existing basement, replaced every window and inserted insulation in the ceilings, where the greatest amount of heat loss occurs. Framing the interior walls of the original structures improved the building envelope.

"Basically we started from scratch, so everything was removed and radiant heat was added to the [new living space], and air conditioning and heating was added to the other two, which of course traditionally had just the big, walk-in fireplaces," Sullivan says. "Since we weren't [leaving] any stone exposed on the inside [of the original farmhouses], we used 2-by-4 walls with R-13 insulation. The other side is still 18-inch-thick [stone], which equates to a R-1 energy factor."

Sullivan and his team worked closely with the clients, who actively participated in the project—especially during the selection process. The company has been tasked with constructing another home on their property, a modern glass house at the edge of a wooded area. But the quaint charm of their revamped colonial farmhouse should continue to exhibit character for another 200 years.

"The integrity of the design was to maintain an image and then update it, so that it had all of the features that people want today—as well as the original look of the building that was intended," Sullivan adds. "Many times, you don't have a full concept of the final result until you're actually standing there looking at it, deciding what to do." | QR

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Applicants for NARI Contractor of the Year and the Chrysalis Awards may submit those materials for the Master Design Awards.



Photos: Treve Johnson Photography

The Long-Term View

A couple's California retirement home undergoes a major remodel to better fit their intention to live and age in place.

By Dave Leff

Our clients found a neighborhood, a property and a view that was exactly what they wanted, but with a house that didn't meet their needs. They knew that the home, purchased for their retirement, would require a major remodel. With a clear understanding of the challenges involved and a vision of how the clients wanted to live in the home, five main goals were identified for the project:

In anticipation of their own aging and that of their friends, the home had to be made completely barrier-free.

A steep driveway was redesigned and a wheelchair-accessible serpentine walkway was constructed, leading from the street to the front door with no steps or other barriers. The front porch and garage slab were rebuilt to

MASTER DESIGN AWARDS 2017 BRONZE | UNIVERSAL DESIGN

REMODELER INFORMATION

LEFF Construction Design Build
Sebastopol, Calif.
leffconstruction.com

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project name: Whole-home Remodel with Universal Design

Square footage added: 1,707

Project cost: \$1.24 million

PRODUCT INFORMATION

EXTERIOR

Front door: Simpson Door Company

Exterior paint: Kelly Moore

Shingle roof: GAF Timerline

INTERIOR

Interior paint: Benjamin Moore

Fireplace: Valor Fireplaces

Fireplace surround: MSI Stone

Mantle: Caesarstone

Whole-house ventilator: Tamarack Technologies

KITCHEN

Refrigerators: Sub-Zero

Oven: KitchenAid

Cooktop: Thermador

Microwave: GE Profile

Dishwasher: Fisher Paykel

Sink: Blanco

Faucet: Grohe

Waste disposer: InSinkerator

Hardware: Top Knobs

Backsplash tile: Bellavita Tile

Flooring: COREtec Plus

GUEST SUITE

Bedroom flooring: Mohawk

Shower system: Altman's Products

Toilet: Toto

Sink: Kohler

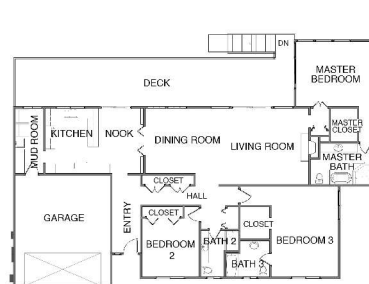
Faucet: Cifial

Cabinets: Sollera Fine Cabinetry

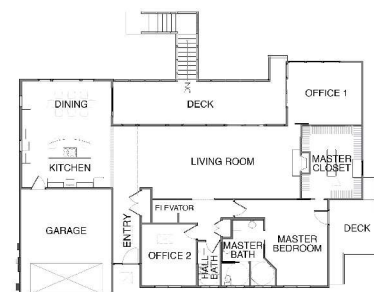
Fan: Panasonic Whisper Green

Flooring: Arizona Tile Over

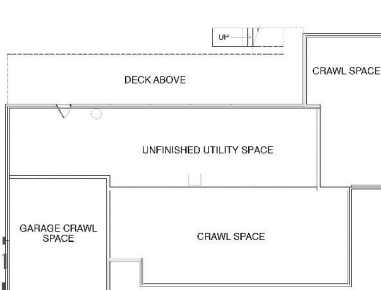
Shower drain: Schluter-Kerdi-Line



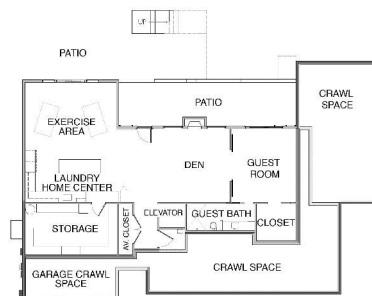
UPPER LEVEL - BEFORE



UPPER LEVEL - AFTER



LOWER LEVEL - BEFORE



LOWER LEVEL - AFTER

eliminate any steps between the exterior and interior of the house. A ramping deck from the front of the house runs along the side to the rear yard, creating access to the hot tub deck with, again, no steps. Once inside the home, all doors and paths of travel were widened; all showers were converted to curbless; and an elevator was installed, allowing for easy access to the lower level from the main floor.

The clients were moving out of a much larger home, and although they were interested in downsizing, this house needed some additional space.

A restrictive zoning ordinance would not allow for an increase in the building footprint of more than 210 square feet. The design solution was to excavate under the house enough to create a full-height lower level of 1,500 square feet and add a smaller, two-story addition of 207 square feet. The former mud room and kitchen nook spaces were reconfigured to expand the kitchen and create a large great room.

Add a fully accessible guest suite.

To accommodate overnight visitors, a guest suite in the new lower level of the house was designed with a bedroom, sitting room and an accessible bathroom with a curbless shower and universal design fixtures. A large laundry room, an exercise area and a large storage room were also added to the lower floor.



← The garage slab and front porch were reworked to eliminate steps from the exterior to interior.

↓ A steel beam runs along the expanse of windows, allowing for minimal framing to maximize views.



Photos: Treve Johnson Photography



↑ A guest suite in the new lower level is accessible by elevator and includes a bedroom and sitting room.

➤ The lower-level guest suite bathroom also features universal design fixtures and a curbless shower.



↑ A larger deck as well as improved accessibility further the California home's connection to the outdoors.

Expand the view and create a strong connection between the interior and exterior spaces for entertaining and gardening.

Because a full view across the valley was not possible from the main living areas, the existing roof structure was re-built with a wall of windows, allowing for an unobstructed view of the local mountains. A steel beam across the full expanse of the window wall allowed for minimal framing above the windows, opening the view of the hilltops and sky from anywhere in the room. A larger deck and more accessible entries to and from the new backyard, patio and garden planters were added.

Make the home more energy-efficient, healthy and comfortable.

All windows and doors were replaced, and the home was air sealed and well insulated with closed cell foam at the ceilings. A PV solar system was installed to help offset the electrical energy requirements of the residence. The home was completely rewired with new LED lighting and replumbed with all low-flow fixtures. Retractable shading was installed on all west-facing windows, which contributed to the passive cooling of the house. The old forced-air HVAC system was removed and replaced with three mini-split heat pumps with concealed air handlers. Two whole-house fans were installed to vent hot summer air. | **QR**



DAVE LEFF is the founder, president and CEO of LEFF Construction Design Build, which is celebrating 40 years of serving Sonoma County homeowners. Leff was born in London, where he lived until moving to San Francisco at the age of 9 years old. He attended Sonoma State University, graduating with degrees in Psychology and English. Leff was on his way to law school when he decided to stay a little longer in Sebastopol, California, to improve

his carpentry skills. In 1978, Leff formed LEFF Construction as a sole proprietor, and was joined by his father in 1987 when they incorporated the company.

Leff is a Certified Green Builder, and over the decades has become an expert in solar and sustainable building, historical renovation and infill real estate development. He's dedicated to alternative building approaches, and his passion for building and remodeling homes that are beautiful and functional—and that integrate sustainable principles with new technologies—has informed his

company vision and the development of his design/build approach to all projects.

Leff has been an instructor of the remodeling process to homeowners and contractors. He and the LEFF team hold remodeling workshops for homeowners at the new LEFF Design Center several times a year. He serves on the Board of Directors and heads up the Green Building Committee of the North Coast Builders Exchange, and he participates as a speaker and panelist in conferences and events about sustainable building practices.

2018 CALL FOR ENTRIES

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Entries for the 2018 Chrysalis Awards are now being accepted.

All entries must be in a **digital format** this year. Complete information is available at ChrysalisAwards.com.

DEADLINE: Entries must be received by **March 30, 2018**. This deadline may be extended.

ELIGIBILITY: Projects completed after January 1, 2015 are eligible for the 2018 program. This includes previous Chrysalis entries that did not win a Chrysalis Award, as well as entries in other competitions.

WHO MAY ENTER: Any remodeler, architect or design professional in the United States. Chrysalis is open to everyone. There is no requirement to be a member of a specific professional organization to enter.

ENTRY CATEGORIES: A complete list and description of the categories can be found at ChrysalisAwards.com and on the entry page. Entry categories include several price ranges in almost every aspect of remodeling.

ENTRY FORMAT: You can create your entry on the Chrysalis Award Entry page, or submit any digital entry from another remodeling competition without change.

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Storage Space

Cabinetry plays a prominent—and preliminary—role in the planning and design of an outdoor kitchen.

By Kyle Clapham

The number of previously owned homes on the market dropped to 1.48 million units at the end of 2017, the lowest since 1999 when the National Association of Realtors started tracking total inventory. A scarcity of housing supply has compelled many owners to continue living in their home and build up additional equity, so they can truly enjoy their space and boost resale value.

An outdoor kitchen gives homeowners the capacity to entertain people outside and reduces the need for frequent trips back into the house. Advanced features such as ice makers, dishwashers and warming drawers increase the convenience and make the space more independent from the kitchen inside. Adequate storage also plays an essential role in the design of an outdoor kitchen.



Photo: Walpole Outdoors



Photo: Atlantic Outdoor Living



Photo: Walpole Outdoors

← Outdoor kitchen cabinets must be able to withstand the heat from grills and other cooking surfaces.

↑ [Top] Denver/Brown Jordan Outdoor Kitchens gives homeowners a wide range of cabinetry options.

↑ [Bottom] Cabinets must be considered early on in the project because they set the stage for appliances.

Cabinets present an ideal solution because of their versatility, and homeowners have used them indoors for many years. Outdoor cabinetry must be able to weather the elements, however, and hold up over time without rusting or deteriorating. The range of products available continues to grow as consumers weigh their options and remodelers learn about the benefits of each cabinet.

GETTING STARTED

“Historically, outdoor cabinets have been pretty lousy,” says Craig Mason, president of Mason Development & Construction in Jupiter, Florida. “The stigma is cabinets are not going to hold up, hinges are going to rust, hardware’s not going to work, and cabinets [will] deteriorate over time. Then you’re going to have a countertop that’s

held up to the elements, [and] you’re going to have appliances that are in good shape, [but] you’re going to have to go back and try to take everything apart [to] replace the cabinets.”

Cabinetry often serves as the starting point for an outdoor kitchen project, Mason adds, and his company primarily uses three different types of cabinets. The bolt-in-place CMU block or brick wall provides intermediate supports for the countertops and allows the appliances to be installed between them. Stainless steel cabinetry offers superior durability and prevents rust, which comes in especially handy for Mason because the company completes outdoor projects in a marine area.

