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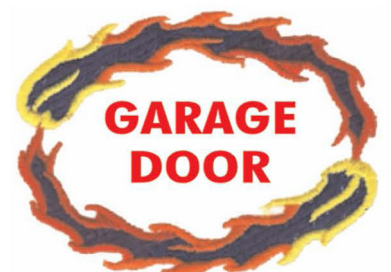
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For Local Information Contact:
themetropolitanbuilder@yahoo.com
832-317-4505
www.themetropolitanbuilder.com

5161 San Felipe St. #320
Houston, Texas 77056
832-317-4505

Owner/Publisher
Giselle Bernard

Editor
Kathy Stolz

Magazine Layout & Design
Pamela Larson

Website
www.themetropolitanbuilder.com

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Giselle Bernard
Publisher

In today's business climate, I've run across several companies still struggling to grasp the full impact of a well-designed, updated and functioning website. I, myself, have pondered whether I needed to update my website.

Well, after doing a bit of research and talking with Sandra Morgan, owner of The Network Chefs, I've concluded that, in order to remain profitable, I must compete by marketing The Metropolitan Builder both offline and online.

In today's market, a website can be an awesome sales tool! Growing a brand using a website is as important as employing a highly effective sales team. An effective



COORDINATING ONLINE/OFFLINE MARKETING

website totally maximizes a business' potential. For customers to find a company's website, it is crucial to make sure the website functions to the best of its ability.

However, business owners need to research carefully web design firms before employing one to design this intricate tool. If their websites aren't designed properly, it's like investing in a beautiful company brochure but not distributing it and wondering why sales aren't up.

It's for all the reasons above that I've had the talented professionals at The Network Chefs build a new and updated website which I will launch soon. So excited! Find out more about them at TheNetworkChefs.com!

Giselle Bernard,
Publisher

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William David Homes Makes

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Transparency, honesty and communication are the cornerstones of William David Homes, for they combine to create trust, according to David Sanders, president and owner of this design/build company headquartered in Cypress.

“What sets us apart is our transparency in the building process and in our pricing structure,” he said. “We are building trust with our customers through that transparency. And communication is a really, really big deal for us.”

Sanders admitted that building a custom house is something like being married. It’s a long, emotional process with a big financial commitment, developing into an intimacy between clients and builder. “You really, truly get to know families as they make decisions based on their lifestyles during a build, such as requesting his-and-her toilet closets and showers.”

William David Homes (WDH) typically builds 10 homes a year in the greater Houston area, with no two homes being the same. “We work together with the clients and our creative team to design and build unique spaces,” Sanders

said. “Every William David project is custom-crafted with creativity and originality, providing every feature you expect in a luxury home. But we also produce an impressive design feature at every turn.”

The company specializes in Build on Your Lot custom homes from acreage on the outskirts of Houston to tear-downs in areas such as Spring Valley and Memorial Villages. It also specializes in building on lots in master planned communities, including Towne Lake, Willowcreek Ranch, Benders Landing and Cane Island.

WDH also has at least one speculative home under construction at all times, in part because the master planned communities require such as project, but also because a spec home provides an opportunity for Sanders to showcase his company’s products. “Spec homes are risky but advantageous for sales. We carry one spec home for every 10 pre-sold homes,” he stated.

Because Houston has no zoning laws, he said he sees more and more families moving into master planned communities. “My goal ultimately is to increase our



Building Process Transparent

footprint in master plan communities because they appeal to families.” He said that he sees the company entering the semi-custom home market while continuing in the high-end, true custom home market.

WDH houses range from 3,000 to 10,000 sq. ft., with 5,000 to 6,000 sq. ft. being its most typical size. Prices can vary from \$550,000 to \$2 million, with most averaging about \$1 million.

Its clients are split between empty nesters who are often downsizing to a smaller home but still want all of the “bells and whistles” and professional couples in their 30s and 40s moving up from a starter to a custom home. Those families usually choose a four-bedroom home with a large, casual dining space and outdoor living area.

Sanders said his clients appreciate the transparency of the WDH building process, which starts with “discovery” discussions with an architect, designer and WDH staffers talking with the clients about what they want in their homes. “Many of our clients come to us without a plan, but they bring their Pinterest boards and ideas from Houzz. At

this stage we also talk about the budget. We meet again two weeks later and show them the floor plan. Elevations come later.”

