

Qualified Remodeler

QualifiedRemodeler.com

January | February 2025



WHOLE-HOUSE CHALLENGES • 38

Remembering Fred Case • 16

Lead-Gen Tips for 2025 • 32

Trends in Composite Decks • 50



Turn call centers into revenue centers

Lace Call Center Dashboard Calls Performance

All companies Past 6 months

Success rate 82% Target: 90%

Total calls 20,736 Qualified 1,888 Booked 1,548

Success rate
▲ 48%
July August September October November December

Top objections

Objection	Percentage	Number of calls
Price concerns	51%	(963 calls)
Timing issues	30%	(566 calls)
Need to consult others	15%	(283 calls)
Competitive shopping	9%	(170 calls)
Lack of urgency	8%	(151 calls)

Most coaching opportunities

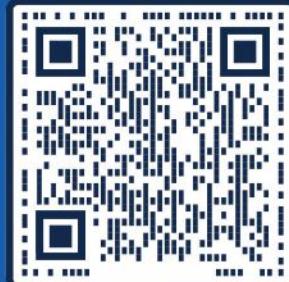
Highest need	Success rate	Booked/Qualified
Adrien Breck	14%	16/115
Michelle Lee	23%	31/136
Jayden Smith	36%	37/103
Teo Belton	41%	39/96
Samantha Davis	44%	53/121

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increase in lead generation

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increase in net sales

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booking rates

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2025 LEAD-GEN & MARKETING REPORT



What's Working Now

Generating leads today requires a broad array of tactics. Some are tried-and-true like direct mail and home shows while others leverage the latest technology, including artificial intelligence.

PROJECTS



Whole Ordeal

Award-winning remodelers reimagine existing floor plans to create open spaces and refine old homes for contemporary living.

Merge Safely

Pinemar partners with Phenotype Architects and Studio Friedman to combine two smaller apartments and deliver an expansive space.

HOME IMPROVEMENT PRO™



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Tech and Lead-Gen Merge



Patrick L. O'Toole

FOR AN INDUSTRY that is about creating physical realities, about improving the built environment, about the tactile—sticks and bricks—it's almost head-spinning how dependent the business of remodeling and home improvement is on new and emerging digital technologies. I suppose it is still possible for remodeling professionals with an old-school mindset to stay very low tech. You could keep your books on paper. You could insist on receiving printed plans from any architects involved in the projects you accept. And you could rely solely on yard signs and word-of-mouth for your leads. After all, this is how remodelers and contractors operated in the not-too-distant past. Remodeling and home improvement has a long history of being low tech.

The opposite is true today. Digital natives, those who grew up with smartphones and who innately understand the digital expectations and habits of today's homeowners, are today's new remodelers. Their acceptance and entrepreneurship utilizing wave after wave of new technology is transforming the industry and is rapidly raising the stakes for those focused solely on the craft of remodeling.

This issue of *Qualified Remodeler* is bookended with remarkable stories. On one hand there is our remembrance of Fred Case on page 16, founder of one of the most admired companies in the industry. His story started with an abiding love of “the craft.” But that was just his starting point. In time he grew to become a shrewd entrepreneur, a businessman who seized upon opportunities. In the process, he raised the bar for other top remodelers who followed his path into design-build remodeling.

The other bookend of this issue is marketing and lead generation. As I write this in

CLIENTS EXPECT A TECH EXPERIENCE.

January 2025, there is no more urgent topic of conversation in remodeling than how to generate the leads that all companies need in order to survive and grow.

Our columnist Amy Zimmerman is a true ace in the industry. Her shoulders carry the weight of hundreds of sales professionals working in the Great Day Improvements family of companies. In her column this month, she lays out a map of strategies and tactics that are constantly in a state of play in the world of lead-gen.

This issue also features a guest column from Scott Berman, the founder and president of the large and fast-growing company, Florida Window & Door, based in Lake Worth, Florida. Scott is old enough

to have two decades of home improvement management under his belt. But he's young enough to understand the impact new technology is having on consumers. Knowing that consumer behavior has been shaped by online shopping, he set out to create a new software to augment the work of his call center. Today that technology is allowing Berman's prospective clients to click on a link in their email or in their text messages to set an appointment with a Florida Window & Door sales representative any time of the day or night, 365 days per year.

Our lead-gen report on page 32 is filled with tech ideas. Many more pages could be filled with coverage of the ways tech and lead-gen are merging and changing remodeling. The craft is so important, but so are new tech and new ideas. **QR**

Patrick L. O'Toole

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Codes and Standards

'Resiliency' Movement Surges in Wake of LA Fires

IN THE WAKE OF the wildfire catastrophe that struck Los Angeles in January, there's been a surge of interest in a group of building standards and codes that enable homes to survive similar wildfire outbreaks. They are part of a group of standards that emphasize "resiliency" against a host of natural disasters. The resiliency standard most pertinent to the L.A. fires is the 2021 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code (IWUIC).

Published by the International Code Council, the IWUIC has been adopted in 200 jurisdictions across 24 states and has been adopted as statewide code in Montana, Pennsylvania, Utah and Washington. California has its own wildfire building code (Chapter 7A), which went into effect in 2008 and applies to all newly built structures within specified wildfire zones. The California code is the strictest wildfire building code in the nation.

The key components of the IWUIC include ignition-resistant construction, defensible space, emergency vehicle access, water supply, fire sprinklers, and chimneys with spark arrestors.

From a building products standpoint, "ignition-resistant construction" approved roofing products include concrete roof tiles, metal roofs, slate, and class A rated asphalt shingles. Approved exterior wall systems include masonry (brick, stone, or concrete block), stucco applied over metal lath and fiber-cement siding, as well as non-combustible metal siding.

Eaves, soffits and fascia are often seen as weak points for wildfire resilience. Under the IWUIC eaves and soffits must be enclosed with noncombustible materials or materials that resist fire penetration. Vents must have fire-resistant screens with a maximum mesh size of 1/8 inches to block embers.

Decks, porches and exterior stairs must be constructed with noncombustible materials or with fire-retardant-treated wood. The underside of decks and porches should be enclosed or shielded to prevent ember intrusion. The code allows composite decking with fire-resistant properties, treated lumber



The International Wildland-Urban Interface Code has shown to be effective against wild fire property loss.

meeting IWUIC standards and metal or concrete decking.

To learn more about required materials for windows, glazing, doors, gutters and downspouts, as well as fencing and attachments, go to the ICC website.

There are a number of other standards and sources for resiliency standards and guidelines for minimizing or preventing property losses in areas prone to floods, hail and wind damage. The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) conducts research and sets standards for disaster-resistant construction, which is published under the FORTIFIED Home program. The nonprofit Resilient Design Institute advocates for principles of resilient design in homes and communities.

Stats on the LA Fires

Roughly one of every seven (14 percent) homes within the perimeters of the Palisades

and Eaton fires in the Los Angeles area have been destroyed or damaged. That's a total of 6,354 homes; of those, 5,449 (86 percent) were destroyed, and 905 (14 percent) were damaged, says a report from real estate brokerage Redfin.

Of the 6,354 homes that have been destroyed or damaged, just over half of those (56 percent) were destroyed or damaged by the Eaton fire, and 44 percent by the Palisades fire.

Single-family homes account for the vast majority (89 percent; 5,636) of the homes that were destroyed or damaged. Another 11 percent (707) were units in multi-family properties, and less than 1 percent (11) were mobile homes.

Roughly 6,000 single-family permits are granted each year across all of Los Angeles County, according to Redfin, which is less than the number of homes that have been destroyed by the Palisades and Eaton fires.

Market Outlook

Harvard: Modest gains in 2025 outlook

After two years of decline, annual expenditures for improvements and maintenance to owner-occupied homes are expected to grow at a mild pace throughout 2025, according to the Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA) released by the Remodeling Futures Program at the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. The LIRA projects that year-over-year spending for home renovation and repair will increase by 1.2 percent in 2025.

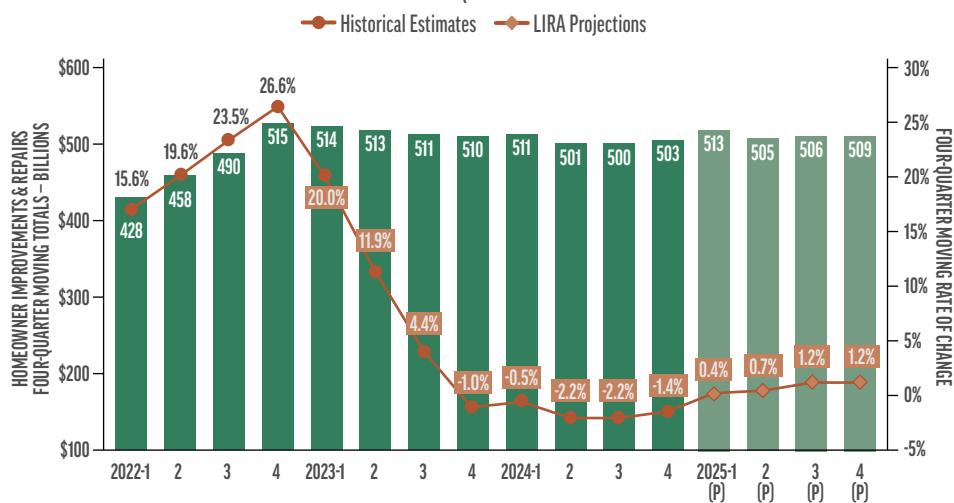
"A solid labor market, rising home values, and continued improvement in existing-home sales are supporting greater activity in home remodeling and repair," said program director Carlos Martín. "Upward trending retail sales of building materials and steady permitting for remodeling indicate that homeowners are slowly but surely expanding the pace and scope of projects compared to the last couple years."

This LIRA release incorporates new benchmark data from the American Housing Survey that revises up the overall market size.

"In the wake of the pandemic, strong gains in homeownership, record-high home values and equity, and a healthy economy

Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity

Fourth Quarter 2024



Notes: Improvements include remodels, replacements, additions, and structural alterations that increase the value of homes. Routine maintenance and repairs preserve the current quality of homes. Historical estimates since 2021 are produced using the LIRA model until American Housing Survey benchmark data become available. — Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University

The latest release of Harvard University's Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA) forecasts a slow but steady expansion of the remodeling market throughout 2025.

combined to lift improvement and repair spending to unprecedented heights in 2022 and 2023, growing 25.3 percent over these two years. The growth in actual spending was 7.5 percentage points higher than the gains originally estimated by the LIRA

models over this period," said the program's associate director, Abbe Will. "While expenditures are expected to grow only modestly this year, we've increased our projection for the remodeling market size in 2025 by \$30 billion, or 6.4 percent, to \$509 billion."

OSHA

Association asks for clear, flexible guidelines for OSHA heat standard

NAHB submitted comments in response to OSHA's proposed rulemaking to establish the first federal standard for preventing heat-related injuries and illnesses for both indoor and outdoor work settings.

As written, the standard would apply to all employers conducting outdoor and indoor work in all general industry, construction, maritime and agriculture sectors, with some exceptions. In its response, NAHB argued the agency's one-size-fits-all approach to prevent heat injury and illness prevention does not consider the unique needs of these different industries.

Specifically, NAHB expressed concerns over applying the same heat triggers nationwide as well as the proposal's overly prescriptive requirements, such as mandatory rest breaks and acclimatization procedures.

Instead, NAHB advocated for guidance that allows employers to tailor their heat injury and illness prevention programs to fit the needs of their employees, the size of their businesses and the areas in which they work.

NAHB also discussed the impact the rulemaking would have on housing affordability and the critical workforce shortage in construction. Using data collected from the November 2024 NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index, survey respondents noted the following when asked about the impact of the proposal:

- 75 percent indicated the requirements would create delays or difficulty

completing projects on time.

- 69 percent stated they would raise home prices.
- 53 percent stated they would have difficulty hiring subcontractors while 32 percent stated the requirements would make it more difficult to hire construction employees.
- 37 percent stated some projects would be unprofitable.
- 31 percent stated the requirements would cause their businesses to turn down projects that they would otherwise accept.

Additionally, OSHA recently announced a fully virtual informal public hearing, where interested organizations and individuals can provide testimony and evidence to provide the agency with the best available evidence to use in developing a final rule. The hearing will take place June 16, 2025.

Market Outlook

US Remodeler Index ticks higher in Q4

In four years of data collection for the U.S. Remodeler Index (USRI), remodelers have never registered a sentiment number below 50 on a scale of one to 100, where any reading over 50 indicates a growing market. That streak continued in the fourth quarter of 2024 as remodelers gave conditions a 62 rating, up five points from Q4 when remodelers registered a rating of 57.

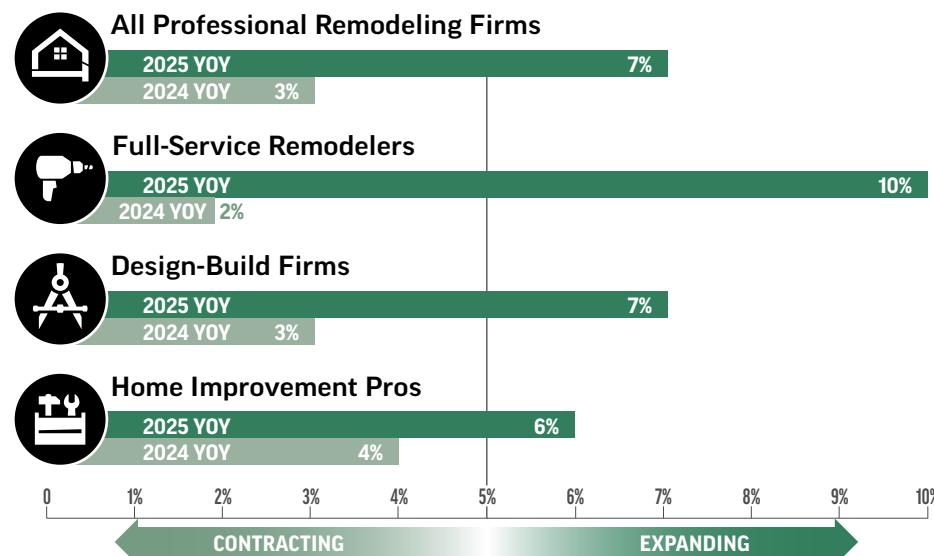
When viewed by remodeling segment, all three registered very similar sentiments. Full-service remodelers were slightly more bullish at 63 while design-build and home-improvement pros both registered a 61.

In terms of revenue outlooks for 2025, full-service remodelers surveyed in Q4 expect a 10 percent growth in revenue; design-build firms expect 7 percent revenue growth; and home improvement pros expect 6 percent revenue growth.

Analysis from John Burns Research and Consulting, which produces the index in collaboration with *Qualified Remodeler*, cited four key takeaways in its fourth quarter report.

- Households prioritize smaller projects over large discretionary remodels. Elevated materials, labor and borrowing costs continued to constrain large-scale remodeling projects. Homeowners shifted to essential repairs and targeted upgrades rather than expansive renovations. This reflects a cautious approach to spending as economic uncertainty and high interest rates persist.
- Potential regulatory changes add

Average Full-Year Professional Remodeler Revenue Growth Outlook



Note: Full-service remodelers offer a broad range of repair, remodeling, and home improvement services, including kitchen and bath remodeling/trades. Design-build firms offer design and construction remodeling services, primarily whole-home remodels and additions.

Home improvement professionals include specialty contractors marketing windows, roofing, siding, decking, bath replacements, etc.

