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June 2023

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PROJECTS



Photo: Anice Hoachlander

Design Solutions

The Block Builders Group and Teass Warren Architects redefine a midcentury home to utilize aging-in-place elements and provide space for hobbies.

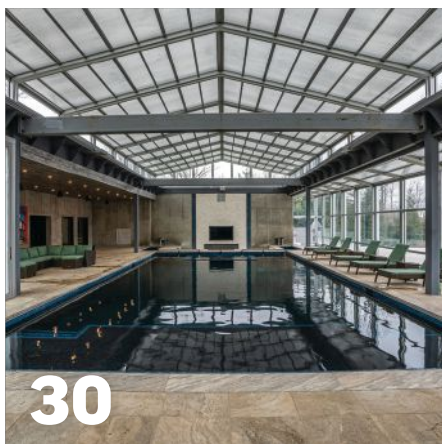


Photo: Andy Schmidt, Cinegraph Studios

Designer's Notebook

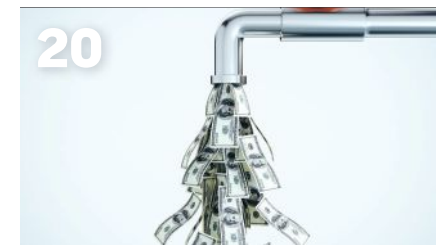
Millennium Custom Homes manufactures an interconnected setting for family and friends within the surroundings of an existing house.



Remodelers Choice 100

A full year's worth of coverage is compiled into the 100 products most accessed by you, our readers.

HOMEIMPROVEMENT PRO™



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Energized Leadership



Patrick L. O'Toole

A RECENT SOCIAL MEDIA PHOTO showed an apartment building under construction. On the side of the building, workers had hung a large sign with the message: “ChatGPT, please finish the rest of this building.”

I think it is a wonderfully powerful statement. It snaps us back to reality. Yes, the power of artificial intelligence is head-spinning and incredibly disruptive for many jobs, but not for us—the workers and companies who create our built environment.

To the outside world, that sign says, “We’ll just keep doing what we’ve always done: Design, build, remodel and improve.” As business owners there’s also a healthy wisdom in sticking with what works and not getting too far ahead of ourselves by jumping at every new technology that comes on the scene.

As all the remodeling market abnormalities related to the pandemic continue to recede, what has emerged is a new normal. Supply chains are functioning. Leads for new business have fallen back to more normal levels. The best business advice today

is about shoring up your people, your processes and your pricing. Dave Yoho addresses the importance of cash flow in his column on page 20.

Similarly, Scott Siegal on page 22 also offers some sage advice during this current period of change in remodeling and home improvement. He stresses the importance of assessing the workloads on your people. To paraphrase: If they’re doing too much, they won’t tell you. They will just leave. So, be cautious and grow incrementally. Indeed, it is a time for tightening the ship and staying focused on consistent profits.

Here’s the tough part for many of us, but not all: While tightening the ship, it’s also vital to continually assess all the potentially game-changing innovations at our disposal. The winners of tomorrow are paying close attention to the innovative new building products that have been introduced this year, delayed by past supply constraints. New software is a hotbed of business innovation for remodelers and home improvement pros. New products and new solutions, when properly assessed and implemented, can help find new efficiencies, new profits and much higher levels of client satisfaction. They can aid

in tightening your ship, but not if you’ve got the blinders on, and not if you are locked into doing things the way you’ve always done them. Entrepreneurs today need to find the energy to drink from the fire hose of innovation without losing their way.

Leadership energy is a magic ingredient. If you’ve got it, the sky is the limit.

Sports superstars talk about how the game slows down for them, allowing them to perform better in the

moment. The game slows for them because they’ve kicked themselves into a higher gear. They are hyper aware and hyper present. That takes energy. Here’s a question all of us face today: Do I have the ability to muster the kind of energy needed to shore up my business and to also drink from the fire hose of innovation? For young leaders and leaders who remain young at heart, the answer is a resounding yes. **QR**

DO YOU HAVE THE KIND OF ENERGY NEEDED TO TRULY INNOVATE?

Patrick O'Toole

Qualified Remodeler

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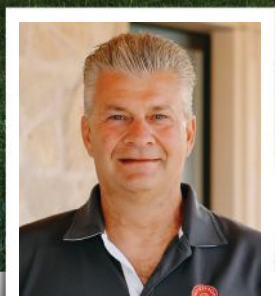


FAST Remodeler Live is the winner of the 2023 Jesse H. Neal Award recognizing outstanding business content.



The Vision:

Boldly renovate to create a vacation-inspired home layered with light.



Dave Johnson | Senior Job Site Supervisor | Hagstrom Builder | Marine on St. Croix, MN

Sourcing natural, durable, and high-performance materials was crucial for this extensive, contemporary remodel nestled on a 6-acre wooded lot in Minnesota. Floor-to-ceiling windows and doors from Kolbe's VistaLuxe AL LINE were utilized to meet the energy goals while also connecting and transcending the home's defined indoor and outdoor spaces.

Recap the renovation by watching the video at kolbewindows.com/cloud-forest

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Market Outlook

Existing-Home Sales, Key Driver of Remodeling Activity, Decline 3.4%

EXISTING-HOME sales decreased in April, according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR). All four major U.S. regions registered month-over-month and year-over-year sales declines. Total existing-home sales—completed transactions that include single-family homes, townhomes, condominiums, and co-ops—slid 3.4 percent from the month prior to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.28 million in April. Year over year, sales slumped 23.2 percent, down from 5.57 million in April 2022.

“Home sales are bouncing back and forth but remain above recent cyclical lows,” said NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun. “The combination of job gains, limited inventory and fluctuating mortgage rates over the last several months have created an environment of push-pull housing demand.”

Total housing inventory registered at the end of April was 1.04 million units, up 7.2 percent from March and one percent from a year ago (1.03 million). Unsold inventory sits at a 2.9-month supply at the current sales pace, up from 2.6 months in March and 2.2 months in April 2022.

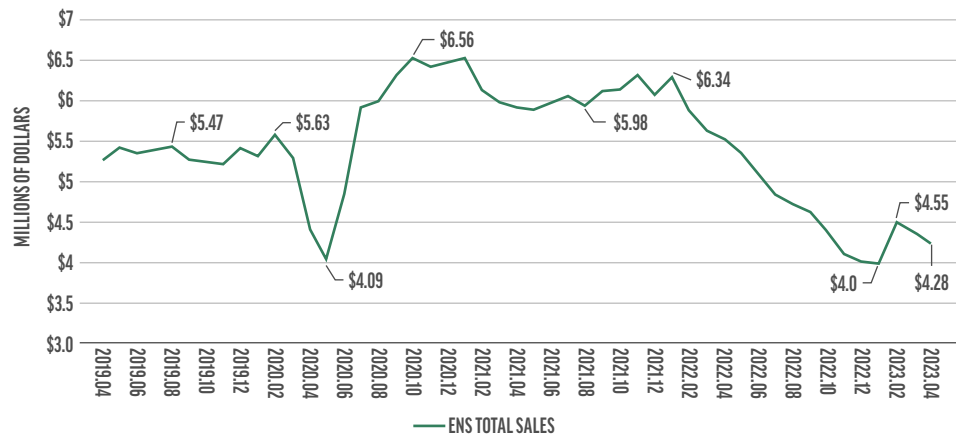
The median existing-home price for all housing types in April was \$388,800, a decline of 1.7 percent from April 2022 (\$395,500). Prices rose in the Northeast and Midwest but retreated in the South and West.

“Roughly half of the country is experiencing price gains,” Yun noted. “Even in markets with lower prices, primarily the expensive West region, multiple-offer situations have returned in the spring buying season following the calmer winter market. Distressed and forced property sales are virtually nonexistent.”

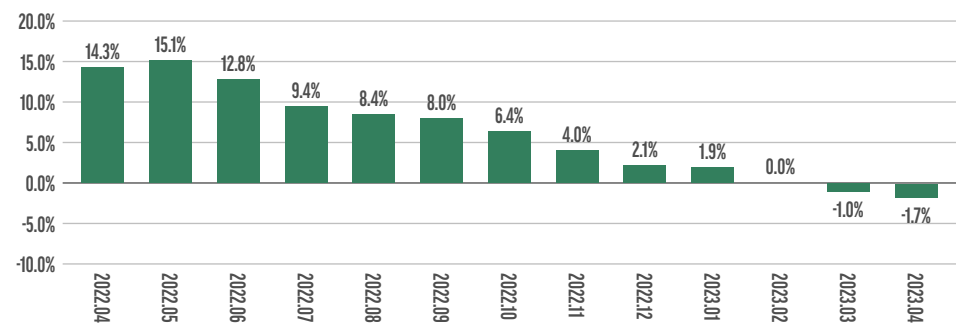
Properties typically remained on the market for 22 days in April, down from 29 days in March but up from 17 days in April 2022. Seventy-three percent of homes sold in April were on the market for less than a month.

First-time buyers were responsible for 29 percent of sales in April, up from 28 percent in both March 2023 and April 2022. NAR’s 2022 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers—released in November 2022—found that the

Total Existing Home Sales, SA Annual Rate



Existing Home Sales Median Price, Percent Change Year-Over-Year



Source: National Association of Realtors, 2023

annual share of first-time buyers was 26 percent, the lowest since NAR began tracking the data.

All-cash sales accounted for 28 percent of transactions in April, up from 27 percent in March and 26 percent the previous year. Individual investors or second-home buyers, who make up many cash sales, purchased 17 percent of homes in April, identical to March and one year ago.

According to Freddie Mac, the 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 6.35 percent as of May 11. That’s down from 6.39 percent the previous week, but up from 5.3 percent one year ago.

Regional Breakdown

Existing-home sales in the Northeast receded 1.9 percent from March to an annual rate of 510,000 in April, down 23.9 percent from April 2022. The median price in the Northeast was \$422,700, up 2.8 percent from the previous year.

In the Midwest, existing-home sales declined 1.9 percent from one month ago to an annual rate of 1.02 million in April, dropping 21.5 percent from the prior year. The median price in the Midwest was \$287,300, up 1.8 percent from April 2022.

Existing-home sales in the South decreased 3.4 percent from March to an annual

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“We went through a process of energy studies, and aluminum started coming in” as a favored choice. “If you install it correctly, it will last forever.”

-Barry Alan Yoakum, FAIA, Principal, archimania

Civitas, Memphis Installing contr.: Ralph Jones Sheet Metal Architect: archimania
Owner: Barry Alan Yoakum Photo: archimania

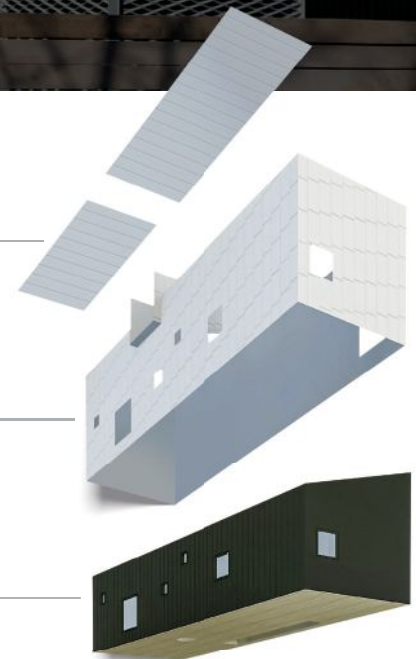
Civitas makes a strong statement not only in its visual presentation, but also in its accomplishment as the first single-family home in the Americas to be registered as a Zero Energy/Zero Carbon home. Petersen’s wall and roof systems contributed to both design and performance of this progressive home.

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rate of 1.98 million in April, a 20.2 percent decline from one year ago. The median price in the South was \$357,900, down 0.6 percent from April 2022.

In the West, existing-home sales slipped 6.1 percent from the previous month to an annual rate of 770,000 in April, down 31.3 percent from the previous year. The median price in the West was \$578,200, down 8 percent from April 2022.

Market Outlook

Labor shortage easing, but still a challenge

Labor shortages are slightly less severe than they were a year ago but “continue to be a headwind” for the home renovation and design industry, according to the Q2 2023 Houzz U.S. Renovation Barometer, a quarterly gauge that tracks residential renovation market expectations, project backlogs and recent activity among businesses in the nation’s construction, architectural and design services sectors.

Houzz reported last month that nearly four-fifths (79 percent) of the more than 1,500 residential construction and design businesses surveyed in March reported moderate-to-severe shortages in this year’s second quarter, down from 91 percent in the second quarter of 2022. The finding may be a reflection, however, of recent declines in business activity levels and newly committed projects, Houzz cautioned.

Carpenters are in the shortest supply, followed by electricians and cabinet makers (as cited by 42 percent, 28 percent and 26 percent of industry pros, respectively), Houzz said. However, at least 30 percent fewer renovation and design pros are reporting shortages of these subcontractors as compared with the previous year, the company noted.

Among other key findings of Houzz’s survey were the following:

The most significant impacts of the labor shortages include increased project costs (81 percent), subcontractor compensation (72 percent), and project length (71 percent).

Beyond skilled labor, construction and design professionals are also facing challenges in securing the items they need to complete their projects. Nearly half of businesses not only report moderate to severe shortages of products and materials (49 percent), but also

shipping delays once purchased (63 percent).

Material challenges are greatest with copper or brass (47 percent), followed by lumber or plywood (46 percent), drywall (40 percent) and aluminum (40 percent). Delays in the arrival of cabinetry (96 percent), indoor furniture (95 percent), windows (94 percent), outdoor and indoor doors (94 percent and 93 percent, respectively) and lighting fixtures (92 percent), “are top of mind for pros as they plan their project timelines,” Houzz said.

Associations

Tobin named new president and CEO of NAHB



Tobin

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the Washington, D.C.-based trade association representing the housing industry, has named James W. Tobin III as the association’s new president and chief executive officer.

Tobin, formerly executive VP and chief lobbyist at NAHB, succeeds CEO Jerry Howard, who is retiring from the 140,000-member trade association after more than 30 years. Tobin, who joined the NAHB in 1998, assumed the new post effective June 1.