Another option for Mason has become WeatherStrong Outdoor Cabinetry, a waterproof, ¾-inch marine-grade

polymer product with stainless steel hardware and handles. The line comes in four different door styles, and its lower price point enables consumers to save money and spend more on other aspects of their outdoor kitchen, such as the countertops, appliances and barbecue space.

“Some people like the stainless steel look, and that’s what they want; but it is more expensive,” explains Mason, who takes on five or six outdoor kitchen projects a year. “If you have a budget and go into it with a certain number for the entire project, and you’re able to get one component for less money, it makes sense to upgrade your countertops [and] your outdoor barbecue area. A lot of the appliances have been upgraded [in our projects].”



WeatherStrong Outdoor Cabinetry offers remodelers design services and expedited shipping.

Mason prioritizes the quality of outdoor cabinets but also values the transactional benefits, such as design assistance and the speed at which he can receive the product. Some manufacturers just need the specific measurements, and they can generate a 3-D rendering that shows the customer what the selected cabinetry will look like, as opposed to leafing through a catalog and imagining.

“It’s cool because we can show that to a customer and say, ‘This is what we can do,’ compared to me going through a catalog and saying, ‘This is what the stainless steel cabinets look like—you’ve got to picture this in your setting,’” explains Mason, who places even more importance on how quickly he can obtain the cabinetry.

“Most times it’s a long lead time. That doesn’t always come into play because if we’re doing a larger project for a customer, it’s not a big deal to wait eight to 10 weeks,” he continues. “But if someone’s in a rush, particularly before Thanksgiving or a Super Bowl party or something like that, [and] they want to have it done for that, then we have to put a rush on it and make sure we can get a product that’s available in time.”

PLANNING AHEAD

Eddie Casanave, owner of Distinctive Remodeling in Raleigh, North Carolina, asks his clients to fill out a survey at the beginning of their project so he can design a proper solution. They must be able to think through how they intend to use the outdoor kitchen—do they want to grill or smoke, for example—and if they desire to include technologies like TV systems and Wi-Fi connectivity.

“I try to get them to help me pick out the things for their outdoor kitchen that they want to use,” says Casanave, who completes 10 to 15 projects a year. “I get them to visualize who’s going to be cooking, who’s going to be entertaining, how many they will be entertaining, and which type of appliance best suits those needs—because we have to design the cabinetry around appliances.”

Casanave prefers stainless steel cabinets for outdoor kitchens and became a Denver vendor about six years ago. The stainless steel products require additional planning because they must have the right-size trim pieces to fit around the appliances selected. Once remodelers become well versed with stainless steel cabinets, though, they can begin to push the limits of what is possible with outdoor kitchens.

“I’ve used a composite type of outdoor cabinet before, and I just was not very impressed with it. It doesn’t withstand the heat as well as the stainless,” Casanave explains. “To withstand the heat from grills, you have to put liners in it, and if you live in a hot area, the material can get soft and start to sag. I only did one that way, even though I recommended the stainless steel ones to them; they just chose to go with the less expensive one. That’s the last one I’ll probably ever do.”

Whenever he shows a comparison between the composite material and stainless steel, customers choose stainless steel 99 percent of the time, Casanave says. He often has to educate them about the benefits of having all stainless steel components—the hardware, slides, doors, drawers and the boxes themselves—but once homeowners understand the advantages, they usually choose the stainless steel cabinets.

“To save money, they may forego a powder-coating finish, and that puts it right in the same price ballpark as the composite cabinet cost,” says Casanave, who runs a cabinet shop as well. “That’s my step down to compete price-wise, is to just do the stainless finish. But it [still]



Photo: Distinctive Outdoor Kitchens

gives them all the benefits of the stainless cabinets [when they choose to] do that.”

Most of the stainless steel cabinetry that Casanave installs have a powder coat or some other kind of finish, which minimizes fingerprints and other smudges. “Whether it has a woodgrain [finish] or it’s a solid color, the powder coating makes the cabinets much easier to clean,” he explains.

“That’s a big selling feature—the ability to keep it clean easily [when you] have the powder coating on there. [You have to] let them know the features that are available to help make it easier to maintain,” he adds.

GOING FORWARD

The woodgrain powder-coating process has been a recent development, and some of the finishes have become quite popular already, Casanave says. Another evolution entails the production of stainless steel, soft-close drawer slides and door hinges made for the outdoors by manufacturers such as Denver. Hardware had always been the weak spot for outdoor cabinetry, Casanave adds.

No matter the material, however, the biggest concern revolves around its ability to withstand the heat from cooking as well as the natural elements. Many remodelers consider durability in terms of the potential for harsh weather, but few of them examine the possibility that grills or smokers might have negative repercussions for some of the cabinetry nearby, Mason says.

↑ Distinctive Outdoor Kitchens prefers to use cabinets from Denver/Brown Jordan Outdoor Kitchens.

↓ The woodgrain powder-coating finishes continue to grow in popularity among homeowners.



Photo: Distinctive Outdoor Kitchens

“You’ve got to remember that when you’re outdoors cooking on a barbecue area, there’s a lot of heat put off by the barbecue itself. There’s potential for the hot trays to be rested on finishes,” he explains. “It’s just generally a harsh environment. The biggest issues we see coming in are where [cabinets don’t] hold up to the elements or just to the abuse of using them on a day-to-day basis.” | **QR**

Keeping Your Website Relevant

Marketing experts share tips for how to make sure your company's website is eye-catching to potential clients and to Google.

By Kacey Larsen

Let's walk through a scenario: You have a vacation coming up, and your friend who usually watches your dog when you're out of town already has plans, so you need to find a someone else to pet sit. Although a kennel might be an option, you'd prefer to have someone stay at your house so your dog can at least be in a familiar place in your absence. How would you go about finding someone to stay in your home and take care of your dog?



“What most remodelers are missing, in our opinion, are case studies—actually the story of each transformation.”

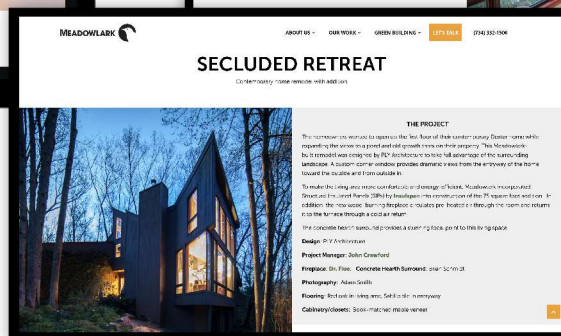
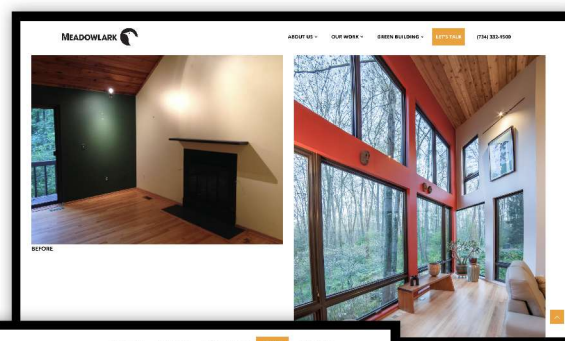
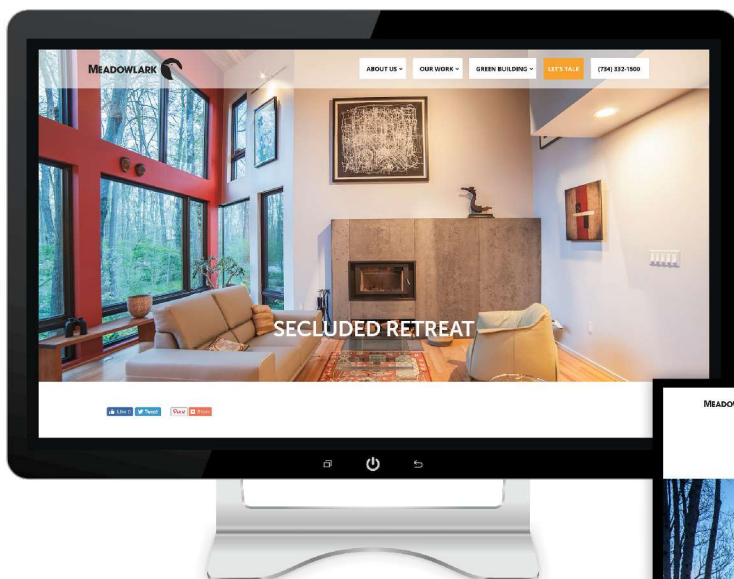
Joaquin Erazo, Marketing Wing

If your answer is to page through a phone book, then the rest of this article probably isn't for you. If your answer is that you have more than one friend you'd let watch your dog while you're on vacation, then that's lucky for you, but you may be getting too caught up in the scenario. The point I'm trying to reach is how do you, personally, find someone to provide a service today? Yes, word-of-mouth

and referrals are great, but you still likely Googled whom-ever was recommended to you. This is more than likely exactly what your potential clients are doing for you and your remodeling company.

Joaquin Erazo, president of Marketing Wing, explains that having a company website is a bare minimum in terms of a web presence, but that is very much the first step. “We live in not just a digital society, but a mobile society. We see the behavior that if you're at a cocktail party and you're talking about a kitchen, someone refers you to a company, you'll pull out your phone, Google the company just to take a peek at their website, and then you'll have it stored to later go on it again and perhaps take action,” he continues. “But that's a first impression, so if [a website] doesn't show up or it's just a Facebook Business page, that isn't good. It's 2018—come on guys, you should have a website.”

This exact trend of doing a quick search on a smartphone is why Chris Behan, owner/president and chief optimization officer for Socius Marketing, believes, “Web designs at this point really, at a bare minimum, have to be fully responsive.” Beyond just being better optimized for those looking on their phones, Google is now also rewarding this approach, Behan notes, because its search engine algorithm indexes a mobile site *before* indexing a desktop site. “So if you don't have a fully responsive, mobile-compliant website, it's going to make it much more difficult to rank within search engines at this point,” he says. “Past that, Google indexes every page within your website. Above all else from an actual rankings perspective, they want content—original, readable content on your website that's specific to who you are, what you do and, for most home improvement companies, where you do it would be very important as well.”



A client of Erazo's, Meadowlark Design+Build showcases its Master Design Award-winning project within a case study format on its website.

CASE STUDIES AS CONTENT

A caveat to Google's concept of content is that it cannot be duplicative, so listing out manufacturers' product details and specifications or a press release straight from an industry association, does you no favors. One way Erazo helps his clients create original content is with what he refers to as "case studies." Through looking at Google Analytics, he realized homeowners were somewhat skeptical of a photo gallery because they weren't able to understand how such a transformation came about.

"Everybody would put up galleries of these beautiful, drop-dead [gorgeous] after photos, professionally photographed, and they look beautiful but what most remodelers are missing, in our opinion, are case studies—actually the story of each transformation. Instead of just showing one after photo of a gorgeous kitchen, literally create an entire page for just one project. You show the before, you have some copy in there that talks about what the homeowners wanted, like 'the dark, cramped galley kitchen that only one cook could get in there,' and then what the remodeler actually did with multiple photos of the transformation overall," he says. "When you put a couple dozen of those together on a website, then people are engaged, they see the transformation and they see what a particular remodeler can do. It's a lot of work, but when it's done correctly, it's what homeowners want."

Erazo is the first to note this case study approach requires more effort than a standard project gallery, but he also points to the likelihood that any remodeling companies who enter design award competitions may have already compiled much of the materials he's referencing. Most require before photos, a storyline or project details as well as product listings in some cases, so the case studies are a repurposing of that content.