Sources: *Qualified Remodeler*; John Burns Research and Consulting, LLC (Data: 4Q24, Pub: Jan-25)

lingering uncertainty. Uncertainty surrounding upcoming regulatory changes has led to hesitancy. Stricter environmental and building regulations and potential new compliance requirements have introduced unpredictability, causing some projects to stall as stakeholders take a wait-and-see approach.

- Strategic remodeling as a competitive edge over purchasing new homes. For owners remaining in place, remodeling has become a strategic decision to enhance the functionality and value of their homes. Remodelers report rising interest in future-proofing homes

through accessibility upgrades, such as aging-in-place designs and energy-efficient improvements. These projects balance immediate needs with long-term benefits.

- Optimism for a remodeling uptick in 2025. Looking ahead, pro remodelers anticipate a gradual recovery in the remodeling market. Easing inflation and the potential for easing interest rates are expected to encourage more discretionary projects. Rising household wealth and an increased focus on multigenerational living are also poised to drive demand for more comprehensive remodels.

Regulations

NAHB, attorneys general file suit vs. energy codes mandate

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and 15 state attorneys general have filed a complaint in the Eastern District of Texas seeking to stop the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

(HUD) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) from adopting the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) and ASHRAE 90.1-2019 as the minimum energy-efficiency standards for certain single-family and multifamily housing programs.

NAHB Chairman Carl Harris, a custom home builder from Wichita, Kansas, issued the following statement on the lawsuit:

"Compliance with the 2021 IECC can add more than \$22,000 to the price of a

new home; but in practice, homebuilders have estimated increased costs of up to \$31,000. Along with 15 state attorneys general, NAHB is the only private entity in this lawsuit seeking to halt HUD and USDA from adopting the 2021 IECC because homebuilders can document how this egregious regulation will needlessly raise housing costs and hurt the nation's most vulnerable homebuyers and renters. This ill-conceived policy will act as a deterrent to new construction." **QR**

Industry Rankings

2025 TOP 500 Now Accepting Applications

Applications for 2025's TOP 500 are now open until May 30 at www.qr-top500.com.

Established in 1978, the TOP 500 is the longest ongoing recognition program in the remodeling industry. Each year the TOP 500 recognizes remodelers for significant and sustained success in the following areas:

- Installed remodeling dollar volume
- Industry association membership

- Industry awards
- Total years in business
- Certifications and accreditations
- Community service

The rankings will be published at QualifiedRemodeler.com during the first week of August 2025. They will also be published in the print edition of the August issue of *Qualified Remodeler*. The most recent TOP 500 rankings can be found at qualifiedremodeler.com/top500.

Companies ranked on the 2025 TOP 500 will receive two complimentary passes to the annual TOP 500 LIVE conference, which is set to be held November 19-20, 2025, at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. QR



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Obituary

Remembering Fred Case, Entrepreneur and Remodeling Leader

He could not know it at the time, but in 1961 as a newly minted graduate of Catholic University with a BA in philosophy, Fred Case established what would go on to become one of the largest and most admired residential remodeling companies in the country.

He also could not know that in establishing Case Construction, he'd be creating a company that would one-day serve as a dynamic platform for new ideas and visionary entrepreneurship in remodeling; namely, pioneering the use of design-build in remodeling as well as the establishment of the first franchise system for large-scale remodeling and handyman services, which ultimately spread coast-to-coast.

Perhaps most significantly, Case also could not have known in 1961 that his company would go on to spawn a string of influential leaders in the remodeling industry. For example, Case's former wife, Linda, later established the peer group Remodelers Advantage. Mark Richardson, who led Case for more than a decade, is today a recognized author, speaker, consultant, business coach and senior fellow at Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

Among many other important company leaders through the years is Fred's son, Bruce, the company's current CEO, who oversaw a massive restructuring and subsequent growth at the company beginning in 2010. In 2023, Case Design/Build Remodeling Inc., completed 947 jobs on \$50.4 million to rank as the largest design-build company in the nation, according to *Qualified Remodeler's* TOP 500 rankings of the largest remodelers.

Frederic Felix Case, 85, founder of Case, passed away Dec. 14, 2024, at his home in Maine. Fred is survived by his wife Carolyn and his four children, Bruce, Charles, Rebecca and Amy.

Case Construction operated as a sole proprietorship for 10 years before Case made the leap and hired an administrator/bookkeeper. The business grew steadily throughout the 1970s, a time when he was among a handful of industry leaders who sought to boost the professionalism and stature of remodeling.

Along with Neil and Tom Kelly of Portland, Oregon, Charlie Knutson of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Dave Sauer, the founding publisher of *Qualified Remodeler*, among others, Case was part of an enthusiastic group

"HE WAS ALWAYS FASCINATED WITH HOW YOU GET THE BEST CRAFTSPEOPLE, ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS, THE FIELD AND THE OFFICE, WORKING TOGETHER, BECAUSE THEY ALL THINK ABOUT THINGS DIFFERENTLY."

Bruce Case



Fred Case, founder of Case Architects & Remodelers

of remodelers with the wherewithal and vision to see remodeling as a separate discipline from home building, a group that helped bring together two forerunner organizations to establish the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI).

Among Case's proudest accomplishments came as an early leader of NARI's education committee, where he oversaw the development of course work for the Certified Remodeler designation, which is widely seen as one of the most rigorous and respected industry designations to this day.

According to his son Bruce, Case's father died when he was still young, and his mother supported him and his two older sisters by buying and renovating homes in the Washington, D.C. area. Since at the time women couldn't acquire contractor licenses in their own name, Case's mother was forced to put her company under her deceased husband's name. She remodeled more than 30 homes throughout Case's childhood, moving the family to the next house when the last was sold. "I think he was in 18 homes growing up. He got the sawdust in the blood doing that," Bruce says.

A degree in philosophy was not an obvious choice for a budding entrepreneur who did handyman work to pay his way through college, but his degree certainly influenced his perspective on both business and life, Bruce says. To Fred, remodeling was more than just "sticks and bricks," Bruce adds. "He had a bigger vision of things."

Quotable Fred Case

"Reputation is everything in remodeling"

"I found the real challenge was trying to control the uncontrollable. On a remodeling job, every situation, product, client, and outcome are different. You re-create the business every day."

"Over the years, I learned that, rather than fear failures, they can be seen as a learning tool to help meet future challenges and move on to success."

"I realize the value of listening to others' ideas, learning from others, and being open to suggestions. It's not important who has the best idea; it's important to work as a team."

Case's first employee, Polly Evans, ran the administrative side of the business but later rose to company president. Case felt Evans was the best-suited to lead the company at the time, bucking a trend that resisted female leadership and showing his loyalty to his longest-standing employee.

In 1976, Case received the first National Contractor of the Year Award for "Best Residential Remodeler" from NARI. In 1981, Case brought in Richardson with an architecture degree from Virginia Tech, as a first step toward becoming a design-build company. In 1992, the company expanded with a handyman division. In 1997 came a bath division. Meanwhile a separate division of the company managed Case Remodeling and Handyman, the previously mentioned franchise operation that grew to more than 50 locations.

"He was always fascinated with how you get the best craftspeople, architects and designers in the field in the office working together. Because they all think about things differently," Bruce says. "Some are in the office in the A/C, and some are working outside in the heat. How do you get the left hand working with the right hand? I think 'design-build' is easy to say, but to do that effectively [is difficult]. I think he would say that it's a big competitive advantage for us that we do it effectively—and better."

Every year, the Fred Case Remodeling Entrepreneur of the Year Award recognizes an outstanding leader in the remodeling industry who exemplifies innovation in their business. The award is given by Case Architects & Remodelers to an individual who embodies the qualities that made Case a pioneer in his field: staying on top of the latest trends and technology, listening to clients' needs and preferences, and listening to team members and implementing their ideas. Case placed importance on elevating the professionalism of the industry and spent his career working toward and achieving that goal. He established the award in 2007 to celebrate remodelers as businesspeople and more than just handymen, as they were sometimes seen.



Case was more than an industry leader. He was, above other things, a father, husband and friend. Bill Millholland, executive vice president of Case, who has worked at Case for more than 30 years, remembers calling him "Uncle Fred."

"I think the kernel is that he loved fricking remodeling," Millholland says. "I don't know why, but he just did. And it was important to him. This was his thing. And it was important to him to see it be successful, to thrive, to grow, to survive."

Bruce remembered his dad's love for craftsmanship and the enthusiasm with which he shared it. "Every weekend growing up, we were in the basement sanding down shutters or louvered doors that he got off a job and finding a place to put them in the house. Or he'd ask, 'What do you wanna build today? A spaceship?' And we'd pull some wood out—all kinds of stuff from jobs. It was a deep passion. The craft that was his deepest passion." QR

Fred Case with Bill Millholland, EVP of Case Architects & Remodelers



Fred Case on stage with Bruce Case, CEO of Case Architects & Remodelers

Events

Watch Speakers from Day One of TOP 500 LIVE 2024



Speaker clips from day one of TOP 500 LIVE 2024 have been added to Qualified Remodeler's recently revamped YouTube channel: youtube.com/@qualifiedremodelermagazine.

TOP 500 LIVE 2024 was held October 28-30 at the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, featuring a list of speakers that included CEOs and experts focused on today's best practices in sales and marketing. The event was headlined by keynote speaker Billy Beane, former general manager of the Oakland A's and the inspiration behind Brad Pitt's character in the movie, *Moneyball*.

The annual event is the home improvement industry's leading sales and lead-generation conference, which offers a combination of leading experts and consultants along with home improvement business owners and entrepreneurs. TOP 500 LIVE returns to the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas from November 17-19, 2025.

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** Peel-and-stick products ease tile installations from **SCHLUTER-SYSTEMS** | schluter.com
- 2** Moving glass wall boasts narrower sightlines from **MILGARD** | milgard.com
- 3** Column wraps gain realistic woodgrain from **VERSATEX** | versatex.com

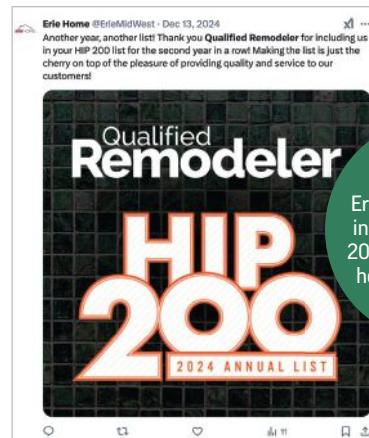
**2****1****3**

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!



Exterior Pros posts about its ranking on our HIP 200 list for the second consecutive year.



Erie Home tweets its inclusion on our HIP 200 list of the largest home improvement companies.



HomeFix Custom Remodeling shares its top-30 ranking for 2024 on our annual HIP 200 list.

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Are You at Risk Due to Single Points of Failure?

by Shawn McCadden, CR, CLC, CAPS

BEING A REMODELER is full of risks, particularly if your business is small. That's why I always stress the need to charge for—and earn—a dang-good net profit. One huge risk is referred to as a single point of failure (SPOF). SPOF refers to a single component within a system that, if the component fails, will cause the entire system to stop working as intended. Simply put, it's a single vulnerable point in your business that can bring down your whole operation. In this article I will share with you just a few SPOFs, so first you will be aware of them as something to watch out for, and second, so you can try to avoid them.

Sole Proprietorship Realities

As a sole proprietor or small corporation, your business is highly dependent on you to guide it and often to perform the actual work that brings in the money. If something were to happen to you, things will likely quickly come to a standstill. Even if you have employees, and they are self-managing, and you've already done a sufficient handoff of project information, they too may be a SPOF.

Business owners in this situation have limited options to help keep their businesses and their households financially afloat. If this is true for you, I highly recommend purchasing disability insurance and consider covering yourself in a workers compensation policy. Additionally, priority needs to be placed on earning a good net profit over and above any salary you draw. Use some of that money to build reserve funds for yourself personally as well as for your business. You can't assume nothing will ever happen to you. You know what they say about assuming.

Bookkeeping Can't Be Overlooked

Keeping the books at your business should be a task delegated to someone else other than you. As a business owner, your efforts every hour of the day are worth a lot. Never mind that you probably hate doing the books;

someone else not only might enjoy bookkeeping, but they'll also do it better and more quickly than you.

In my experience almost every remodeler uses QuickBooks or another similar software in different ways than other remodelers. If you find a good bookkeeper, it's likely they will help you advance how you use the software and, therefore, how you do your bookkeeping. As a result, your bookkeeping system will be somewhat unique to you in the sense that no one else does your books the exact same way you do. Unless you've got a written manual explaining how and why you do your bookkeeping the way you do, if your bookkeeper gets hit by a bus tomorrow, you will know that he or she is also a single point of failure for your company.

To help address this risk, I suggest when you hire a bookkeeper you include in the job description that the bookkeeper will be responsible for creating the manual needed to some day train his or her replacement. (You do have a job description, right?) Do not abdicate this responsibility. Delegate it. By this I mean don't assume the bookkeeper will do it. Check in as needed to make sure it is happening. Abdicating it is another possible SPOF.

Production Risks

As remodelers grow, one critical and required change is to get the owner out of the day-to-day work in the field. A good way to do this is to train at least one employee to become a real lead carpenter. They must be trained and experienced such that if you properly hand off a project, they can independently perform the work while you run the business. If you have only one lead carpenter and that person either gets sick, or worse, leaves your business, this too is a potential SPOF. To help limit this risk, I recommend you adequately train and successfully put in place two leads before you leave the field. In addition to reducing your risk if one is no longer available, you'll likely

need two leads to produce enough work to generate enough gross profit to afford leaving the field. You and your salary will have become overhead.

Another point of failure, particularly if you have only one lead, is flight risk. He or she could hold you and your business hostage by demanding a raise, or they will leave. Leads are valuable, not only to you, but to other businesses. Limit this risk by compensating them well and making them feel appreciated.

Subcontractor Risks

Still another production-related risk can be subcontractor pricing and availability. When your volume is small, you probably need only one sub for each trade. However, as your business grows, your demand for certain trades will grow. Your current subcontractors might not be able to keep up with the work you offer them. Keep in mind, too much volume from just your business could also be a potential SPOF for them. Find at least two subs for each trade your business needs. Another benefit of having more than one sub for each trade is that you can compare pricing to be sure one is not taking advantage of you or holding your business hostage in similar ways as described above for a lead carpenter.

There are many points of failure lurking out there, particularly as your business grows. Here are a few: guessing your markup, paying employees under the table, or ignoring OSHA and RRP requirements. You can take your chances in the hopes of reducing costs to keep your pricing low to help score jobs. In reality, you may be saving your customers money while foolishly putting your business at risk. **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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Are You (and Your Company) Really Prepared For 2025?

by Dave Yoho

My perspective on the challenges facing our industry starts with a checkup from the neck up. Here are answers to common questions from home improvement pros.

Q: If yours is a successful business, why does the cost of leads issued continue to rise?

At a recent business conference, in discussions on this subject, most responders glowingly stated their solution is to “raise your prices.” This statement, made with bravado, is alarmingly a “band aid” solution.

In questioning the outcome as to profitability, the answers ranged from, “It’s working,” and “We are profitable,” to anecdotal stories of how their answers prompt additional questions.

Q: If you balance the high cost of an issued lead by raising your prices, what happens to the overall close rate versus leads issued?

The industry talks about average close rate versus leads issued by stating their goals of 35 to 40 percent. The truth is some top salespeople close 40 percent-plus. However, when balanced against the lesser skilled in their organization, the company’s overall average is less than 30 percent. Now, do the arithmetic. If your issued lead is valued at \$600 and if salespeople are given seven leads a week, that’s \$4,200—more than \$16,000 per month—and over \$190,000 per year to distribute leads to the average salesperson. If the salesperson sells \$2 million annually—that’s almost 10 percent—add the commission (for example, 8 percent) and that totals 18 percent. So, what if you pay salespeople 10 percent, and what if lesser skilled salespeople close only 12 to 15 percent of leads issued? And in fact, many supposedly “well-run companies” have an issued lead cost of \$900 or more.

