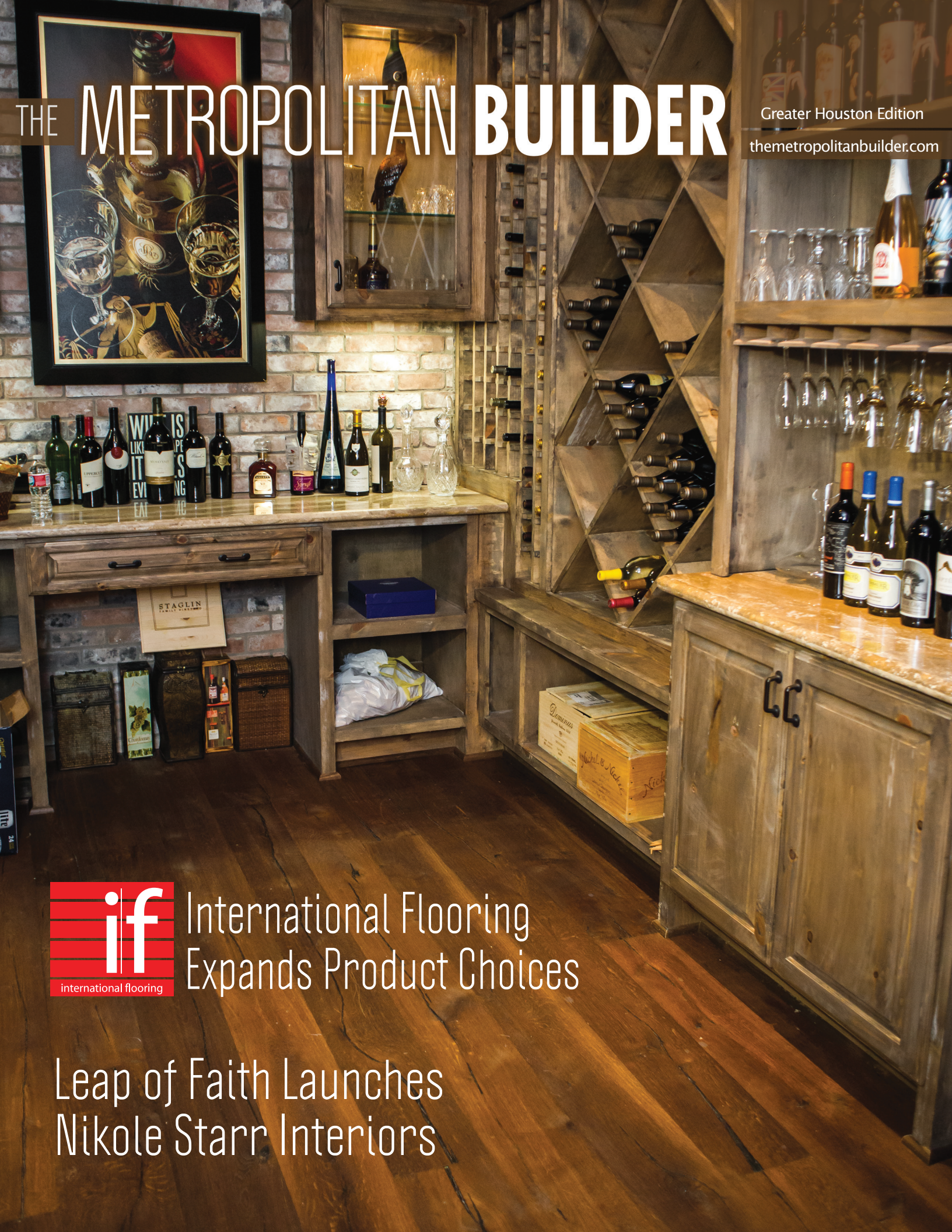


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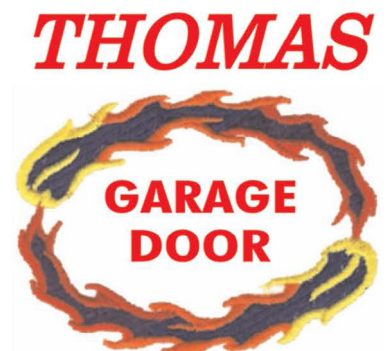
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Visit Our New Website

Giselle Bernard

Publisher/Owner

Switching vendors and subcontractors from time to time is a given. There are times that you must deal with excessive increases in costs of products or services, unreliable delivery, poor communication, or just plain old poor service. These problems will inhibit you from reaching your short term and long-term business goals.