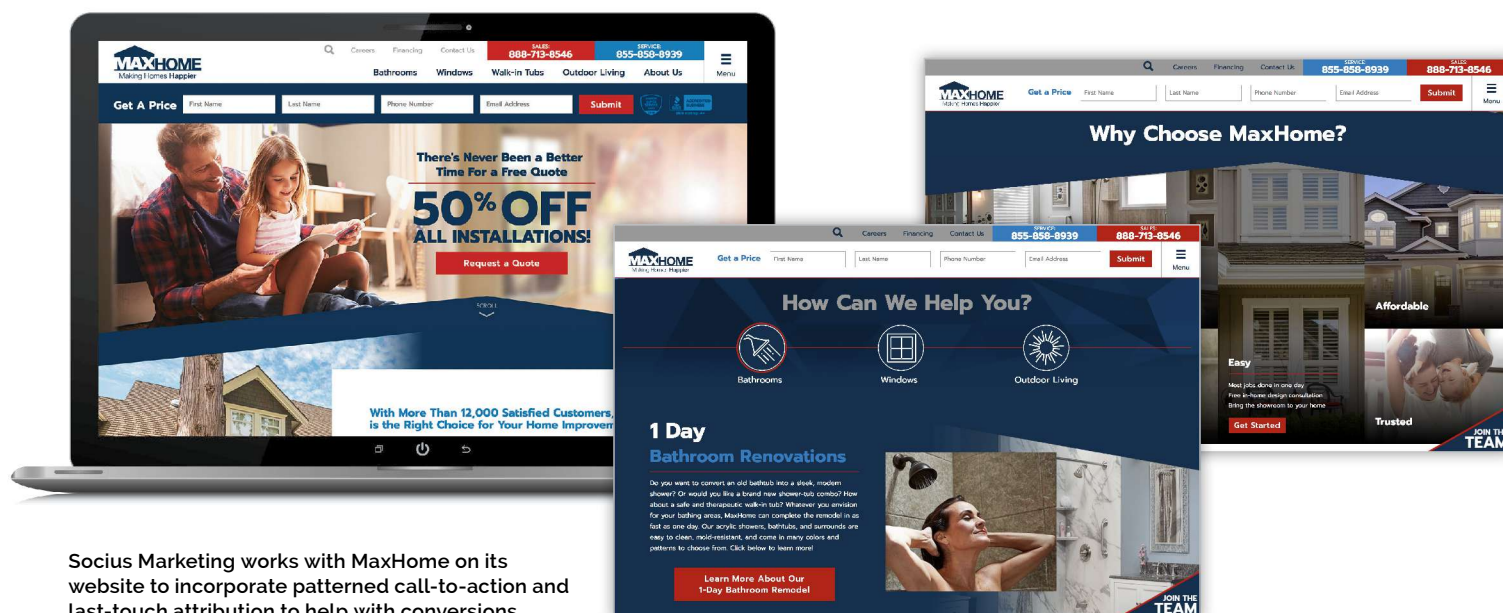
Beyond counting as original content to Google and repurposing materials a remodeling company may already

have, Erazo cites helping homeowner understanding as the biggest reason to undertake case studies. "Homeowners had a hard time just kind of wrapping their brain around it. 'I don't know how you could do that in my house or if that would work.' So remodelers know the transformation; they were just having a hard time communicating what that transformation was," he says. "They would do it in a terrific way, telling these stories in the sales process. With an iPad they could show the before and talk face-to-face about what they did, how they did it and pulling out the details. But it would be better a little higher up in the consideration funnel to share this with prospective clients and maybe attract them to [a remodeler]."

"And homeowners are skeptical—some of them think that you're showing stock photography. 'How do I know that's not stock photography, and it's actually your kitchen?' This case study approach makes it a little more real," he continues.

One example of a company Erazo works with who is taking advantage of this case study approach is Meadowlark Design+Build, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Everything showcased on the company's website under "Our Work" is an example of a case study that describes the project size, details behind it, work being done, multiple photos and even materials used. He notes this goes beyond what you can do on Houzz, where it is more so about great photography than highlighting the process. Plus, this case study approach builds SEO considerations right in.

"You can see from an SEO perspective that this has what digital marketers would call very rich, long-tail keywords. [An example would be] words like net-zero energy, LEED Platinum-certified home, not to mention



Socius Marketing works with MaxHome on its website to incorporate patterned call-to-action and last-touch attribution to help with conversions.

their materials—soapstone countertop, white oak on main floor,” Erazo explains. “So, this has richer keywords, and you’re not trying to trick the search engines.

“We like to see four new pages on a website on a monthly basis—a bare minimum of two new pages of fresh relevant content. And again, it’s like this: more case studies, more stories about the projects; it could be blog posts about the latest trends,” he adds. “There is so much that [remodelers] have they just need to make it a priority to add fresh, relevant content.”

KNOW AND PREDICT SITE VISITORS

While Behan also recommends updating a company website a few times a month in terms of adding new content, providing different offers and updating photo galleries, his company has been offering a track/service called, “Going Beyond Responsive,” which leads them to look at the website as more of a marketing platform where the design changes somewhat frequently, Behan notes, but the messaging changes constantly.

“It’s built out with what we call ‘patterned call to actions,’ so you look at the buttons that get you a quote, like an example on MaxHome’s website [is] everything that gets you a quote is in red, and that’s called patterning. The reason that you pattern call-to-actions is because there’s this notion in the web world that familiar equals intuitive, so it is only intuitive because it feels familiar. And the reason that something like that matters is it helps with the conversion rate of your website,” Behan says. Another reason it’s important is that advertising often sends people to a company’s website first. He gives the example of watching TV, seeing a commercial and then, next thing, you’ve Googled whatever was in the ad.

How to turn that search into a conversion is the next step, and Behan again references a technique MaxHome, with locations in New Orleans and Houston, is taking advantage of called, “last touch attribution.” The example goes: A user visits the company’s website, maxhomenow.com, clicks onto any page off the homepage—let’s say outdoor living—and then closes the window or leaves the site. Then, they return to the company’s homepage, but now the homepage shows as the outdoor living page they last visited, and it now includes a special offer.

“So [the website] knows what you looked at, and you’re what’s known as a ‘known user’ now to that website and it’s going to begin to track you,” Behan explains. “We call it last-touch attribution, where it’s doing its best to remove friction from the conversion process. So it knows you like outdoor living, it knows you went to the website the first time and didn’t convert, so it built you a new offer that is not existent on that website except for you.”

Another conversion tool, though perhaps not an obvious one, Behan mentions is a company’s About Us page. “The study that we did, a few years ago at this point, of 2,000 home improvement leads what was interesting in that study is that in most cases a visitor visits the About Us page before they convert, which kind of makes sense. If you’re looking at windows, you made the decision, you’re on a local website, and you want to learn about the company that you’re about to invite into your house,” he explains. “When you look at websites like MaxHome, Alure Home Improvements, Reborn Cabinets or some of the new sites we’re putting up, we actually tell the About Us story on most of the popular pages—the most visited pages on the website—because we’re trying to shorten and abbreviate that messaging.

A Remodeler's Instagram Success

BACK IN JANUARY OF 2017, Brendan O'Sullivan of Keystone Home Remodeling in Norristown, Pennsylvania, decided to start putting a little bit of effort into his Instagram page—the results were quite a surprise to him. “I always had an Instagram account and I would put my construction work on there, but didn't really pursue putting it out there with hashtags and some of the networking and connecting with people. But January of 2017 I decided you know, I'm going to put a little bit of time into this, kind of research what's the best time to post, what are some hashtags to use, and from there it even seemed like a lot of guys were experiencing the same thing as me. ‘Oh wow, this Instagram construction thing is kind of taking off,’” O'Sullivan explains. “I actually happened to be working on full remodels at the time, basically doing house flips, which I think piqued people's interest, bringing them to my page a little bit. From there I started getting a little bit of traction with followers and people just kind of interested in what I was doing.”

It was at this point that O'Sullivan was first put in contact with Versatex through a connection via the comments section on Instagram, as he was looking for a specific piece of PVC for a project. Although he ultimately made his own piece, the relationship with the company continued.

“[Versatex] came back to me, I think, a few months later and they said, ‘Hey listen, we want to present this idea to you of being a brand ambassador,’” O'Sullivan says. “And now basically, I use Versatex whenever I can and kind of promote their product, but also they're looking at it as, ‘Hey, how can we help you grow your business as well and elevate the industry?’ I think the overall social media aspect of it has really expanded not just my knowledge of products, but I think so many other guys out there.”

In the release announcing the Versatex Brand Ambassador Program, Sales Vice President Rick Kapres says, “Brendan's an influencer. He's got close to 10,000 followers keeping up with his remodeling practice and engaging with him as he shares and solicits information about projects and business strategies ... We enlisted him because he's the real thing—an authentic building-trade professional with a solid grasp on social media's potential for making life easier for contractors, distributors and manufacturers like us.”

While Versatex has plans to introduce additional brand ambassadors in the future, perhaps from different areas of the country, Kapres notes the company is also updating its website to better serve as a resource for consumers and professionals alike. In the meantime, he sees the company's Instagram and Twitter pages as being more pro-



fessional-oriented, with education and how-to information, much like O'Sullivan's voice; Facebook they are treating as more consumer-oriented.

“I kept [my messaging] somewhat opinionated, but on a professional level. Then getting into the Brand Ambassadorship, I think that's what they were drawn toward because I kind of said it how it was,” O'Sullivan notes. “Though we might be, as we say, doing it ‘for the ‘Gram,’ I think [posting] also has to say something for your business. You're presenting your business and product, and you want it to be the best it can be, so why not use this platform as a way to motivate you and your business?”

Much like Versatex hopes this Brand Ambassador Program as well as its other online efforts help further build trust around the brand, O'Sullivan too thinks Instagram can help build trust with clients. Clients have found him via Instagram, and he has sent homeowners to his page so they can see some of his process beforehand.

Ultimately, O'Sullivan's advice for those looking to break into Instagram is about consistency. “I think it's as simple as consistently posting, using the hashtags, but also not being afraid to get behind the camera and do [Instagram] Stories and put work out there for people to see with geotags and hashtags,” he says. “Aside from all the other avenues you might take putting out your business listing, it's honestly a free way to market yourself and your company, and also show how qualified you are to your potential customer when starting up, because a lot of times you don't have referral or word-of-mouth stuff. So I think that's kind of a good way to break into it, is to not be afraid to get on Stories and show potential customers who you are and what you do.”

Versatex Building Products launches its Brand Ambassador Program with Brendan O'Sullivan, a second-generation remodeler, as the company undertakes an in-depth social media campaign.

“Look, we understand that it might be hard for a \$2 million company to build a true brand; to when somebody says windows, you say A1 Windows,” Behan continues. “We get that, but what we also tell people is that it doesn’t make your story any less important. You probably got in this business for a reason. There’s probably milestones within your organization that are worth sharing that people would find interesting. It builds trust, again, into who you’re about to invite into your house.”

BEYOND A STATIC PRESENCE

Now, obviously, there are many, many more places to exist online than just a business’ website, with the influx of social media and review sites. Both Behan and Erazo note benefits to having a presence outside of solely a website, but both caution that being committed to being active is a key component of things like a Facebook Business page paying off.



“Conversion is a process at this point, and you want to have all of the conversion points lined up.”