Q: Many question me: Over the years, you have been known to encourage small and large companies to raise prices.

You’re right. That’s because most companies have an improper pricing method. However, we do not simply encourage companies to raise prices to cover their inequities.

A retail price has to be based on a quality product/service that meets (or more than meets) the customers’ satisfaction needs. I urge you to read my white paper on “Customer Satisfaction Selling.”

Moreover, fewer and fewer companies really invest time/energy in an evaluation of their current methods. The cost of lead development is but one critical component of the current dilemma. 2025 will be a great year for many companies but only those who analyze their methods of operation (due diligence).

Q: Does this imply that raising the price to accommodate the marketing cost is wrong?

By no means. However, by simply raising prices and expecting that to solve the problem points to a *band aid* philosophy because abundant case studies indicate you will have to raise prices again and again as marketing costs and overhead costs continue to rise.

When we do a confidential overview of a business (similar to a complete physical by a physician) we uncover numerous side issues that conflict with a company’s goal to run a profitable—or more profitable—business.

Those companies who survived the COVID era (many thrived) are now experiencing a “post prosperous era,” i.e., fewer leads from the same sources, higher total revenue with fewer contracts, outdated sales compensation, failure to upgrade the skill levels of their sales management personnel and more.

Above all, the failure of top managers to inaugurate modern sales training methods is a key issue. Comprehending modern lead development, creating “face to face leads,” shows and events, direct mail, proximity

marketing, are requisite, and these are not quick fixes.” (*Check out Super Sales Training, visit www.supersalestraining.com*)

Q: Dave, your company advocates a step selling system that we use. We believe our methods are “up to date,” but we are still getting fewer leads and unfortunately, we are not getting desired results.

Bravo! However, you pat yourself on the back for utilizing “step selling methods,” when in all probability you may be using modified, outdated methods and probably cannot define “step selling” as it was introduced, nor its intention to deliver to a prospect true *customer satisfaction language*. I challenge those who use what you (and they) describe to the origin, purpose, proper use, and defined outcome of the original method (original title, *6 Sales to a Sale*, circa 1963). So, let’s give you some history, purpose, updates and potential outcomes of updated step-selling.

First, “step selling” is based on what the customer thinks and feels. If correctly understood, taught, trained and mandated into a methodological format to meet modern customers’ needs, that’s great. Often, it is poorly taught or mandated, then it becomes compromised and fails in its purpose.

Examine the methods of those who wish to have a clear understanding of “customer’s needs.” When the customer says, “I want a lower price,” this is often misinterpreted when in fact there is a proviso, i.e., they have certain quality and performance expectations and may need to know payment options.

I can almost guarantee that most companies presentation methods do not meet this need, although, a well-developed *customer satisfaction* sales presentation can include this long before the actual price is introduced. The actual presentation is delivered in steps



to allow a prospect's values to be understood (It's not done by assumptions or guessing).

As an example, utilizing well-developed "psychological laws" utilizes authentic *customer value questions*, as to the prospects' purpose, utilization, specific needs, and what they have experienced prior to your visit. Moreover, it's how the salesperson responds to the information and how to define the differences between *wants* and *needs* raises the questions of how an owner truly understands *customer satisfaction selling*.

In a truly defined customer satisfaction presentation, this is accomplished via *linguistic programming*, the purpose and intent of which is to gain *rappor* (simply defined, a feeling of trust, worthiness and a compulsion to hear more).

Q: It sounds complicated. How is this taught to salespeople, and how do we ensure its usage?

Actually, it parallels the methods that were used to teach you the alphabet, or similar methods of communication. It's called a *mnemonic*—no, it's not misspelled. Its pronounced knee-monnic.

Once established in a presentation, it opens the door to "post negative suggestion," i.e., how to find ways to insert ideas, thoughts and respond to the needs and value system of those to whom your product/service is presented.

Despite its intent we seldom see it utilized correctly, largely because owners, managers and trainers believe they know this, then they contrive shortcuts, which give them a compromised version that seems to work (Check your company's net close rate).

Q: Are you saying that many companies teach step-selling incorrectly?

Yes, and while it may not seem to be an error, it represents the core of most problems, which because of compromise does not achieve the result intended.

And there's much more to know, all of which is teachable and manageable; however, if it is not correct, there are unintended

consequences, which is what we are seeing in many companies today.

A true step-system selling method has to be defined by proven psychological laws, which also include:

Embedded commands—value centered presentation, revivification, hypermnesia and more. So, here is an admonition:

- You cannot know what you do not know.
- You cannot learn what you do not know until you admit that you don't know.

If you learn what you do not know and don't use the new learning, it's the same as not knowing.

With it all *you* and those you hire, train and manage have blocks that prevent you from doing all you are capable of doing. There are *cultural blocks* based on your history—what you already know and what is clearly outdated information but may represent a need to adapt to updated behavior and training methods.

There are *emotional blocks* based on what you or others you train see as stable ideas (not necessarily valid), any or all of which prevents *adaptation*, a vital behavior need is a time of change.

And there are *perceptual blocks* that are the least problematic in overcoming with proper training. As an example, improving methods to ask questions while learning how to listen and ask more questions.

The home improvement industry was once composed of many small companies who wanted to grow; all of that has changed. What are you doing to "change" your company's methods? ***It all starts with "a checkup from the neck up."*** QR

Dave Yoho is acknowledged as a leader and an icon. His sales/sales management methods are used by the most successful organizations in the industry. His story emanates from founding a small sales organization that when he sold it in 1974 was doing in excess of \$60 million in annual revenue (equivalent to \$350 million by today's economy). To learn more about Dave Yoho Associates' new online sales training platform, visit www.supersalestraining.com.

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The Power of Professional Education, Coaching and Networking

by Gary A. Cohen

IN OUR WORLD of home improvement and remodeling, staying ahead requires more than just mastering the trade. Contractors and remodelers aiming for long-term success recognize the value of education, coaching and networking. An effective way to achieve this is by attending industry conferences and joining a professional network. These experiences are not just beneficial; they can be transformative, providing the tools and support required to thrive.

Conferences Matter

Industry conferences serve as a concentrated dose of knowledge, innovation and inspiration. These events bring together contractors, remodelers and industry experts to exchange ideas, learn new strategies and explore trends. But what makes them so impactful?

The primary benefit of attending conferences is exposure to cutting-edge ideas and strategies. Home improvement is constantly evolving, with new technologies, tools and customer expectations shaping how business is done. Conferences offer access to industry leaders willing to share their insights.

Another benefit is the opportunity for important professional growth. Most home improvement pros get caught up in the daily grind, but conferences serve as a space to step away and invest in self-improvement. From workshops to keynote presentations to breakout sessions, each is an opportunity for expanding your professional acumen. Conferences also offer inspiration. Running a contracting or remodeling business can sometimes feel isolating, particularly when facing challenges, like generating leads or economic pressures. Conferences such as the ones offered by our organization, CCN, or TOP 500 LIVE, which is hosted by this publication, re-energize attendees. Hearing success stories, discovering innovative solutions, and connecting with like-minded pros can re-ignite a passion for the business and inspire new ideas.

The Power of Networking

One of the most valuable aspects of attending conferences is connecting with other professionals. Networking is not just about meeting people—it's about building relationships that positively impact your business.

When you surround yourself with successful contractors and remodelers, you gain access to their knowledge and experience. Networking with top performers allows you to learn their best practices, avoid their mistakes, and gain valuable insights that might take years to discover on your own.

Joining a strong network opens the door to collaborative opportunities. In addition to CCN, there are several peer-group organizations offering benchmarking and smaller group intensives that can serve as an informal board of directors. These groups do not include members who are competitive, so peers feel free to share ideas and strategies. Peer groups create a collective environment where everyone benefits.

Being part of a network means you never face challenges alone. Whether you're looking for advice on streamlining operations, managing customer expectations, or scaling your business, the support of a network can make all the difference. It's fantastic to be part of a group of likeminded contractors who learn from each other's experiences while forging meaningful friendships.

Why Outside Training and Coaching Are Essential

No matter how skilled a contractor is, there's always room to grow. A significant advantage of attending conferences and joining a network is the outside training and coaching.

1. Gaining a Fresh Perspective

It's easy to get stuck in the same routines or methods of doing business. Outside training provides a fresh perspective, offering innovative approaches to common challenges. Coaches and trainers can identify blind spots, offer actionable

solutions, and help contractors see their businesses in a new light.

2. Accountability for Growth

Having a trainer, coach and a network of contractors can provide the accountability needed to follow through on positive change. Whether it's implementing a new process, launching a marketing initiative, or tackling financial reviews, accountability partners ensure that contractors stay on track toward their goals.

3. Accelerated Learning

Learning from others who've already achieved success can shorten the learning curve. Instead of reinventing the wheel, contractors can adopt proven systems and processes that have been tested and refined by others.

4. Building Generational Wealth

Contractors who engage in continuous professional development often find themselves not just growing their businesses but also building a legacy. With the right systems and strategies in place, they can create a business that generates wealth and provides financial stability for years.

If you're a contractor looking to grow your business, improve your processes, and build a better future, there's no better time to explore the power of conferences and networks. They may just be the key to unlocking your full potential. [QR](#)

Gary A. Cohen is executive vice president of Certified Contractors Network (CCN) and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the company. Cohen is also a 30-year veteran of the home improvement industry. Previously he was a professor and dean at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland. Email him at gary@contractors.net.

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How to Maximize Lead Generation for Multiple Product Types

by Amy Zimmerman

MARKETING MULTIPLE PRODUCTS is like juggling chainsaws while riding a unicycle—scary and potentially dangerous, but impressive when you nail it. Whether your product lineup includes windows, doors, siding, one-day bath remodels, or kitchens, cracking the code on where to allocate your marketing dollars is the key.

Should You Separate Products?

Yes, but with a bit of finesse. It's tempting to lump all your products into one giant pot of marketing soup and hope homeowners take a bite. But no one's in the mood for a mystery casserole. Homeowners are looking to you for expert guidance—they expect recommendations suited to their tastes and needs. Segmenting your campaigns to highlight individual products helps you stand out as the expert, build trust, and make you look like a marketing genius.

The beauty of segmented marketing? It makes tracking your performance metrics easier and allows you to shift budgets based on which product is killing it or needs a little more campaign TLC. Maybe your direct mail hits it out of the park for windows, but bathrooms need more of a push.

How Much Goes Where?

While there's no one-size-fits-all formula, here's a cheat sheet to help.

- **Referral & self-generated leads:** This is your golden goose—free-range, organic leads that cost almost nothing. Allocate 10-20 percent of your budget here by incentivizing referrals and rewarding sales reps who can generate their own leads.
- **Paid search & social media:** These platforms are excellent for creating targeted campaigns, particularly for visually driven products such as kitchens and bathrooms. Allocate around 20-30 percent of your budget here.
- **Direct mail & marriage mail:** Yes, print still works, but it's a slower burn. Reserve 10-15 percent of your budget

for these efforts, focusing on neighborhoods with homes that fit your target demographic. Don't forget look-alike audiences who mirror your best prospects and previous customers.

- **TV & radio:** Expensive but effective, particularly for brand awareness. These channels drive website traffic and boost PPC campaigns. Allocate 15-25 percent here, if your market and budget support it.
- **Events & home shows:** These face-to-face opportunities can convert at a high rate, especially with a strong team. Dedicate 10 percent of your budget to these efforts.

Home Shows: Product Specific?

When setting up your booth, highlight the product with the most demand or go for a showstopper that freezes people mid-stride. Whatever you choose, make sure it's in mint condition: no dents, scratches or fingerprints. Pro tip: Literature should be light. Your goal is to set appointments, not hand out brochures.

The key to your booth's success? Your people. Friendly, engaging staff who can have real conversations with attendees are worth their weight in gold. The more they engage, the more appointments they'll set.

Email Marketing: Tailored and Targeted

Email marketing is the peanut butter to your marketing jelly. Make one product the star of the show, but don't forget to mention the others in smaller sections. If someone buys windows, highlight more window options—they may not have replaced them all. If someone did a bath or kitchen remodel, they might be ready to consider windows or doors next.

- **Frequency:** Aim for one or two emails per month per product line. More than that, and you're annoying; less than that and you're ghosting them.
- **Content:** Be sure to include testimonials, before-and-after pics, and seasonal tips.
- **Automation:** There are new tools that can track IP addresses to home addresses and

send personalized emails and postcards. This automated follow-up is like magic but with way more conversion potential.

KPIs to Watch

Metrics are your scoreboard. Some key performance indicators (KPIs) to keep an eye on:

1. **Cost of marketing:** Your marketing spend as a percentage of net sales. Aim for 15 percent. If it creeps higher, it might include call center or phone room costs.
2. **Set rate:** The percentage of raw leads that turn into set appointments. Aim for 50-60 percent.
3. **Demo rate:** The percentage of set appointments that turn into completed presentations. A solid target here is 70-80 percent.

AI: Your New Best Friend

AI is the Taylor Swift of marketing: It's everywhere, and it's wearing sequins. Whether it's optimizing ad spend, scoring leads, or sending personalized follow-ups via chatbots, AI is moving in fast.

Optimize ad spend: A.I. can pinpoint high-performing channels, increasing marketing efficiency.

Lead scoring: Let AI figure out who's most likely to buy, so your sales team can focus on leads that matter.

Automate follow-ups: Chatbots, SMS or text reminders, email—AI's got you.

Marketing multiple products doesn't have to be a juggling act, although it might occasionally feel like one. By strategically allocating and monitoring your budget, personalizing your campaigns, and embracing new tools like AI, you can give each product the marketing love and support it needs. **QR**

Amy Zimmerman is senior VP of marketing for Great Day Improvements. Previously she held similar positions with 1-800-Hansons, Jeld-Wen Windows and Doors, Republic Windows and Tundraland. She holds a masters degree in advertising from Northwestern University.



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Adopt Amazon's Approach to Customer Interactions

by Scott Berman

AS WE ALL KNOW and have read in this publication, the home-services industry has achieved unprecedented growth. In fact, companies didn't need to be good or efficient to make money over the last couple of years. Marketing was easy, leads were plentiful, and sales volumes were significantly higher for most companies in our industry.

Unfortunately, many in our industry were not in business prior to COVID-19. They don't know how difficult and expensive it can be to generate leads. Even among those who do know, many never believed that the daily lead-gen grind would return.

All home-service companies, regardless of size, must accept that in the coming years, marketing costs will be higher. Raw inquiries will become more expensive and conversion rates will drop. Companies who convert the highest percentage of inquiries into *issued leads* will not only have the lowest cost of marketing, but they will continue to see revenue growth.

At this point some of you may be thinking the solution is simple: go "all-in" on the lead source with the lowest cost of marketing with the highest GSLI (gross sales per lead issued). Spend more on this source and generate more revenue. Others might choose to enlarge their call centers, increase hours, and improve their scripts to convert more inquiries into leads. But neither approach solves the underlying issue: The consumer has changed.

Higher Customer Expectations

Your customer no longer wants to wait and speak to a call-center representative with extensive scripting and qualifying questions to set an appointment. The customer of today expects your company to be available at their convenience, regardless of the time of day or if it's a weekend or holiday. They want to set an appointment in real time based on the availability of your salesforce (not a bot).

At Amazon you can order any time, any day of the year—even holidays. Now look at

your organization. Every missed call or delayed appointment can mean a missed sale. Home service companies are spending huge sums running ads to generate inquiries, but you only set leads during specific hours. What happens to the inquires that you cannot get in touch with, or those that come in outside of regular business hours? How much money did you spend—or waste—on those?