When it’s time to build, one of the three project managers on staff takes the lead on the construction, although Sanders visits the job sites and often communicates with the clients. As company owner, he oversees the daily operation of William David Homes with a focus on sales and budget.

The two administrative assistants handle office operations and his retiree father works on estimates and tracking construction loan draws from the banks. WDH includes third-party interior designers who are involved in every aspect of construction, both on the exterior and interior of the homes.

°Sanders said he prefers advertising his business via social media instead of traditional media. “Instagram has been really big for us.” In addition, he has found that putting himself in front of the camera when producing content for social media seems to attract interest.

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Texas Custom Patios Offers Alternatives to Houston Heat

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Tired of being trapped indoors all summer by the heat and humidity? Turn to Texas Custom Patios for your solution.

“Here in Texas people want to be outside, but many homes are built without a patio cover or just a very small one that does not provide ample shade for enjoying the back yard,” said Katherine Douglass, one of the company’s four partners.

“We can make your outdoors more livable by designing solutions for outdoor living, including patio covers, outdoor kitchens, screened porches, room additions, pergolas, decks, outdoor fireplaces or fire pits and anything else you can think of!”

Nothing this company builds is pre-fabricated; each item is customized for the individual homeowner. “We design the outdoor living space to mirror the homes’ original style, so it blends seamlessly and beautifully with the landscaping and exterior. We match the design, stone, wood, and other finishes to both the homeowners external design and their personal preferences,” stated Douglass, who also serves as the office manager of the Houston headquarters.

“To create this seamless look, we tie the new roof structure into the existing roof line – making it appear the home

was originally built this way. Or if the homeowner wants a freestanding structure out away from the home, we can do that, too.”

She continued, “Everything we build is a wooden frame structure, just like your house is built. We use all of the same trades as a home builder – framers, roofers, electricians, tile and floor, trim carpenters, concrete, masons.

“At Texas Custom Patios, we’re confident in our work – and we want our clients to feel confident, too. That’s why we offer a two-year warranty for materials and workmanship, and a five-year warranty for structural components of a home improvement project,” she added. “Compare that warranty to guys working out of the back of their trucks.”

The family-owned company has completed about 1,800 projects during its 15 years in business. Rob Douglass, who founded the company with his wife Katherine, serves as the managing partner/sales director, overseeing the 14 project developers in both the Houston and Dallas/Fort Worth offices. Steven Schell, the first employee, is also a managing partner in addition to being the lead project



developer.

Project developers, who handle many jobs at a time, are something of a one-stop shop for clients. The project developers meet with homeowners, create a design based on their desires and the layout of the home and then meet again to present rendered views of the designs and the associated costs.

Texas Custom Patios features an Exact Quote Promise, using pricing software to prepare accurate estimates. The project developers can easily show the potential clients how the quote changes with additions or subtractions to the base project. “We try to make it easy for the homeowner,” Douglass stated.

Additionally, project developers serve as project managers – ordering materials, contracting tradespeople, pulling permits, dealing with homeowner associations and communicating with the clients.

The length of time needed to complete a job depends on the job’s complexity, she added. In general, simple jobs can be completed within a month and more complex jobs may take as long as three months or more.

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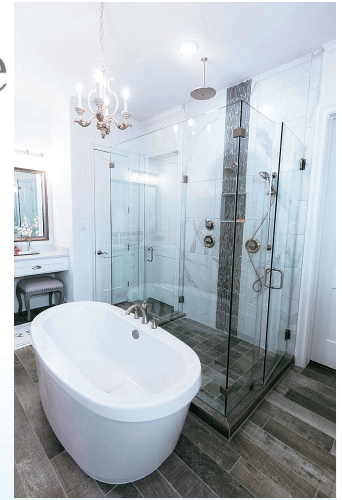
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Modern Farmhouse Tops the List of Builder Trends

By Linda Jennings

Farmhouse sinks have become wildly popular in recent years and are often a top request to builders when it comes to kitchen designs. Ruvati has captured the essence of this trend with its extraordinary Fiamma Fireclay sink collection that brings a modern look to a traditional favorite. Notable for its signature apron-front style, the collection features an innovative twist – a reversible option that allows a smooth, flat front panel or one with decorative fluted pattern.