Howard

Green Building

HUD publishes new funding opportunities for green and resilient retrofit program

The Department of Housing and Urban Development announced funding for green and resilient retrofits of properties participating in Multifamily Assisted Housing programs. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provided HUD with \$837.5 million in grant funding and \$4 billion in loan authority

for this new program. The bill also included \$42.5 million for a new HUD initiative that will launch later this summer to collect and assess energy and water usage data from assisted multifamily housing properties.

Building owners will be able to invest in technologies such as solar panels, heat pumps, wind-resistant roofing and other measures that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make properties healthier and safer for residents in the face of more severe weather and a changing climate.

HUD published three Notices of Funding Opportunity for the Green and Resilient Retrofit Program, along with implementation guidance.

Elements Awards target properties already advanced in a rehabilitation transaction and need gap financing to fund specific utility-efficient or resilient elements.

Leading Edge Awards target properties in early stages of recapitalization planning. These awards fund projects that will achieve a high-level third-party green certification, such as Phius ZERO REVIVE.

Comprehensive Awards target properties with high needs where HUD-procured contractors commission third-party reports and assessments to develop scopes-of-work. The resulting plan will include whole-building retrofits to incorporate green retrofit and resilient design elements.

Green Building

Major appliance maker addresses sustainability in new report

Whirlpool Corp., the appliance giant, released its Sustainability Report, highlighting the company’s “enduring commitment to environmental sustainability, social responsibility, corporate governance initiatives, and progress in meeting its sustainability, inclusion and diversity goals,” the company announced.

“Whirlpool Corp. has established a series of goals and commitments that shape our approach to environmental stewardship, employee and community support and product sustainability,” said Marc Bitzer, chairman and CEO of the publicly traded Whirlpool Corp., whose portfolio includes Whirlpool, JennAir, KitchenAid, Maytag and other appliance brands.

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Pros Talk Tech at FAST Remodeler Live 2023



The second annual business technology conference for home improvement pros and remodelers, FAST Remodeler Live, attracted an engaged group of entrepreneurs looking for tech solutions for operational gains. FAST is an acronym for Focused on Agile Systems and Technology.

The event, which was held May 16-17 at the Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor, highlights opportunities offered by the latest software solutions for entrepreneurs.

“The progress made against these commitments is a testament to the work of every Whirlpool employee, because we all have a role to play in improving life at home for our consumers,” Bitzer added.

Among the highlights of the report were the following:

- Whirlpool Corp. reached its commitment to be “Zero Waste to Landfill” Gold or Platinum status at 29 manufacturing sites worldwide.
- The company activated two virtual power purchasing agreements that are expected to yield renewable energy to match 100% of Whirlpool Corp.’s electricity consumption by its U.S. manufacturing plants.
- The company further enhanced efforts to “thoughtfully design and deliver products for consumers that make the best use of materials, have a sustainable operating life, and that can be responsibly managed at the end of life.”
- As part of its ongoing commitment made in the company’s 2020 “Pledge for Racial Equality and Fairness,” Whirlpool Corp. engaged more than 1,300 U.S.-based employees with Unconscious Bias and Empathy training.
- Through its “BuildBetter with Whirlpool” program, the company committed to work with Habitat for Humanity to build at least 250 climate-resilient and energy-efficient homes by 2024.

Supply Chain

US action sought on ongoing China cabinet trade issues

The American Kitchen Cabinet Alliance, a trade organization closely aligned with the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association, has requested that the Biden Administration and Congress “stand up to China,” which the AKCA and KCMA have charged with myriad unfair trading practices, including alleged evasion of antidumping and countervailing duties imposed by U.S. trade officials.


Representatives from the sister trade associations last month urged government officials “to stand with 250,000 American cabinet workers and support domestic manufacturing.”



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“We simply cannot allow China’s exploitative trade practices to reclaim control of our domestic cabinet industry and strip working families of the ability to pursue their own American dream,” said Kountry Wood Products President Perry Miller, immediate past president of the Reston, VA-based KCMA, which represents 300+ North American cabinet manufacturers and suppliers to the cabinet trade.

“We’re going to continue to fight for our fair-trade agenda,” said incoming KCMA president Jeff Gullede, president of Bishop Cabinets. “We’ve seen the real dollars (saved) by properly enforcing trade laws and we’re going to continue to stay the course.”

According to the KCMA, legal efforts aimed at combatting unfair-trading practices have blocked some \$4.9 billion in illegally traded imports of Chinese-made kitchen cabinets, vanities, and components from entering the U.S. between 2019 and 2022.

Outdoor Living

NKBA report on growth in outdoor kitchens

Luxury in outdoor kitchens grew in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic, as spending time at home and wanting to entertain within an outdoor space became more popular, according to a new report by the National Kitchen & Bath Association.

At the same time, the NKBA reported, luxury outdoor kitchens are becoming “a new standard” for luxury new-home construction, since they provide additional usable square footage for a home.

The NKBA’s “Luxury Outdoor Kitchen Report,” released last month, was based on the input of 11 designers who completed custom outdoor kitchens in seven states, including four U.S. regions and two Canadian provinces, the Bethlehem, PA-based trade association said.

“While there are some ways in which outdoor kitchens are similar to indoor kitchens in term of design principles and layout, they can also create unique obstacles and challenges for designers,” said the NKBA, citing “increased activity” among association members around high-end outdoor kitchens.

A successful outdoor kitchen “provides harmony and flow” from the indoors to the outdoors, the NKBA said. “Product innovation and materials used allow for this transition to feel very natural.”

“Using various materials, products and services extends the homeowners’ ability to use the outdoor kitchen throughout the year through various seasons, extending the kitchen’s value,” the NKBA said.

The “Luxury Outdoor Kitchen Report” is available by contacting the NKBA, at www.nkba.org.

Supplier News

Outdoor living supplier opens new Arizona design center

Oldcastle APG, a supplier of concrete building and hardscape products, is opening a 5,000-sq.-ft. design center in Tempe, Arizona, the company announced.

The design center, which opened is set June 7, is aimed at providing contractors, architects and homeowners with an opportunity to experience Oldcastle’s line of outdoor living products and brands, including Belgard, Techniseal, Mirage, Barette Outdoor Living, PebbleTec, MoistureShield, Amerimix, Belgard Commercial, Echelon and Tru-Scapes, corporate officials said.

The center features a wide selection of products, outdoor lighting examples and comprehensive masonry, as well as product finishes, colors and samples, according to the company, a unit of building materials giant CRH Company. Also included is space to host training sessions, conferences and installation demos, the company added.

The Design Center, located at 1919 W Fairmont Drive, Suite 5, is open to the public Tuesdays through Fridays, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., or by appointment.



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Supplier News

West Shore Home opens western headquarters in Irving, Texas

West Shore Home opened a western headquarters in Irving, Texas, on June 8. The 82,000-square-foot facility houses a full distribution center, office space for over 120 employees and training rooms for corporate programs.

The facility services West Shore Home's Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah branches. The warehouse provides storage for all window, door, shower and bath products for the company's remodeling jobs west of the Mississippi River.

The western headquarters is the centerpiece of West Shore Home's megaplex in the Dallas-Ft. Worth region. Just a short distance away is the company's hands-on

training facility where all company window, door and bath installers and sales team will learn their craft by training in a replicated home environment.

"West Shore Home is growing at an explosive rate and this is the next step in our goal to become America's Most Admired Home Remodeling Brand," said B.J. Werzyn, President and CEO, West Shore Home. "Our proven customer-focused business model is propelling West Shore Home nationwide, while our ability to provide fast, seamless business integrations is changing perceptions in the home remodeling industry."

West Shore Home's Western Headquarters is the company's third corporate building. The others are in Mechanicsburg, Pa. where the company was founded. This is the first time the company has combined a distribution center and operational functions in the same building.

Wolf expands its representation in Midwest

Wolf Home Products, a supplier of cabinets and other building products, has expanded its partnership with Key-Link Fencing & Railing into select midwestern states, the company announced.

Under the terms of the partnership, Wolf Home Products and Key-Link, a leading supplier of aluminum rail and fence systems, will now be serving customers in Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, the companies said.

"We're looking forward to furthering our partnership with Key-Link to satisfy the demands of the midwestern market," said Craig Danielson, president and CEO of Wolf Home Products. "This expansion allows us to (provide) a wide variety of in-demand products to set our Midwest customers up for success." **QR**

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Special Section

10 Reasons to Commit to a Franchise or Dealership



The remodeling and home improvement industry benefits enormously from dozens of great brands and business opportunities that are available to industry entrepreneurs. For at least 20 years, *Qualified Remodeler* has compiled a list of these opportunities. If you're in the market for a new home-improvement opportunity, visit qualifiedremodeler.com/10-reasons-to-commit-to-a-franchise-or-dealership-2023-franchise-dealers-opportunities.

Most Popular Products

These products had the most views in recent weeks. To learn more, go to QualifiedRemodeler.com and search the product or company name.

- 1 Caulks give contractors confidence on jobsite from **TITEBOND** | titebond.com
- 2 Underlayment products now covered by warranty from **CERTAINTEED** | certainteed.com
- 3 Bath collection offers industrial chic aesthetic from **MOEN** | moen.com



1



3



2

QR on Social Media

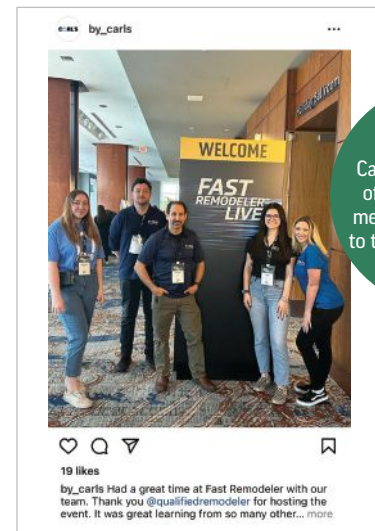
We love connecting with remodelers and home improvement pros, so come find and engage with us across our various social media channels!



 Case Design posts about two of its team members presenting at FAST Remodeler Live in Baltimore.



 EverConnect tweets its booth presence as a sponsor for the FAST Remodeler Live conference.



 Carl's shares a photo of some of its team members posing next to the signage at FAST Remodeler Live.



W

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A Sound Strategy to Determine Your Labor Costs

by Shawn McCadden, CR, CLC, CAPS

PRODUCTION LABOR COSTS are one of the key ingredients to profitable estimating and pricing for remodeling projects. If you can't or don't properly calculate the breakeven costs to put labor in the field, your business risks underpricing the projects it sells. Worse, until you know how to properly calculate and also job cost—apples to apples—you will continue to unknowingly underprice your projects.

A lot goes into accurately determining what it really costs to put an employee in the field for each hour worked before you earn any gross profit on that labor—way more than can be covered in one article. Below are some common mistakes.

Labor Burdens vs. Overhead

A sound financial strategy for your business requires a clear understanding and separation of labor burdens versus business overhead. Labor burdens should be considered job costs and should be included in estimated costs before markup. Overhead is the expenses the business pays that cannot be specifically estimated into the cost of producing a specific project. Overhead expenses should be covered by the markup applied to estimated costs to cover your overhead.

For example, workers' comp is often wrongly considered overhead. For an office employee, it is overhead. For a field employee, it should be considered an estimated job cost. To get that cost into your estimates, it needs to be part of the burdened labor cost added to the wages you pay employees.

Another example is vehicle cost. A vehicle used by a salesperson is considered an overhead expense, but the vehicle a carpenter needs to complete work in the field should be considered a job cost. Again, this should be added to the assumed labor cost you use when estimating project hours.

In addition to separating costs from expenses when you estimate jobs, it's just as important to use the same strategy of separation when you do job cost.

For example, if you assume burdens such as workers' comp and vehicles on your labor when you estimate the cost of a project, but your job cost reports only include wages and taxes paid on that labor, you will be comparing apples to oranges. In the example below, a remodeler may be led to believe his or her projects are coming in underbudget. Think of it like estimating in English but job costing in French, without an interpreter.

Reasons to Separate Costs, Expenses

By separating cost and expenses, you will know the breakeven cost of your labor. This is the cost before any gross profit or profit is applied or assumed. This knowledge will help your business in many ways.

If an estimate given to a lead carpenter overseeing a job includes a budget of \$5,000 for staff labor to frame an addition, but the lead carpenter wants to consider subbing out the framing to keep the project on schedule, can he or she confidently compare the price a sub offers for that work to the framing budget in the estimate? If you use the strategy recommended here, yes, an apples-to-apples comparison can be made. However, if vehicle and workers' comp costs were considered overhead instead of labor burden, the comparison to the sub's quote becomes apples to oranges. Does your lead carpenter know how to make the conversion?

Determining the markup your business must use in order to cover overhead on estimated costs is much simpler if your overhead costs are fixed. If burdens like workers' comp and vehicles are considered job costs, keeping to a fixed overhead budget is much easier. On the other hand, if costs vary during the year and are considered overhead—depending on how many employees you have in the field, how many trucks your business will need to support them, and the gross profit dollars you will need—the necessary markup will constantly change as you do business throughout the year. Does your salesperson or estimator understand this?

Guidelines for Burdened Labor Costs

1. Use a spreadsheet tool. Create or find an Excel template. To download mine, just go to shawnmccadden.com/free-burdened-cost-of-labor-worksheet.
2. Be sure the figures you are using are based on the current year's costs.
3. Incorporate PTO. Be sure you're collecting enough money from the hours an employee actually works to also cover pay for holidays, vacations and other non-productive time.
4. Verify your cost assumptions against changes during the year, so you can update your labor costs. Check workers' comp and employer-paid tax rates: Have they or will they change?
5. Adjust your burdened labor costs inside estimates well in advance as needed, so you will cover your real costs incurred at the actual time of construction.
6. Anticipate employee raises during the coming year in advance of selling the work to be completed after the raise.
7. Be clear on how you separate overhead expenses from burdened cost of labor. Depending on your method, either the labor cost goes up, or the markup to cover overhead goes up. Sometimes both.

Have Confidence in Your Strategy

If you complete the work done within the estimate, you are on the right track. But if you use the wrong assumption for the burdened cost of labor, you'll either make more money than anticipated—or less. **QR**

Shawn 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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What Is Your Brand Story?

by Christopher K. Landis, AIA

MOST OF YOU have a brand. Have you thought about it in a while? Does it need a tune up? Your brand should be found at the intersection of your core values and your mission statement. The definition of a brand story is a narrative that communicates the mission of a company (or individual). It is a narrative that evokes emotion and builds customers' trust.