Does Amazon stop running ads late at night, during early morning hours, or on holidays? Do you? If the answer is yes, I assume the reason is your call center is closed.

Imagine your company becoming the Amazon of home improvement and being able to run ads in the evening, overnight or on holidays, when ads are more affordable with less—if any—competition. What if you were able to convert inquiries into confirmed leads at a lower marketing cost with a higher set and confirmation rate?

At Florida Window & Door, we challenged ourselves to be like Amazon. With the help of a developer, we created our own software that captures leads and instantly lets people schedule their own appointments based on real-time availability pulled directly from our CRM. Today, while our competitors are waiting until the morning to call, we've already confirmed that appointment.

Your CRM Holds Gold

The results have been so good with the new software, which we call HeavySet, that we set it to work on thousands of existing leads in our CRM. Using the software's SMS/email messaging feature, we target those existing leads directly. We're engaging leads that have been in our system since last week, or three months ago. Our software isolates them, sends targeted messages, and enables them to schedule appointments directly from the text. No more wasted inquires that you are unable to reach.

More recently our developer has added a reporting dashboard that tracks and tallies results from every SMS/email campaign. As

an owner looking to grow our company and facing the daily lead grind just like everybody else, I've now got this technology tool in my arsenal. I can send a targeted message blast to all the eligible leads in our CRM—by date range, last engagement, or other criteria—and see real-time data on replies and appointments set.

We've now used this new software for the last three years and have been blown away by the results. Appointments set through HeavySet saw a 33 percent reduction in cancellation rates compared to those scheduled traditionally. The average sale price on those appointments has been 20.7 percent higher.

24/7 Appointment Setting

For any home service company to generate leads and appointments, it's imperative they model their customer acquisition strategy after companies in other industries. When you can get your news on X, shop on Amazon, and stream television 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays, should you be surprised that a potential customer expects your company to deliver a similar experience by allowing them to set an appointment now as opposed to waiting until the next day?

The consumer mindset and consumer buying expectations have shifted dramatically. We have to put our businesses in a position to adjust to these new buying behaviors. Technology is evolving so quickly. Digital, customer-facing tools are no longer experimental. HeavySet and others now offer the ability to meet the buying expectations of today's customers. At the same time, these tools help you get the most out of your marketing spend. This is true whether you remember what it was like to generate leads before the pandemic or not. **QR**

Scott Berman is the founder and president of Florida Window & Door, which ranked No. 19 on Qualified Remodeler's TOP 500 with \$131.5 million in revenue on 4,950 completed jobs. Berman is also founder of HeavySet, www.heavyset.tech.



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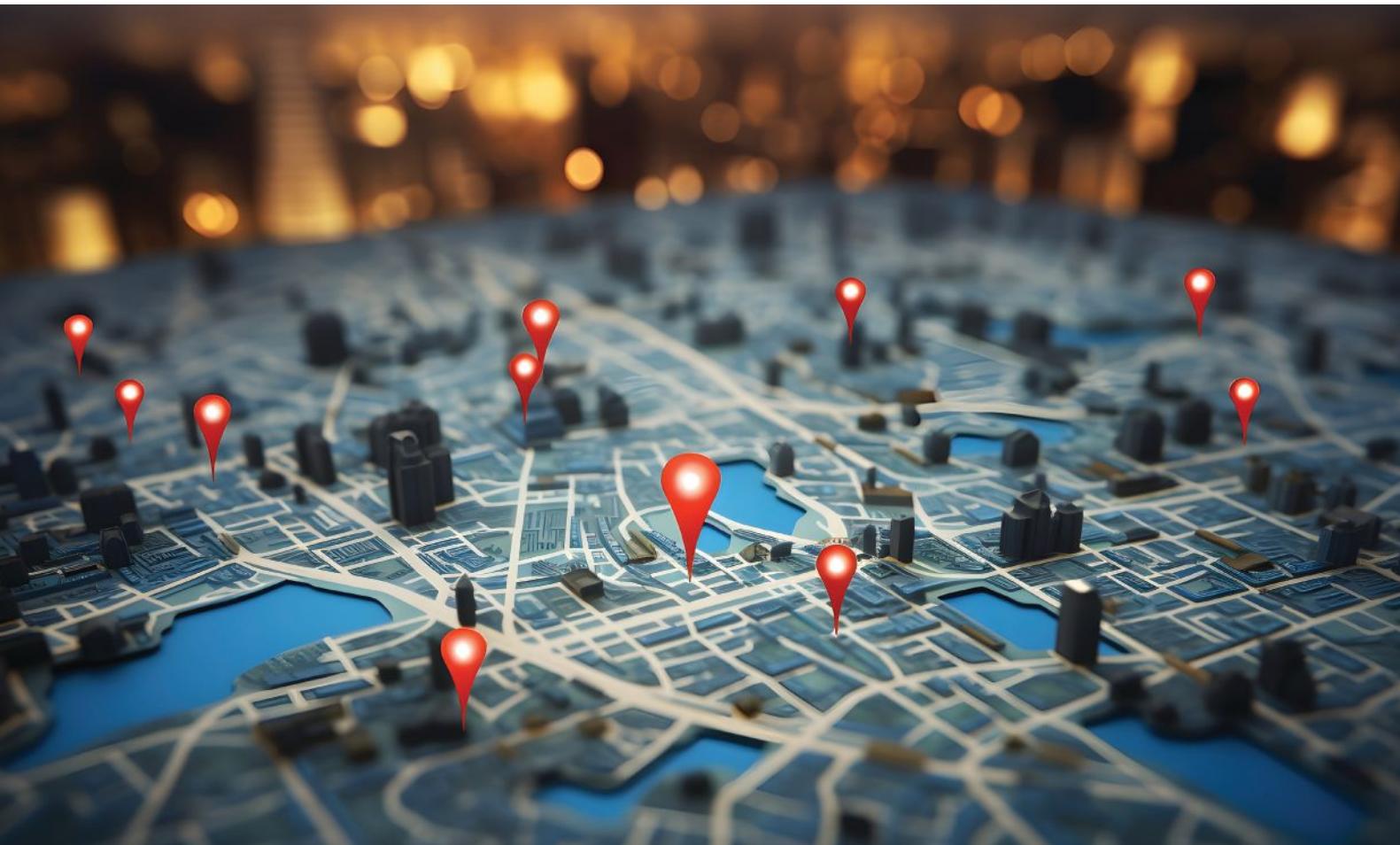
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Lead-Gen Report

What's Working Now

Generating leads today requires a broad array of tactics. Some are tried-and-true like direct mail and home shows while others leverage the latest technology, including artificial intelligence.

by Patrick O'Toole

FOR more than a year, home improvement pros and remodelers have prepped for the new “one-to-one consent” rule to take effect. Barring a last-minute stay in federal court, the new rule took effect on Jan. 27 and prohibits marketers from calling or texting a prospect without explicit permission to do so by company name.

For many years it had been perfectly acceptable for a lead-aggregation service to generate a lead or inquiry and to sell it to several competing companies who would then each communicate with the prospect with a combination of text messages and phone calls. It was also commonplace for a prospect to fill out a web inquiry for new windows and to subsequently receive calls and texts not only from window-replacement contractors, but also firms offering everything from decks to one-day baths.

There's a whole group of companies today who previously were in the business of offering one lead to many companies. Over the past several years,

many home services firms had become increasingly reliant on these lead aggregators. Because of the new FCC rule, lead aggregators have been forced to change their models. They now commit to selling a certain volume of leads to a group of large home improvement companies who pay more for those leads.

But this is just one of the factors making lead-generation more challenging in 2025. Slower demand post-pandemic and the rising cost of purchasing home improvements are also lead-gen headwinds this year.

Qualified Remodeler asked its readers to submit their best ideas and strategies for generating leads in 2025. The following report is a compilation of those lead generation ideas, presented in two parts. One is for home improvement replacement contractors. The other is for full-service and design-build remodelers.

Home Improvement | Replacement Tips

More go-get marketing. This tip was the top tip from all the *Qualified Remodeler* readers who responded about the lead-gen tips that are working best now. Go-get marketing is an umbrella term for a wide range of lead-generation activities from in-store sales situations to radius marketing and canvassing to home shows and events. Because leads from these events are self-generated, your company owns that contact, whether they quickly convert to a sale, or they defer and stay connected to your company through ongoing outreach via your company CRM. When a company is operating with a well-trained go-get marketing team, they

tend to generate a steady and predictable supply of leads. Scripting, training and practice are critically important to making any go-get tactic work. Tony Hoty and Megan Beattie are well-known for the success of their go-get tactics, scripting and training. Go to the *Qualified Remodeler* YouTube channel to watch a portion of their go-get marketing presentation at TOP 500 LIVE in Las Vegas last November.

Let prospects set their own appointments. This tip is more about boosting lead conversion than it is about lead generation. Scott Berman, founder and president of Florida Window & Door in Lake Worth, Florida, commissioned a software developer to create a program for appointment setting. At most home improvement companies, appointments are set by trained call-center employees, typically between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Berman wanted a way for prospects to view real-time availabilities and pick a time that works best for them. The idea is that many busy people don't pick up when the appointment setter calls the next day. The resulting system generates links to prospects and disburses them via SMS (text) or email 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Berman's company has been using the software for more than a year and has seen its overall lead efficiency grow dramatically during that time. The company has even gone back to leads within its CRM that were never set for an appointment and have created solid returns on idle assets. Berman provides more detail in his guest column this month on page 28.

"WE FOCUS ON ORGANIC GROWTH BY CREATING CONTENT THAT HOMEOWNERS FIND VALUABLE AND INFORMATIVE."

Leo Lantz,
Leo Lantz Construction



A successful home show for All Weather Seal of Michigan led by trainer Hannah DeLozier last month.

"THE COST GUIDE ON OUR WEBSITE HAS BEEN THE BEST TOOL FOR QUALIFYING LEADS AND GETTING BETTER LEADS."

Justin McCullers,
Impact Enclosures

Real-time cost estimators on company websites are a new way to improve the quality of leads.

Focus on each product or service with separate campaigns. In her day job, QR marketing columnist Amy Zimmerman is chief marketing officer for the Great Day Improvements Family of Companies. She thinks far too many companies make the mistake of selling all their services in all their messaging. To generate better leads and more of them, a company who sells windows and one-day baths should focus on each service with separate campaigns. "Segmenting your campaigns to highlight individual products helps you stand out as the expert, builds trust, and will make you look like a marketing genius," says Zimmerman in her column on page 26.

Maximizing first-party data with tech-driven solutions for lead handling and lead nurturing. With the demise of third-party data collection by attaching cookies to visitors and building behavior profiles, several other first-party data services have filled the void. These include fullthrottle.ai, meera.ai, Hatch and many others who offer some or all of these services. The value of first party-data rests on the relationship your company forms with each contact over time.

AI-generated video content. Welcome to the brave new world of generative AI and video. Chris Sever, president of Thompson Creek Window Company, of Lanham, Maryland, reports that his company is finding cost savings and more effective video testing via AI tools. "We've reduced video production costs from approximately \$6,000 per spot to \$300 by leveraging AI tools. This allows us to test and iterate on messaging more frequently, finding what resonates with customers and rolling it out across multiple channels at a fraction of the price," Sever says.

Develop a private, high-ticket ad network.

This was a second tip offered by Chris Sever of Thompson Creek. "We've built a private ad inventory of over 600 websites, enabling us to reach our audience at significantly reduced costs. This network supports creative testing at scale, helping us optimize messaging and drive high-quality leads."

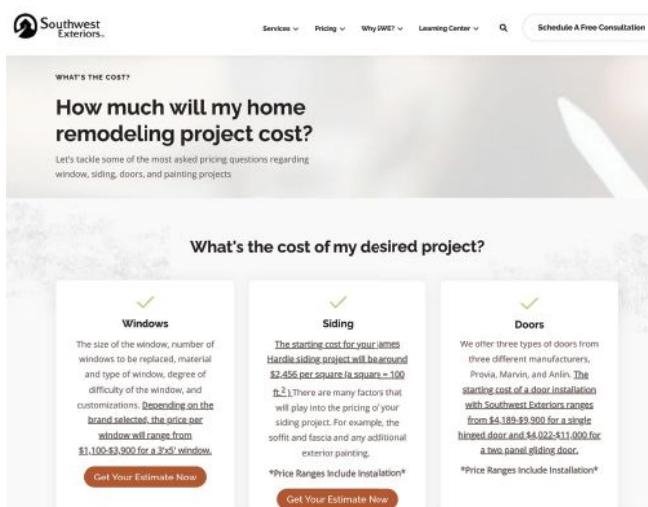
Add an up-to-date cost calculator on your website across multiple product lines.

Ryan Shutt, CEO of Southwest Exteriors in San Antonio, Texas, is succeeding with a radically new approach that is certainly not a good fit for every company. Southwest maintains a cost calculator on its website for its three principal product lines: windows, roofing and siding. To make the new system work effectively, Shutt needed to restructure the company's sales process. The calculators drive a large amount of traffic to their website. Those who stay and fill out a form are much more likely to convert, Shutt says. Sticker shock is not a factor. Justin McCullers of Impact Enclosures of Jacksonville, Florida, also maintains a cost calculator on the company's website. "The cost guide on our website has been the best tool for qualifying leads and getting better leads," McCullers says. "The clients have a ballpark figure, and we know they aren't kicking tires."

Tips for Full-Service and Design-Build Companies

Create content that highlights your expertise and is relevant to your target market. Leo Lantz of Leo Lantz Construction in Glen Allen, Virginia, is a former NAHB Remodeler of the Year for a reason. In addition to delivering high-quality projects, he's a very savvy marketer. Case in point: His showroom occupies a restored gas station at a busy intersection. For his company, generating leads is about creating quality content and pushing it out on many platforms. In addition to well-written articles, his company posts a steady feed of videos that take the form of a video podcast.

"We focus on organic growth by creating content that homeowners find valuable and informative," Lantz explains. "This helps us show up naturally when people search for remodeling services, building trust and ensuring we're a go-to resource. Paid ads are a secondary tool for us—used strategically to enhance our organic efforts and connect with specific audiences when needed. On top of that, we believe people buy from people, not just companies. To build that connection, we run a video podcast channel where we share insights, success stories, and industry knowledge, and we syndicate it across different platforms, including social media, YouTube, and our website. It's not just about showcasing expertise; it's about creating authority and forming genuine connections with our audience."



Tips for Any Type of Company

Use the latest AI-driven advertising products from Google. Joaquin Erazo, director of marketing for the DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen franchise network, says he's going big with Google's new multiplatform advertising product called **Google Performance Max**.

"Gone are the days of building, split testing, and adjusting PPC (pay per click) ads to generate leads," Erazo explains. "As we move into 2025, I'm encouraging our franchisees to launch Google Performance Max ads. Performance Max uses Google AI across bidding, budget optimization, audiences, creatives, and attribution. Your ads are displayed across Google properties such as Search, Display, Discover, Maps, Gmail, and YouTube. Best of all, the spend is allocated to each property based in your ad performance."

Traditional television with a mix of OTT (over the top) streaming services still works well in many markets. Most remodelers and home improvement pros operating in major metros can skip over this tip from Dave Wageman, co-owner of Hometown Restyling in Hiawatha, Iowa, near Cedar Rapids. For pros located in Atlanta, Dallas, L.A., Chicago or most of the top 25 largest metros, broadcast television is expensive and often delivers leads beyond the service area of a local remodeler. But in metros like Cedar Rapids, local TV delivers an affordable combination of branding and lead generation. Wageman says the company promotes \$5,000 cash sweepstakes three times each year. Hometown is a blended company offering replacements as well as larger kitchen and bath remodels. In recent years the company has supplemented broadcast TV with OTT and on the YouTube TV platform. "Although we spend a fair amount on TV, we get the best ROI from it," Wageman says. "We fill up our schedule with this approach."