The new fireclay sinks have a 10-inch deep basin and are available in 30-inch and 33-inch widths as well as single and double bowl options. These sinks are handcrafted by Italian artisans and offered in Horizon Gray, Coastal Shabby Chic with a distressed finish in a soft blue, Cracked White, Glossy Black and traditional white and biscuit.

Nostalgic Warehouse embraces the modern farmhouse style that is sweeping the nation with bin pulls, cabinet knobs, door plates and knobs that fit this motif perfectly. The brand offers an extensive collection of farmhouse-esque hardware from crystal door knobs to cup pulls in modern finishes. Nostalgic Warehouse provides its customers with a range of designs and a mix-and-match flexibility with its hardware tailored exclusively for cabinetry in the kitchen, bath and throughout the home.

Known as the Cascade Collection, these beautifully crafted towel warmers from Sterlingham Company offer exceptional versatility in configuration and style. Their sleek design consumes less wall space than traditional



warmers, allowing them to be hung alone, paired, stacked or arranged in nearly any formation.



The Cascade Collection is available in a range of styles to suit contemporary baths and transitional spaces as well as those inspired by the farmhouse motif. The Stourton, Park Lane and Wollaston lines utilize classic and flared ball joints to bring a traditional elegance to the bathroom. The Churchill incorporates 38 mm tubes and casted wall mounts to achieve an oversized elegant aesthetic. All are crafted from solid brass and available with electric, hot water or dual fuel heating systems.

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But Sanders also loves serving others. “The way we win is by serving our clients better than anyone else. To serve is to care,” a lesson he learned from his years of working in food service, starting at age 15. The first one in his family to attend college, he worked as a bus boy, cook, server, bartender and manager to pay his way through college.

“It took me five-and-a-half years to get through college, but the restaurant business prepared me so well for being a builder. Working in restaurants for nine years was very fast paced and stressful, but I learned how to treat people with respect. You have to have a true passion for serving people. I think it would be beneficial for everyone to wait tables at some point in their lives.”

He continues to serve others through his business. A stint working on his church’s staff while he was starting his business ignited Sanders’ passion for helping others. From WDH’s beginning he decided to give a portion of profits from every house that he built to nonprofit organizations, such as Rescue Pink, Camp Hope and Dan’s House of Hope, among others.

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Sanders started his building career 16 years ago, working for a production builder after graduating from the University of Houston’s Bauer School of Business with a degree in finance. In 2008-09 he took a voluntary layoff and starting doing home renovations with a partner. They had only one client lined up for a whole-house renovation, but Sanders was willing to take the risk. When that partnership ended in 2012, Sanders went solo and formed William David Homes, creating his company’s name by combining names from his and his wife Becky’s families. William David also happens to be their older son’s name

“I love being an entrepreneur. I love the risk, the game of it, the idea that you ‘eat what you kill.’”



*For more information about William David Homes,
 contact David Sanders
 by phone at 281-256-8009,
 by email at david@williamdavidhomes.com
 or by mail at 17774 Cypress Rosehill, Suite 200
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Ensure your team is ready for the unexpected

By Burk Moreland

“It is with the heaviest of hearts that Superior Expo Services announces the unexpected passing of our general manager and leader, Chad Thornton.”

That statement was one of the hardest I have ever had to type for a client. Not only had I lost a client and good friend, but I also knew what Chad Thornton’s death meant for all of Chad’s employees, their families and the clients of Superior Expo Services (SES).

I have had the opportunity to work with Chad and SES for about three years now. During that time we have more than doubled the revenue and increased the profit margins at the same time. More importantly, we have started building a culture of accomplishment and family—a family that I am happy to say has included me as one of their own.

In the week since Chad’s death, I have spent extra time with his team, and several team members have come up to me and hugged me. They thanked me for helping to get the company to where it is today. If Chad’s death had happened three years ago – before we started working together – it would have been a personal disaster for him, his family and friends and a catastrophic disaster for the company.

One of my main focuses for the last few years has been to understand and learn from the simple wisdom that guided Chad’s choices and made him the amazing leader that he was. Together, Chad and I spent many hours identifying and clarifying the many innovative ideas he used to build and improve his company. As a result, we were gradually able to better understand the thought processes that enabled him to build the successful team he created. Part of my goal was to share that information with his team.