Regardless of your company's size, it behooves you to work with vendors you can count on. Evaluate your vendors' service on a quarterly basis.

When you consider replacing a vendor or subcontractor,

it's important to keep your options open and meet with the vendors and subcontractors who have been referred. After all, they are invested in your success.

As you know, each year I bring something new to the table to better serve our referred building professionals as well as the vendors and subcontractors I work with.

Please visit our new website, www.themetropolitanbuilder.com, where you will find a directory guide to assist you in finding vendors or subcontractors to help you increase your business.



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International Flooring Expands Product Choices

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

“The most expensive floor is the wrong floor,” according to Richard Arnold, co-owner of International Flooring.

“Flooring is an expensive purchase. It’s not like buying a pair of shoes. When a builder comes to me, I ask a lot of questions. Will you glue it? Nail it? Staple it? What kind of pad? Moisture barrier? I apply my knowledge of construction as a former builder. I educate my customers a little so they will walk out happy.”

Because of changes in the flooring industry, International Flooring (IF) is changing too after 17 years in business. “We are becoming more of a product distributor instead of an installer.”

He continued, “We’re ‘way beyond wood flooring now. We’re putting a very strong effort into a diverse inventory. We now have about 500 different products in our showroom. We offer carpet, luxury vinyl tile (LVT), large-format tile, moisture shields and slab preparation” in addition to reclaimed antique beams, solid wood, engineered wood and laminate flooring.

Richard said he attends trade shows and talks with

manufacturing representatives to find products that fit the Houston market for style, humidity and installation. “My focus is to fulfill the needs of my customers. I know what they want in looks, colors and price.” He said the most challenging customers are high-end designers who have been to Europe!

“We are focused on product knowledge. Every product I have, I understand it. I trust it. There are so many misconceptions about products from people reading on the internet. I can explain and put everything in context,” he noted.

While there are four basic options in flooring (wood, tile, carpet and laminate), many choices exist within each option. When builders or designers find a product they like the look of, Richard will explain how the product will perform.

“There are a lot of products out there. There’s a lot of crossover. Now there’s tile that looks like wood. There’re wood floors that have a vinyl core. There’s wood that has a vinyl top. There’s tile that is a PCP product; it’s waterproof



and doesn't use grout.

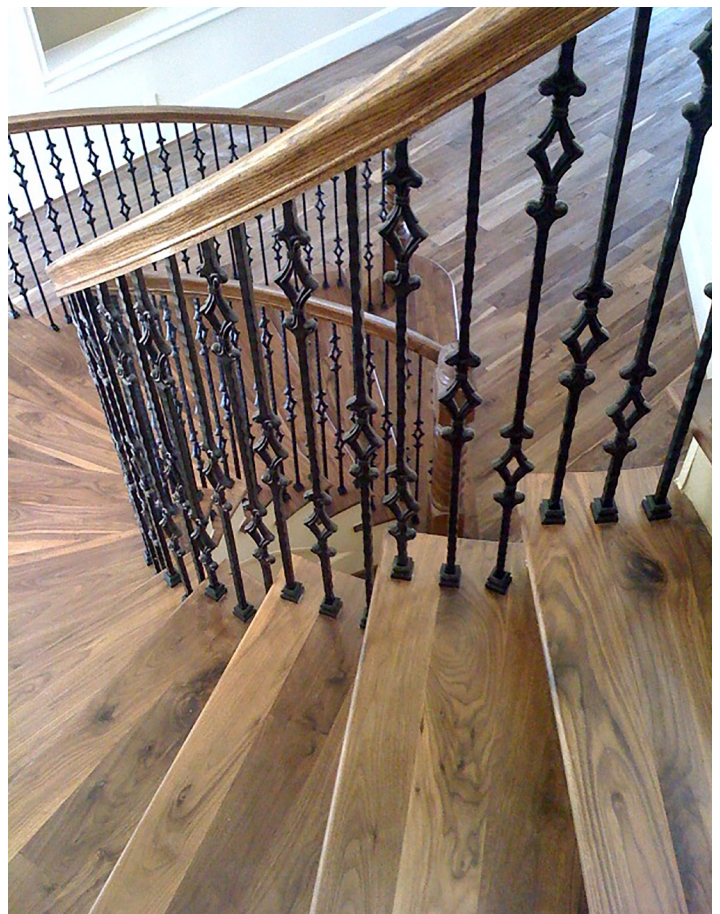
"LVTs are the fastest growing product. It was ugly when it came out five or six years ago. It was very utilitarian. Now it's very good looking. It's hard to tell that it's vinyl. Even I have to bend down to touch it to know the difference.