Customers who are moved by your brand story are more likely to count on your company and eventually buy your products or services. All companies today need a compelling story to positively convey their brand to stay competitive in today's market. A compelling brand story differentiates your company from its competitors. It builds client trust and loyalty. And, yes, it drives sales.

You'll know that a brand narrative is successful when it effectively achieves the following list of benefits. That is why it's important to continually revise and improve the narrative.

- 1. The story must differentiate your company.** In today's market, most buyers purchase from companies who share similar core values. An authentic story helps attract clients with similar values by communicating your brand's mission and ideals in a succinct and engaging way. Eventually those values become a clear point of differentiation from your competitors.
- 2. The story should create connection with your target client.** A business's reputation depends entirely on its connection with its customers. When customers connect emotionally to your story and not just your product or service, they will be more loyal to your brand and more likely to recommend it to others.
- 3. The story must build trust.** Your brand story sets for and establishes a brand promise and tells how you deliver on that promise. Following through on brand

promises deepens your company's connection with its customers and builds customer trust.

- 4. Effective stories generate sales.** Modern consumers look beyond price tags and good deals for compelling stories. A well-designed brand story drives conversions, encourages connection and, ultimately, leads to sales.
- 5. The strength of your narrative will help you optimize scarce marketing resources.** Smaller companies use their brand stories to attract new customers, even without a big marketing budget. Small businesses have the advantage of consumer interest in local relationships, which increases sales and allows for small companies to scale quicker.



Maybe you already have brand and a story about that brand. How well does that story effectively achieve these objectives? To sharpen your brand and improve its story, you'll need to talk to your employees and survey your clients. You'll want to know which elements need to be improved or emphasized in your business. Then you'll want to do the same exercise with your marketing.

Re-read your website with the above five bullet points in mind. Does your website achieve these goals? Does all your media across all platforms clearly and concisely tell

your brand story? I am referring to LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Houzz as well as association websites, where you are a member and have a listing. Does your newsletter reinforce your brand story?

If your brand needs honing, I suggest laying some groundwork by researching the topic of branding. There are also many credible resources on the internet that explain how to write your story. Many offer templates and consulting services. With more artificial intelligence services developing online, many internet platforms will surely be adding brand-story services, including a review of your existing brand.

A good place to start is any charities and community building organizations that you support. They can help communicate your core values in an authentic way. They can be profiled on your website. An example of this is Patagonia. The outdoor clothing and mountaineering company has pledged 1 percent of its sales to the preservation of the natural environment.

It goes without saying that every person and aspect of your company must be aligned on your resulting brand story. It's about the customer experience—from how your phones are answered, to the branding and messaging on your job signs, and to the design of your office.

Every interaction with your clients, however small, should be designed to build trust on a functional and emotional level. For design-build companies, it is foundational to inspire a sense of pride in design, workmanship and community. To paraphrase Steve Jobs, your brand story "is not about how it looks, but rather how well it works." **QR**

Christopher K. Landis, AIA, owns Landis Construction in Washington, D.C. He brings 30 years of remodeling design, construction and management experience to this series of columns for the magazine. You can reach him at chris@landisconstruction.com.

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Cash Flow Is the Key to Thriving in This Changing Economy

by Dave Yoho

THE AVERAGE HOME IMPROVEMENT

or remodeling company is often owned by someone who worked for another similar type of company before starting their own business. Many were installers. Some were in sales and marketing roles.

What they have in common is the desire to be successful entrepreneurs. They want to make things happen and create a business utilizing creativity and intuitive judgment. They believe this will make them comfortable and happy. This is also an illusion that can lead to unintended consequences.

Most owners of home improvement and remodeling companies lack experience in structuring and managing the backend of the business. The majority also struggle with “working capital” issues, some of which are not easily apparent. This often starts when the business is established and continues as the business grows.

Many companies appear to operate at a profitable level yet have not increased their level of working capital to accommodate growth. Startup companies often do so with little capital and a lot of sweat equity. A lack of cash flow can create immense problems.

Suppose a business produces \$1 million in revenue and earns a 7 percent pretax net profit in the first year. That means the business spent \$930,000 in labor, material and operating expenses. That’s \$77,500 per month or slightly less than \$20,000 a week. Seldom does the average entrepreneur research this need and then follow up by creating an operating budget to meet these ongoing costs.

Couple this with the fact that they are usually operating on a “cash basis.” If they are savvy, they require deposits or progressive payments with contracts—and this often results in a *false perception of profitability*, which can be disarming and often can also be costly.

Another example: An owner who came out of a sales role with some marketing experience starts a business with a few



Photo: © Adobe Stock / Who is Danny

salespeople. They do \$2.5 million in their first year and end with a 7 percent pretax net profit of \$175,000. This means the company spends \$2.33 million on labor, material and operating expenses. That’s over \$190,000 a month or slightly under \$49,000 per week.

Some startups have accomplished this with less than \$10,000 as an original investment. Most who start with this level of funding, however, don’t survive, or they continually struggle with cash flow problems. They also suffer complications that eventually affect their tax liability.

Companies Seldom Grow on Cash Flow Accumulations

In each of the examples shown, estimated net profitability was 7 percent, which would be subject to federal and state taxes. All the while these companies are attempting to grow without sufficient cash to make it workable. With effective (within the law) use of deposits, progressive payments, change

orders (paid for when negotiated), and prompt collection of “balance due” when the job is *substantially completed*, cash flow becomes more workable.

We find numerous cases where jobs are completed yet balances remain unpaid. Delayed collection and/or litigation is lengthy and costly. Settlements often wipe out the profit, and the virtually uncollectable balance often requires the owner of the business to pay taxes on a “receivable,” which may never get collected.

Note: The use of the phrase “substantially completed” is a variation from the use of “completed.” If you have an unfinished portion of the job to complete, or there is a punch list, either complete it properly or offer the customer a “hold back” amount of approximately 150 percent of what your costs are for the work not satisfactorily completed, then get repairs done promptly. Hopefully, this will help you keep customers satisfied while reducing “receivables.”

Golden Rules of Positive Cash Flow

- **Get cash deposits (within state laws) or progressive payments on all contracts** and be sure they exceed “work in progress.” If you are incorporated and utilize accrual accounting, cash deposits or progressive payments are not treated as income until the job is completed. This is the equivalent of having a capital loan with no interest.
- **Offer discounts for prompt payment.** On cash contracts create a phrase such as, “The balance of \$_____ is due on the day the specified work is substantially completed. If paid on the date of invoice, which shall be considered the date of completion, the customer shall be entitled to a discount of ____ percent. Balances paid after that date are subject to interest at the rate of _____ percent.”

WORKING CAPITAL IS YOUR LIFEblood. A LACK OF CASH FLOW CAN CREATE IMMENSE PROBLEMS.

- **Add-ons and change orders.** Large add-ons can usually be acquired by offering financing. Smaller add-ons or change orders should be negotiated—including contract amendment—and be paid for the day they are negotiated.
- **Convert all payrolls (W-2 or 1099) to bi-weekly, or every two weeks.**

- **Pay your bills on time** and ask your suppliers for a discount for prompt payments. A 2 percent discount for prompt payment on the 10th of each month can earn up to 37 percent when compounded annually. You might be able to borrow money from your bank at a reasonable rate of interest, and that loan would earn you big dollars in return.
- **Adjust commissions due** for jobs sold at an underpriced rate.
- **Create a weekly (or monthly) cash flow report.**

Know Where Some of Your Capital Might Be Hiding

Companies with large marketing budgets and those companies who advance a portion of the commission upon “approval” will have cash depletion based on their investment in the backlog.

Backlog, which is business sold and approved for installation or waiting to be scheduled, usually contains *advances for labor and material as well as marketing expenses and advances to salespeople, plus overwrites to sales management.* All of these deplete cash.

Here’s an example using a good-size company who sells products such as roofing, siding, insulation or windows:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Backlog | \$1,000,000 |
| Marketing expense | 15% |
| Commission and overwrite advances | 7% |
| | <hr/> |
| | 22% |
| Total estimated investment in backlog | \$220,000 |

You will find that positive cash flow is a great stress reducer. With these suggestions, it won’t come overnight, but it will come. **QR**

Dave Yoho is the president of the oldest (since 1962), largest and the most successful small business consulting company specializing in the home improvement industry. His company employs a staff of consulting experts who specialize in advising companies on how to become more profitable in their business. They also sponsor a series of ongoing educational programs in the form of webinars and seminars at hipsummit.com. His recorded materials are sold throughout the U.S. and several foreign countries. To learn more, visit daveyoho.com.

Additional Quick and Easy Ways to Increase Cash Flow

- **Spend less money than you take in.** If you have a budget based on anticipated business and anticipated net profit, spending considerably less than what you earn helps you accumulate cash.
- **Do not employ checkbook management.** Many companies decide to purchase equipment or vehicles based on the amount of money they have in their checking account. Instead, use a current balance sheet or cash flow report to determine cash available less liabilities.
- **Cutoff-date purchasing.** If you purchase from a supplier who accepts credit cards, find the date each month that your credit card issuer totals the account for the prior month. Make purchases on your credit card the day after that cycle is completed. This will give you another 30 days use of that money.
- **Offseason purchases.** Many vendors such as printers, stationary suppliers and similar may be open to extended terms or special prices on large purchases made during their slow season.
- **Decrease your “turn time.”** This is the amount of time it takes you to complete

and collect a contract once it has been approved. A simple reminder: The more times you can turn your money in a given year, the easier it is to accumulate cash.

- **Reduce accounts receivables.** Collect all balances on the day the work is “substantially completed” and collect for all change orders or extras at the time they are executed.
- **When a deposit is received,** remember that this money still belongs to the customer and is issued to the contractor as an “in-faith” deposit. It technically does not belong to the contractor until the job is substantially completed.
- **Evaluate** all new projects, staff additions, and other actions. Programs should be thoroughly evaluated—both in advance and as they proceed. Don’t spend the money unless you are sure to meet objectives.
- **Evaluate all products and services.** Do away with operations that aren’t profitable or only marginally productive. It could be a product or an outmoded procedure. Every company has a few “sleepers” and “sacred cows.” Get rid of them. **QR**



Rules for Managing Growth Amid Uncertainty

by Scott Siegal

ONE COMMON CONCERN among many home improvement company owners is figuring out how to manage growth in an uncertain marketplace. Among our peer groups here at Certified Contractors Network (CCN), we have come to learn that it's impossible to do this if you're also uncertain about you—specifically who you are as a business.

In our industry, companies begin with two objectives: to sell and earn. Young owners will set out wanting to sell as much of their product or services as possible while keeping as much profit as they can. And sure, that makes sense in the moment. But where do they go—and grow—from there?

Over time, we have learned to push business owners to establish visions for their companies early on. The key is to develop a business plan they can come back to, time and time again, to keep them on track. Wise owners will use their business plan document to periodically check whether they are meeting their objectives, regardless of how the market is fairing. This foundational vision is a critical baseline objective prior to addressing concerns about managing growth in an uncertain marketplace.

Getting From Point A to Point Z

Most business owners work by themselves in a vacuum. They feel like they can't ask friends for advice, nor can they talk to family. They feel like it's all on them to drive their company forward. That is why peer-group organizations like ours work so well.

By plugging into a network of other owners, once-isolated business owners can access the coaching, consulting and training they need to achieve the visions they set out to achieve in their business plans. And they can also tap into the group for advice during uncertain market conditions.

A business owner needs three resources to get the answers that they need to keep their companies on track to achieve their visions of the future.

- **Coaching:** You need best practices that come with decades of experience. There are plenty of experienced owners who can offer this. It can be anyone in a position to offer insights on how to think about your business plans and also how to see them through.
- **Consulting:** Some experienced industry pros offer consulting. It's worthwhile to consider working with someone you trust to identify and solve the specific problems keeping you back.

**BE PATIENT.
THE BIGGEST THREAT
TO YOUR CONTINUED
GROWTH IS TAKING ON
BIG RISKS.**

- **Training:** Once solutions to problems are identified, it's important to get your whole team on the same page. You need to work with positions at every level of your organization and show them how it's done.

But before any of this can happen, everyone in your organization needs to speak the same language.

A Conversation About Conversation

In this industry, how we “talk” to each other and represent our results need to be the same. Unfortunately, a lot of times business owners like to massage their data to fit their narrative. Salespeople tend to do this. They cherry-pick the right data to make it look like they're performing well, when in reality

they're really not.

To help you get a better sense of how you're performing, you need to establish the same benchmarks and standardize your key performance indicators (KPIs). In short, you need to identify your KPIs and develop a consistent way of referring to them.

When you are involved with business peer groups, and you are accessing other business resources, being consistent in referencing a defined set of KPIs becomes essential. Only then can you calculate costs, margins and profit and understand exactly how you're performing in comparison to everyone else. With this understanding, you can then work to get the most out of your business.

The “Aha” Moment

After level-setting your business with the right benchmarks and getting that nice, clear picture of how your company is performing, then you can begin to see the areas that need the most improvement and discover opportunities for growth. This “aha” moment is full of revelations. “We need to generate more leads. We should consider offering additional services.” These revelations are a good thing. They give clarity to the uncertainty, and when you get this greater understanding of your company in sync with the business plan you set from the start, that's when the growth really happens.

Make Small Bets

As your business starts to grow, you might be tempted to try to make big gains by placing big bets. Be patient. The biggest threat to your continued growth is taking on big risks. Make a lot of small bets and see what works. That's the best way to get through times of uncertainty. **QR**

Scott Siegal is the owner of Maggio Roofing in Washington, D.C., and also owns the Certified Contractors Network. You can learn more about CCN by going to the website contractors.net.



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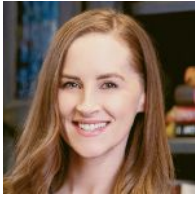
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Why It's More Important Than Ever to Drive Online Reviews

by Dawn Dewey

WITH THE CONTINUAL EVOLUTION in the digital buying behavior of prospects and clients, the importance of having a strong online reputation has grown exponentially in the past several years. Consider this news: *Consumers have become more reliant on your online star-rating than a recommendation from their neighbor.*

Since the days of cavemen (surely), a solid recommendation from your neighbor has always been the absolute, heralded gold standard in finding the best option for anything you need—especially a home improvement pro!