Experiment with one of the many visitor-tracking software services. The importance of a company's website for driving leads cannot be overstated. Perhaps the best type of website conversion is when a consumer fills out a form to request more information. Those individuals are highly intentional, and they very likely have done a lot of research before revealing themselves. If they fill out a form, they're ready to buy. But what happens to most of your website visitors who do not fill out a form or do not subscribe to your newsletter? That's where visitor-tracking software comes in. For a structured per-visitor price, these services convert the IP addresses (a series of numbers) into names and emails. Vlatko Demrovski, owner and general manager of Element Kitchen & Bath in Hudson, Ohio, says he's finding some early success with services

Top Trends in Marketing and Lead Gen in 2025

- **AI personalization:** Utilizing artificial intelligence to analyze data enables businesses to predict customer behavior, score leads accurately, and offer personalized experiences, thereby increasing conversion rates.
- **Cultivating customer relationships:** Focusing on building strong relationships through consistent communication and engagement helps in retaining customers and generating referrals, which are vital for sustained growth.
- **Generative AI content:** Employing AI tools to create content streamlines marketing efforts, allowing for scalable and efficient content production tailored to audience interests.
- **Omnichannel:** Implementing strategies across multiple platforms—such as social media, email, and search engines—ensures a broader reach and meets customers where they are most active.
- **Conversational content:** Creating engaging and interactive content, such as chatbots and interactive videos, improves user experience and encourages potential customers to take action.
- **Optimized website:** Ensuring websites are user-friendly, mobile-optimized, and contain clear calls to action enhances user experience and increases the likelihood of converting visitors into leads.
- **Google Business optimization:** Maintaining an up-to-date Google Business Profile improves local search visibility, making it easier for potential customers to find and contact home-services providers.
- **Reputation management:** Actively managing and responding to online reviews builds credibility and trust, influencing potential customers' decisions. **QR**

Source: Qualified Remodeler, 2025

"GONE ARE THE DAYS OF BUILDING, SPLIT TESTING, AND ADJUSTING PPC (PAY PER CLICK) ADS TO GENERATE LEADS."

Joaquin Erazo,
DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen

from artonicweb.com and pearldiver.io. The latter offers street targeted customer analytics to increase the effectiveness of everything from direct mail to door-to-door marketing. There are literally dozens of IP conversion software services to evaluate. Some services such as fullthrottle.ai perform multiple services beyond visitor identification. **QR**



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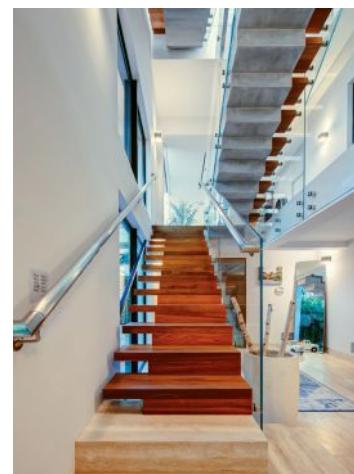
Whole Ordeal

Award-winning remodelers reimagine existing floor plans to create open space and refine old homes for contemporary living.

by Kyle Clapham

ANY time homeowners opt for a whole-house remodel, they must be prepared to weather the ebbs and flows of a multi-faceted project. What begins as a straightforward renovation to update living spaces and improve functionality can turn into a protracted effort to overcome local regulations and unforeseen challenges. Sometimes the remodeler even has to complete the project in phases.

Reconfiguring the footprint of a home often entails opening up living spaces and maximizing the amount of natural light. A whole-house remodel also presents opportunities to increase energy-efficiency by integrating new systems and technologies without compromising aesthetics or the historical value. Minimal disruption of the structure during construction, therefore, becomes key.



Photos: Cartano Creative

Each of the winners in our annual Master Design Awards for a whole-house remodel more than \$1 million took on a complex job. They reimaged floor plans and created natural connections between public spaces to equip outdated homes for contemporary living. Their design solutions can serve as inspirations for other remodelers tasked with modernizing an antiquated residence.

Comprehensive Approach

Designed to function as a vacation home for a European family, the project started as a multi-effort renovation and addition to an existing, late mid-century beach bungalow. The house sat farther out toward the beach than most of the adjacent structures on the barrier

island, so this owner opted to remodel and add to the existing structure rather than construct a new residence.

"It was a very old [home], and it was in very rough shape. It was full of termites and rats," says Michael K. Walker, president of Michael K. Walker & Associates in Sarasota, Florida. "When I looked at the concept for the project, I questioned the validity of a project of this magnitude on this barrier island, on this piece of property. But they were determined that they wanted to be able to rehab the existing building and then do the substantial addition on the landward side."

This approach enabled unobstructed north and south sweeping views of the Gulf of Mexico that would not have been possible otherwise. If a new residence was constructed, it would have had to

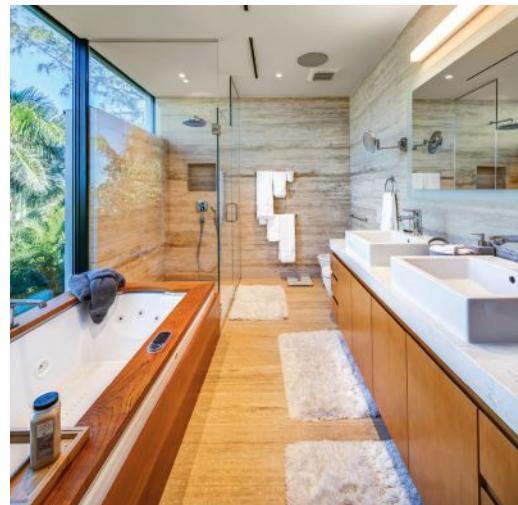
MASTER DESIGN AWARDS 2024 WHOLE HOUSE MORE THAN \$1 MILLION GOLD

COMPANY INFORMATION

Michael K. Walker & Associates, Inc.
Sarasota, Fla.
michaelwalker.com

PROJECT INFORMATION

Location: Longboat Key, Fla.
Designer: Sweet Sparkman Architects
Square footage before: 2,092
Square footage after: 5,981
Project cost: \$8.2 million



The project displays the re-use of an existing non-conforming building to deliver a truly seamless integration.

been built much farther landward because of the current coastal building and zoning setbacks.

The existing structure was not compliant with FEMA flood elevation requirements or the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) coastal building standards. A segmented work approach kept the firm within the limits of improvements to existing, non-conforming structures.

"I cautioned and said we're limited to 50 percent improvements, and the [home's] tax value is for just over \$100,000, and the project we're going to be doing is millions of dollars—so it's going to take a while," Walker recalls. "I just wanted to make sure they were good with that because that's what it was going to take. And they said, 'Yep, that's what we want to do.' So, we got started."

The company analyzed the entire project from a cost and logistics standpoint and divided it into the individual work efforts. As each effort created additional value for the structure, subsequent efforts

were then maximized to accomplish as much work as possible with each individual effort.

FDEP criteria did not allow for any modifications to the existing building foundation, so all the work was designed and executed without any structural enhancements except for the first effort, which reinforced the existing wood pile supports. Because the design architect was based in the Czech Republic, weekly or bi-monthly Zoom calls were utilized to finalize many of the special finish details during the final two and a half years of the project, which was completed in 2022.

"It was challenging to always be able to have a very comprehensive discussion agenda," Walker notes. "The project was so fragmented. We had to be laser focused on each phase of the global picture but also drill down into specific design issues. There were some intense design details."

The exclusive, secluded, private-resort-type residence can house both family and multiple guests during several annual, seasonal visits and will ultimately function as a family legacy property. A sister project was also completed on another nearby property that contains two detached guest houses, a second pool and covered boat-docking facilities, creating a full spectrum of amenities.





David Tsay, davidsay.com

Visual Language

A couple in Los Gatos, California, sought a retreat to fuel their love of surfing and golfing as well as a comfortable, spacious and airy home to host weekend visits from family and friends. After purchasing a 1970s fixer-upper 90 miles south along the coast of the Monterey Peninsula, they envisioned a renovation that channels a distinctively Northern Californian, mid-century feel.

"They were referred to us, and we just instantly had a good rapport with them," explains Daniel Holbrook, associate project manager at Feldman Architecture in San Francisco. "They knew our work and admired the project we had done for their friends. They were looking for the type of warm aesthetic that is in our

wheelhouse, so it was a very easy relationship right from the jump."

Despite its beautiful location and neighborhood, the house suffered from years of renters and had not been updated since being built. The company typically approaches a remodel with an eye for preserving aspects of the home and bringing in modern details; but in this case, Feldman viewed the project through a lens of transformation. Some foundation was the only piece worth keeping.

"The existing spaces were very chopped up and dark, and the organization didn't make sense for how they intended to live in the house," Holbrook notes. "We started shifting the puzzle pieces around and moved the kitchen, so it had a better relationship to the rear-yard patio. We created a more

MASTER DESIGN AWARDS 2024 WHOLE HOUSE MORE THAN \$1 MILLION SILVER

COMPANY INFORMATION

Feldman Architecture
San Francisco, Calif.
feldmanarchitecture.com

PROJECT INFORMATION

Location: Pebble Beach, Calif.
Square footage before: 2,657
Square footage after: 3,150

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Windows: Kolbe
Lighting: Design Within Reach
Stools: Sean Woolsey
Surfacing: Caesarstone
Paint/stain: Benjamin Moore; Sherwin-Williams
Plumbing fixtures: Brizo
Shower floors: Concrete Collaborative
Wood siding: Dolly Varden Siding



The main challenge was working within the confines of the original structure to create a light, airy home.



White oak casework and splashes of green soften the kitchen (above) and differentiate it from the living room.



formal entry and just really started to open up the house, so that it wasn't so chopped up."

The company relocated the kitchen from a small room adjacent to the entry to a double-height great room, tying it into the living and dining rooms as well as the outdoor kitchen and dining space to create a meaningful indoor/outdoor connection. Rotating the stairway to frame the new kitchen added a small opening onto the outdoor living area and simplified the original floor plan.

To maximize usable square footage, Feldman tucked the back of the kitchen underneath the stair for open shelving and wine storage. A new kitchen island provides ample space for cooking and hosting. Working within the confines of the original structure, the reimagined floor plan allows the kitchen, living room and dining room to open eastward toward rolling golf-course vistas.

"The kitchen and the stair became the linchpin for the main design moves," Holbrook says. "We

opened up both of those to the double-height space. It really is a small house, and in the grand scheme of things, we just wanted to maximize the usage and make it as efficient as possible for them. The budget was reasonably constrained; it forced us to make efficient design decisions."

Their approach to sustainability focused on passive strategies such as solar orientation, shading, ventilation, and connection to nature. The existing home welcomed very little natural light along its northern edge and was overexposed to strong afternoon sun on its southern façade. Opening north-facing interior spaces introduced natural light and ventilation while deep overhangs on the south shade the home in summer. A new wood trellis sits along the south edge of the living room.

Wood and concrete finishes reference the iconic visual language of Sea Ranch (casual, colorful), and the Malibu-inspired, modern interiors contrast with understated, natural material selections.





Functional Architecture

The client, CFO of a big development company, aimed to transform his mid-century rationalist home into a modern, energy-efficient and sustainable living space while preserving its original architectural integrity. He had an appreciation for architecture given the nature of his work, and one of his colleagues recommended Webber + Studio, Inc., an architectural firm in Austin, Texas.

"I tend to find developers—or people who are in leadership at development companies—usually have a love and appreciation for architecture," says David Webber, founder and principal. "This house

was pretty awesome and important just from a historical perspective in the city before we ever touched it. It was a good piece of architecture, so he was definitely liking that aspect of it."

Designed in the 1960s, the home contained living spaces that were organized but designated as individual rooms. It lacked openness and views throughout the house from one area to another. "As much as I love architecture, I often feel like architects get in their own way," Webber notes. "This looked like a project where the original architecture got in its way. It was very rigorous as a piece of architecture, but it

MASTER DESIGN AWARDS 2024 WHOLE HOUSE MORE THAN \$1 MILLION BRONZE

COMPANY INFORMATION

Webber + Studio Architects
Austin, Texas
webberstudio.com

PROJECT INFORMATION

Location: Austin, Texas
Builder/contractor: Capital Construction Company
Project cost: \$2 million
Square footage: 6,000

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Acoustics: Acoustical Solutions
Alarm system: AllSafe
Appliances: Harway
Audio/visual: Captive Audio
Brick/stone: ACME Brick Company
Cabinetry: River City
Countertops: Hill Country Granite
Light fixtures: Lights Fantastic
Doors: Mirror Gallery; Western Pacific
Flooring: Design Select Floors
Garage doors: Cedar Park Overhead Doors
Glass: Marble Falls Glass
Gutters: Seamless Gutters
Hardware: Expressions Home Gallery
HVAC: Austin Air Conditioning
Insulation: Cool Insulation Company
Interior trim: Waterloo Woodworks
Mantles: Steel House MFG
Roofing: Carrington Roofing
Siding: McCoys



The design team successfully maximized natural lighting and balanced the use of traditional materials with modern, sustainable alternatives.



No-VOC finishes and repurposed materials helped maintain 100 percent of the re-verified, mid-century existing structure.

"THIS LOOKED LIKE A PROJECT WHERE THE ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURE GOT IN ITS WAY."

David Webber,
founder and principal,
Webber + Studio, Inc.

was not as fully functional as it could have been for a place to live."

The original kitchen, for example, was too small and gave way to a "rabbit warren" of a closet, pantry, laundry room and then another pantry, Webber adds. "It was these tiny little spaces that were too skinny to walk through when carrying stuff or when holding a kid by the hand, trying to get ready to leave. It had a dark, low ceiling, and it didn't open up to the other spaces very well."

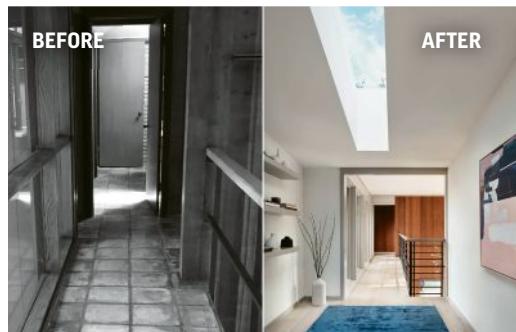
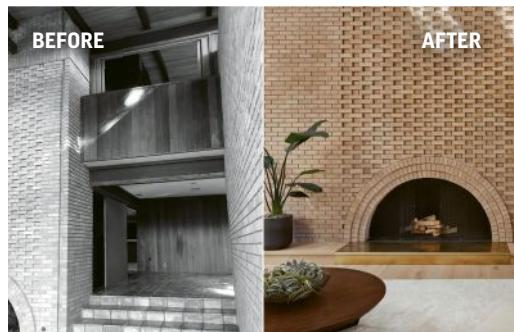
An enormous fireplace, furthermore, blocked views of the large family room from the existing kitchen. "The main thing we did was we took some of those zones that existed in the house—the kitchen being the worst one—and we just opened them up and made them more functional," says Webber, who credited the homeowners with suggesting a solution for the odd entry to the house.