Chris Behan, Socius Marketing

“It drives me crazy when I go to somebody’s Twitter page and they haven’t posted since 2014—take it down. Same thing with blog posts, especially with dates that say 2015. If you’re going to do it, do it right and be committed to it is what I tell everybody,” Erazo says. “Overall on the social media side, Facebook continues to be popular and is a good place to showcase the remodeler’s personality, and by personality I mean their internal culture. I like seeing posts like, ‘Yippee, we just got our Girl Scout cookies today’ with a photo of the 17 boxes, so it shows that they’re real. It’s an opportunity to not be self-serving necessarily, but if I’m going to hit your website then go to your Facebook page, I don’t want to see the same photos from your website.”

“The other one that I always tell everybody [is] to make sure you’ve got your profile at least well-buttoned up [on] LinkedIn,” he continues. “If you’ve got an appointment coming up, there is a good chance that the homeowner is, ‘Who’s coming to see me?’ Joaquin Erazo. Let me Google him.’ Immediately, you Google somebody’s name, their LinkedIn profile is going to show up, [so] just have a complete profile.

Have your photo, show that you’re connected to NKBA, NARI, NAHB and even your local chamber; and you’re connected to other remodelers and to manufacturers. Just have a decent digital presence on LinkedIn because [potential clients] are going to see it; they aren’t going to connect with you, but they want to make sure you’re legit.”

Along the lines of showing legitimacy, Behan points out that it’s important to have a fan base for any social media page because clients are going to vet you. “They’re going to go out and say, ‘I wonder what their Facebook page says about them?’ And if you have three ‘likes’ to your page—one of them is you, the other is your wife and the other person works there—it’s kind of like having no friends, and sometimes people have no friends for a reason,” he says. “So you want to have a few hundred ‘likes’ to your organization. Facebook actually has programs, legitimate programs, that you can deal directly with Facebook on, and they will go out and build the number of people that ‘like’ your organization. [Having] that kind of social credibility ultimately helps with conversion.

“Conversion is a process at this point, and you want to have all of the conversion points lined up so when somebody goes through and reads your About Us page, they like what they see; when they look for social credibility, i.e., they go to your Facebook page, they see an engaged organization with good reviews and nice posts showcasing your work; they want to see your industry credibility, so when they scroll to the bottom of your website you’re part of NARI, you’re part of Angie’s List, part of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce or whatever it might be,” Behan adds. “[Clients] look for corporate credibility, social credibility and industry credibility.” | **QR**

With 20 years of experience in the internet marketing world, Chris Behan, owner/president and chief optimization officer, brings invaluable expertise to Socius Marketing. He pioneered “pure client-side optimization,” referring to the strict optimization of a client’s website as opposed to using proprietary software, content management systems, etc. used by many search engine optimization companies. Learn more about Behan and Socius Marketing at sociusmarketing.com.

Joaquin Erazo Jr., MBA, is president of Marketing Wing, a marketing agency that provides hyper-local custom marketing for design/build remodelers. With over 20 years of industry marketing experience, he is a sought-after consultant, speaker, strategist, leader, columnist and visionary. Erazo has been published in Forbes, Inc magazine, The Washington Post, Fast Company and more. Learn more about Erazo and Marketing Wing at marketingwing.com.

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Photos: Michael Roud Photography

From left to right,
Gabriel Posternak,
Moty Ginsburg and
Seda Kirakosyan

California Hybrid

Focused on brand and a seamless platform, Treeium is a full-service remodeler with the zeal of a specialty contractor for marketing and lead generation.

By Patrick O'Toole

The remodeling industry is home to many great local and regional firms with very strong brands in their respective markets—Case Design & Remodeling in Washington, D.C., and the Neil Kelly Company in Portland, Oregon, are two examples. But even for these leading companies, market share locally remains low—1 or 2 percent of remodeling activity in their home markets. It is a sign of just how local and fragmented remodeling remains. At the same time, both firms have shown an ability to take their brands to other markets: Case with its franchises and Neil Kelly with its company-owned branches around the Pacific Northwest.

But these are rare examples. Design/build and full-service firms are often an extension of a single individual who manages to build a team capable of perhaps 50 to 100 projects per year, even with small jobs put in the mix. That is why these types of firms are traditionally not marketers. They live off strong reputations and the word-of-mouth referral and repeat business that follows.

“We saw where print was going, and this is where the shift started.”

Moty Ginsburg

Specialty and home improvement firms stand at the opposite end of the spectrum. They are marketers spending as much as 10 to 15 percent of their top-line revenue to generate leads. These are dominated by window replacement, roofing, siding, deck, sunroom and basement finishing firms, just to name a few specialties. In the past, there were very few similarities between specialty and full-service firms. But that may be changing.

According to annual marketing spending numbers found in *Qualified Remodeler's* Top 500 data, the industry has seen a steady uptick in the number of full-service and design/build firms adopting more aggressive lead-generation activities. Where once average spending by full-service and design/build firms represented 1 or 2 percent of gross sales, this average has steadily ticked upward to 4 and 5 percent of sales.

This begs the question: Will there come a day when a new business model in remodeling will enable a local full-service remodeler to quickly scale up and grow its brand to become a regional or national player? That company would most certainly need to be a hybrid—a firm focused on marketing, but with a portable project management and customer-relationship management system capable of handling the complexities of full-scale remodeling. Treeium, of Valley Village, California, near Los Angeles, is certainly giving it a go.

The company, No. 35 on our 2017 Top 500 list, reports \$32 million in sales on approximately 1,300 projects. They spend more than \$3 million on lead-generation alone. Additional funds are budgeted for the separate marketing discipline of branding, says Seda Kirakosyan, Treeium's director of marketing. Indeed, Treeium is a hybrid firm with a strong, recognizable brand driven by a passion to drive leads and scale up after only seven years in business.

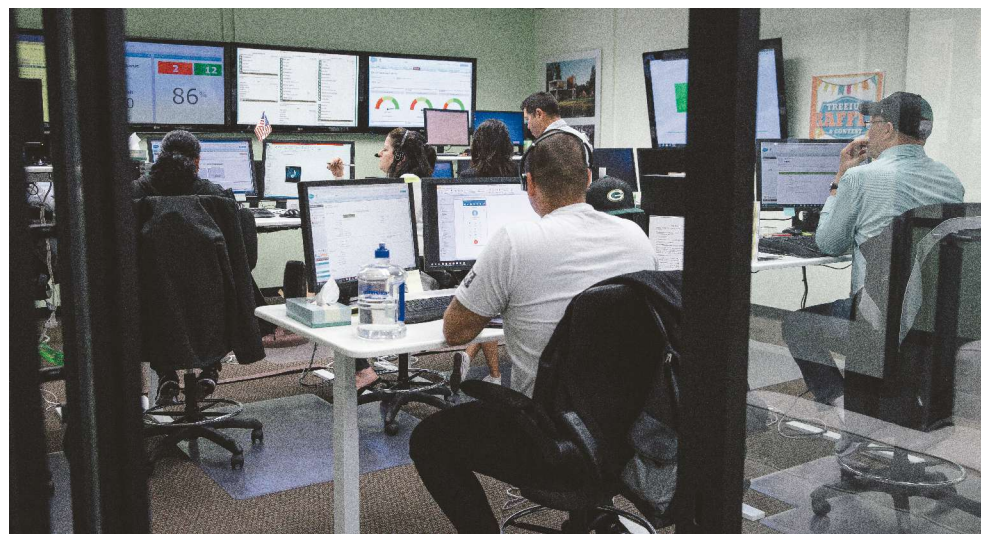
Treeium has grown rapidly since its founder, Moty Ginsburg, purchased a small design/build firm in 2010 billing less than \$1 million annually, changed its name

and began focusing on an aggressive mix of digital and online advertising. Key to its growth also has been its call-center operation—very unusual for a full-service firm. Maybe its most unique characteristic of all: The call-center and all of the company's systems are backed by a proprietary software program written by a company employee, Gabriel Posternak. The company has even moved to several locations around the Golden State. Today, it operates branches in San Diego, Irvine and Pleasant Hill near San Francisco, as well as in the Inland Empire region. Ginsburg explains the decision to seek a technology solution began when traditional media advertising, namely print, began slipping badly as a lead source.

“We saw where print was going, and this is where the shift started,” Ginsburg says. “So that's why when we launched, we didn't just develop a technology but also developed a brand around it. It was key to do both of them at the same time. We developed a brand and technology at the same time.”

BRANDING, LEAD GENERATION AND PROPRIETARY TECHNOLOGY

Most remodeling company names are commonly tied to geography or the founder's last name. Ginsburg, who is an entrepreneur with a background in technology and



finance, wanted a name that was recognizable yet completely original. In short, he wanted a brand name the company could build from the ground up. They settled on Treeium for a number of reasons, but mostly they liked the green and organic connotations it evokes.

“We sought to create a brand that homeowners really want to deal with, the company Treeium,” Ginsburg says. “We want everything they see, our reviews and reputation, to bring them to a point that if the prices structure right, you know, they would like to do business with us.”

The call-center operation at Treeium Inc. in Valley Village, California. The company's proprietary software enables Treeium to respond faster to inquiries.

First came the brand, then came the marketing. In hiring Kirakosyan, the company set out in new digital directions. Google pay-per-click, Facebook, email marketing and content marketing became the focus. In particular, Kirakosyan zeroed in on Angie's List, Houzz and HomeAdvisor. Today, Treeium is recognized as HomeAdvisor's top remodeling company partner in California. The primary reason, among several, is the

"Then prior to the appointment, there are reminders via text, via email that take place so he or she can confirm those appointments," he continues. "They also have options to load those appointments to Google calendars, any other calendars out there, so it will be harder to forget."

This type of system and software is increasingly common among home improvement companies, particularly specialty firms. Typically, firms will acquire or lease



Gabriel Posternak and Moty Ginsburg work with a Treeium colleague in order to demonstrate their system for visitors.

speed with which someone from Treeium responds to each inquiry. Kirakosyan explains the company responds to all inquiries within 30 seconds. In a segment of the industry where some folks reply with emails every evening, this is a game changer.

Call-center employees are trained to respond by phone call, email and text depending on the preference of the prospect. If no preference is given, they try all three.

"We train our call-center employees to answer more than just basic questions in order to get the homeowner engaged," Ginsburg says, explaining the process. "But eventually, the idea is that we convert this call to an appointment. Keep in mind a lot of it right now is happening online, where the customer gets an automated email or text from us letting them know they can contact via email. If he or she is not sure about when to book the appointment, we send them a nice template, 'Thank you for calling,' with the link. That link takes them to an online appointment module where they can book his or her own appointment based on inventory of people we have in different branches. It doesn't mean that we have all days, all hours available.

"Moty wanted to scale really fast so the dream was growing really quickly, really fast and we really needed to put not just people, but really processes and technology in place ..."

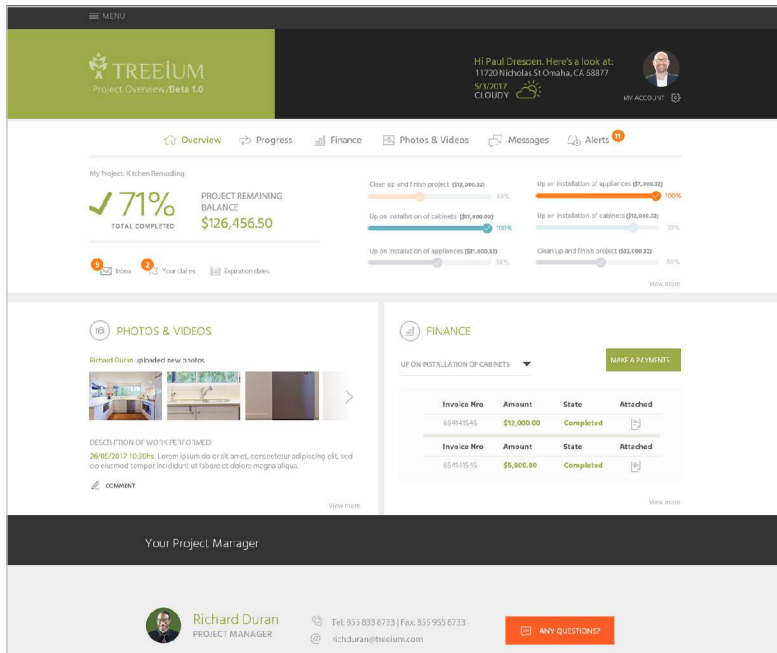
Gabriel Posternak

specialized CRM and call-center systems from outside vendors, then they bolt them onto other company software purchased elsewhere. According to Ginsburg, the company was heading down that route but was not satisfied with having to switch customers into new software for each step of the remodeling process, feeling the customer experience would be too bumpy.