But nowadays? Say my neighbor Wilson recommends your company to me. He says his experience was outstanding, the best he's ever had! Terrific! Now, I Google your company to give you a call, only to see you have just 3.9 stars...ouch. Sure, Wilson might have had a good experience, but it must have been a fluke based on this rating. I'm calling the next company listed who has 4.8 stars with 250 reviews!

And so it goes. You just lost a referral from your customer. The same goes for prospects Googling you after they saw your TV spot, received a direct mail piece, or any other media. By having only 3.9 stars, you're losing leads and driving up your cost of marketing.

It's not just about inspiring consumers to choose to call you. A strong online reputation is important for another reason: SEO or search engine optimization. We all know Google and the others have algorithms programmed to find and display the best search result. Logically, one indicator of a relevant result is a company with a good volume of relevant online reviews, posted with recency, most of which report a positive experience. Google not only considers its own reviews when determining result rankings, it also aggregates ratings across other leading review sites and even lists those results in your map listing now.

So, without a strong online reputation,

the algorithms deem that you are not the best result, and the search engines thereby rank you lower, beneath the scroll, which means fewer people will see you and even have the chance to choose to click on you.

It comes down to this: *You need to drive a strong online reputation because it will enable you to drive more LEADS at an effective cost.*

Of course, you aren't driving 3.9-star experiences regularly, and the vast majority of your customers are as happy as Wilson (I hope). The problem is unhappy customers are much more likely than happy customers to post a review. Why? They have an axe to grind. Most happy customers move on with their lives, with it simply not occurring to them to take the time to post an online review.

That's why it's imperative to develop a strong, well organized and managed strategy to drive positive reviews. At its simplest, a successful program simply functions to ask your customers to share their experience. With happy customers who just don't think of it, simply asking them to write a review is, very often, enough to spur action. Whether it's driven by incentivizing employees or rewarding customers, it is essential to the longevity of your business that you are proactively driving online reviews.

As you develop and execute your successful strategy to drive a stronger online reputation, here are some things to keep in mind:

- 1. Your aggregate rating should be 4.6 or higher.** Studies show that with anything less you are losing leads. Interestingly, a perfect five-star rating also leads to fewer conversions; apparently, in the consumer research psyche, perfection is suspect. The ideal range for star ratings is 4.6 to 4.9 stars.
- 2. Quantity and recency matter.** If you have 4.8 stars with 28 reviews, and the last one was posted six months ago, that's

a problem. Consumers are going to pay more attention to your competitor with 4.6 stars and 300 reviews with the newest one posted last week—and so are the search engines. Recency and quantity also serve another purpose, which you may recognize from the catchy industry phrase “drown and surround.” Meaning, when the inevitable negative review is posted, you want it to fall into every growing sea of positives reviews.

- 3. Track and manage tightly.** As with anything, successfully driving a stronger online reputation is going to require diligent monitoring and active management. What is your aggregate star rating when combining reviews from all prominent third-party sites (Google, Facebook, Angi, etc.)? You don't know? You should; it's how you will track and manage your overall online reputation. There are plenty of resources you can subscribe to that will do this for you for a monthly fee.
- 4. It's not only about driving positive reviews.** Minimizing negative reviews should also be an integral and instrumental piece of your broader online reputation strategy. Aside from focusing on strong customer service, add ancillary tracking and actions to take when the occasional negative review comes in. For instance, at Dreamstyle, every negative review deducts three positive reviews from reporting.

Drive reviews to drive your business forward! **QR**

Dawn Dewey is senior vice president of marketing and business development at Dreamstyle Remodeling, a full-service remodeling firm based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Dreamstyle is a Renovo Home Solutions Company.

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Modern Take

Teass Warren Architects and The Block Builders Group redefine a midcentury home to incorporate aging-in-place elements and provide hobby spaces.

by Kyle Clapham

ONCE their kids moved out and went to college, newfound empty nesters in a Washington, D.C., suburb wanted to downsize to a home with fewer stairs. The couple lived in a large, traditional colonial house, so they asked architect Charles Warren to help them shop for a house that could become their “forever home.” They ended up purchasing a smaller residence about a mile away.

“That’s how my relationship with them started—as a consultant to some degree,” recalls Warren, co-founder and principal of design for Teass Warren Architects in Washington, D.C. “[We were] trying to find a house that would be a good fit for them where they wanted to be in the next stage of life. For them, it was a ‘forever home.’ It was the last house they wanted to buy.”

The well-constructed, largely intact midcentury modern residence sat on a sloping site in a leafy neighborhood. Beyond maintaining the integrity of its existing architecture, the owners sought to incorporate aging-in-place elements—including a primary suite on the same level as the kitchen and



Photos: Anice Hochlander

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COMPANY INFORMATION

The Block Builders Group
 Bethesda, Md.
 theblockbuildersgroup.com

Teass Warren Architects
 Washington, D.C.
 teass-warren.com

PROJECT INFORMATION

Location: Chevy Chase, Md.

living spaces—and create custom spaces for each of their hobbies: baking and woodworking.

Great Bones

Approaching retirement age, the owners wished not to continue climbing and descending stairs into their later years. Initially, they desired a modern farmhouse aesthetic, but they were having trouble finding an existing house that could accommodate single-floor living without destroying its architecture. Then the midcentury modern home not far from their house came on the market.

“It already had a lot of that built-in, one-level living to some degree, so we didn’t have to alter it quite as much, but it definitely wasn’t modern farmhouse,” Warren says. “They had to come around to that, and they ended up getting into the midcentury style. They were a little hesitant at first; I just said, ‘This is a great house—it has great bones. We can do a really nice project here.’”

Warren immediately noticed the home was positioned well on the site and thus received an ample amount of natural lighting. The kitchen, however, had been updated at some point and boxed off into its own little room. In general, the circulation in the house became awkward at times, mostly because the stairway down to the basement encroached upon the entrance through the front door.

“It was a little uncomfortable to enter the front door because the stair down was so close, but the natural lighting and the volume of the space were just really great,” Warren explains. “It was

obviously something [we wanted] to keep. It had that low-pitch roof line you see in these midcentury buildings. I thought was cool as soon as I walked in there.”

An addition at the front of the building would unify the two wings of the house with a light-filled foyer and create a generous entry with a direct view to the exterior. “The two wings of the house had a



Beyond maintaining the integrity of the existing architecture, the homeowners voiced three objectives: incorporate aging-in-place elements, provide area for their hobbies, and create dedicated office spaces.



An addition at the front of the building unifies the two wings of the house with a light-filled foyer and creates a generous entry with a direct view to the exterior.



roof line that broke in the middle, so the addition not only unified those, but it also allowed us to loosen up the entrance, so that it's a little grander, foyer type of treatment."

Although a previous remodel closed in the kitchen, it did not rely on any structural or immovable walls, Warren notes. "We were able to demo all the walls that enclosed the kitchen and opened it up to the dining room. The way the structural systems were working in the house, there weren't any load-bearing walls. Once we took them out, that allowed connections to the living spaces."

Custom Design

General contractor The Block Builders Group of Bethesda, Maryland, preserved the shell of the home but otherwise gutted it. The company installed new plumbing, electrical, HVAC, windows and roofing and corrected some of the subfloors and floor joists, says Tony Paulos, who founded the business in 1990. He explained to the owners the pros and cons of every finish they selected.

"When you're doing a renovation, there are lots of decision to be made and a cost impact of those decisions, whether it be the appliances, countertops, cabinetry, flooring, tile, plumbing fixtures or lighting fixtures," Paulos says. "It's an extensive process because when you go into lighting, [for example], you're talking about the recessed lights you're going to use: Are they LED? Are they LED



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The design team utilized white oak throughout the residence for its warmth as a unifying material. The client selected the bold blue color.



bulbs, or are they LED built-in fixtures? Where can you get the most bang for your buck?

“The homeowners show us things they like—that they’ve torn out of magazines, or they’ve seen online—and then we will guide them to find that exact fixture or something that may be similar at a better price point,” he adds. “They can say, ‘Fine, this works,’ or, ‘We’d like to find ways to save money.’ And that’s when we start coming up with options to get the budget that they want.”

The client searched online and found a kitchen she liked, so Paulos asked the wood mill that he works with to duplicate the look, which combines painted and stained cabinetry. “She did have a vision for what she was looking for in terms of finishes,” Warren notes. “The color choices are interesting—a bold blue—and the wood is custom stained. She was really pushing for that, and we helped guide the design process, including the flow and location of appliances.”

Warren encouraged the client to tell him exactly how she cooks (and would like to cook) in order to position each piece where she needs it. “I feel like we’ve got five different ways to cook stuff in there, but it was all very specific and very much a custom design—even down to the cabinets. We can do little things like putting spice racks in the corner and custom cabinets for their mixers.

“It’s all custom cabinetry; that was definitely a big part of their program,” he says. “They wanted a really nice kitchen that would act as a gathering

space for the family. She does cook and bake a ton, so it’s one of those things where it was just the right thing to do [for them].”

Normal Thing

The main level of the house now includes the kitchen, living space and office areas as well as the primary suite, which incorporates several universal design elements such as generous circulation, larger doors and a zero-threshold shower. A sculptural stair in the middle of the house seamlessly connects to the lower level, where a family room, additional bedrooms and the wood shop reside.

“That was a unique one; we had talked about trying to put [the wood shop] in the yard initially—like in an outbuilding or something,” Warren recalls. “It’s not a big yard, and they like to garden and have a lot of open space, so we ultimately decided to put it within the footprint of the house. We excavated below the mudroom to locate it in the new basement space. That’s not a normal thing to do.”

Keeping the noise and sawdust from the wood shop from spilling into the rest of the house made sound and air management even more critical. Sound insulation, sound isolation clips, metal stud furring and soundproof drywall provided a solution, Paulos says. “Making the room completely soundproof is prohibitively expensive, but you can take measures to reduce sound transmission quite a bit. The second part was to have an exhaust system that could get the sawdust out of there as he was working, so he was not affected by it. Because that space doesn’t have any windows.”

The wood shop has its own heating and cooling system, effectively creating a compartmentalized pod inside the home. “From the outside we wanted him to have his own entrance so that he could bring plywood and things like that and directly into it, instead of having to drag them through the house,” Warren explains. “So, there’s a little side entrance that goes straight into the wood shop.”

Warren used white oak throughout the residence for its warmth as a unifying material. A custom quartz fireplace with bookshelves now anchors the double-height living room. A glassy addition at the rear of the house creates transparency and connection to the landscaping outside while still maintaining privacy. “We added about 4 feet and utilized a lot of glass to highlight the wooded lot.

“They really love the outdoor space,” Warren says. “I think that was something they really were surprised about, how much they use it all the time. The way we designed the building, there’s a large deck that connects the whole back of the house, but you can get to it from multiple spaces. There’s a private portion off the primary bedroom, and all the living space are unified by the decking.” **QR**

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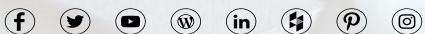
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Photos: Andy Schmidt, CineGraph Studios

Tunnel Vision

Millennium Custom Homes builds an interconnected setting for family and friends within the surroundings of an existing house.

by Philip A. Calinda, Jr.

OUR clients wanted to produce the ultimate place for indoor/outdoor living and play. They imagined they could create a wonderfully interconnected setting for their children, family and friends, all within the beautiful surroundings of their home.

This project started with an addition to the second floor of the home featuring an expansive exercise facility, accessible from both the master bedroom suite as well as a substantial floating staircase leading down to a glass enclosed vestibule. This in turn opens to the lower level of the house and exits to a lighted and heated covered patio.

The patio leads to a specially built playground that enables adults to navigate under the features to attend to younger children. The playground is covered with lush, artificial turf and includes several sliding boards, swings, rope features and a large rock wall for climbing.



An originally designed tiled mural (above) that depicts happiness adorns the inside wall of the pool area. A 100-foot heated and lighted tunnel (right) leads to the pool house.

This very active and sports-minded family decided to build a pool house on their property that could be used year-round. To connect the project elements together, the floating staircase was extended down another level to a 100-foot heated and lighted tunnel that leads to the pool. The tunnel, which sits below the playground, connected all the features of the project, enabling the family to have year-round use of all the features.

The pool house holds a significant pool with water features, a sunken seating area at one end with a



fireplace and TV, and a dining area with kitchen for entertaining. The building also contains bathrooms with a shower room and separate steam and sauna rooms. The glass outer walls, as well as the roof, are retractable for opening during the warm months.

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COMPANY INFORMATION

Millennium Custom Homes LLC
Livingston, N.J.
millenniumcustomhomes.com

PROJECT INFORMATION

Location: Livingston, N.J.
Project cost: \$2.5 million
Square footage before: 22,000
Square footage after: 29,600

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Kohler sinks
Kohler faucets
Kohler toilets
Kohler showerheads
Pella windows
Pella doors

The project started with an addition to the second floor of the home featuring an expansive exercise facility, which is accessible from the primary suite as well as a floating staircase.





The playground, built on top of the tunnel, is covered with lush, artificial turf and includes several sliding boards, swings, rope features and a large rock wall for climbing.

Our greatest challenge was keeping the owner's imagination in line with the budget. A second challenge came with a start date in early May and how to keep all the cranes, concrete pumps and concrete trucks as well as all the materials that would be needed on a day-to-day basis from getting stuck in the soft ground during that time of year.

Two feet of dirt was removed in an area of 124 feet by 75 feet. Then we laid in fabric and recycled material for support that was needed to pour 3,200 yards of concrete and more than 35 tons of rebar to complete the project. There was a 6-inch grade differential from the house to the pool that needed to be addressed in order to build 145 feet of basement and tunnel from the existing basement floor to the pool coping.

The craziest part of this whole project was the owner signed a contract with a company out of

Connecticut and ordered the automatic roof system for the pool house before we had plans and an architect on board. This necessitated building around the ordered roofing system instead of them building the system to the final structure.

As the building of the tunnel and structure were under construction, the pool had to be built in the middle of all the chaos. Miles of plumbing, electric and gas lines had to be installed through and under the footing. The icing on the cake was the 3 million BTU gas meter that needed to be installed.

With a project of this magnitude, there were many challenges from day to day. Our experience, along with the enormous amount of man hours and sleepless nights, pulled this amazing project together to create the ultimate family dream home.

The homeowner had a vision to create an atmosphere at their home where they could provide lots of opportunities to play for their active family along with entertaining family and friends.