Other trends Arnold is noting: "We're seeing a lot of large format tile. And we're going back to natural, light colors in wood, getting away from the gray. Wire-brushed wood finishes are reappearing instead of hand-scraped."

"With so many choices, people are unsure. People assume the vinyl will be cheapest, but not anymore. Wood may be cheaper," Arnold stated.

"Flooring is actually highly technical." He will happily discuss synthetic vs. wool vs. natural sea grass soft floor coverings (carpet), or solid vs. engineered, or multi-layer vs. hard core, or real wood vs. laminate flooring. He can also provide expert information on how certain products may impact those with allergies.

Continued on page 6







Continued from page 5

He said International Flooring is very competitive. “We have selection, variety, great prices. We can do multi-unit pricing. I can go to manufacturers for pricing also because manufacturers will not sell directly to builders.”

IF has a 3,500-sq.-ft. showroom as part of its office and warehouse facility. The company is about expand its showroom area by another 800 sq. ft. to allow it to display 300-400 more products. “We don’t need a mega showroom. Everything is selected by me. I pick everything I want. There’s a lot of junk out there. In big, big retail stores, you see a lot of duplicates. In my showroom you won’t see duplication.”

Arnold claims that “warranty” is a “fake word” in the flooring industry. He said he has never seen a manufacturer’s warranty honored in the 15 years he’s been in the business because it’s so hard to prove what constitutes reasonable wear and tear. However, the “best warranty builders have is me.”

Builders look for vendors who can support their products, he added. “Builders want a new product to fit in their system or to save money. The builder needs to feel comfortable the product will perform. I help the builder keep looking forward. The majority of my clients have been with me for seven to 12 years.”

One reason for those clients’ loyalty is the expert installation that International Flooring provides. “I’m focused on the right application and right installation for Houston. The humidity in Houston makes installation a challenge. We have 85 percent of moisture in our warehouse, but air conditioning dries out houses and

shrinks floors, creating major gaping. Raised houses are an additional issue. We encourage builders to let the wood flooring adjust to the lower 42 percent moisture in a house before installing floors. Builders do appreciate our knowledge, and that’s why we keep them as clients.”

However, many builders and homeowners will turn to a less expensive installer “until it costs them big bucks. Then they come to us to solve their problems.”

All of the sales staff and installers at International Flooring get on-going training in new flooring products and follow the National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) standards, Arnold said. They also get training from the Greater Houston Builders Association and from manufacturers. International Flooring installation professionals adhere to the company’s protocols and training as well as the NWFA guidelines.

Richard’s role with the company is sales and marketing, and his partner Luis Hernandez’s role is finance and sales. The company also employs an accounting clerk, an office project assistant, a field manager and two back-shop workers in addition to the installer.

*You may contact
International Hardwood Flooring, LLC, at
713-895-7562 or at www.ifhouston.com
or richard@ifhouston.com*

*The company is located at
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Ken Miller Creates Art Puzzles

By Mary Lynn Mabray, ASID

Ken Miller creates art puzzles. He has such a strong sense of composition, fluidity and graphic design that his technique is a crossover of representational art and the pop art style that art aficionados salivate over.

For Ken, creating a piece of art comes easily because of its puzzle-like composition. He imagines, then creates, then studies, then compares complementary shapes and colors until that piece is complete in a masterful way. He's versatile in subject matter, a skill he's developed from traveling all over the world, observing cultures, people and vistas from the macrocosm to the microcosm.

Self-taught, Ken seeks to establish that "aha moment," perhaps a sense of déjà vu, in each piece that results in joy, peace and happiness. Ken enters uncharted territories to bring forth art that speaks to soul in a quiet way that is Buddhist in nature. He combines a path to the art that has philosophical reasoning.

Ken's work is stylish in an upbeat way that makes the viewer do a double take. His paintings complement any interior or style of architecture from French, English and Italian to modern farmhouse and contemporary's clean lines.