Indeed, the technology aspect of Treeium's rise is perhaps most noteworthy among its accomplishments. As previously stated, the entire system was built, section by section, by an employee of the company, Gabriel Posternak, with the assistance of contracted coders working under his direction. No costs associated with the construction of the platform were given, only that it was less costly over time to invest in the systems upfront.

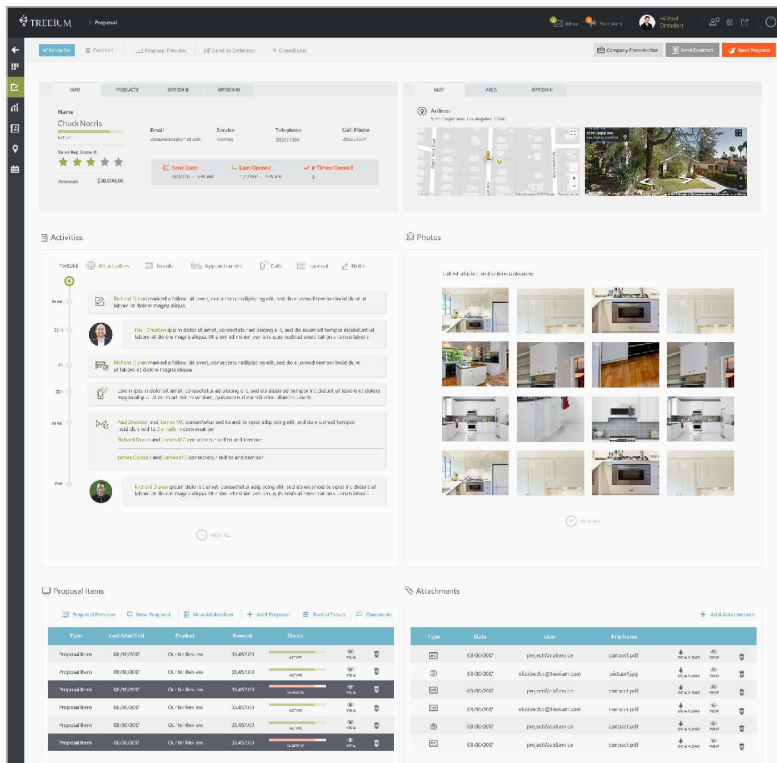
In 2012, Posternak built the CRM and call-center systems. In 2013, Treeium added a dispatch system, which took in factors like geo-locations, in order to dispatch salespeople to appointments. Then in 2015 and 2016, they built out the remainder of the system with a front end for the customer and a back end for contracts, payments, estimating, purchasing, project management, completion and post-sale communication. Employees, field superintendents and trade contractors all have separate logins where they can view and manage projects in their individual queues. From there, each member of the team can post messages, images, and videos directed

CUSTOMER PORTAL



The user interface for Treeium's client portal is similar to what one would find when interacting with a much larger company. The dashboard (above) keeps clients informed and in touch.

PROJECT MANAGER PORTAL



Employees and trade contractors see this back-end user interface to keep on top of specific tasks. Each view is tailored to a particular employee's responsibilities.

to clients, other partners and employees as individual messages or in groups.

This magazine is not a technical journal; the editorial team has experienced many software demonstrations and this one—with expectations of a home-grown software slightly lower—exceeded expectations when viewed from the client perspective. It appears to be a solid, very satisfying user interface from start to finish. That was the goal set out by Ginsburg, Posternak and Kirakosyan, and it appears to be the reason why the company can manage so many jobs in several locations with an in-house staff of 45.

“Moty wanted to scale really fast so the dream was growing really quickly, really fast and we really needed to put not just people, but really processes and technology in place to be able to sustain the kind of growth and not just throw everything (the software) away,” Posternak says. “So we had to build an intelligent solution on the call center to be able to have the least amount of people, but the most effective, not just on managing everything that we pour into our system, but able to connect the most and get the most out of it through our lead-scoring and qualification systems that we have in place.”

Ginsburg cites efficiencies in the call-center operation since the new software has been in place. He also sees the seamlessness of their system to the client, which does not yet have a name but offers a way of doing business with busy clients who want to operate online as much as possible. Yes, there are meetings and measurements, but proposals are all online. The client can sign them fast or wait. Sometimes the company will have proposals accepted 30 or 60 days after they were sent. In addition, about 50 percent of Treeium's payments come through ACH transactions, which is a huge boost in cash flow versus traditional means. And, overall, clients seem to like the interface and the overall process better—it is consistent with the way they live now.

“Mainly is the word communication. We want to be sure that at anytime, anyplace, anywhere, the communication is flowing,” Ginsburg notes. “So communication from a customer point of view means having a customer portal where you can login at anytime, anywhere and have access to the contract, change orders. They can have access to pictures, videos that we loaded; it can communicate via messaging with the group of people here through the portal. It can pay, do transactions in both directions. A person doesn't need to be at home to do the transaction. A transaction is the barrier we deal with a lot of customers. A lot of homeowners are traveling on business, and they've signed their contracts, they pay the down payment, and we start the job even before they come and they open the door for us. They leave us the key or they have a manager bring a key or whatever, so that we don't delay processes.” | **QR**





Raise the Profile of Manufactured Stone Veneer

New interest in cleaner, more contemporary lines is driving profile and color trends with today's veneer products.

By Chuck Ross

Manufactured stone veneer can add new beauty to a home's appearance in both exterior and, increasingly, interior applications, but its value to homeowners can be more than skin deep. In fact, the return on investment can be even higher than that of siding for the most frequent exterior uses. So, for homeowners seeking an easy update to what might be aging siding or a dated fireplace surround, veneer products could be a great option.

Adding to the growing appeal of these offerings is a new attention to contemporary style, according to the eight manufacturers with whom *Qualified Remodeler* recently spoke. While a decade ago, homeowners were drawn to the old-world charms of irregular, rounded river rock designs, today's remodeling clients are seeking a cleaner and more rectilinear look. Interestingly, a parallel trend is the growing interest in reclaimed wood looks, similar to those showing up in board-style porcelain tiles for interior flooring. Now, some of those tiles are literally climbing the walls.

But it's not all about the homeowners in some manufacturers' lineups, with several companies offering products that don't require a skilled mason's touch. Companies are paying attention to the labor shortage affecting all the

construction trades, with a number of them promoting veneers that install mechanically, like siding, rather than with mortar and grout.

WHERE'S IT GOING?

Exteriors remain the primary application for manufactured stone veneer, according to all the manufacturers with whom we spoke. The varied colors and textures provide an eye-catching contrast to vinyl or aluminum siding, and can help call out architectural features that might otherwise blend into the background, adding to a home's curb appeal.

"It is frequently featured as an exterior home design accent, as a knee wall or door surround," says Kelly Warren, marketing manager for CertainTeed Siding, maker of the unit-style Ledgestone and panelized STONEfaçade product lines, echoing comments heard from a number of manufacturers. "It is now even showing up on many of the popular home renovation TV shows."

Beyond walls, however, veneer products also are enhancing outdoor living areas, notes Joey Peters, senior masonry brand manager for Oldcastle Architectural, which recently consolidated its masonry products into a new subsidiary, Echelon Masonry. "We are finding that outdoor living spaces are no longer a trend but an expectation with homeowners,

both in new construction and remodeling,” he says, adding, “a slab of concrete and a few plastic chairs won’t cut it these days. Manufactured stone veneer was traditionally a bottom-third cladding for wall exteriors, but has found new life in bringing the outdoors and indoors together.”

To Peters’ point, a number of companies are seeing veneers venturing onto interior walls as well. “On the remodeling side, the fireplace

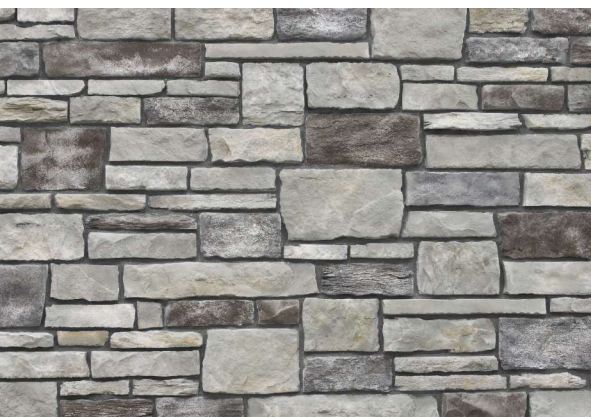
“Today’s remodeling clients are seeking a cleaner, more rectilinear look.”

is probably the largest application we see,” says Mike Nutter, sales director for Ply Gem Stone. “Many times homeowners had sheet rock, or a lot of times we see them replacing tile with stone—that’s probably 60 percent of the remodeling business.”

Peters adds that some of Echelon’s customers are opting to use the same stone for both outdoor and indoor fireplaces. “The continuity creates connection between interiors and the great outdoors,” he says, noting there’s an economic advantage as well. “It is more cost-effective for the homeowner—one pallet



Outdoor living spaces are an increasingly popular application for manufactured stone veneer. **PLY GEM STONE**’s panelized True Stack, shown here, features individual stacked stones molded into varying lengths. **Circle 6 on inquiry card**



The patterning for **PROVIA**’s Frost Terra Cut stone was the result of a new coloring process involving multiple layers of hand-applied pigment. **Circle 5 on inquiry card**

of the same stone versus multiple, or creating blends from two pallets.”

And fireplaces aren’t the only places where homeowners see stone veneer as a strong replacement option for existing tile. Sarah Lograsso, marketing director for Eldorado Stone, points to kitchen and bathroom backsplashes as a growing application. And David Barrett, vice president of product development and marketing for Environmental StoneWorks, notes a more unusual use for the material.

“We’re starting to see stone going into bedrooms,” he says, adding that the shift to greater interior adoption has been building recently. “It’s been going on for a couple years. We’ve been on five [of] the last seven New American

Homes [at the International Builders’ Show], and we use that a lot to gauge trends.”

EVOLVING PROFILES

Across the board, manufactured stone veneer makers are seeing a move toward cleaner lines, which generally means uniform unit heights, though length and depth can vary. This growing trend is evidenced in Eldorado Stone’s Modern Collection and Echelon’s new imported Mirage porcelain veneer panels, among others.

“When we look at the entire category of stone, we’re seeing a lot of the real square, almost blockish appearance,” says Aaron Sims, Boral’s business development manager for its TruExterior Siding and Versetta Stone lines. But the blockish shapes can vary in profile

depth, he adds. “It’s a more rugged look, like our LedgeStone product. It fits in well with cedar shake and lapboards, and it links to that continued trend of diverse textures for the exterior.”