After several project changes, the final plans were completed. What the client imagined and what was created far exceeded their expectations. It was a long, arduous project that started in May 2021 and was completed in early February 2022, three months longer than expected due to material delays.

The family now has a complete exercise facility, including special pieces of equipment for their children, so they can all work out together. With all the pool toys, dining and seating arrangements included, they were able to enjoy the pool house during the winter while looking forward to opening the roof during the summer.

On many cold nights during the winter, the family can just stroll through the underground tunnel to watch movies in the sunken lounge sitting by the fireplace after a swim. A colorful, specially designed tile mural depicting "happiness" adorns the wall of the pool house. One might say a happy family is a happy life!

As spring approached, the children couldn't wait to experience their new custom-designed playground equipment, complete with swings, sliding boards and a large climbing rock wall. The final feature added was a soccer field for these very sports-minded children. **QR**



Millennium Custom Homes has been inspired to create beautiful new custom homes and remodeled homes for more than 38 years. They are keenly aware that making peoples' dreams come true is a tall order to fill.

They are "dream makers" and exist to serve their clients by creating unique living spaces.

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The 2023 Remodelers Choice: 100 Most Requested Products

by QR staff

TREND information is frequently based on feel. Drawing on experience and gathering the best available data, an expert or group of experts uses intuition to render an opinion. This list of 100 products is the opposite of a gut check; it is based solely on numbers.

Using tabulations from Google Analytics' tallies of website traffic on QualifiedRemodeler.com, the editors of this magazine are able to determine with a great degree of precision the number of pageviews each product generated over the past year. And while no one is drawing on experience or expertise to generate this annual list, certain trends emerge.

During a period of time when remodelers have been managing very strong demand for services, product shortages have presented big challenges. To meet this demand, many suppliers in 2022 focused their product offerings on the most popular styles and finishes. Variety, to some

degree, went out the window. Look carefully at the 2023 Remodelers Choice 100, and you will see many new products and companies whose offerings rose to the top based in many cases on their uniqueness. They offer variety in a market being pushed to standard features, colors, shapes and sizes.

While the Remodelers Choice 100 is based on your interest level in products as expressed through website pageviews, it is not presented in rank order. They are alphabetized based on the name of their manufacturer or supplier. We do this to control for factors like the amount of time a product has been posted on the site.

Congratulations to all the companies who broke through with new products in 2022 to generate a high level of engagement with remodelers. Remodelers, please use this as a resource to find solutions you may have missed last year. They have been vetted by your peers. **QR**

Kitchen and bath design app aids pros

2020 DESIGN LIVE (20/20) is a kitchen and bath design application that helps professional designers with space planning, photorealistic rendering, and presentation on one unified platform. The interface provides content libraries with catalogue items, textures, and finishes from manufacturers, allowing users to visualize spaces with real products.



Hybrid water heater enhances installation flexibility

A. O. SMITH adds the Voltex AL (anti-leak) hybrid electric heat pump water heater to its family of residential products. The unit brings to market a first-of-its-kind water heating solution with integrated leak detection, smart connectivity and updated water connections for professionals and homeowners seeking a highly efficient, intuitive and user-friendly product.

Exterior lights offer endless design options

ACCLAIM LIGHTING introduces Unity to bring a high level of flexibility, performance and refinement to exterior illumination with its Spectrum Five light engine and large aperture Fresnel lens. Unity also delivers a specially calibrated control channel that can instantly match any temperature of white, from 2500K to 8000K, for color and design control.



Bathtub puts spin on traditional Japanese bath

ACQUABELLA honors the past and adds a modern twist with its new Elko tub, inspired by the rich cultural traditions of the Japanese soaking bath. The tub is



generously sized to allow for total submersion while its ergonomic shape gently cradles the body. Elko has a compact design with a relatively small footprint.

Bi-fold door system boosts energy efficiency

ALL WEATHER recognizes the need for larger, higher-performing custom aluminum folding doors with its new Series 9200. The thermally broken bifold door system transforms space from the inside out by expanding interiors filled with natural light as well as open air and maximizing views.



Cabinet doors provide single-source solution

The **ALVIC USA** made-to-order door collection to now operates as a single-source supplier to the cabinet industry. Alvic USA's ultimate package for cabinet components includes its cabinet door line, matching panels, edgebanding, and finishing laminates. The door collection utilizes the latest advancements in engineered materials and finish technology for fashion-forward, maintenance-free cabinet components with enhanced durability.



Toilet technology keeps bowl clean from top to bottom

AMERICAN STANDARD VorMax Toilets' revolutionary flushing action, CleanCurve Rim design and EverClean Surface keep the bowl clean from top to bottom. The VorMax Flush Technology has been tested and proven to clean two times better than conventional toilets. The leading flush technology uses 1.28 gallons of water compared with 1.6 gallon per flush toilets.

Textured finish helps elevate freestanding tub

The most innovative **AMERICH** tub, a textured finish on solid surface, was inspired by the works of American artist Jackson Pollock. For the Textured Bathtub, Americh applies its interpretation of his famous abstract designs onto any of the baths in the ROC Collection. The effect is a beautiful, tactile and usable work of art.



Retractable screens enhance outdoor living

ANDERSEN WINDOWS & DOORS launches the iQ+ System for its Big Door Retractable Screen, allowing for easier quotes and further enabling customers to enjoy an indoor/outdoor lifestyle.

Easy to install and compatible with Andersen MultiGlide and Folding Outswing patio doors, the screen features load-balancing technology.

Window upgrade achieves higher ratings

ANDERSEN WINDOWS & DOORS introduces a PG Upgrade option for A-Series windows that sits between its current Standard (PG50) and Impact with Stormwatch protection (PG70) offering. With the upgrade, A-Series windows achieve PG70 ratings for even more performance, added strength and a higher PG/DP value.





Mosaic tiles inspired by watercolor paint

ARTAIC introduces three new designs to the brand's celebrated Flourish Collection. Inspired by watercolor paintings of live botanicals, these designs reflect comfort

and tranquility through sophisticated earth tones and forms that are soft to the eye.

Cup pulls give cabinets pop of personality

ASHLEY NORTON offers even more options for adding personal style throughout the home with its Cup Pull Collection. True to its reputation for offering a vast array of architectural hardware styles and finishes, the company's collection of cup pulls spans the spectrum from traditional and transitional to industrial and modern.



Top rail completes cable railing system

ATLANTIS RAIL SYSTEMS launches a new aluminum top rail for its popular Spectrum cable railing system. The company previously supplied the cable, fittings and posts for its Spectrum

System and requested the customer supply their own hardwood top rail. Atlantis Rail now has created a Spectrum Top Rail System.

Railing system decreases time, effort to install

BARRETTE OUTDOOR LIVING expands its line of premium railing products to include Elevation Rail, a horizontal cable railing system that can install 38 percent faster with fewer SKUs that need to be ordered. Elevation Rail is available as pre-assembled kits with pre-installed brackets and pre-strung, stainless-steel cables.



Synthetic pavers rebrand following acquisition

BRAVA ROOF TILE launches Aspire by BRAVA, a line of synthetic pavers made from recycled plastic and tires recently acquired from Azek. Aspire by BRAVA are high-performance

pavers that can be used in both ground and roof applications. The pavers are made with up to 95 percent post-consumer recycled rubber and plastics removed from the waste stream.



Bath collection draws insight from modern geometric shapes

BRIZO debuts the Allaria Bath Collection, a bath collection that embodies the simple beauty of modern minimalism. The collection comes in

three striking split finishes to bring further distinction. The Allaria Bath Collection offers a full suite of products including lavatory faucets, tub fillers and tub spouts, shower systems, shower components and accessories.

Range hoods ideal for custom applications

BROAN-NUTONE introduces two Broan 21" Custom Range Hood Power Packs. These power packs are the latest in the company's hidden ventilation alternatives for the kitchen, offering homeowners endless design possibilities while applying a simple, behind-the-scenes solution that eliminates smoke and odors without ever being noticed.



Digital tool estimates

BUILDERTREND has added new features to its landmark product: takeoff. Construction Takeoff, or cost estimating software, is technology designed for contractors to estimate project costs. This digital estimating solution helps construction professionals efficiently

calculate material needs and costs.

Multi-material offering adds to surface portfolio

CAESARSTONE introduces a multi-material surfaces portfolio, Porcelain and Natural Stone.

For the new Porcelain range, Caesarstone utilizes its technological expertise and design leadership to capture the visual qualities of a wide range of material types—from natural marble to the industrial aspects of concrete and metal.



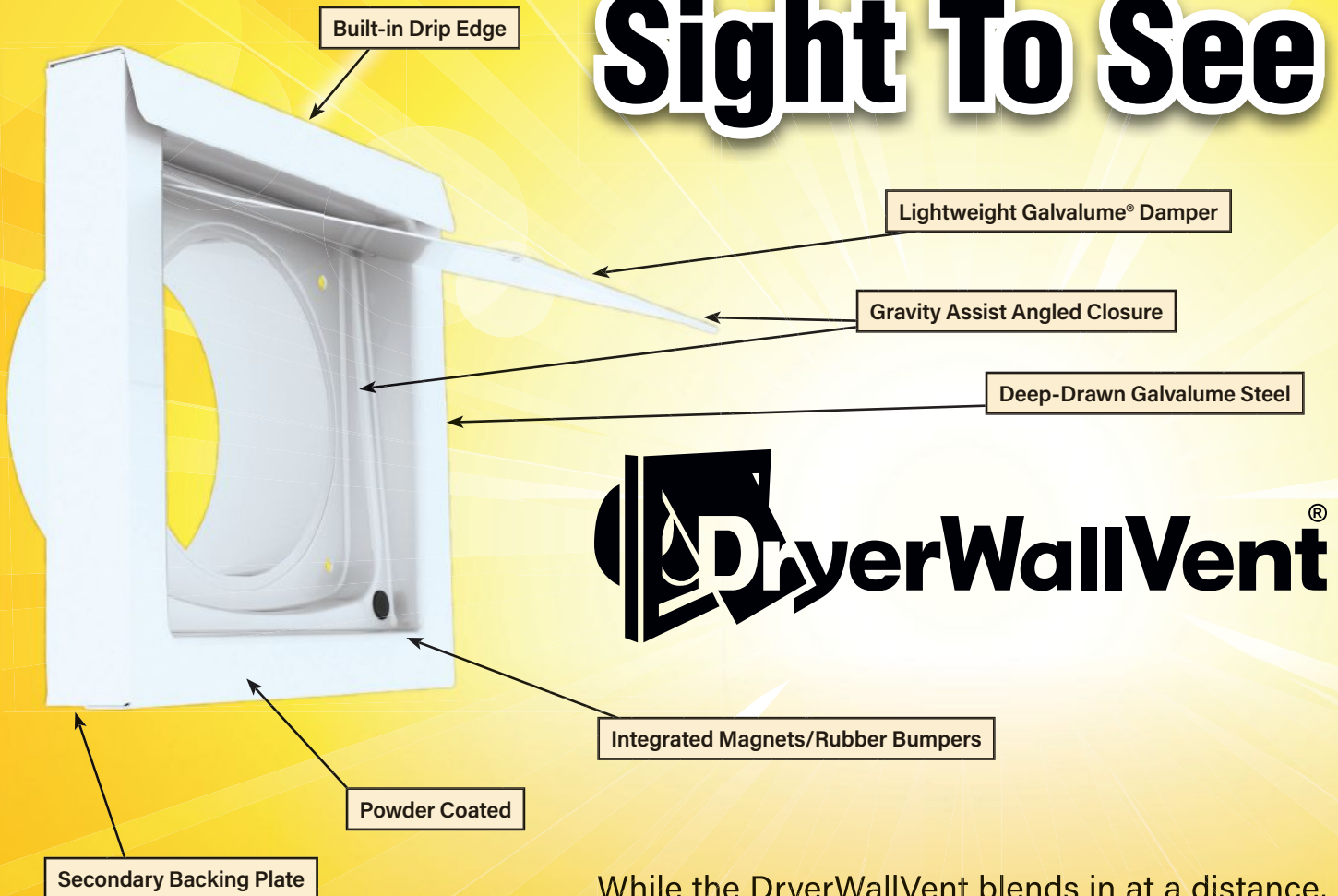
High-arc spout option adds dimension

CALIFORNIA FAUCETS boosts the style of its elegant Rincon Bay Series of bath faucets with a new high spout option. With options such as softly rounded cross handles and cylinder escutcheons that blend traditional and Art Deco,

Rincon Bay has the unique ability to shine in a wide range of bath motifs. delivers a 100 percent weatherproof and waterproof seal.

Upon Closer Inspection Excellence Stands Out

Sight To See



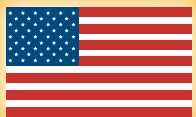
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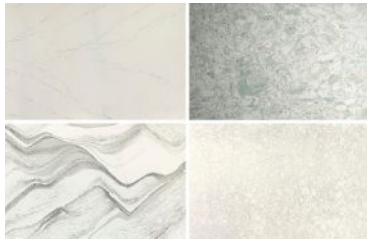


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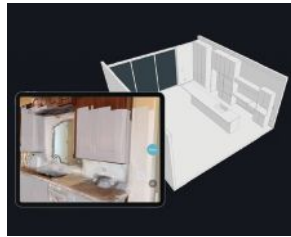
Surface designs derive beauty from nature

CAMBRIA launches four new designs for residential and commercial applications, adding to its existing palette. Rich, off-white backdrops are

elegantly enhanced with seascape-inspired contours and colorways with organic movement and refined details. The allure of rugged landscapes and coastal countrysides is captured in the new designs.

Mobile 3D app scans

CANVAS is a mobile 3D scanning app which makes capturing a 3D model of a home simple. Canvas captures tens of thousands of measurements in real-time, right on an iPad. Powered by Structure Sensor, a mobile depth scanner, Canvas saves hours of measuring.



Reinforced siding looks just like real wood

CERTAINTEED CERTAplank Single 7" Reinforced Siding combines the durability and strength of vinyl with the authentic appearance of real wood

siding. Lighter and easier to handle than wood, fiber cement or wood composites, it features an extra-thick panel and reinforced foam backer that provides the rigidity one would expect from a hardboard cladding.