"It was this overly grand entry into a kind of short, dank entry hall that was too big an entry hall, but it was too short of an entry hall," Webber laughs. "Once you arrived at the entry, no matter

where you went, you had to go upstairs to get anywhere. One of the clients said, 'Why don't we take that entry? It's big enough that we could turn it into a guest room, and let's bring the entry into this other area that's more public and more central.' And that turned out to be a great idea."

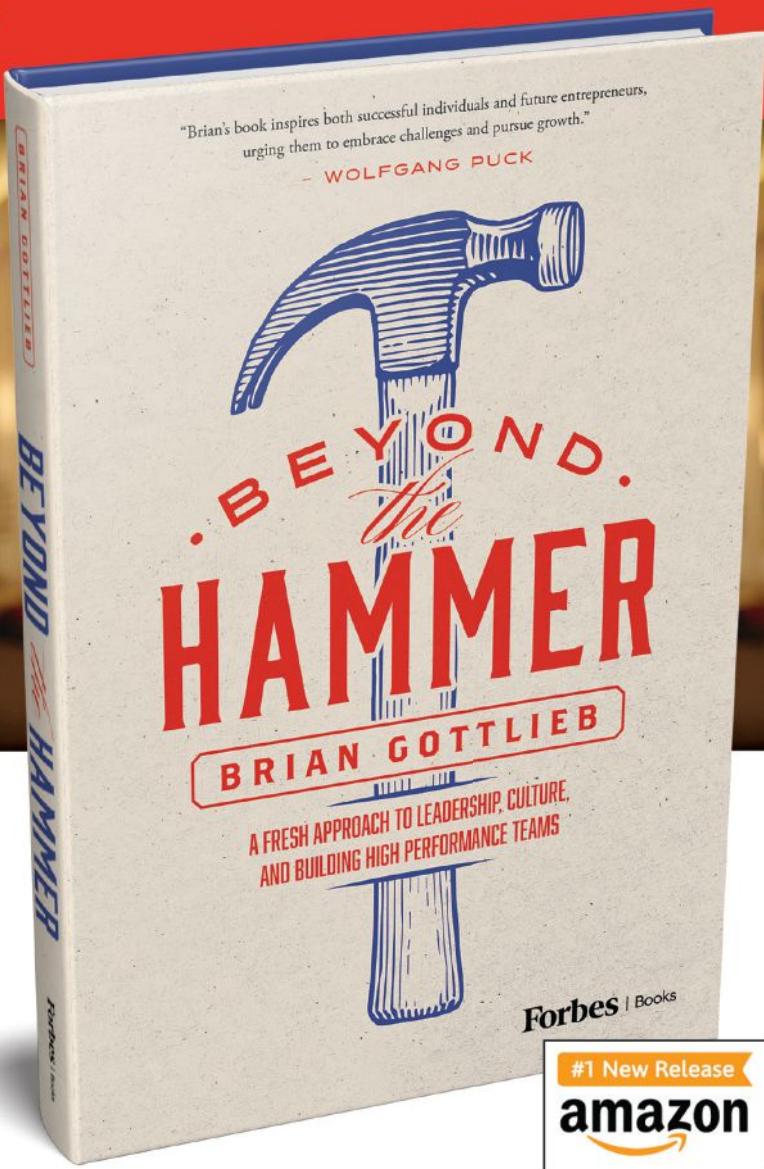
The saved space also enabled the company to carve out a bigger primary closet on the second floor. Working within the constraints of the existing building footprint as well as local zoning regulations, Webber + Studio preserved existing wood and double-width brick structures while introducing low-VOC finishes and FSC-certified wood for new elements. High-performance double-pane windows and improved wall insulation, additionally, boosted energy efficiency.

"Every project is successful because of the whole team, and this was a team that worked well together," Webber explains. "This was a case of everybody working well together and trying to meet the needs of the rest of the team as they were doing their work to the best of their ability." QR



“FINALLY, A LEADERSHIP BOOK SPECIFICALLY FOR OUR INDUSTRY – AND THIS ONE IS A MUST READ!”

– Vince Nardo, President, Reborn Cabinets



BRIAN GOTTLIEB is a renowned business leader celebrated for his inspirational messages on culture, team alignment, and growth. In 2009, he founded Tundraland Home Improvements with just \$3,000 and a plastic folding table. Over 12 years, he built a thriving family of businesses with 600 employees and more than \$150M in yearly revenue.

In **BEYOND THE HAMMER** Gottlieb shares his five foundational pillars of leadership, the very strategies that built his world-class businesses. **BEYOND THE HAMMER** offers a powerful blueprint for creating high-performing teams and ensuring your business is positioned to win, no matter the competition.

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– Chris Hermes, CEO USA Showers



SCAN TO
PREORDER



Merge Safely

Pinemar partners with Phenotype Architects and Studio Friedman to combine two smaller apartments and create an expansive space.

by Karen Costello

BUILDING in Philadelphia and along its historic Main Line, we have completed numerous projects representing nearly all the region's popular architectural and design styles. With this Rittenhouse Square condominium project, we had an opportunity with a build that could be considered transitional, incorporating a combination of several styles that represented our clients' tastes.

The project is located in a 19-story multifamily condominium building on Philadelphia's historic Rittenhouse Square. Originally built in the 1910s, the building was the first high-rise building on the square. At approximately 3,000 square feet, this residence encompassed nearly three quarters of the fifth floor of the building.

Pinemar partnered with Phenotype Architects and Studio Friedman for this endeavor. Our scope was a complete remodel of the space, with a total demolition of all existing finished materials. Completed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project presented several challenges that required unique solutions.

As a multifamily building, contractor rules were governed by a resident association; although government and health departments directed COVID policy, the building association could impose its own requirements or, in our case, restrictions over contractors entering the building.

Despite creating a COVID safety plan, we were shut out of the building. Waiting for the end of the pandemic to begin work was not a desirable option for our clients. After all, they wanted to move into their new home.

Our solution was to erect scaffolding complete with stair tower on the outside of the building, which allowed us to enter the fifth-floor apartment directly from the outdoors, void of the necessity to enter public spaces in the building.

With a material lift on the scaffolding, we were able to load tools and materials to the apartment. The resident association ultimately permitted our work to begin with this added safety measure in place.

Once underway, we began to realize the challenges of a remodel in a building more than 100 years old and a space that has experienced several remodels through the years. Our structural floor was a combination of steel, terra cotta block, concrete, wood planking, and crushed stone from one area to another.

Requiring a flat, uniform, strong floor to build upon, we consulted with structural engineers and decided to demolish the remaining loose material and place a new gypcrete floor. This self-leveling subfloor provided the proper structure for the new wall framing as well as a proper surface for the hand-hewn European white oak floors to follow.

We were challenged again when our clients requested the structural steel columns in the space to remain exposed. We delivered on this mandate by coating the columns with several thin coats of intumescence paint required to satisfy fire codes.

A black topcoat gave the steel an authentic finish. These character-rich columns hint at an industrial theme while plaster dentil crown molding balances the space with a classic colonial tone and blends with the architecture of the building.

A focal point of the living room is a custom wine refrigerator with an integrated structural column, matching steel and glass doors and illuminated steel display racks. Adjacent to the wine refrigerator is a matching bar with antiqued zinc countertops and backlit art glass wall accenting custom steel and glass shelving.



MASTER DESIGN AWARDS 2024
RESIDENTIAL INTERIOR
MORE THAN \$150,000
GOLD

COMPANY INFORMATION

Pinemar, Inc.
Ardmore, Pa.
pinemar.net

PROJECT INFORMATION

Location: Philadelphia, Pa.
Designer: Studio Friedman/
Phenotype Architects



The project required a shoring up of the structure and all new mechanical systems. Fresh finishes blend tradition and modern comforts and provide the backdrop for gracious city living as well as entertaining.



The company exposed original steel posts as part of the renovation and also maintained the 10-foot ceilings.

The primary suite bath features a one-of-a-kind Drummonds cast iron and glass shower as well as Drummonds console sinks and fixtures.

The kitchen features custom-built, hand-painted wood cabinetry with built-in appliances and white Carrara marble countertops and backsplashes. Custom unlacquered brass frames support the glass shelving while a custom-built steel and brass range hood shares attention with the Lacanche European range with which it partners.

The centerpiece of the space is a large antique French draper's table that had to be partially disassembled and reassembled by our carpenters to fit it through one of the largest windows via a crane set up on the street below.

At the heart of the residence is the living room with hand-built chandelier, centered below a plaster medallion, framing the view north over Rittenhouse Square.



All combined, the features of this new residence reflect our client's personal taste and influence in a space equally appropriate for hosting dinner parties or unwinding over the weekend. We were delighted to take on this challenging build and welcome our clients' home. **QR**

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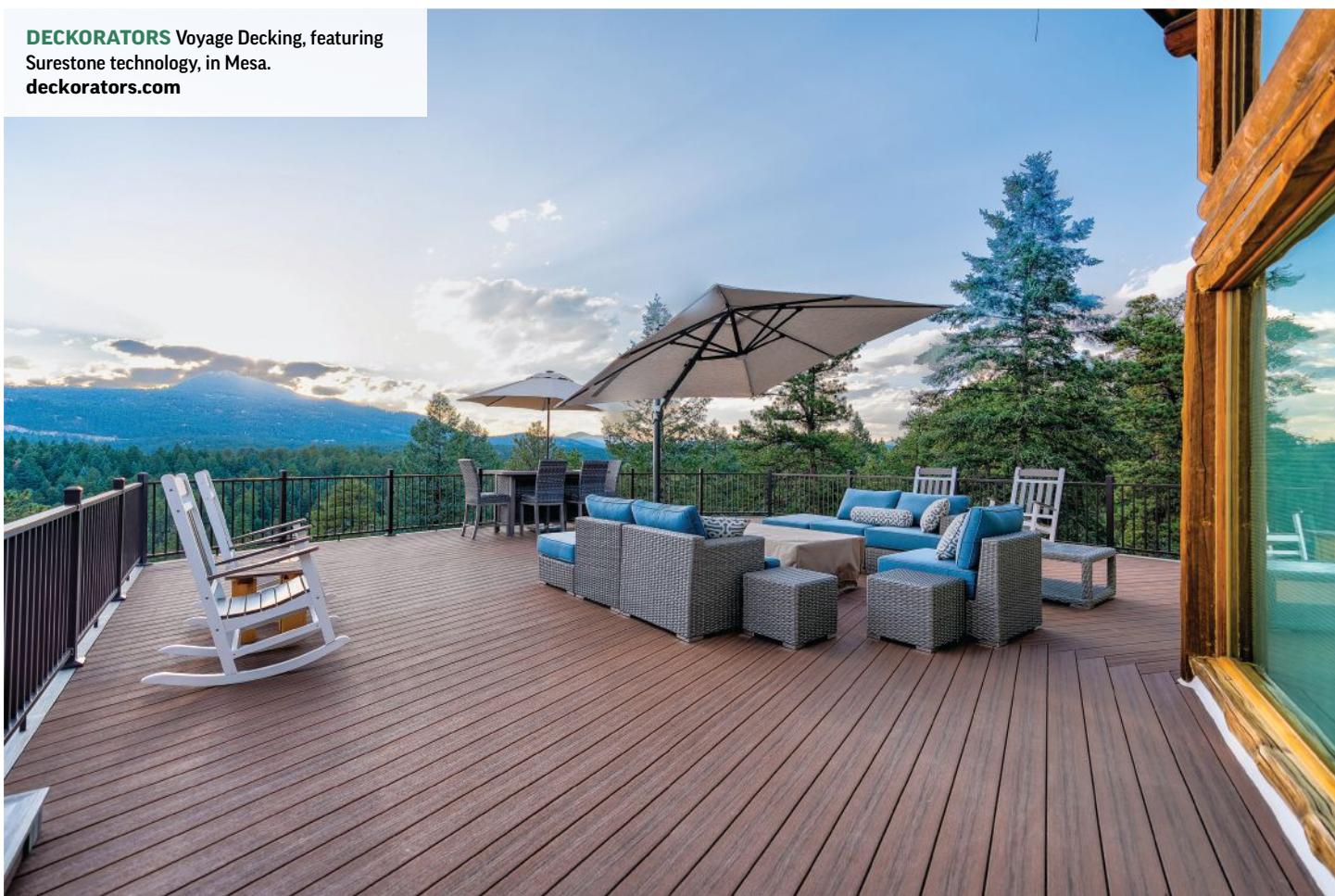
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DECKORATORS Voyage Decking, featuring Surestone technology, in Mesa.
deckorators.com



Decked Out

All hands are on decking for spring and summer. Lighter colors, cooling technology, and fire-resistance stand out as notable trends.

by Ryan O'Toole

WOOD or composite is often the first and most important question on the minds of homeowners and commercial property owners shopping for new decks. With each material offering its own sets of advantages and disadvantages, it makes sense that this question carries a bit of timber.

According to Freedonia Group, wood-plastic composite will capture a larger portion of the U.S. decking market through 2027. The continued rise of composite is projected as the historically high price of lumber back in 2020-2021 continues to drop in the post-pandemic world. Though lumber prices have remained elevated, they are projected to stay below peak levels through 2027 as supply chains normalize.

According to Decks.com, the cost of different decking materials per lineal foot in 2024 ranged from \$3 to \$6 for pressure-treated wood, \$5 to \$10 for composite, and \$10 to \$15 for the tropical

hardwood Ipe. Redwood, cedar, and bamboo decks all fell within the previous price ranges while aluminum decking outpriced even premium Ipe. These material choices contribute greatly to the overall cost of a project, along with deck size and installation-related labor. Using these numbers, a low-end 200-square-foot, pressure-treated wood deck would cost a homeowner \$600 in materials while a higher-end Ipe deck of the same size would cost \$3,000.

The rise of composite is attributed to advancements in aesthetics and durability. Plastic shells more convincingly resemble wood and capstock-coated decking, which aids in the prevention of mold growth and slows degradation, allows decking boards to last longer with less upkeep than real wood.

Though residential deck installations have fallen since their peak in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector is expected to be sustained by the increased average size of decks and the large stock of wood decks in need of replacement, along with homeowners' willingness to spend more on outdoor living spaces.

Nonbuilding installations—or decks built in public spaces such as parks and boardwalk areas—as well as commercial installations are expected to grow through 2027 even as residential installations are expected to maintain most of the decking market.

So, wood or composite? That remains up to individual homeowners, their project and their budget. The composite sector of the decking market is predicted to see more growth over wood decking in the next three years. Trends in composite decking are various and rapidly changing as new technologies come to market. Cooling and fire-resistant technologies have expanded across product lines. Colors are trending lighter because of both aesthetic preference and their cooler temperatures. And warranties remain generous to homeowners and consumers, showing the lasting confidence manufacturers have in their products as well as their dedication to consumers.

The Age of Greige

While roofing and siding materials trend toward darker, richer colors, decking materials have moved largely in the opposite direction toward light grays, browns, and greiges. Patrick Barnds, senior vice president of Azek, an exterior product manufacturer whose decking brand is TimberTech, notes an increasing preference for lighter, sandier colors among homeowners. "Cooler, darker grays were the most popular colors five years ago. Today—and what we're seeing probably for the next two to three years at least—is a shift to lighter, warmer, browner colors, tanned hints in gray, and just a warmer gray overall."



In 2024, TimberTech released its Terrain+ Collection of composite decking, which features subtle wood-graining in three colors: dark oak, natural white oak, and weathered oak, the latter of which is just the kind of light, warm gray Barnds describes. The subtle blends of colors on the boards were designed to mimic the appearance of sanded wood, giving the product a subtle and neutral look.