After studying at the School of Visual Arts and the Fashion Institute of Technology, he became the assistant photographer to the legendary fashion photographer, Ken Haak. Ken also

authored and photographed a coffee table book entitled "The Hamptons" that was published by Rizzoli in 1996.

Ken's background in modeling and high style fashion photography has made him comfortable in eliminating all sense of pretense in his art to show only what's really beneath it all, creating a kind of magic that illuminates an unseen fast track to the heart of his art.

It was through modeling and photography that Ken met Ken Detelich, a former high fashion and Ralph Lauren model. They've been together for 36 years and married in Palm Springs in 2008.

Ken was born in Huntsville, Ala., but his formative years were spent in New England. He is the son of a dedicated, military-minded mother and a rocket scientist father. If it weren't for Ken's father, Neal Armstrong would have never uttered the words, "One small step for man; one giant leap for mankind." Phillip C. Miller, invented a low temperature aluminum alloy for space vehicle use at cryogenic temperatures. He is basically responsible for the ability and success of space travel, according to his son.

Ken Miller is represented in Houston by Jack Meier Galleries, 2310 Bissonet Street, Houston, TX 77005, and in the Hamptons by MM Fine Art, 44 Main Street, South Hampton, NY 11968. He can be reached at 631-259-2274.

Mary Lynn Interior Design
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Mary Lynn Mabray, ASID



L.A.'s Mulholland Drive Inspires Luxury Shower Drain

California Faucets unveiled Mulholland™ StyleDrain®, the first of four new drain styles by renowned Beverly Hills interior designer Christopher Grubb for the company's patented, award-winning StyleDrain® collection.

Inspired by the dramatic curves that overlook Los Angeles along famed Mulholland Drive, Mulholland™ StyleDrain® invites architects, designer, and homeowners to make a stylized statement in the shower.

Offered in 28 finishes, including non-tarnish and ultra-durable physical vapor deposition (PVD), Mulholland™ blends with its surroundings, from Hollywood glam to urban modern.

“With its labyrinth of twists and turns, Mulholland™ represents the essence of Christopher's new StyleDrain® designs. It's fresh and modern, yet versatile enough to work with just about any style of decor,” said Noah Taft, California Faucets' senior vice president of marketing and sales. Like all four of the distinctive new designs, Taft noted that Mulholland™ features the international award-winning interior designer's signature architectural flair.

“Mulholland™ StyleDrain® is like a piece of jewelry for the shower. It gives you that beauty-is-in-the-details touch. And just as jewelry can be worn in both formal and casual ways, Mulholland™ can be ‘dressed up’ or ‘dressed down’ depending on the selected finish,” explained Christopher Grubb, president/founder of Arch-Interiors Design Group, who has been specifying the most standout bath details for his luxury-loving clientele for more than 25 years.

More than just a pretty accessory, Mulholland's spiral decorative grid design is made of solid brass. Its durable construction won't bend underfoot, and, with no visible screws and a handcrafted finish, StyleDrain® is comfortable to stand on.

California Faucets has manufactured handcrafted products since 1988 at its Huntington Beach, Calif., plant. For more information about Mulholland™ StyleDrain® or bath faucets, shower fittings, luxury drains, kitchen faucets or accessories, call 800-822-8855 or visit www.CaliforniaFaucets.com.



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Leap of Faith Launches Nikole Starr Interiors

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

For most people, having a second child is enough of a challenge, but Nikole Starr took on an additional challenge by starting her design business, Nikole Starr Interiors, at the same time.

Graduating from Texas State University during the economic downturn with a bachelor's degree in interior design in 2009, she said it was impossible to find a professional design position, so she worked in a commission sales position at Noel Furniture before working as a designer at Design Source.

As the birth of her second child loomed four years ago, Nikole was considering becoming a stay-at-home mom. Instead, at the encouragement of her husband Mark, she decided to take a leap of faith and launch her own firm when the parents of a friend asked her to redesign their kitchen.

Now, part of Nikole's own home is dedicated to her design business. The guest bedroom, home office and a large closet are filled with fabric and tile samples. She even squeezed in a design assistant, Crystal Ryder, in the past

few months to meet the demands of her growing business.

An award-winning member of the American Society of Interior Designers, Nikole said her specialty is transitional style, or traditional with "an edge."