Roofing colors provide affordable aesthetic

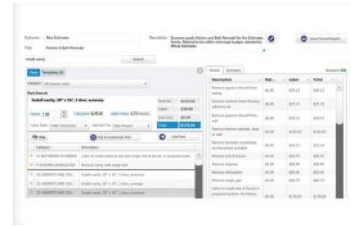
CERTAINTEED debuts three colors for its Landmark PRO roofing shingles: Max Def Coastal Blue, Max Def Espresso and Max Def Red Oak. Engineered with two laminated layers to replicate the dimensional appearance of true wood shake, Landmark PRO offers peace of mind with a premier aesthetic at an affordable price.



CAD, 3D modeling enables control

CHIEF ARCHITECT is a CAD and 3D modeling software suite that gives users control over their commercial and residential floorplans.

The software allows users to fine-tune every aspect of the design, with robust site plans and terrain modules.



Estimating system helps construction

CLEAR ESTIMATES is a construction estimating system that allows remodelers to create estimates, produce bid requests, draft proposals, manage customers and more.

It integrates with QuickBooks and allows users to export estimates and customer information into the system.

Stone profile adds textural interest

Pro-Fit Terrain LedgeStone from **CULTURED STONE** is a modern-inclined, clean design that adds sleek, textural interest to any outdoor project. The small-scale, low-relief stones offer a practical way to achieve a tailored ledgeStone look. This modern profile is quick and easy to install because it is applied as groups of small stones meticulously bundled together.



Cosmopolitan table collection offers innovative induction

The new **DANVER** Cosmopolitan Table Collection is the brand's latest collaboration with architect, designer and creative director

Daniel Germani. The collection includes three new product offerings: the Cosmopolitan Prep Table, Cosmopolitan Dining Table and Cosmopolitan Cooking Table which offers innovative induction Invisacook technology for small spaces where a grill may not be practical.

Sealant holds up to extreme temperatures

DAP introduces AMP All Weather Window, Siding and Door Sealant, which outperforms silicone in key performance attributes such as wet surface application, paintability and crystal-clear clarity while also offering exceptional weatherability, durability and mold and mildew resistance.



Slate roof tile complements home styles

DAVINCI ROOFSCAPES, a division of Westlake Royal Building Products, unveils a new single-width composite slate roofing tile. Province

Slate, a 12-inch-wide tile with a fixed 8-inch exposure, evokes a historical nature with authentic natural slate appeal. Modeled after actual slate, the tiles have a natural, non-repeating beauty that complements a variety of home styles. It offers two-stage filtration—a pre-filter with carbon and a HEPA filter.



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Traction mat presents slip-resistant surface

DECKED introduces Traction Mat by SeaDek to combat the aggravation of cargo or gear sliding around in a truck bed. Decked partnered with SeaDek to bring its marine-

grade, self-adhesive, closed-cell ethylene-vinyl acetate foam padding to the Decked truck bed Drawer System. The patented Drawer System helps a truck bed work harder and store smarter.

Composite decking offers enhanced traction, less slip

DECKORATORS announces its Vista Composite Decking will now feature vertical grain variegation with enhanced traction and slip resistance. Available in four colors and grooved-edge profiles, the Vista Composite Decking line offers homeowners ultimate design flexibility, including the option to effortlessly mix-and-match two or more colors to create a custom outdoor living space.



System provides maximum wind resistance for homes

DIGGER SPECIALTIES INC. (DSI) introduces Uplift Kits for most of its column designs, which provide protection during high wind situations by reducing vertical movement of the column. Columns installed with Uplift Kits have been tested to an industry best of 5,000 pounds of wind uplift resistance.



Downlighting solution keeps project moving

DMF LIGHTING debuts the H Series, a high-performing recessed downlighting, whole-home solution. Combining a modular design that features a single, compact, field-adjustable LED light module with reliable performance, the versatile LED module's field-selectable lumens switch allows three low-glare brightness levels for various applications needs, including ceiling heights up to 12 feet.



Silicone surfactants enhance polyurethane foam applications

DOW unveils an extension of VORASURF Silicone Surfactants in order to support the growing demand for enhanced energy efficiency and sustainable solutions in the rigid polyurethane foam market.

Specific products include VORASURF SF 2937 Additive and VORASURF RF 5358 Additive for rigid closed cell applications. 900 Series lets users check the weather and set clean cycles to specific instructions with a simple command.



Collection derives inspiration from sea

DURAVIT NORTH AMERICA introduces Soleil by Starck, a new collection designed by long-standing design partner, Philippe Starck. Drawing inspiration from the sea, both with its natural elements and



restorative qualities, Soleil is a compact product range that exudes elegance. The series spans washbasins, toilets and bathtubs, offering choices for bath projects at an attractive price point.

Stain, sealer applies easily, repels rain faster

DUTCH BOY PAINTS introduces a product specifically formulated for exterior stain projects. Dutch Boy Exterior Stain + Sealer applies easily and repels rain quickly—within just four hours of application—so homeowners can enjoy their outdoor spaces sooner. The water-based, 100-percent acrylic stain product is available in four different opacities, and it delivers all-weather protection.



Sleek, modern line incorporates design era

DXV unveils the Être Kichen Collection, a representation of the design era known as "Machine Age Modernism," a time when designers focused



on functionality, practicality and purpose. True to this concept, the Être line is defined by sleek, modern lines with adaptable and durable design elements for maximum utility.

Hinge tips add textural interest

EMTEK Select Hinge Tips allow homeowners to add decorative interest and texture to an oft overlooked but essential component of door hardware. Select Hinge Tips can be used to match the finish and texture of Emtek's Select Lever or Select Knob collections, and they can be used in conjunction with any standard hardware options.



Duct-fan controller boosts energy efficiency

FANTECH unveils a new controller for electronically commutated motor (ECM) in-line duct fans that features a more modern design; an integrated linear outline that allows for easy, precise dimming operation; and a soft-touch knob provides a pleasing grip. With the EC-10V, users can choose the desired fan speed for optimal energy efficiency.



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Truss support creates restraint in one brace

FASTENMASTER introduces TrussBRACE, a faster and safer alternative to temporary wood-based supports used to install roof trusses. The FastenMaster TrussBRACE is an

innovative steel roof truss support that provides both lateral and diagonal restraint in one brace. The system allows framers to set, space and brace roof trusses in one easy step.

Rail lighting designed for indoor, outdoor applications

FEENEY LED Rail Lighting for DesignRail is designed for indoor and outdoor applications, and the lighting can be integrated into the top or bottom rail. High lumen output is ideal for railing lighting and provides efficient ambient light when installed with a compatible dimmer switch.



Cordless dust extractors offer portable power

A **FESTOOL** integrated suite of offerings, the CTC SYS Cordless Systainer Extractor, CTC MIDI Cordless Compact

Dust Extractor, TCL 6 DUO Rapid Charger and Energy Sets. The Energy Sets are conveniently housed in a Systainer and include a TCL 6 DUO rapid charger and either two BP 18 Li 4.0 or two 5.2 ASI battery packs.



Drawer design boosts dishwasher output

FISHER & PAYKEL debuts its Series 11 DishDrawer Dishwasher, which features a fully stainless steel interior and offers expanded features for a deeper clean as well as extended flexibility. With SmartDrive technology, the DishDrawer has many technology enhancements, including a knock-to-pause feature and WiFi capability.



3D modeling software enables designers to create, store, convert 3D models



GOOGLE SKETCHUP is a 3D modeling software that enables designers to create, store, and automatically convert 3D models into 2D designs. SketchUp allows users to provide potential clients with virtual reality-based walkthrough videos.



Exterior paint gives new life to outdoor spaces

GRAHAM & BROWN allows homeowners to quickly change their outdoor living spaces with the addition of a new exterior paint range to its

paint collection. The durable exterior paint offers homeowners an easy way to breathe life back into outdoor areas, including garden furniture sets, front doors, window frames, fences and sheds.

Kitchen surfaces resistant to both stain, UV damage

HÄCKER KITCHENS combines high-quality look with a velvety smooth feel with the introduction of PerfectSense, their new cabinet and countertop surfaces. PerfectSense surfaces are light and UV-resistant, heat-, climate-, water- and stain-proof and easy-to-clean. The advanced technologies imbued within its surface dazzles kitchens with special anti-fingerprint features that prevents smudges from leaving a lasting mark.



Undermount sinks open fresh possibilities

HAMATUSA expands its popular Chelsea Fireclay Sinks Collection to include a new series of undermount kitchen sinks. With sleek lines and a seamless look, the sinks are in high



demand by homeowners and designers, who love the easy counter cleanup made possible by the barrier-free design.

Sealant allows pros to complete jobs quicker

HENKEL offers GE-branded Re-New, which quickly applies over an existing 100 percent silicone sealant to help finish sealing jobs up to 50 percent faster. Simply clean the existing 100 percent silicone sealant, apply Re-New on top, then let it cure for 24 hours.



Faucet brightens kitchen with colorful hues

ISENBERG brings a modern, industrial vibe to the kitchen with the Velox K.1800 model and its graceful high-arched spout and two minimalist-inspired levers. Colorful finish options amp up the drama with 20 different shades to choose from. In fact, the design team at Isenberg is capable of creating custom-colored faucets in nearly any imaginable hue.



Composite windows, patio doors fill need

JELD-WEN announces Auraline True Composite windows and patio doors, a new product line that blends the beauty of wood with strength and durability. Auraline products are GREENGUARD Gold certified and

feature fresh, contemporary designs that deliver crisp, clean lines homeowners desire and contractors want to use.

Ceiling-mounted kitchen faucet delivers striking design aesthetic

KOHLER presents the Purist Suspend Kitchen Faucet, which pushes the boundaries of traditional kitchen faucet design by mounting from the ceiling. The faucet's hose is mounted on the ceiling with a precise pivoting arm that can be adjusted to any preferred hanging height for 8- to 10-foot ceilings and stays at the previous height.



Quartz counters combine beauty, durability

KOVA introduces the KOVA Quartz collection, which provides a classic mix of neutral colors with warm and cool tones that includes 20 mindfully curated styles. KOVA Quartz collections offer cut-to-size customization in a variety of thicknesses to enhance any space. Focused on easy care, the surfaces require minimal maintenance, and they are versatile, durable and long-lasting.

Drain quickens installation of freestanding tub

L.R. BRANDS announces the 1916 Collection Universal Freestanding Tub Drain to make it easier to install a freestanding tub. The drain is the first product of 1916 Collection and it works with freestanding, island center or offset tubs. The drain offers simple installation between the P-trap and tub without needing access from below the floor.



Assembly system improves extension ladder stability

LADDER-LOCK is a ladder conversion kit designed to increase the safety of its users by improving an extension ladder's overall stability. Ladder-Lock has two adjustable legs that connect at the ladder midpoint

and two adjustable arms that anchor to the ladder's lowest rung, creating four points of contact.



Retractable screens protect porches, gazebos, covered patios from elements

LARSON SCENIX porch windows with retractable screens protect porches, gazebos and covered patios from pesky bugs, pollen and

dust. With two operable glass panels and hidden screens at the top and bottom of the window, Scenix porch windows convert the space from a screened-in porch to a three-season room on demand.

Touchless switch expands modern control offering

LEGRAND launches a new radiant Wave Switch, extending its innovative touchless technology first made popular by the adorne Collection to fit into even more applications and projects. The radiant Wave Switch provides an easy, sleek option for cleaner control in both commercial and residential applications and is available in both 15A and 20A.



Sensor, fan control helps reduce mold, mildew

LEVITON presents its Decora Humidity Sensor and Fan Control devices, designed to work with ventilation fans to create a more comfortable environment in areas of the home prone to dampness and humidity. The devices are available in two models. Both models automatically detect excess humidity in a room and activate the ventilation fan.

Insulated sheathing minimizes temperature fluctuations

LP BUILDING SOLUTIONS presents LP NovaCore Thermal Insulated Sheathing, which combines OSB structural sheathing with continuous insulation for faster installation to provide protection against cold and heat. LP NovaCore sheathing made with Owens Corning FOAMULAR NGX XPS foam offers continuous insulation without long-term R-value deterioration and can reduce potential heat gain or loss through the studs.



Tile inspired by sun, sand and architecture

LUNADA BAY TILE introduces the Shelter Island tile collection by designer Johnathan Adler, inspired by his home in Long Island, New York. The collection is an eclectic mix of mid-century modern imagined through the lens of traditional Japanese ceramics, with colors drawn from his beachfront home.



Quartz surface rolls out three additional colors for collection

LX HAUSYS debuts three new colors for its Viatera Quartz Surface Musica Collection. Allegro and Cantata display on-trend colors, unique patterns and a combination

of short and long veins. Sonoro, with its mid-tone gray and brushed finish, brings a modern industrial look.

Laundry pair created for homes with pets

MAYTAG presents the Maytag Pet Pro System, a laundry pair designed to visibly remove pet hair. In the washer, the Pet Pro option unleashes additional water and a deep rinse to activate the Pet Pro Filter, a pet hair filter in the washer, removing five times more pet hair from clothes.



Porcelain tile deck is skid-, mold- and fade-resistant

MBRICO Tile Decks are installed on conventional code deck framing or any pedestal roof deck. Mbrico porcelain tile decks are about the same price as higher end composite deck-

ing but allow for a much more durable, skid resistant, mold resistant and fade proof option.

Lighting collection brings woody, rustic charm to home

MEYDA expands its collection of Antler Lighting, featuring chandeliers, pendants, wall sconces and a broad range of custom options. Each fixture is made from sustainably harvested, naturally shed elk antlers, with no two antlers exactly the same. The style builds on the trend of naturalism and bringing the outdoors.



Multi-zone HVAC system provides compatibility

MIDEA launches the new Midea EVOX Multi-Zone System in the U.S., equipping HVAC service providers with flexible and affordable product and system combinations

that can seamlessly mix and match ducted and ductless configurations across multiple applications with up to five zones per heat pump.



Accessory cases provide endless customization

New **MILWAUKEE TOOL** Customizable Accessory Cases for all Drilling and Driving sets are designed for use in Packout storage solutions. The new

Customizable Drilling and Driving cases are optimized to fit inside all Packout organizers, giving users additional flexibility and endless customization options for their storage solutions.

Recessed ceiling cassette uses small design

MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC TRANE HVAC US (METUS) offers the EZ FIT MLZ-06 Recessed Ceiling-Cassette for those



looking for the benefits of a recessed ceiling cassette in a smaller design. The EZ FIT ceiling cassette design is effective regardless of ceiling height because of its adjustable airflow.