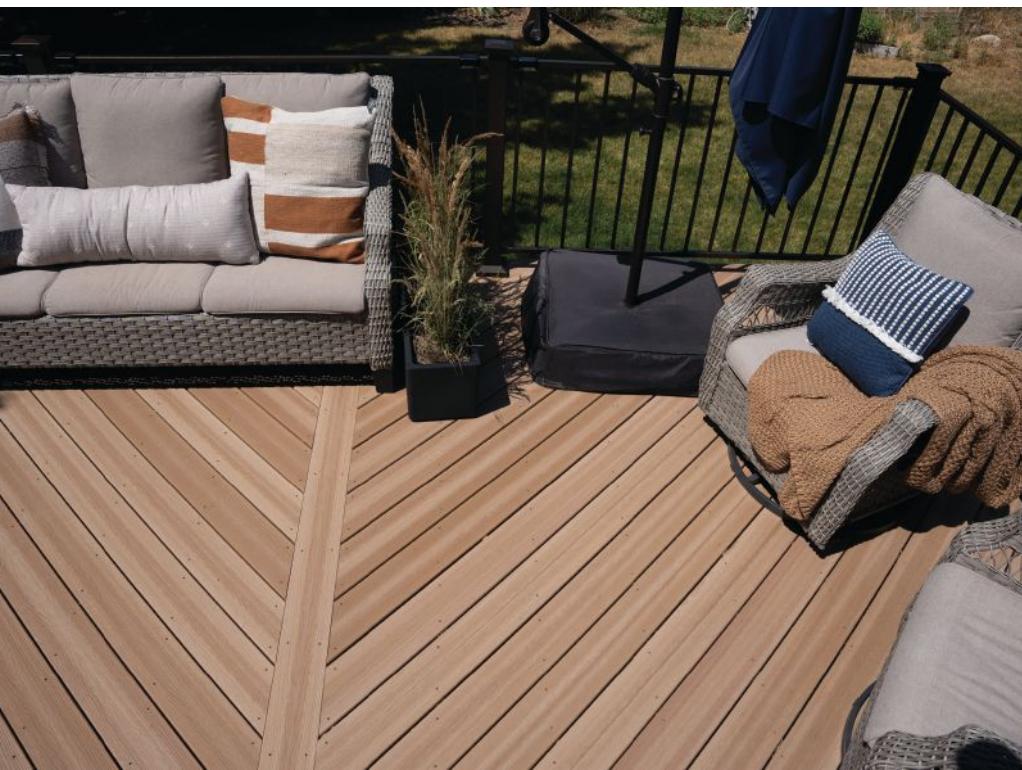
Mike Onderko, director of product marketing at Trex, notes that preferences in decking materials have grown on both ends of the color spectrum, both for much lighter and darker colors. "The trend that we've seen recently as well over the last couple of years is towards lighter colors. Within our Lineage portfolio, there are two additional colors that we're launching imminently, which is Salt Flat and Hatteras, which ultimately will likely be the lightest and darkest colors within that portfolio."

While the popularity of lighter colors increases, a sizeable niche of consumers still prefers darker, more traditional colors that more closely resemble tropical hardwoods.

In 2023 Envision Outdoor Living Products, a division of Envision Building Products, released a new fleet of lighter colors in its Distinction line: Hampton Dunes, Nantucket Shore, and Seaside Pier. While these additions are light browns and grays, Chase Moritz, director of marketing and communications at Envision, relays that the darker colors remain their top-selling product options, although he still anticipates an uptick in lighter colors in the future.



TIMBERTECH Landmark Collection of Advanced PVC decking (top) in Castle Gate. Vintage Collection (above), within Advanced PVC decking, features fire-resistant properties.
timbertech.com



ENVISION Distinction decking, which features Cool Tread technology, in Hampton Dunes.
envisionoutdoorliving.com

Cold Feet

The increase in lighter color offerings aligns with another growing trend in the industry: cooling technology. Previously, homeowners with PVC or composite decking might have had to avoid their decks at midday or rely on potentially expensive pergolas, awnings, and umbrellas to keep them



TREX Transcend Lineage decking in Salt Flat and Hatteras, the lightest and darkest colors in the collection.
trex.com



cool. But the wider implementation of heat-mitigating materials in composite decking better enables homeowners to make the most of their decks during long summer afternoons and forgo additional accessories.

Lighter shades have an advantage when it comes to cooling—lighter colors will always reflect more sunlight and remain cooler than darker ones, even when both employ the same cooling technology. Worse than limiting the time homeowners can use their decks, overheated decking material can burn the bottoms of their feet or crawling infants. This issue might sound novel to homeowners with wood decks because of wood absorbing less heat than composite.

"I don't care what your technology is, I don't care what the material is; when it's 100 degrees outside in the sun, everything is going to get hot," says Onderko of Trex. "The expectation a consumer has is if wood was on that surface prior to it, they understood how infrequently they had to deal with not being able to be in bare feet." All of Trex's decking material lines, including its entry-level Enhance line, use heat-mitigating technology.

The difference in cooling abilities between wood and composite may present a deterrent to homeowners switching from the former, but the larger manufacturers are quickly catching up to the organic material's ability to resist heat.

Envision's Cool Tread technology, used on its Distinction line of products, offers both cooling technology and improved traction with deeper grooving on the board's outer shell.

"Not only do those boards stay cooler, but they provide better traction as well. That's been a huge



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DECKORATORS Voyage Decking featuring Surestone technology in Sierra. | deckrators.com

success for us. The material makeup of the board helps keep the board about 25 percent cooler,” says Moritz of Envision.

Other companies have also married deeper grooving with cooling properties. The mineral-based Surestone technology from Deckorators, used across its Voyage, Vault, Summit, and Porch Flooring lines, also offers increased traction and less heat absorption. The greater cavitation on Surestone boards allows the product to cool itself faster, explains Michelle Hendricks, category marketing manager at Deckorators. The boards are infused with limestone, giving the technology its name and increasing durability as well as preventing warping, rotting, and mold growth in the cores of the boards.

With a combination of lighter colors, grooved textures, and added heat-resistance, composite decking manufacturers have made strides to keep their products cool under intense sunlight, extending the time homeowners can use their decks and ensuring they’re safe for everyone.

With the Grain

Innovations in composite shell technology have allowed graining to become more realistic, with the current trend calling for less eye-catching and machined patterns.

“The desire [is] to make the deck not overly aggressive in terms of graining, but to almost make it look like a canvas that you would decorate,” Onderko says. Some homeowners prefer the decking board to act as a backdrop for the deck’s main attractions: the furniture, fire pit, bar cart, and all the other accessories that make the space feel like an extension of the home.

“I DON’T CARE WHAT YOUR TECHNOLOGY IS, I DON’T CARE WHAT THE MATERIAL IS; WHEN IT’S 100 DEGREES OUTSIDE IN THE SUN, EVERYTHING IS GOING TO GET HOT.”

Mike Onderko,
director of product marketing at Trex

Barnds of Azek identifies a similar trend in natural and distressed yet simple grains. “You see an uptick in rustic reclaimed visuals, hand-scraped visuals, rough-sawn crosscut, and wire-brushed,” Barnds says. “The thing that really has come on strong more recently is an all-over natural hardwood grain. Not a particularly pronounced cathedral grain, more of a straight grain.”

Trex and other decking material manufacturers such as Westlake Royal can replicate the grains of many common and expensive woods on decking boards. “If we want to do a redwood or an Ipe, or a cedar, maybe even products that aren’t really engineered to be on a deck, like teak, you could get that look, and we could print it and create that product. That gives us unlimited aesthetic options as we go forward,” Onderko says.

Subtle, realistic and minimally repeating stand out as the three golden criteria for graining on composite boards currently as reflected in many companies’ top products.

Not Unwarranted

Major decking products companies offer warranties that ensure homeowners remain satisfied with their decks years—and often decades—after installation. Both manufacturers and homeowners view composite decks as a lifetime investment, so it goes with this belief that warranties on these products protect against damages, like stains and color fading, over many years.

“That premier product in our Surestone line has a 50-year structural warranty and then a 25-year stain and fade warranty, and then a 25-year removal and replacement warranty as well,” says Hendricks of Deckorators. “If that board does have

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WESTLAKE ROYAL Zuri Premium decking is backed by a lifetime colorfastness warranty. | westlakeroyal-buildingproducts.com

some sort of failure in the field for whatever reason, we will also warranty the labor that was used to take the board out and then reinstall or correct the issue. All our products are going to have, from entry-level up, a 25-year structural and 25-year stain and fade warranty. But that Premier line has that little bit of an increase in that warranty because it is that premier product.”

Other companies also offer a wide range of warranties, which extend up to the lifetime of the



FIBERON offers both physical Integrity performance warranties from 25 years to lifetime depending on the product collection. fiberondecking.com

product and cover a variety of potential damages, although many primarily guarantee color fastness before other damage coverage.

“Fiberon offers both physical integrity performance warranties from 25 [years] to lifetime, depending on the product collection as well as stain and fade resistance warranties. We also offer installer warranties through our Fiberon Ascendant program,” says Kate Haws, director of brand communications at Fiberon. The company’s Ascendant program is a rewards and loyalty program for installers, dealers and homeowners.

Westlake Royal Building Products, a manufacturer of exterior products including siding, roofing, windows and decking, offers comparable coverage on its topline Zuri decking, which is designed to look like exotic hardwood. “Zuri Premium Decking is backed by a 25-year colorfastness warranty, ensuring its just-installed look with minimal color shifting,” says Steve Booz, vice president of marketing at Westlake Royal. The warranty ensures colors don’t shift more than five Hunter units, the standard unit measuring pigment change. Materials such as vinyl and PVC are especially susceptible to color changes when exposed to UV radiation, leaving composite decks vulnerable to slight color changes overtime.

Trailblazers

As wildfire seasons intensify in the western half of the country as well as parts of the East, the need for fire-resistant decking increases in reaction to this threat. While decking material with cooling properties has made it easier for homeowners to enjoy the benefits of a composite deck on hot days, fire-resistant decking can assuage some homeowners’ fears in areas with high wildfire risks.

The Vintage and Landmark collections within TimberTech’s Advanced PVC decking are designated Ignition Resistant, meaning they are less likely to catch flame than traditional wood and composite decking, and they carry a Class A Flame Spread rating. The collections are also Wildland Urban Interface compliant, meaning they are certified to be installed in wildfire-prone areas where local codes mandate fire-proof materials.

“I think that’s another thing that contractors are going to get asked more and more questions about. They’re going to hear more and more questions from consumers about, ‘Do I need to worry about fire with this product?’ or ‘What’s its performance?’” says Barnds of Azek. “But more and more of those are becoming mainstream conversations with people as they’re picking any material for their house and deck. Because it’s right there on the outside. And it’s sort of the front line of defense and of exposure to any kind of fire. That’s become a bigger and bigger deal for folks.” **QR**

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What's New



Flooring, wall coverings exude design, quality

DUCHATEAU presents collections that are crafted to bring character and depth to spaces, blending modern innovation with classic aesthetics. The Vernal Hardwood Collection emphasizes natural grandeur with its smooth grades and refined tones while the Motif and Pictura wall coverings offer dynamic textures and finishes like Cadence, available in shades ranging from soft white to darkened walnut. The designs seamlessly cater to both contemporary and traditional interiors.

duchateau.com



AC, heat pump units deliver targeted comfort

ALLIED AIR ENTERPRISES announces the re-design of the Pro Series for the Armstrong Air and AirEase brands to accommodate the Low-GWP refrigerant transition. It includes a newly designed cabinet and several benefits for dealers and users. The new Pro Series A7AC22V Air Conditioner and A7CP21V Heat Pump units deliver targeted comfort when consumers need it, especially when it's paired with the Comfort Sync A3 Thermostat for control and energy savings.

alliedair.com



Water heater incorporates design enhancements

RHEEM announces design upgrades to its award-winning ProTerra Hybrid Electric Heat Pump Water Heater line. The new design enhancements significantly reduce installation time for ProTerra. Available in 40-, 50-, 65- and 80-gallon sizes, ProTerra models include elements such as new top-of-the-tank water connections and a duct-ready design. Built-in Demand-Response-Ready EcoPort and Wi-Fi powered by EcoNet technology provide additional smart features.

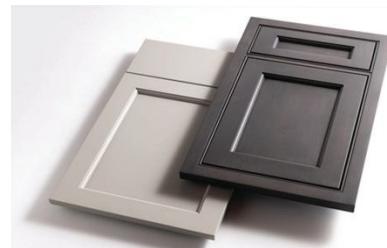
rheem.com



Porcelain slabs provide sustainable alternative

NEMO TILE + STONE reveals two new porcelain slab collections: Dolcissima and Marvel XL. The porcelain products offer a sustainable alternative to marble and natural stone, capturing intricate veining and elegance without sacrificing the luxurious aesthetic. Dolcissima offers an innovative and modern approach to porcelain surfaces while Marvel XL matches its functionality and aesthetic benefits and has a slimmer profile (6mm) suitable for interior and exterior applications.

nemotile.com



Cabinet doors give fresh take on timeless classics

WOOD-MODE Fine Custom Cabinetry unveils a collection of cabinet door designs that continue a tradition of excellence in craftsmanship combined with contemporary sophistication. With an understanding that individual style is as nuanced as someone's personality, the newest profiles (New Yorker Recessed, Venice, Whitehall, and Hudson Recessed) give a fresh take on timeless classics and offer bold design for dramatic focal points and elegance that never goes out of style.

wood-mode.com



Resilient flooring looks, feels like authentic wood

MATTER SURFACES debuts several new products from Parador Modular ONE. The new introductions that are exclusively available in the U.S. through Matter include Parador's Herringbone, a brand-new format for the company, along with new wide-plank colors and oversized tile colors. Parador's resilient flooring looks and feels like authentic wood and stone while offering the easy maintenance and installation of traditional resilient flooring products.

mattersurfaces.com



Unlacquered brass adds to distinctive finishes

ASHLEY NORTON introduces Unlacquered Brass to its array of finishes available for the Solid Brass architectural hardware collection. Also known as "raw" or "uncoated" brass, Unlacquered Brass is a "living finish," which means it's designed to tarnish and darken as it oxidizes. With use over time, Unlacquered Brass develops a one-of-a-kind patina, creating a timeless look that grows richer. It's available in all Ashley Norton solid brass hardware, cabinet hardware and accessories.

ashleynorton.com



Surface offers natural look of unfinished wood

GROTHOUSE unveils the latest addition to its Durata waterproof finish line: Durata Zero. The fourth evolution in the Durata series marks an advancement, delivering the natural look of zero-sheen, completely flat, unfinished wood with the durability, stain resistance, food safe, and low-maintenance qualities that distinguish Durata finishes. Developed to meet client demand, Durata Zero achieves the raw wood aesthetic with the functionality of a waterproof, food-safe finish.

glumber.com

Energy recovery ventilators improve efficiency

PANASONIC rolls out its BalancedHome Elite and Elite Plus Series of Energy Recovery Ventilators (ERV). Available in top and side port configurations and compliant with major building codes, the BalancedHome series ERVs are versatile and efficient, giving remodelers the flexibility to choose between eight different models with four different CFM levels. Equipped with state-of-the-art SmartFlow technology, each ERV is designed to perform as rated, boasting efficiency.

na.panasonic.com



Laminates give consumers additional flexibility

GENESIS PRODUCTS launches its UltraFoil Collections, which fall into three categories: specialty, featuring metallic, textured and high-gloss finishes; solids, elevated by super-matte finishes in trending colorways; and woodgrains, offering stunning realism in grain, tone and texture. Solid colors from Genesis are available in Foundational (classic shades of white, grey and black) and Modern Oasis Collections. For 2025, Genesis is adding two deep, bold hues to Modern Oasis.