"Referrals have been really great for me," Starr stated. "I get referrals from neighborhood Facebook groups, I've put some ads on Instagram and Facebook in the past for just the Houston area, and I stay active on my social media."

Quality photographs that showcase her work have been a plus for her business. She said hiring a professional photographer, Colleen Scott, to shoot portfolio photos of her work three years ago was "a great investment." Although the added expense was a jolt at first, the investment quickly paid off.

Her market area now spreads from Cypress to Katy to Sienna Plantation, Starr said, with a majority of her projects coming from suburban areas of Houston, although the inner loop is also a frequent area for her to work. Many of her

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clients are business owners and entrepreneurs.

Clients hire Nikole Starr Interiors for a range of services, including full-service design, eDesign, one-day makeovers, kitchen and bath remodels, new construction, purchasing and project management, styling and accessorizing, color consultations, window coverings and fine art advisories.

“We work with busy professionals who desire beautiful homes but don’t have the energy or know-how to achieve it alone. A lot of clients will say ‘we got this far, but now we’re stuck.’ We can provide the finishing touches to make their houses feel homey, such as artwork and window coverings.”

For her full-service clients, Nikole offers a multi-step process. The first step is an in-home consultation when she may offer tips and advice. The second step is a Trades Day when she meets with the contractor(s) at the house. (Her trusted contractor is Renaissance Design Construction, but she will work with the clients’ choice.) The third step is working in her own studio, which includes sourcing and gathering materials. The fourth step is the presentation of her full design plan and the receipt of a client’s deposit. The final step is the installation and client reveal.

“I take the stress out of my client’s lives by selecting everything from floor to ceiling, so that, instead of spending time making expensive mistakes, they can spend more time with their families in a beautiful home they deserve.”

For her eDesign clients, Starr provides a shopping list for the clients to gather their own materials. She will arrange for installations if requested.

Thanks to HGTV and Pinterest, “design is more accessible to everyone. A lot more clients have DIY (do it yourself) ambitions.” But the media may present an unrealistic picture of interior design. “It’s not as easy as it looks at times. They don’t show what’s behind the scenes, dealing with trade vendors and damaged goods. A lot goes into that pretty picture,” she admitted. “You’ve got to have a passion for design.”

She added, “I get my greatest satisfaction when my clients can sit back, take a deep breath and not have to worry about anything else.”



***To contact Nikole Starr Interiors,
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***or email hello@nikolestarrinteriors.com
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**We make life simpler through
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Always be recruiting for new employees

By Burk Moreland

January is upon us. I am sure most of you feel like you just got used to writing 2019. Well, try 2020. Has anyone ever noticed when it's a good market, the year flies by, while 2009 felt like it would never end?

How quickly many of us forget the pain of struggling to find business when that lack of business is replaced by more business than we are prepared to handle! It is, as we say, a good problem to have, but a problem nonetheless.

In fact, it seems that all I hear from clients as I travel the country is that there is a "lack of manpower." My challenge to you, as we find ourselves at the end of one year and the beginning of another, is what are you going to do about it?

You could rely on the old tried-and-true methods of yesterday: Put an ad on a job seeker website, collect the resumes, cull through them, pick your winners and hire them.

But, based on what I am seeing, this method simply isn't working anymore (not by itself, for sure). The problem is that those techniques ignore the real problem – our supply and demand are out of balance. There are simply more jobs (demand) in comparison to job seekers (supply) than there has been in a very, very long time. If people want a job, they can get usually get one. If they want a raise or a new title, instead of working harder or better, they just find a new job. All of these elements make finding new employees really tough, and they make keeping the ones we have even tougher.

So how do you find new people in today's demand-dominated market? The first key is widening your search. EVERYONE is looking for the experienced, not-too-expensive great person. Many people call these exceptional prospects Unicorns. And, like unicorns, there aren't very many (if you can find any at all).

Today's market requires compromise. Can you substitute training for experience? Can you afford higher compensation? No one wants to work with the not-so-great person, but desperate times call for desperate measures. And, who knows, maybe one of those "not-so-great" prospects will become your leading salesperson with a little coaching and encouragement.

In addition, widening your search to include less-than-ideal

candidates may generate unexpected benefits. In fact, being willing to push the limits of the safest method or tried-and-true can open the door to an entire group of new potential employees. If a prospective employee has been overlooked, rejected, or ignored by other companies, he or she is likely to be very motivated to work hard for an employer willing to give him or her a chance.