The move toward linearity is also leading to a renewed interest in brick-style veneer. “We’re starting to see it come back into a modern-type look,” says Barrett, who explains Environmental StoneWorks’ Cast Brick offerings are experiencing new interest. “We’ve seen customers who say, ‘I want clean brick, and I don’t care what color, because I’m going to paint it.’ It comes back to creating clean lines, but adding texture to highlight various areas inside the house.”

According to Emily Bonilla, product development manager and area sales manager for Cultured Stone, this trend is playing out in the company’s Terrain LedgeStone line and, most recently, in its new Sculpted Ashlar introduction. She says the new offering, which has a tumbled finish, combines “a thoughtful collection of naturally weathered stone textures with a purposeful variety of shapes and sizes.”

Phil Wengerd, ProVia’s vice president of market strategies, says his company’s Terra Cut line was launched two years ago to meet just this demand. “It was a culmination of what we’ve been hearing from the field,” he says, describing how Terra Cut’s pairing of a more linear arrangement with stones of a range of depths was developed. “The more depth you have in that profile, the more the color will pop.”

Nutter from Ply Gem Stone says that a tighter, more fitted look, without visible mortar joints, is starting to take hold. Though taste trends are very regional, he’s recently started seeing a move to an even more contemporary appearance. “We’re starting to see a smoother texture—sort of a rustic contemporary look.”

COLORING OUR WORLD

Obviously, earth tones are a part of all manufacturers’ palettes, as they work to create manufactured stone products that realistically reproduce the look of the real thing. That said, there appears to be a trend toward darker colors that can build on the larger push for a more contemporary look.



The Versetta Stone’s Tight-Cut profile from **BORAL** is available in six colors. Here, it’s shown in Mission Point, which draws on today’s taste for gray-based palettes with copper-toned highlights. **Circle 7 on inquiry card**



With the addition of its Mirage line, **ECHELON** adds the moisture-resistance of porcelain to a product that installs like tile. The Ardesie Living collection (shown) is also available in a style modeled on distressed wood. **Circle 8 on inquiry card**



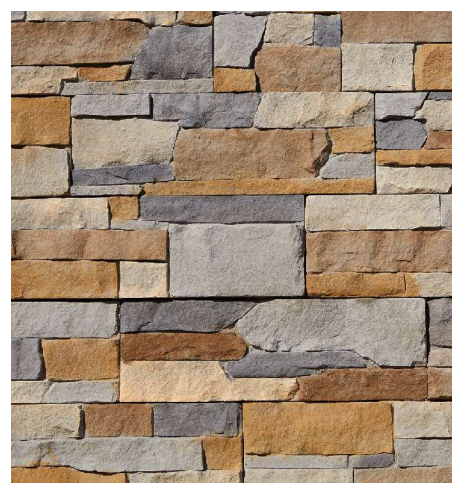
“A number of firms promote veneers that install mechanically, rather than with mortar and grout.”

Barrett from Environmental StoneWorks also sees a stripping away of color to create simpler palettes and patterning. “Prior trends were the more color you could get in, the more realistic it looked,” he says. “But now, it’s a lot of white to every shade of gray you can imagine.”

Barrett also has an interesting take on where this contemporary, more monochromatic push is coming from. “Some of the answers I’m getting is it’s the millennials who’ve grown up with Apple products, and that design scheme mimics some of the trends we’re starting to see in today’s home design.”

Boral’s Sims sees the influence of commercial design driving this more monochromatic approach. “The line blurs when you talk about contemporary and commercial looks,” he says. “And we’ve seen a lot of residential design moving in that direction.”

Regardless of the trend’s origins, other manufacturers echoed the growing importance of gray for today’s homeowners. “Grays are definitely in, especially with a gray base,” Nutter says. “That goes from a light gray to a dark charcoal.” He adds that Ply Gem’s latest color, Niagara, adds a plum highlight to a gray base tone.



Manufactured stone veneer is often paired as an accent with classic clapboard and shingled siding. **CERTAINTED’s STONE** façade panels—shown here in the Appalachian Twilight pattern—offer an integrated rainscreen for exterior moisture control. **Circle 9 on inquiry card**

Similarly, Bonilla notes Cultured Stone has been working “to develop new explorations of contemporary aesthetic touches as the market embraces color and patterns that skew more modern.” This means pairing high contrast colors, from silver and charcoal to copper and iron hues, with traditional tans and browns.

MAKING THINGS EASIER

Manufacturers also appear to be united in their understanding of the labor challenges remodelers now face in most regions of the country, with a number offering options that attach mechanically, rather than with mortar, in either panels or individual units. This is exactly the issue Boral’s Versetta Stone was designed to address, according to Sims.

“A pain point across the industry is labor, especially skilled labor,” he says. “We’re addressing that labor shortage and that lack of skill—there’s no additional knowledge needed to meet certain codes. You just screw it to the wall.”

Ply Gem Stone’s Durata Stone product pairs panelized veneer with a unique clip system that builds in ventilation and drainage when installed over a solid substrate.

“It looks like a dry stack when you put it together, but there’s no mortar,” Nutter explains, noting that, for example, siding contractors now have a chance to get into the stone veneer business. “You don’t have to be a mason—you can come from another trade.”

CertainTeed’s STONEFaçade has a similar integrated-rainscreen design, which Warren says eliminates the need for traditional masonry-style prep work. “Scratch coat and mortar preparation are two of the most important steps in a traditional stone veneer installation,” she adds. “Mortar-less installation using panelized stone relieves many concerns regarding stone veneer installation.”

Additional examples include Beonstone, imported from Canada and distributed by Oldcastle; several profiles in Eldorado Stone’s Modern Collection; and Environmetal StoneWorks’ ClipStone line. The latter company also has addressed remodelers’ labor concerns by developing its own national network of installers. This arrangement gives remodelers greater flexibility in product selection, without the need for arranging masonry installation on their own.



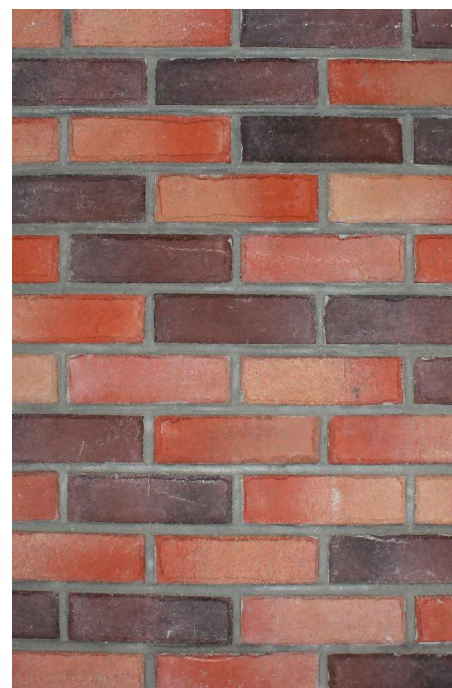
Panelized Vintage Ranch veneer from **ELDORADO STONE** is modeled on reclaimed barn wood that’s been milled to 2-, 4- and 6-in. heights. Available in four colors, it’s shown here in Foxwood. **Circle 10 on inquiry card**

MOVING FORWARD

With a broadening range of profiles and greater attention being paid to easing installation, manufactured stone veneer is worth a new look from remodelers who previously offered only traditional siding products—at least ProVia’s Wengard thinks so. With veneer’s popularity increasing in new construction, he believes remodelers’ clients are becoming more interested in adding the material to their homes’ exteriors.

“A lot of stone is being used in new construction today—the majority of product is going onto new structures,” he says. Remodeling trends generally trail closely behind those of new construction, Wengard adds, and that’s a pattern he’s been seeing play out with stone veneer. While it may be a new offering for many remodelers, Wengard believes a growing number are beginning to recognize the aesthetic appeal of these products for homeowners.

“I think we’re going to see more of these people bring in manufactured stone as a product line,” he says. “It’s a small part of the business today, but we’re going to see more of it.” | **QR**



ENVIRONMENTAL STONWORKS is seeing renewed interest in classic brick-style veneer to create clean lines while adding texture, but it is often painted after it’s installed. Shown here is the Blackstone Clean Brick pattern. **Circle 11 on inquiry card**

+ Continue to next page to read about more trending siding products.

PRODUCTS

Siding

As noted, the mix and match of manufactured stone with other siding products continues to be a popular design trend. Here is a selection of recent siding offerings that may pair well.



Additions to cladding décors

TRESPA introduces 10 décors to its Trespa Pure NFC sidings line. Additions include eight Uni Colors—pure white, white, pale yellow, aquamarine, silver grey, quartz grey, anthracite grey and wine red—and two wood décors of mystic cedar and Siberian larch. Siding planks come with a 10-year product warranty. The siding can be installed horizontally or vertically in either side-by-side or lap style. [Circle 12 on inquiry card](#)



Substrate achieves the look of stucco

LP ArmorStrand is an engineered substrate designed to deliver a strong foundation to help create the look of stucco with durable acrylic finishes. It offers clean lines and is more impact-resistant than traditional stucco, and it saves time during installation with its APA approval for single-wall construction. The substrate offers a competitive 50-year limited warranty, giving homeowners and remodelers peace of mind. [Circle 13 on inquiry card](#)



Assortment of textures, profiles for fiber cement collection

JAMES HARDIE BUILDING PRODUCTS pairs its smooth, geometric Reveal Panel System with the distinctive profiles of its Artisan Siding to create its Aspyre Collection. As part of the collection launch, four Artisan Siding profiles are being introduced, which join the existing Artisan V-Groove and Lap Siding offerings. Each profile has unique features and the ability to miter corners with $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. boards. The collection includes an assortment of textures, profiles and products to achieve any design aesthetic. [Circle 14 on inquiry card](#)



One-course shake panels with 5-in. reveal

DERBY BUILDING PRODUCTS expands its Beach House Shake created by Tando with availability throughout North America as well as two additional color offerings: Hatteras and Pacifica. The shake is impervious to moisture, which enables it to be used at a roofline or ground level. Joining Sandcastle, each of the colors represents real cedar's variations: Hatteras emulates weathered white cedar, while Pacifica looks like western red cedar. [Circle 15 on inquiry card](#)



Composite siding will not need repainting

Everlast Advanced Composite Siding by **CHELSEA BUILDING PRODUCTS** matches the look and color of original cedar while remaining impervious to harsh climates. Produced from a composition of inorganic minerals, polymeric resins and acrylic colorants, the siding is lightweight, easy to cut and will not need repainting. Because it contains no organic material, it will not swell, rot, bow or be attacked by wood-boring insects. [Circle 16 on inquiry card](#)



Expanded wood-look offering from fiber cement series

NICHIHA announces two additional colors for its Wood Series: Redwood and Ash. Research indicated professionals were seeking red and gray tones in siding for commercial and residential projects, hence Redwood and Ash now join Cedar and Bark in the company's VintageWood lineup. The fiber cement siding panels can be installed vertically or horizontally for interior and exterior applications, and come with a built-in rainscreen. Designed to offer the same texture and ease of installation as natural wood siding, the series resists warping, rotting and pests. [Circle 17 on inquiry card](#)

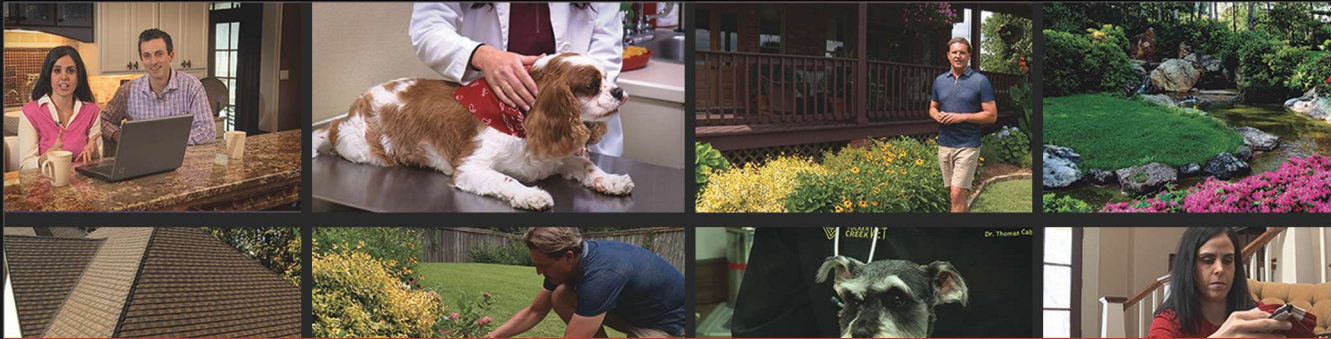
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What's New



Line of full-size appliances

PERLICK's launch of full-size luxury appliances is comprised of 10 appliances and builds upon the company's lineup of undercounter refrigeration. The 84-in.-tall column refrigerators, freezers and wine reserves feature a mix of slate black and brushed stainless steel interiors combined with LED theatre lighting. Refrigerators incorporate four separate zones of precision cooling, humidity control and dual-chamber air filtration. Available in multiple sizes, the line of dual-fuel ranges and cooktops offer precise, versatile temperature control.