genesisproductsinc.com



Bath



Shower bases feature crescent-shaped drain

ACQUABELLA offers a stylish solution for any bath with its new Lado Shower Bases. Featuring a unique crescent-shaped drain and crafted from high-quality materials, the bases not only provide a functional foundation for the shower but also add a touch of elegance to the space. Thanks to their one-piece solid construction, Lado Shower Bases are like one large slab of tile, so there's no need to worry about regularly replacing or re-sealing grout, making them very easy to care for.

acquabella.com



Streamlined tub adds to luxury collection

HASTINGS BATH COLLECTION announces Catino, an addition to its collection of contemporary, Italian-made solid-surface bathtubs. Catino is a sleek and streamlined, oblong-shaped luxury bathtub crafted in Italy using a combination of modern technology and handcrafting techniques. Its solid-surface gel-coated material has a soft-touch feel that is antibacterial and resistant to UVA rays, impact and stains. Catino can be customized using any of 44 matte or glossy colors.

hastingsbathcollection.com

Freestanding tub creates tranquil experience

MTI BATHS launches the Addison bath as part of its MTI Collection to create a tranquil aesthetic that is elegant and yet luxurious. Beautiful in form and function and with the smooth touch of molded stone, the Addison reflects the clean lines that have made the MTI Collection so popular. The tub is available in two models, 66 x 35 inches and a smaller size, 58 x 30 inches, and comes as a soaker or air bath in white or biscuit with a soft matte or hand-polished deep gloss finish.

mtibaths.com



Widespread faucet provides sleek expansion

CALIFORNIA FAUCETS unveils a new faucet design for its popular Bel Canto series. Joining the manufacturer's original single-hole faucet, which features a thin rectangular spout that delivers water in a vertical sheet, the widespread version sports a similar profile with thin, vertical lever handles. The addition of two captivating spout options—a curved Arc and the "soft geometric" Quad—provides even more options for creating a strikingly customized modern bath retreat.

calfaucets.com



Shower systems incorporate custom options

SONOMA FORGE makes more options available for its exposed shower systems in the WaterBridge Collection. They include a gracefully arched gooseneck shower arm, as well as an enhanced handshower attachment and a series of cold-water-only models for installations where hot water is not needed or available. Users can select dual showerheads with additional riser and shut offs, switch handshower orientation from right to left, and modify vertical dimensions to fit the space.

sonomaforge.com



Exterior



Aluminum doors protect against high winds

WAYNE DALTON introduces Contemporary Aluminum Model 8855 (residential) and Aluminum Full-View Model 453 (commercial) to its vast collection of residential and commercial door offerings. Built to meet local building codes, including the Florida Building Code and Static and Impact approvals, the aluminum full-view models feature large windows for natural light and an unrestricted view as well as robust wind load protection for homes and businesses in prone areas.

wayne-dalton.com



Exterior trim made from recycled material

AZEK TrimLogic Exterior Trim is made with up to 95 percent recycled PVC material that delivers excellent performance and appearance as well as a Class A Flame Spread Rating. It is engineered to outperform traditional wood and fiber cement trim options, resisting moisture, rot and insect damage. TrimLogic is easy to install using standard tools and must be painted within 180 days of installation. Available in 0.675- and 1-inch thicknesses, it offers a real wood look. | azekco.com



Storm doors raise the bar with innovations

LARSON launches two storm doors set to modernize home protection and comfort. The Lifestyle 2.0 Midview Screen Away and the enhanced Life-Core Composite Surface Single-Vent provide unparalleled performance, sleek style and ease of installation. Lifestyle 2.0 has a retractable screen that disappears above the window, providing an unobstructed view when desired. Life-Core has redesigned finger tabs on the built-in screen for better ergonomics and pinch-free grip.

larsondoors.com



Butyl tape offers more efficient application

TREX RainEscape Clean-Edge Butyl Tape delivers all the proven performance of the original Trex RainEscape Butyl Tape with design enhancements that ensure a cleaner, more efficient application. Designed specifically for use with the Trex RainEscape system, it's installed above the joists of a deck's substructure to employ an integrated network of troughs and downspouts that captures and diverts water away from the deck to create dry, usable space underneath. trex.com

Ridge vent solution optimizes roof protection

WESTLAKE ROYAL BUILDING PRODUCTS

announces Dryroll, a universal ridge vent and weather block. Designed to safeguard the roof from the elements, the ridge vent solution also helps to exhaust heat and moisture from the roof. With rollable installation, the product blends smoothly with the roof and reduces unappealing field vents and roof penetrations. During installation, Dryroll is unrolled and sealed to field tiles, so that no additional tools or fasteners are needed. | westlakeroyalbuildingproducts.com



Tools



Portable vacuum lifter establishes benchmark

GRABO announces its all-new HIGH FLOW electric vacuum lifter, which is built to tackle the most porous and challenging materials. With a vacuum flow rate of 1.5 cubic meters per minute—or 1,500 liters per minute—the HIGH FLOW easily grips and lifts heavy, porous materials. Its portable design features a smart cut foam seal and ergonomic T-handle, making it ideal for handling outdoor pavers and rough surfaces such as dry cast pavers and patio bricks. grabo.com



Compact press tool helps to reach tight spaces

RIDGID debuts the latest tool in its compact press tool family that gives performance with total access. The RP 251 Press Tool delivers more in every press, working harder to help pros work smarter and perform better with less fatigue and more efficiency. Featuring 360-degree head swivel, the RP 251 reaches tight spaces from nearly every angle and has an ergonomic design with forward-positioned trigger and in-line SlimGrip handle for easy, overhead one-handed use. ridgid.com



Caulk gun applies smoothly for more control

CRL unveils a revolutionary caulk gun without the steel rod. The new CRL (model CRLCG2) caulk gun includes a patented mechanism that extrudes caulk by exerting pressure on the plastic cap at the end of the tube from a pre-tensioned spring in a lightweight 13.5-inch cartridge gun. Like a tape measure, the spring-loaded mechanism is located at the handle of the caulking gun, retracting back into itself when the caulk tube is removed, ready for the next tube to be inserted. crlaurence.com



Cordless roofing nailer improves productivity

MILWAUKEE TOOL introduces the fastest cordless coil roofing nailer on the market with the new M18 FUEL Coil Roofing Nailer. The coil roofing nailer improves productivity on the jobsite with firing speeds of up to 6 nails per second, 1,100 nails per charge, and roofing and vinyl siding versatility. By improving firing speed, the M18 FUEL Coil Roofing Nailer solves a major user pain point and allows users to be more productive when completing small jobs and repairs. milwaukeetool.com



Measuring accessory boosts efficiency, precision

WESTLAKE ROYAL BUILDING PRODUCTS launches Tapco Tape, a measuring accessory that speeds custom bends and cuts on Tapco Tools siding and trim brakes. Tapco Tape attaches easily to a brake to provide an instant scale for bends and cut-offs, allowing users to measure from the brake anvil with a 1.5-inch offset for use with the Pro-Cutoff without using a standalone tape measure. There's no need to mark material with a tape measure and then line up marks with the anvil. westlakeroyalbuildingproducts.com



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and click on the "Enter the Chrysalis Awards" button and it will take you directly to the registration page. Once you register, you can create, import, or edit your entries, and you will receive ongoing updates and information on the Chrysalis Awards.

Registration does not require a fee. The entry fee of \$190 per entry is paid only when the entry is completed and submitted at any time prior to the deadline. If you don't wish to register now, email us and we'll keep you up to date on the 2025 program.

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April 15, 2025. Entrants will be notified of the results in June.

You can see snapshots of the 2024 winning entries displayed on www.chrysalisawards.com as well as all winning projects since 2000.

You can also see the 2024 winners featured on the *Qualified Remodeler* website at qualifiedremodeler.com/category/chrysalis-awards/.

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designandconstructionweek.com

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New Normal

No. 356 Brindisi Builders adapts to the end of overspending as more owners hesitate on completing home remodeling projects.

by Kyle Clapham

IN 1971 Mike Brindisi decided to earn his college education. Through the Philadelphia Union Carpenters' Apprentice Program, he worked four days a week and attended Drexel University one day and two nights. After five years Brindisi received a bachelor's degree in construction management, but the company that sponsored him and a subsequent employment fell through.

"I was disheartened, and I told my wife, 'I don't like the way this is going.' I said, 'I want to go out on my own and create my own company,'" recalls Brindisi, who founded Brindisi Builders in Marlton, New Jersey, in 1976. "I started doing work with myself and a helper and proceeded to grow the company. The pinnacle was probably 2005 when I had 50 employees and two offices."

The economic downturn of 2008-2009 required him to rebuild the company, and 15 years later Brindisi Builders ranks No. 356 on Qualified Remodeler's Top 500 with \$6 million in revenue from 79 jobs. In the very beginning his biggest obstacle was not bookkeeping or carpentry but facing potential customers whom he had never met and engaging in a conversation with them.

"I found that very challenging," Brindisi admits. "Someone told me, 'If you really want to learn how to get in front of people, sell life insurance for a while. If you could do that, you could do anything.' So, I took a night job with Metropolitan Life selling life insurance for a few months just to get that feel of rejection. I don't think they sell insurance anymore by knocking on doors."

Developing a business plan became his next challenge, especially when oil production dropped in wake of the Iranian revolution and led to an energy crisis. Prefabricated fireplaces had just hit the market, so Brindisi sold them as an alternative heat source with wood at only \$25 a quart. He even manned his own little stand at a nearby grocery store on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

"We worked that; we would sell them, and we would travel anywhere [within] a 50-mile radius to put these fireplaces in and create a heat source," he explains. "It was only a temporary thing, though, because we all know what happened with lumber [prices] and everything else after that."

Brindisi eventually took on a partner, but the business grew too fast, and they split in 1988. "I learned one thing after divorcing a partner: I never was going to divorce my wife," he laughs.

At that point he brought in his brother, who started running the operations while he handled the sales and general oversight. Fast forward to this year, and the company enjoyed strong demand until August, once

I'VE BEEN THROUGH SO MANY CYCLES.

Mike Brindisi, founder and president

the overspending and inflationary period following COVID-19 came to end.

"People are struggling," Brindisi notes. "The younger group in their 40s who may be had a small house, their family's expanding, and now they need another room. They would just buy another house [because] they can get great money for their house, but the house that they need to buy is much higher than they anticipated spending. Then they contemplate doing a major renovation."

"That becomes sticker shock because they might've been talking to their parents or some other elder within their family, and their pricing is antiquated for what it is today. It's a vicious cycle."



MIKE BRINDISI,
founder and president

COMPANY:
Brindisi Builders

LOCATION: Marlton, N.J.
DESCRIPTION:
Full-service remodeler

TOP 500 RANK: No. 356

REMODELING SALES: \$6 million (2023)

"I had a \$1 million job go ice on me in August because they're concerned about what's going to happen," he adds. "They're waiting until the spring to see if they're going to pull the trigger on it. And this is after they had deposited with me. We've got the permit up, and we're ready to start the job. They're just holding off for whatever fears they have at this juncture. So, I just roll with it."

The company is still contracting remodeling work despite this environment, although the process has proven to be much harder than a few years ago, he says. "I've been through so many cycles. I think this will be the new normal as long as nothing else critical happens to change it again."

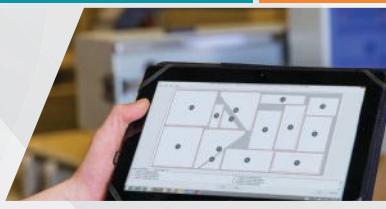
Larger jobs such as kitchen remodels and whole-house renovations continue to be popular while bathroom projects have fallen off in the past three months, notes Brindisi, who is still very involved with design. "Taking a smaller house and opening the floor plan, it gives them the feel of a more open experience and utilization of the living space that is better suited to their needs."

Adding a space like a bedroom, a bedroom and bath, a primary suite or an in-law suite can also improve everyday life, he says. "It's the number of people moving in with their children—or to help with their children. They don't tell me that directly, but I know that's why they're doing it." **QR**



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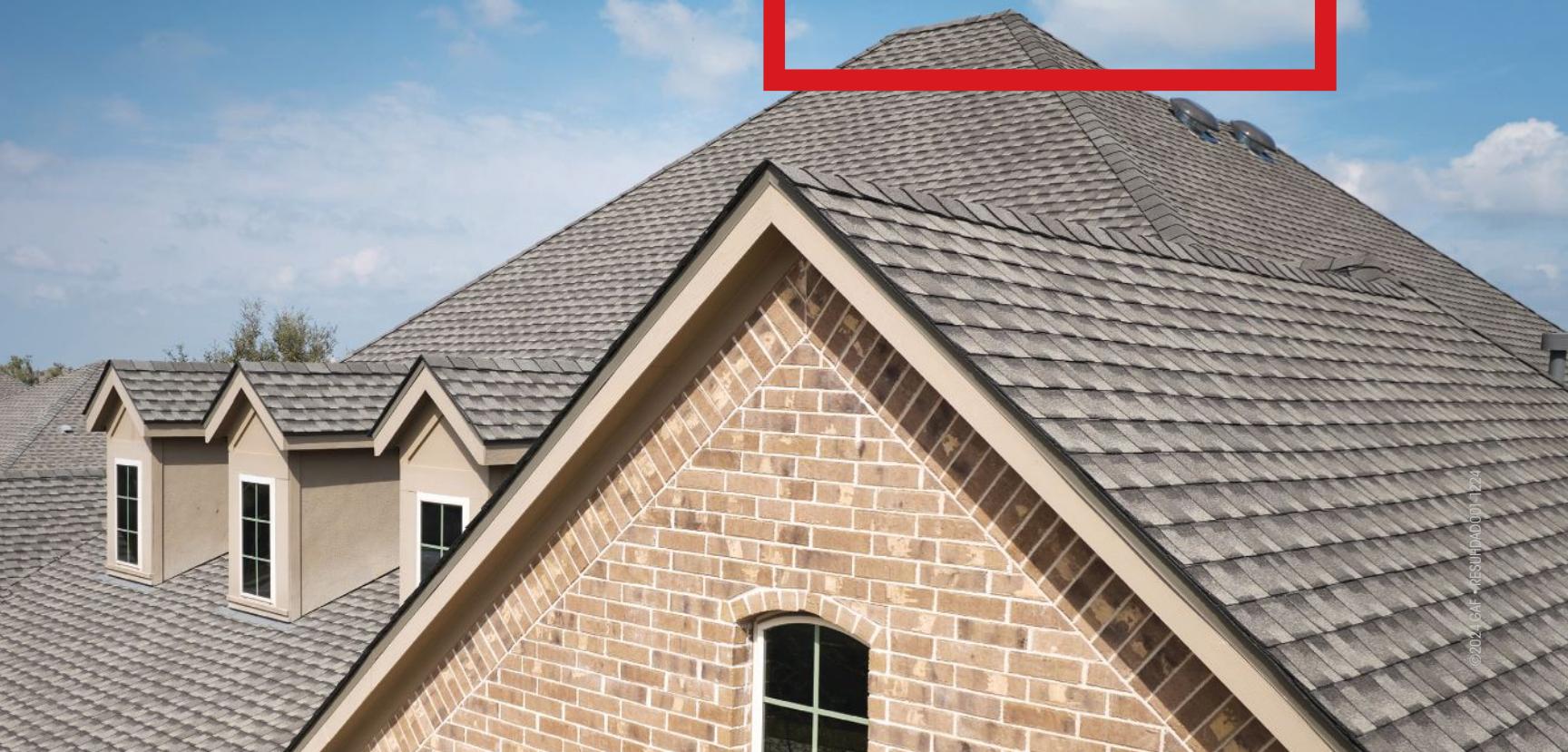
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