Like a lot of strong leaders in small- to medium-sized companies, Chad had always been able to run his business out of his head – without assistance from anyone. In fact, he believed he was protecting his team by taking all of the responsibility and pressure on himself. However, the problem with that belief is that there is no room for the unexpected. As many of his team members told me: “Can you imagine what would have happened had we not started the process of downloading the information several years ago?”

It’s always easier to see someone else’s situation more clearly than our own. Now that the unexpected has happened, we can all see clearly that a critical part of being a good leader is allowing the team around you to have information and delegating responsibilities. Communicating and delegating are the only things we can do to prepare for unexpected tragedies like Chad’s sudden death. Even then, the waves of grief and pain caused by

this kind of loss will ripple through a company and create temporary chaos, but if knowledge and experience have been shared along the way, they will eventually reveal a path, and order will be restored.

Today, I challenge you to take a good, close look at your own operation and ask yourself if you and your team are prepared for the unexpected. Can you take a vacation without a phone or computer for a week or more? Can you do it without working tons of extra hours before you leave and then again after you get back? If the answer is no (don’t worry, most of the time it is), please start the process of allowing others to help. Your family, your team and your clients will all be better off. Invest a little in offloading duties and responsibilities.

Fortunately, for most of you and your companies, you will never face the kind of sudden tragedy experienced by Superior Expo Services. For most of you, the main advantage of this kind of preparation and distribution of knowledge and responsibility will be the simple pleasure you receive from taking a real vacation.

Here’s how to start:

- Sit down with someone who knows your routine and write down all of the things you take care of during the week. Your list will be pretty long once you get into the details. Be specific. Instead of “approve paperwork,” write “approve contracts” or “approve time cards.”
- Once you write your routine all out, decide who in your operation you truly believe in and trust. Start with just one person. You have probably believed, as Chad did, that you were protecting your team. The truth is that you have actually been telling them you didn’t believe in them. Once you actually allow your team members to help, you will be shocked at how much better they will feel and how much harder they will work.
- Start by giving your chosen person a few easy tasks. For example, what can you give them that will only require a “final check” from you? You could start with something small but important, like matching up numbers on invoices—a task that requires only a small amount of your valuable time because it is something that is easy for you to spot check. Train, show, watch that person, do the task, then check on the employee periodically. And always, always give the employee permission to ask for help if not sure how to handle the task. It is very important to make it safe for employees to ask questions.
- Now that a few of the easy things are off of your list, move up to items that are a little more difficult and find someone who can help you with those things.

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Continued from page 7

Where is Texas Custom Patios going from here? Where are potential new areas to expand the business? She noted the company is focusing on expanding more to the north of Houston to take advantage of the tremendous growth north and west of The Woodlands. Conroe, Montgomery and Magnolia are areas that have tremendous potential for sales because of their growth.

In fact, Texas Custom Patios added a second office in Dallas/Fort Worth in 2015. Collin Jarrell, a fourth partner, manages that office's nine employees. "Growth in the DFW office will focus more on the Fort Worth side. We haven't

really begun to tap into the market there yet," she added.

Douglass said the partners are also considering expanding to the San Antonio and Austin markets at some point. They're also contemplating adding pools to their repertoire.

For more information, contact Texas Custom Patios by phone at 281-265-1994 or by email at [hou@texascustompatios.com](mailto:houston@texascustompatios.com) or by mail at 11391 Meadowglen Lane, Suite B, Houston, TX 77082. The company website is www.texascustompatios.com.

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The procedure is basically the same for every level of responsibility.

Once you have turned over what you consider a reasonable percentage of responsibility, it's a good idea to test yourself. Take a day out of the office and see what happens. Trust me when I tell you that it is not a "badge of honor" to always be the first one in and last one out. Unless you are a sole proprietor, that schedule is just a recipe for impending disaster. Instead of trying to do everything and never asking for help, why not find some opportunities to enjoy the fruits of your labor? Believe me when I tell you that I understand that for control freaks like you and me, this process is never easy. But trust me when I say that it can be very freeing.

The only time guaranteed to any of us is the present. Don't you think we should make the most of it? Always plan for success, but don't ignore the possibility of the something unexpected. Be sure your plans include a way forward in case you aren't there to guide those you care about. Teach them and make sure they are informed.

For help with this issue or to push your company to the next level, contact us today at burk@burkmoreland.com or (832) 356-4585. Until next time, go be the rainmaker for your team!



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