Circle 18 on inquiry card



Laminates inspired by Maker Movement

WILSONART introduces its "Material Celebration," a collection of 25 laminate designs inspired by the Maker Movement and the timelessness of wood. Because wood is a popular medium in the Maker Movement, 11 of the 25 patterns are wood designs, in addition to a collection of marquetry, blocking, herringbone and modern contemporary chevrons. Other materials, inspired by lace and tweed, are a complement to the woodgrains. Each of the designs can be found in the company's Virtual Design Library.

Circle 20 on inquiry card

Nature-inspired composite shake roof shingles

DAVINCI ROOFSCAPES launches its Nature Crafted Collection with three composite shake shingle colors: Aged Cedar, Mossy Cedar and Black Oak. Each color captures and reflects the aging processes found on real shake shingles. The composite tiles will not split, crack, curl or fade; they also resist fire and impact, high winds, mold, algae, fungus and insects. Available on all the company's multi- and single-width shake composite roofing tiles, the roofing tiles come in wavy and straight grains throughout to achieve an authentic wood look.

Circle 19 on inquiry card



Illuminated power tower

The PCS64 from **DOUG MOCKETT & COMPANY** is an illuminated power tower with an LED-powered trim ring that gives a soft blue glow so it can be spotted in any location, even when in the closed position. Available in black or metallic silver, the pop-up power dock provides access to three power outlets and is also offered in a dual-sized version for six total outlets (PCS64/2). An enclosed cylinder protects the unit while under the surface in its closed position.

Circle 21 on inquiry card

Hand-held color-matching tool

SHERWIN-WILLIAMS unveils its ColorsSnap Match, a hand-held color-matching tool. Connecting to the company's ColorSnap Match app via Bluetooth, the lightweight device delivers a streamlined experience for scanning any surface or fabric—including paint, textiles, carpet, tile, apparel, accessories and more—to find corresponding colors. The tool saves scans in addition to matching and showing color palettes. Find the device at the company's stores nationwide, and the ColorSnap Match app is offered for iOS and Android devices.

Circle 22 on inquiry card





Two-tier chandelier makes a statement

Custom crafted by skilled artisans in New York, the Majella Chandelier from **2ND AVE LIGHTING** offers a touch of elegance as a centerpiece for a lobby, entryway and other spaces. The 84-in.-wide two-tier chandelier (174181) features elaborate scroll accents with floral medallions and decorative bobeches that embrace 28 amber faux candles. While the chandelier is shown in a coffee-bean finish, custom sizes, styles and colors are available as well as dimmable and energy-efficient lamping options.

Circle 23 on inquiry card

Ductless system delivers efficiency, quiet operation

Unveiling an all-season solution that increases efficiency and offers optimal performance, **FRIEDRICH**'s J-Series Ductless Split Systems add 9,000 and 12,000 Btu models that deliver 28.0 SEER/12.5 HSPF, with low ambient heat-pump operation, down to -13 F. The ductless units deliver quiet operation due to their Precision Inverter Systems, and can run at variable speeds while delivering precise heating/cooling capabilities to maintain desired temperatures. Along with its neutral finish, the ductless systems are designed to be sleek, slim and unobtrusive.

Circle 24 on inquiry card



Design-oriented air register

ARIA VENT presents its Flushmount Pro air register for use anywhere—floors, walls, ceilings—with any surface material: hardwood, tile, vinyl, carpet, drywall and more. The customizable air vent has optimal airflow performance, and airflow can be regulated by sliding



tray and accessing flanges that open and close. Designed to be both child and pet proof, the vent catches and stops items from falling into the ducts, as well as lays flat with no crevices so nothing can get caught.

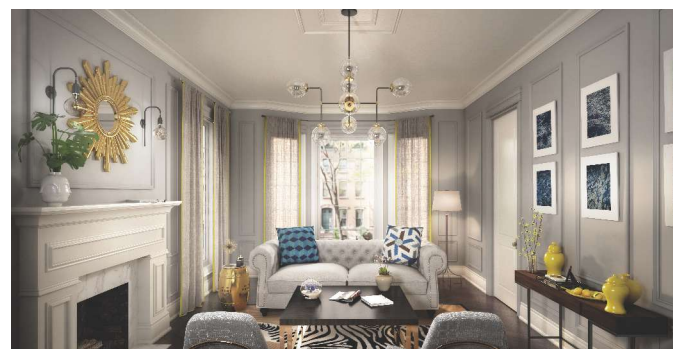
Circle 25 on inquiry card



Ruggedness as flooring trend

LUMBER LIQUIDATORS embraces imperfection as a flooring trend with the introduction of its Rocky Coast Pine Engineered Vinyl Plank, which features unpredictable grain patterns, natural knots and authentic wood texture. The company's CoreLux Engineered Vinyl Plank combines the waterproof features of vinyl plank with a rigid core that clicks together, and a top coat protects against scratches, dents, stains and wear. Including a lifetime limited warranty, the flooring is 7 mm. thick and UL-certified for low chemical emissions.

Circle 26 on inquiry card



Curated moulding, door combinations in six styles

METRIE introduces its Option {M} to help achieve home décor trends while helping ease the consultation and selection process. The preselected moulding profiles and complementary door styles are curated by designers, and identified décor trends include Modern Farmhouse, New Traditional (shown), Bohemian, Shabby Chic, Vintage Industrial and Country. The product solution—including baseboards, casings, crown moulding and doors—creates high visual impact and can further optimize a homeowner's budget.

Circle 27 on inquiry card

Flashing



Use flashing around smaller wall protrusions

Part of a complete **DUPONT TYVEK** Building Envelope Solution, the DuPont FlexWrap EZ provides a simple solution to reduce small air leaks and improve the energy efficiency and durability of structures. The flexible, self-adhered flashing creates an air- and water-tight seal around penetrations, including around wall protrusions such as plumbing and HVAC components, vents, electrical outlets, gas lines and more. Suitable for residential and commercial construction, the flashing is available in 2 3/4-in. by 15-ft. rolls.

Circle 28 on inquiry card



Installable in cold weather, on damp surfaces

BENJAMIN OBDYKE introduces its next-generation of HydroFlash Self-Adhered Flashing, designed with flexibility and ease-of-installation in mind. Featuring a metalized facer that conforms around the 1-mm spacers of the company's HydroGap housewrap for maximum adhesion, the flashing can be installed in weather down to 0 F and applied to damp surfaces. It self-seals around nails, delivers stronger adhesion, and no primer is needed for application. Additionally, for greater longevity and performance, the flashing is UV stable for six months.

Circle 29 on inquiry card



Self-adhering flashing works into tight details

GCP Vycor PRO flashing seals around fasteners, forms water-tight laps, and is easily worked into tight details due to its pliable membrane. The self-adhered flashing provides protection against water infiltration in critical nonroof detail areas. It is composed of a durable, tear- and puncture-resistant engineered polypropylene backing film paired with a nonasphaltic, butyl-modified adhesive. Offered in 75-ft. rolls, the flashing has wide application and service temperature windows—primerless adhesion to wood sheathing from 25 F and suitable for in-service conditions up to 176 F, respectively.

Circle 30 on inquiry card



Family of flashing system solutions

MFM BUILDING PRODUCTS offers a versatile product range of styles for curved shapes, low temperature applications and prolonged UV exposure with its WindowWrap Window & Door Flashing System. The self-adhesive, self-sealing waterproofing tapes defend against wind, water, insect and sound penetration, and they prevent the formulation of mold and mildew. A family of solutions, the five professional-grade flashing systems are: WindowWrap PSX-20, WindowWrap PowerBond, WindowWrap Flex PowerBond, WindowWrap Flex and WindowWrap White.

Circle 31 on inquiry card

Flashing system incorporates style, flexibility

TAMLYN XtremeBlock provides cutting-edge-designed mounting blocks incorporating shingle-style water-management principles with flexibility, style and value. It has been uniquely designed—with an overlapping bottom drip edge, end dams that prevent water from running over the sides, and an angled top with center dam to direct water flow away from the wall and fixture—to maximize moisture movement away from the envelope of a structure while offering a pleasing appearance. The flashing system features a durable, cellular PVC 1/2-in. face that provides superior screw-holding capability for fixtures or pre-cut options in a variety of sizes.

Circle 32 on inquiry card





Two system flashing solutions

HUBER ENGINEERED WOODS' ZIP System liquid flash combines the durability of silicones with the toughness of urethanes, resulting in a liquid-applied flashing membrane that flows easily to seal irregular shapes and surfaces, such as rough openings and wall penetrations. Additionally, the company's ZIP System stretch tape, made of a high-performance composite acrylic, stretches to fit sills, curves and corners with a single piece without having to tape segments together, and can be pulled up and reapplied for hassle-free installation, providing a tight, energy-efficient seal.

Circle 33 on inquiry card



Moisture protection during construction, after cladding

BLOCK-IT Flashing and Flex Flashing Tapes from **KIMBERLY-CLARK** deliver protection against moisture during construction and after an exterior cladding is installed. The tapes prohibit air conditioning and heat loss around door and window openings, and provide long-term adhesion to a variety of surfaces. BLOCK-IT Seam Tapes come in 1.89 by 164 in. and 2.83 by 164 in.; Flashing Tapes in 4 in. by 75 ft. and 6 in. by 75 ft.; while Flex Flashing is offered in 6 in. by 75 ft. and 9 in. by 75 ft.