Decking shade boasts popular combination

MOISTURESHIELD introduces Catalina, a soft "greige" shade reminiscent of aged shiplap, to its Meridian capped composite decking line. Catalina features

TruTexture Surface to offer the superior scratch resistance of a capped composite with natural woodgrain finish and reduced pattern repetition for an authentic aesthetic.

Base sheets improve steep-slope roofing systems

MULE-HIDE PRODUCTS debuts two new base sheets for use in steep-slope roofing systems. Shur-Gard #40 Base Sheet is ideally suited to warm, arid climates. It can be used as the felt layer in shingled and tile roofing systems. Tough and durable, F/G Base Sheet can be used as the felt layer in shingled roofing systems.



Energy-efficient bi-fold door uses slim profile

NANAWALL Generation 4 is the slimmest, most energy-efficient bi-fold door yet. Aesthetics feature minimal exposed hardware

and a slim frame—the intersection of two folding panels is only 3/8 inch. Panels can move in stacks of 4 or 6, enabling unlimited widths for any application. Panels are capable of heights up to 11 feet, 6 inches.



Roofing underlayment meets evaluation standards

NATIONAL NAIL Stinger EXO Synthetic Underlayment is a UV-resistant synthetic underlayment that can be exposed to the elements

for up to six months. Manufactured with 100 percent synthetic woven fabric, EXO delivers high tear strength and proprietary non-skid additives for enhanced slip resistance for roofer safety.

Spray-foam product line showcases insulation offering

OWENS CORNING demonstrates its comprehensive insulation product offering with a special focus on the complementary spray foam products from the recently acquired Natural Polymers, LLC. Designed by industry-leading chemists, the robust spray foam product line supports increasingly stringent energy codes and homeowner demands for products that contribute to healthier indoor air quality.



Air purifier bolsters indoor ventilation

PANASONIC presents the WhisperAir Repair spot air purifier, a compact ceiling-mount air purifier that is main-

tenance-free and easy to install with no ductwork required. The WhisperAir Repair is lightweight and designed to keep indoor air clean and fresh. The air purifier utilizes Panasonic's nanoeX technology, previously available only in its heating and cooling systems.

Durable, versatile, dramatic manufactured stone provides alternative to brick

PROVIA manufactured stone adds dramatic style to homes, as an exterior cladding and indoors as stone veneer fireplaces and wall accents. Its durability, versatility, and handsome looks make it an ideal alternative to brick, and it offers a great variety of configurations and colors to suit any design.



Siding replicates stacked stone appearance

QORA CLADDING combines strength, style and affordability in its Ashlar Drystack. Engineered with proprietary technology from Arcitell,

LLC, to provide durability and authenticity, each patented fiber-reinforced polymer siding panel replicates the appearance of stacked stone with narrow joints, brilliant coloring and stunning earth tones.



Plank panels make impactful, signature wood look

Vesta Steel Siding plank panels from **QUALITY EDGE** create an impactful, signature wood look that is as beautiful up close as it

is far away. Long and narrow panels seams create a subtle reveal for a maintenance free siding solution that's an investment you can count on.

Reinforced PVC material extends to two lines

REHAU announces its proprietary RAU-FIPRO glass-fiber reinforced PVC material is now available on two innovative product lines for windows and doors. Windows and doors made with the RAU-FIPRO hybrid material feature co-extruded profiles with REHAU's uPVC formulation on exposed surfaces and glass-fiber reinforced PVC at the core.



Tankless water heater learns user patterns

RINNAI unveils its new and improved SENSEI RSC Condensing Tankless Water Heater. The RSC model offers a variety of new benefits, including the company's latest addition of Smart-Circ Intelligent Recirculation technology. With Smart-Circ, external controllers are no longer required to provide recirculation for customers, making

installation a smoother process.

Collection creates sense of movement, dynamism

ROHL reflects the trend of soft modernism and speaks to the combination of qualities that please the aesthetic senses with its Amahle Bath Collection. The fine arc of the faucet is juxtaposed with a selection of handles from circles to criss-crossing lines to right-angled levers, all enhanced with detailing that pays homage to the form.



Sinks combine composites with workstation

RUVATI announces a kitchen sink collection that pairs two of today's most in-demand features into one design. The epiStage Series

sinks combine the beauty and color options of granite composites with the impressive practicality of the workstation design. Integrated ledges along the front and back accommodate included accessories that slide into place when needed.



Membranes eliminate thin-set mortar for warming floors

SCHLUTER SYSTEMS introduces two new peel and stick floor-warming membranes: The Schluter-DITRA-HEAT-PS and DITRA-HEAT-DUO-PS. Both products are

available in rolls and sheets to accommodate various room sizes. The membranes feature a pressure-sensitive adhesive to bond the membrane to the substrate, replacing the need for thin-set mortar.

Scannable tapes, labels connect physical, digital

SHURTAPE TECHNOLOGIES

releases Duck Pro by Shurtape BR Code Scannable Solutions, powered by the BitRip app. Developed in partnership with Nastro Technologies, the line features unique tapes and labels preprinted with dynamic scannable codes that can be used to organize and track critical jobsite information, connecting physical objects to critical digital information.



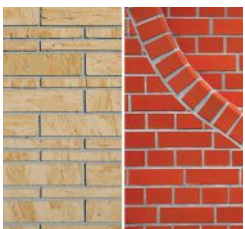
Solar-powered sun, rain sensor adds to motorized exterior products

The Ondeis WireFree RTS Rain & Sun Sensor from **SOMFY SYSTEMS** is a solar-powered combined rain and sun sensor compatible with RTS

motorized exterior products. The Sensor is completely wireless and uses optical rain-sensing technology to measure rainfall, then sends an RTS command when rainfall exceeds the user-selected threshold.

Integrated LED lighting elevates frameless system

SPARTAN RAILING, in partnership with Illuminated Balustrade Australia, announces it has met another testing milestone for its patented frameless glass railing system with integrated LED lighting. The product, which achieved ICC ESR-4816 listing and labeling, is comprised of mounting hardware (spigots), low-iron glass, and LED globes to provide an architecturally appealing railing system.



Prefabricated shapes create innovative facades

STO CORP re-engineers the classic look of brick and wood facades for buildings of all kinds with new prefabricated resin-cast shapes that combine eye-catching aesthetics with low maintenance and long-term durability. Sto Corp. take the beauty and

durability of wood, brick and metal and reproduce desirable appearances to enhance the interior or exterior walls of a building.



Vanity colors bring the outdoors in

STRASSER offers a new color for its line of high-quality, luxury vanities: NW Green, a soothing custom color inspired by the blend of many green hues found in Pacific

Northwest forests. The color brings the ambiance of nature indoors, invoking an energetic feel of springtime.

Composite shingle builds on proven expertise

TANDO unveils composite technology for its architecturally precise 5-inch shingle, Beach House Shake, the authentic composite shingle. Composite technology is recognized for providing uncompromised realism, durability and longevity and has revolutionized exterior products such as decking, roofing, lap siding, and composite stone.



LED lighting available in range of color options

TIVOLI LIGHTING introduces Trace Vertical and Horizontal flexible LED strips with zero voltage drop for precise color consistency in straight and curved interior or

exterior applications. This versatile LED strip creates direct or indirect continuous illumination with three different fixture styles in horizontal tunable white, vertical tunable white and vertical RGB+W.

Composite decking engineered with cooling technology in shell

TREX unveils a new generation of premium composite decking with the introduction of Trex Transcend Lineage. The Transcend Lineage feature an elevated aesthetic with subtle, elegant graining that delivers an unmatched natural appearance. The new offerings are engineered with heat-mitigating technology in the shell to reflect the sun and keep boards cooler.



Sustainable products used for wood entry door

TRUSTILE has chosen the ultra-high performance and sustainable products, Accoya and Tricoya, from Accsys for its Resilient Wood

Entry System. Accoya, the acetylated wood product, brings unprecedented reliability, durability and sustainability for wood. Tricoya top layers provide unparalleled stability, durability and paintability for outdoor applications.

Pavers deliver function, non-slip texture

Design contemporary and functional outdoor spaces with Umbriano pavers from **UNILOCK**. The sleek lines and unique mottled granite appearance combine to deliver unmistakable beauty and richness. These pavers deliver on function with their non-slip texture and stain-resistant surface, making this paver perfect for patios, pool decks, walkways, driveways and more.



Smart home technology controls heating, cooling

UPONOR unveils Smatrix Pulse, a solution that offers precise wireless comfort control of radiant heating and cooling along with forced-air heating and cooling in multiple zones throughout a structure.

Contractors now can install faster and easier, and homeowners can enjoy the ultimate luxury of radiant and air-side comfort with one system.



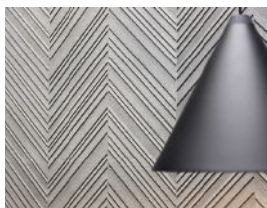
Recessed lighting presents low-profile look

USAI LIGHTING releases its newest collection, TrueZero360, for low-profile recessed lighting. Designed with USAI's recessed lighting aesthetic, TrueZero360

floats seamlessly along the ceiling plane, with one singular identity for all offerings. Delivered with a four-part optical system, the product family gives off more than 2,000 glare-free lumens, providing a balance of performance and comfort.

Electric oven ranges provide splash of color

VERONA APPLIANCES extends its Prestige collection with seven new 36-inch electric ranges. The 36-inch electric ranges feature a five-burner black ceramic electric cooktop that is easy to clean with full-size elements to accommodate pots of any size and a multi-tasking dual element that ranges from PerfectSimmer (700W) to a powerful InstaBoil (2100W) setting.



Tile collection pushes limits of ceramic tile

WALKER ZANGER unveils the Gubi Collection natural-look finishes that bring character and charm to ceramic tile. Giving a minimalist textural beauty to walls, countertops, floors, fireplaces, and

pools, the collection provides limitless opportunities for use in residential and commercial spaces.

Siding combines look of cedar with performance

WESTLAKE ROYAL BUILDING PRODUCTS adds a profile to its line of TruExterior poly-ash siding. Developed in response to growing demand, the profile combines the coveted look and shadow lines of traditional lap siding with the performance of TruExterior's poly-ash material. It has a true 1/2-inch butt, a sought-after profile that mimics real cedar, and it comes in 16-foot lengths.



Capped composite decking gives photo-realistic wood grain

ZURI PREMIUM DECKING, from Westlake Royal Building Products, imagines the timeless presence of exotic hardwoods with minimal grain repetition and distinctive color and inlay design options for a stunning outdoor living experience. Made with a PVC substrate capped with a photo-realistic woodgrain print and clear acrylic, Zuri is fade, stain, scratch, and moisture resistant.



Wall panel designs join nature-inspired product offering

WILSONART helps homeowners reimagine their bathrooms with the introduction of two Wetwall Waterproof Wall Panel System Pro Designs:

Lariss Marble (W7054) and Augusta Calacatta (W7055). The modern yet warm designs are the latest additions to the nature-inspired collection that offers homeowners and designers an easy and affordable way to create a spa-like oasis at home.

Shower line creates refreshed style

WOLF HOME PRODUCTS

announces the expansion of its bath offerings with the introduction of Wolf Showers. Wolf Showers are made of cultured marble that mirror the rich colors and depth of detail of natural stone. Homeowners can piece together their own custom combinations by selecting a shower base, wall panels and accessories in the color and size of their choice.



Stains give wood new life

The new line of **WOOD-MODE** wood stains is intended to meet newfound demand for natural elements in kitchens and other areas of the home. The four new wood stains help round out a wide range of available natural wood looks. In addition,

Wood-Mode's new green and gray collections also complement a variety of undertones and hues.

Reusable dust barrier offers alternative to plastic sheets

ZIPWALL announces the ZipSheet barrier, a ready-to-use, washable and reusable barrier material that is an environmentally friendly alternative to plastic sheeting.

Sheets are available in two heights to fit ceilings up to 9 feet and 12 feet. A 10-foot-wide sheet with a built-in zipper door creates an instant barrier and can be extended as needed.



What's New

Profiles, trim round out portfolio of tile, stone, flooring

LATICRETE adds profiles and trim to its growing roster of tile, stone and flooring installation products, making it the industry's first manufacturer to provide a complete tile installation system including trim options. The comprehensive offering will be available this summer and will feature more than 4,000 possible combinations of shapes, colors, sizes and styles, including LED profiles that allow for unique design elements and accent colors using LED lighting. laticrete.com



Brick veneer exudes modern architectural character

ELDORADO STONE announces LoreioBrick, a long-format brick profile inspired by ancient Roman architecture. LoreioBrick is designed for modern spaces, employing linear dimensions and a neutral color palette accented with earthy tones. As a modern profile with nods to classic design, the brick silhouette flaunts textural details, slender cuts and soft gradients that come together to create a contemporary yet balanced visual element. It is available in four evocative colorways. eldoradostone.com

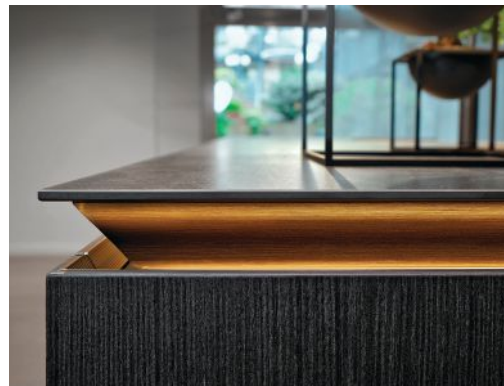
Supply lines, stop valves connect to appliances

OATEY Supply Lines are designed to quickly and easily connect the water supply to appliances and are available in multiple connection types and lengths. Built with a durable, corrosion-resistant, double-walled PVC tube, Oatey connectors bend freely and work with hot or cold water. Made of high-quality, braided stainless steel and vinyl, the supply lines are available for applications including dishwashers, ice makers, faucets, washing machines and water heaters. oatey.com



Water heater cuts energy usage, carbon footprint

LG launches the LG Inverter Heat Pump Water Heater, helping homeowners save money and reduce energy usage as well as their carbon footprint. Ushering in new innovations in water heating, this energy-efficient hot water solution combines heat pump technology with LG's advanced smart control systems. Designed for the eco-conscious, LG's Energy Star-certified Inverter Heat Pump Water Heater delivers hot water with a uniform energy factor of 3.75 UEF. lg.com/us



LED lighting strips make countertops appear to float

SIEMATIC illuminates its handle-free SLX kitchen design with LED lighting strips that integrate into the sophisticated contours of the grip channel. The subtle effect of the channel lights makes the delicately proportioned 6-millimeter ceramic countertop appear to weightlessly float in midair. A sculpture made of space and light, SLX brings tactile properties to the forefront with adjustable LED lights, making SLX equal parts interactive art and efficient kitchen design. siematic.com



Celebrate the Entrepreneurial Spirit

Do you know someone in the remodeling industry who deserves recognition for their innovative spirit? Innovation that takes the client experience to new heights? Innovation that takes the team experience to new heights? Innovation that takes the remodeling industry to new heights? If this sounds like you, or someone that you know, we want to hear from you!