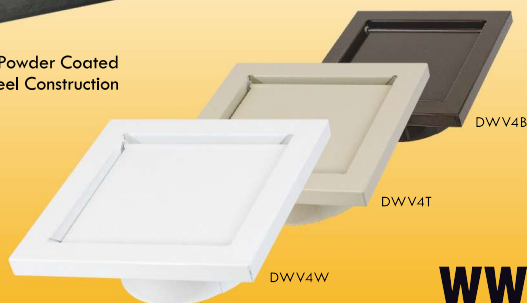
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PRODUCTS

Bath

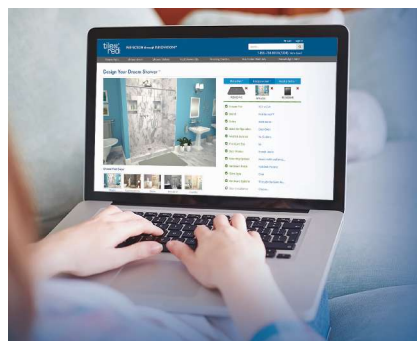


Toilet with small footprint, high efficiency

Featuring Stealth Technology, **NIAGARA CONSERVATION's** Nano Toilet utilizes an average of 0.6 gpf. Its vacuum-assist flush leaves a clean bowl while its noise-cancelling tank and compact design make the toilet a fit for smaller spaces. The toilet's lean silhouette is comprised of skirted sides that conceal its trapway system, a narrow tank, and a smooth, skirted bowl. WaterSense certified, MaP premium rated and certified by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the toilet also includes a 10-year warranty. **Circle 35 on inquiry card**

Neutral white tone introduction for bathtubs, sinks

WETSTYLE launches a purer, more neutral white tone for all its WETMAR BIO products and white lacquered furniture items. This shade introduction works with warm and cool tone design schemes to provide a versatile offering. An example of the finish in action is the Deco Lavatory Sink (shown), part of the Déco Collection, which comes in two thicknesses. Designed by Joël Dupras, Pierre Belanger and Wetstyle Design Lab, the washbasin features rounded corners and a recessed drain. **Circle 36 on inquiry card**



Virtual shower design, selection tool

TILE REDi develops its Redi Tech Virtual Shower Designer as an interface that allows users to view countless choices of shower pans, enclosures, shelves, tile and other accessories. Products can be previewed in a virtual bathroom setting with a selected décor. In addition, Redi Tech Pro interface allows professionals to select products and features they want to showcase for customers and in which order. The interface also establishes pricing as well as the company's branding and contact information. **Circle 37 on inquiry card**

Showerheads provide minimalistic appearance

CALIFORNIA FAUCETS expands its selection of contemporary styles with a line of Ultra-Thin Showerheads. Offered in square and round styles in 6-, 8-, 10- or 12-in. sizes, the showerheads measure $\frac{5}{16}$ in. thick, are constructed of solid brass and come in a selection of more than 30 decorative finishes. With the option to mount on a wall or ceiling, the showerheads feature self-cleaning rubber jets that deliver a rain-like drenching spray while maintaining a maximum flow rate from 1.5 to 2.5 gpm, depending on the model. **Circle 38 on inquiry card**



Customize assortment of medicine cabinets, vanities, lighting

ROBERN unveils its Profiles Collection as a pairing of clean, modern styling with the latest technology, resulting in ala carte cabinetry and vanity sizes, lighting options, and a range of glass and metal finishes. Beyond its range of sizes, the collection's medicine cabinets boast electrical outlets, interior lighting, three complementary mirror designs and more. Lighting is available in warm, cool or tunable Kelvin color temperature options that can be adjusted. Metal finishes include Chrome and Polished Nickel plated finishes and Matte Black and Matte Gold anodized finishes. **Circle 39 on inquiry card**



Hands-free faucet can have reduced flow rate

The VOLA Electronic Hands-Free Faucet from **HASTINGS TILE & BATH** ensures all its electronic boxes are water-resistant, including its connections, which are made with watertight seals. Part of the point system for LEED certificates, the wall-mount faucet's standard flow rate is 1.3 gpm, but that can be reduced to 0.5 gpm, and its run time can be set from 20 seconds down to 10 or even 3 seconds. Each unit has a built-in hygienic rinse to ensure fresh water moves in the lines. **Circle 40 on inquiry card**

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Toilet Armor patent is pending

For more info circle 62

Remodelers' Choice

Readers demonstrate interest in tankless water heaters with recirculation technology built-in and a lighter brick offering for a range of applications.

The following product received the most reader inquiries from the December issue of *Qualified Remodeler*:

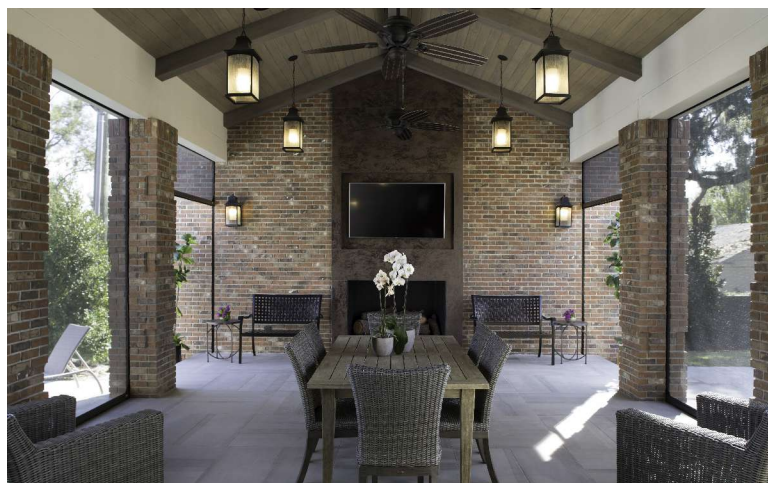
RINNAI

The Rinnai SE+ Series Tankless Water Heater (RUR models) utilizes ThermaCirc360 to provide faster hot water, even in applications where a dedicated return line is not available or is difficult to install. An integrated recirculation pump, internal bypass line and thermal bypass valve—included as standard with every SE+ model—make the Crossover mode of recirculation possible. Installing the thermal bypass valve between the hot and cold supply lines at the fixture farthest away from the tankless water heater enables the use of the cold water line temporarily as the return path of the circulation loop. Rinnai Circ-Logic recirculation technology allows users to set recirculation patterns

that coincide with hot-water usage patterns, making sure hot water is available when needed.

Offered in natural gas and propane as well as indoor and outdoor models, the SE+ Series provides concentric polypropylene or dual-pipe PVC/CPVC venting options on the same model to allow for maximum installation flexibility. Additionally, venting is available in vertical and horizontal configurations. The RUR models are Wi-Fi ready and, thus, can be paired with the company's Control-R Wireless Module and accompanying app for easy tankless water heater control.

For more information, visit rinnai.us/gas-water-heating/catalog/tankless/rur or circle 41.



The following product received the most page views in the past month on QualifiedRemodeler.com:

MERIDIAN BRICK

Authentic Brick by Meridian Brick presents an authentic brick that weighs 70 percent less than traditional brick, resulting in greater design freedom. The genuine, 100 percent fired clay brick is comprised of just the brick face and comes off the wall $\frac{3}{8}$ inch. Its sleek profile measures 3 inches smaller than traditional brick and can be used in a plethora of indoor and outdoor applications, such as fireplace surrounds, accent walls, ceilings, exterior gables and more. Authentic Brick is offered in colors and profiles—in addition to more than 200 made-to-options possible—that can easily mix with existing and/or other façade and cladding materials; 39 stock colors are ready to ship. A choice of textures for Authentic Brick are also available, and options include smooth, velour, rolled and sanded.

Designed to install without needing a structure to support the weight of typical full-sized clay brick, Authentic Brick installs via four field-applied methods: interior adhesive method, thick-set system, thinset mortar or a metal support system. Meridian Brick's products are manufactured from natural materials and are free of volatile compounds.

For more information, visit authenticbrick.com or circle 42.



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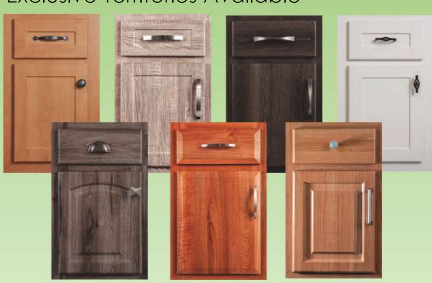
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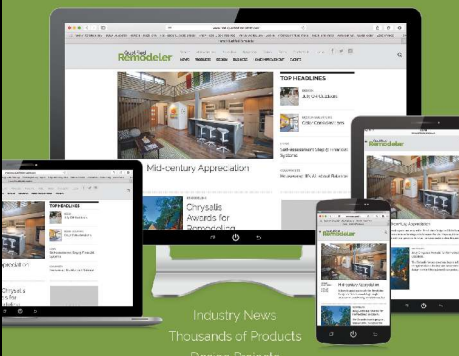


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Numbers Game

No. 261 Building Company No. 7 embraces advanced business systems to increase profitability and develop additional sales.

By Kyle Clapham

Before he started his own company, Matt Millsap worked for contractors who ran their business like many other construction entrepreneurs. They kept a checkbook in the passenger seat of their truck and relied on the same methods they used 15 years ago. When he asked for a laptop, smartphone or even an email address, they quickly invoked their track record without using those technologies.

“It was hard to be a good employee because I never had the right tools to do my job very well,” says Millsap, who established Building Company No. 7 in Nashville, Tennessee, in 2009. “The owner had to be involved in the day-to-day operation; [he] could never get away because everything was in his brain. He was the only one who knew it, and he almost [concealed] the information so he had to be there.”

“I didn’t want to have to always be there. I wanted to be able to have some really talented people that could run the company [while I] was out doing business development,” he adds. “That’s why

it’s Building Company No. 7 and not Matt Millsap Construction—because I didn’t want it to be about me. I wanted it to be about creating an organization [with] standard operating procedures.”

From the beginning, Millsap implemented formal processes so that each employee understood the expectations and knew how to document a bill, for example. The company

structure allowed him to concentrate on growing the business, especially in the first few years. Millsap also learned the importance of accurate accounting and monitoring the financial numbers to anticipate challenges.

“I almost went out of business [between 2010 and 2011] because I thought that it was all about revenue. If you have a [sizable] company and it’s not running right, and your numbers aren’t where they need to be, you can go right out of business,” he says. “That really [opened] up my eyes. We were in the hole because I was focusing on revenue [as opposed to] efficiency and managing the numbers of the business properly.”

Millsap says he used to spend \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year on marketing, and 95 percent of the leads came from the internet.

As he built more relationships with local architects in Nashville, however, they began sending him their plans and helping the company win additional bids. Now only 5 percent of leads for the business come from the internet, while 95 percent

arrive via architects and other referrals.

“We get a highly qualified client that we have a very high chance—like greater than 70 percent chance—of being awarded the project,” Millsap explains. “If I can have a relationship with 13 different architects and each of them sends me two jobs a year, that’s 26 qualified leads, plus the referrals we’ll get when we bring in the architect. I didn’t want

“[If] your numbers aren’t where they need to be, you can go right out of business.”

Matt Millsap, owner



MATT MILLSAP,
Owner

COMPANY: Building Company No. 7

LOCATION: Nashville, Tenn.

DESCRIPTION: Full-service remodeler

2017 TOP 500:
No. 261

to alienate myself from all those other architects [by doing the design in-house].”

This approach has generated bigger projects for the company, such as additions and whole-house renovations. Until last year, Millsap would refer smaller jobs—which included most kitchen and bathroom remodels—to other contractors. But after recognizing a surge in requests for bathroom projects over the past summer, he created a new division to deal with minor jobs and handyman work.

“It goes back to kitchens and bathrooms when the economy starts to tighten up, [so] there’s not going to be as many of the big jobs,” says Millsap, who founded his company during the Great Recession. “We went about it intentionally but also to diversify the services we offer. When the [downturn] comes, we’re prepared [for] those smaller jobs.”

In the meantime, Building Company No. 7 will continue to focus on more comprehensive renovations in the historic parts of Nashville. “We get a lot of noteworthy projects because we can incorporate new building science with an old structure, which can be hard to do,” he adds. “But when the budget is there, it allows us to do [those enhancements].” | **QR**

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