Nominations for the **2023 Fred Case Remodeling Entrepreneur of the Year Award** are now being accepted. Simply e-mail the nominee's name and contact information to ADeLand@casedesign.com. Four finalists will each win \$2,500. The winner, to be announced in October, will win an additional \$10,000.

This is a unique opportunity to celebrate and reward pioneers in our industry. For more information on this award, including past winners and a list of application requirements, visit <https://casedesign.com/about/recognition/fred-case-award/>. We look forward to hearing from you!

Fred Case founded Case Design/Remodeling in 1961 on a shoe string and a dream of building a business, not a practice. For Fred, the status quo was never enough, so he grew Case over the years by bringing innovative solutions to his clients' needs. Fred believes that this same innovation can be found throughout the remodeling industry and he wants to honor and celebrate it. The Fred Case Remodeling Entrepreneur of the Year Award recognizes those who exemplify innovation in their business that may manifest in different ways: new business processes; unique building processes or use of materials; streamlined systems; relevant training programs; and creative use of technology.

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Exterior



Multi-slide patio door blends interior, exterior

MI WINDOWS AND DOORS V3000 Series Multi-Slide Patio Door, Model 1618, from the MITER Brands family of window and door products allows homeowners to let in the light. Opening to 18 feet wide and available in heights up to 8 feet, the V3000 Series 1618 multi-slide patio door is a solution to effortlessly blend interior and exterior spaces. Numerous aesthetic options, including decorative hardware and multiple interior and exterior color choices, are also available. | miwindows.com



Composite cladding wins sustainability award

FIBERON has earned a Green Good Design Award from The Chicago Athenaeum Museum of Architecture and Design for its Wildwood composite cladding. Because it is made from 94 percent mixed recycled plastic and wood fiber content, Wildwood is a key component in the company saving more than 1 million trees and repurpose an average of 100 million pounds of recycled plastic each year. Every Fiberon plant uses a closed-loop system to conserve water. | fiberondecking.com

Panel replaces four layers of exterior material

STONECOAT debuts its Fusion system, showcasing a single panel that replaces four layers of materials used in traditional exterior wall systems: exterior insulation, waterproof and vapor barriers, OSB sheathing, and metal lath. Fusion's structural insulated sheathing and integrated masonry backing ensure strength, and panels are compatible with most exterior claddings. R10 insulation helps meet energy codes, and Fusion offers up to R30 insulation with a 6-inch thickness. | stonecoat.com



Concrete, masonry floor coatings enhance spaces

DUTCH BOY PAINTS presents a full lineup of concrete and masonry floor coatings with three new easy-to-apply products. Sealer + Paver helps seal and protect concrete and masonry surfaces such as floors, pavers, walkways and pool decks. Waterproof is a clear concrete waterproof coating that keeps beauty in and moisture out, season after season. Stain is an advanced concrete solid stain that delivers a balance of customization and protection and can be tinted to match any color. | dutchboy.com

Custom fastener system helps save time, money

GRAD CONCEPT USA and **TANTIMBER** announce the introduction of a custom attachment system for Tantimber's range of ThermoWood decking and cladding products. The new system, custom-built upon Grad's proprietary rail fasteners, enables Tantimber customers to save on time and overall installation costs. Sourced from FSC- and PFEC-certified forests, Tantimber decking and cladding products are produced using the innovative Thermowood manufacturing process. | tantimber.com



Tools

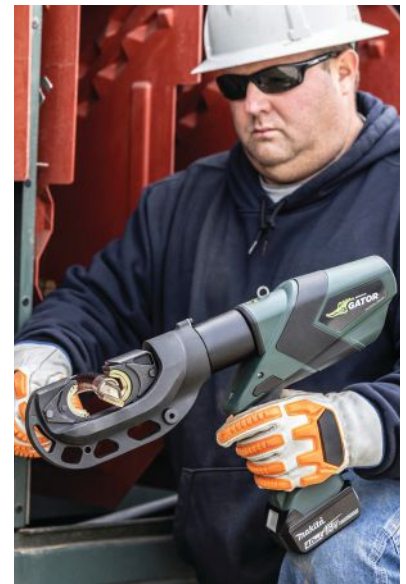
Drill, impact driver expand next-gen solutions

MILWAUKEE TOOL presents its M18 FUEL Drill and Impact Driver with ONE-KEY, an expansion of its next-generation drilling and driving solutions. The new M18 FUEL ½" Hammer Drill with ONE-KEY and M18 FUEL ¼" Hex Impact Driver with ONE-KEY deliver faster driving speeds, enhanced safety and advanced customization technology. With 30 percent more power, the M18 FUEL ½" Hammer Drill gives users less bog down to improve productivity and efficiency. milwaukeetool.com



Crimper optimizes weight balance, ergonomics

GREENLEE, a part of Emerson, introduces the EK1550SLX 15-Ton Crimper, a pistol-grip style crimping tool that is 15 percent lighter compared to existing Kearney-style models and features a new C-head design with optimized weight balance for overall improved ergonomics. Designed for crimping large capacity conductor and connectors in overhead and underground applications, the 15T Crimper crimps up to 1500 kcmil copper and 1250 kcmil aluminum lugs and splices. greenlee.com



Angle duplicator creates accurate miter cuts

BORA TOOL adds a new angle duplicator to its line of workshop tools. The BORA MiteriX Compact angle duplicator is designed to help turn complex miters into easy cuts.

Like the original MiteriX, the tool captures and locks in angles and easily transfers them to a miter saw to

create accurate miter cuts. Its compact design fits perfectly in a pocket, tool belt or toolbox, and it can duplicate an angle range of 0 to 180° on inside corners and 65 to 180° on outside corners. boratool.com



Plunge-cut saw delivers innovative capabilities



FESTOOL announces a new range of offerings designed to improve efficiency in the shop and on the jobsite. The TS 60 K Plunge-Cut Saw, RENOFIX RG 130 ECI Surface-Restoration Grinder, and GHS 25 Ear Protection set a new standard for professional tradespeople seeking streamlined solutions to help build smarter, faster and cleaner. The new power tool solutions are designed to be durable enough for heavy use on the job yet versatile for seamless use across applications. festoolusa.com

Building, demo hand tools offer more efficiency

IRWIN launches new building and demolition hammers, pry bars and wrecking bars. IRWIN Max Strike 19 oz. and 15 oz. High Velocity One-Piece Steel Hammers are carefully engineered to be more efficient. The IRWIN 15 in. 2-in-1 Spring Steel Flat Bar and 18 in. 2-in-1 Spring Steel Wrecking Bar feature an extra-large strikable surface providing more access when working in tight spaces, and they act as a safe knuckle clearing handle when removing siding and other applications. irwin.com



Bath



Freestanding bathtub creates dimension, interest

MTI BATHS adds the Tayla freestanding tub to its product lineup following the launch of the Cosmopolitan Collection. The graceful oval silhouette of Tayla is enhanced by a flat rim and an unexpected square-patterned texture on the exterior. This chic geometric texture adds dimension and visual interest, elevating the entire bathroom with a refined elegance. Measuring a generous 65.75 inches long, Tayla is ergonomically designed to accommodate two bathers in comfort. mtibaths.com

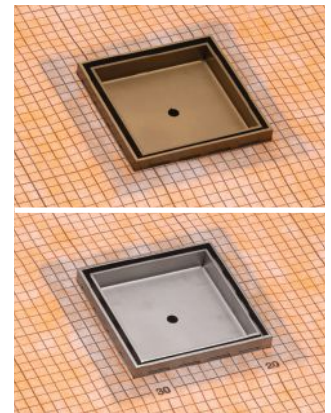


Toilet-paper holders provide vertical solution

CALIFORNIA FAUCETS further expands on its wide array of fully coordinated bath accessories with a selection of new vertical toilet paper holders. Available in styles from traditional and transitional to contemporary and even Steampunk, there is a toilet paper holder to coordinate with any style of decor. Whether used regularly for dispensing toilet paper or as a convenient place to store a second roll, the Vertical Paper Holders help to carry the look of luxury throughout the bathroom. | calfaucets.com

Single-handle faucet combines aesthetics

KOVA exudes sophistication and establishes a “quiet luxury” aesthetic in the bathroom with its Wynwood Single Handle Lavatory Faucet. Combining a classic look while incorporating a touch of contemporary style, the Wynwood soft-edged faucet employs solid brass and a ceramic disc cartridge to ensure smooth operation and durable performance. The single handle also allows for both temperature and volume control, providing easy installation and maintenance. kovaproducts.com



Tile-in center drain adapts to traditional methods

INFINITY DRAIN introduces a premium Tile-In Center Drain collection available with factory-applied Schluter-KERDI membrane fabric that offers double waterproofing capabilities. The advantage of this option is that it is adaptable for traditional methods such as vinyl, lead/copper pan or hot mop underneath and the bonded fabric method above. There are two 5-inch by 5-inch versions available, TDFS 5 and TDFLS 5, available in five standard and five specialty finishes. infinitydrain.com

Shower tray offers more installation options

ACQUABELLA breaks with tradition with its new Largo shower tray by placing the drain on the tray’s longest side. This strategic shift creates more options for installation configurations and adds a gentle slope as a subtle design element. Aptly named using the Spanish translation for long, the Largo Collection is offered in a range of versatile sizes, including a 36-inch square and oversized 36-inch by 66-inch as well as four rectangular designs of varying configuration. | acquabella.us



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Prosperous Partnership

No. 92 DD Ford Construction forges valuable relationships with clients, architects and designers to deliver exceptional projects to homeowners.

by Kyle Clapham

EACH SUMMER through high school and college, Blair Edwards labored for a custom homebuilder who self-performed every job. The company never subcontracted any work and instead provided him the necessary tools, trusting that he would figure out and complete the task. After graduation Edwards toiled in accounting and finance until he was introduced to Doug Ford.

“Doug had built a reputation on principles and values that were consistent with my own; it was do the right thing by everyone, and it’ll work out for you in the end,” says Edwards, who ended up replacing the controller at DD Ford Construction, the com-

“THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS LEADING AND SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE IN OUR BUSINESSES.”

Blair Edwards, partner

pany that Doug founded in 1980. “I had the construction knowledge and experience to make the numbers more than just reporting.

“The number side of things, those are symptoms,” he adds. “The interesting part is what we can do to improve, grow and change—and do what we do better using data to inform us. It’s a matter of how we can not only be good on the values side but also be excellent as a business.”

The accounting role evolved into more of an operations management position for Edwards, who still maintained his controller responsibilities. Eight years ago he and Ryan Prahm, the manager tasked with building out a separate home remodeling and maintenance division, became partners in the company.

“Our roles have morphed, so he is looking outside the company on the business development side of things, and I’m looking inside at operations and production,” Edwards says.

Although the quantity of leads has declined since a COVID-19 peak, the size and complexity of projects continues to rise, he notes. DD Ford essentially contracted all its work for this year and is working on early-to-mid-2024. The company will match or slightly top its sales revenue from the previous four years—the highest they have ever been and twice what they were in 2019.

“The ability to produce that work, it’s gotten slightly easier compared with the last three or four years, where it was like pushing boulders uphill,” Edwards says. “The supply chain has improved, and there has been a shift on the hiring and recruiting front. A year ago you could not find anyone for a rate that was even in the ballpark of reasonable; everyone was asking for astronomical numbers if they were looking at all. It seems in the last year, things have loosened.”

During COVID-19 people were stuck in their homes, which led to an extensive boom in smaller improvement projects, he adds. “There are only so many kitchens and bathrooms out there. Now, everybody’s back to work and back to the busyness of life, and they aren’t wanting to do smaller projects. Also, those small projects are more dependent on interest rates, I think, and our bread-and-butter core business isn’t dependent on interest rates.”

Eighty-seven percent of new leads for DD Ford come from referrals, oftentimes by a designer, architect, Realtor or past client, Edwards notes. The company basically cut its marketing budget to nearly zero because of the 20-plus DD Ford trucks driving around in addition to the signage on jobsites. The remaining 13 percent of leads see these promos or materialize through the internet.

“Roughly 60 percent of the time, clients go to their architect or designer first when



BLAIR EDWARDS,

Partner

COMPANY:

DD Ford Construction

LOCATION:

Santa Barbara, Calif.

DESCRIPTION:

Full-service remodeler

TOP 500 RANK: No. 92

REMODELING SALES: \$23.5 million (2021)

they want to start considering a project,” he explains. “They are an enormous source of our partnership in the community. It’s a mutually beneficial relationship where we deliver clients to them, and they bring clients back to us. If we are doing [design] in-house, now we’re a competitor with them.”

Many clients want to create an experience or evoke an emotional response in their living spaces, so they pursue A-list designers and architects, Edwards says. “We try to be ‘best in class,’ where the A-list designers can trust us to execute their A-list designs and vice versa. The way we often talk about it is if Ferrari is building a race car, they’re going to find the best driver they can. Our clients are on that level: They want the fastest car, but they’ve also got to find the best driver.

“Our architects and designers are going to design that car, but they also need a good driver to be able to execute that design,” he adds. “So, we partner with them rather than try to do it for them.”

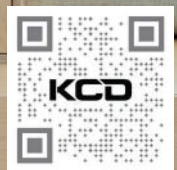
Fatigued after several years of the industry running hotter than ever, people must remember that humans lead businesses, which are not just financial reports or run by robots. “It’s been harder to get anything done; the expectations are higher than ever,” Edwards says. “The biggest challenge is leading and supporting the people in our businesses to help them be healthy and help them thrive.” **QR**



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