Next, you have to treat recruiting as a focus in yours or someone's job. Who is monitoring the resumes? If it is tough to get people, you'd better respond almost immediately to the ones who do submit a resume. If you let those resumes sit, someone else is going to get the employees first. Remember, almost EVERYONE is looking for the same person you are.

And, who is monitoring the ads? Stale ads don't get new people. Rewrite them frequently, constantly changing words and verbiage to attract different people. Who is monitoring follow-up? Twenty-four hours with no communication allows someone else to snap that person up!

Finally, become an evangelist for your company. How many people outside your team have you asked if they or someone they know might be a good fit for your organization? The waitress, the valet, the person in line at the store, the person next to you on the plane, etc. – everyone you meet, no matter how temporary or casual, is a potential referral source for new employees. However, few will tell you about potential candidates without being asked or prompted. Carry good ole' business cards and hand them out. Consider putting a sticker on your cards that says "We are ALWAYS looking for good people to join our team" makes it very quick and easy. You never know where that card will end up.

People are the lifeblood of any organization. Good people are hard to find, so make finding them a priority. Once you get them, keeping them is a whole new challenge for another day. Good luck in your search!

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!



Monte Timber Collection of Knobs and Handles Offers the Enduring Warmth of Wood



Designer Doorware is an award-winning architectural hardware designer and manufacturer. Since its inception in 1996, the company has expanded into a sought-after resource for leading architects, designers, builders, and homeowners worldwide. Recognized for their exclusive designs and smart functionality, Designer

Doorware collections enhance today's clean, modernist residential and commercial aesthetics.

Designer Doorware's new Monte Timber Collection of hardware incorporates American white oak or American black walnut hardwood to deliver a sense of visual and physical warmth. The natural material is versatile and adaptable to most interiors and, when paired with other wood finishes within the same space, enables a closer connection to the surrounding interiors. Monte Timber is available in a range of sleek silhouettes, including a perfectly round knob and an ultra-contemporary blade pull, that elevate the look of wood into modern forms.

"A wood finish brings a timeless, natural feel suitable for nearly any décor, making it a go-to material for designers and homeowners alike," said Joseph Di Benedetto, Executive Director for Designer Doorware. "The Monte Timber Collection not only captures this enduring finish but elevates it with modern shapes and a clean grain for a truly sophisticated look."

The American white oak and American black walnut featured in the Monte Timber Collection are raw woods that can be stained or prepared to complement or coordinate with other wood elements in the room.

Designer Doorware's full product line encompasses door handles and knobs, sliding door handles, door accessories, cabinet hardware, and custom products to suit any space. For more information call Designer Doorware at (877) 751-1411 or visit designerdoorware.com.



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Wrapped in Gold

By Linda Jennings

Sophistication is the goal with these stunning gold and brass embellishments that can take a design and elevate it to five-star quality! It's all about the details when it comes to creating a timeless, elegant look, and bold metallic accents add an immediate element of sophistication. Gold detailing is classical in spirit but adds an updated modern edge that's irresistible.

Pure Urban Elegance

Paying homage to its namesake New York City thoroughfare, the Fifth Avenue Collection by Grandeur Hardware is the height of sophistication. The Fifth Avenue Collection offers a variety of configurations for exterior and interior doors, including passage, privacy, single and double dummy sets, tall plates, entrance sets and one-piece handle sets. All are available in eight beautiful finishes.

This exceptional collection has a simply chic silhouette with a classic, yet contemporary look that offers nearly universal appeal. Solid brass construction and amazing versatility help create a lasting impression of culture and refinement.

Shown here is the Fifth Avenue Plate with Baguette Crystal Knob in Vintage Brass.

Industrial Chic Details

The Hannah vanity is an amazingly versatile design that features a trendy transitional aesthetic, clever storage solutions and nearly endless customization options. Hand-crafted in the US, the vanity comes in standard widths from 24 to 72 inches in five different configurations. Each includes an impressive variety of storage spaces, including split short drawers as well as double-height bottom drawers.

The Furniture Guild offers Hannah vanities in 25 standard finishes. Customers may add hardware and accents in eight metallic finishes to make the vanity their own.

Shown here are the Campaign Bar Pulls and Inlay – a ¼-inch-wide metal inlay with mitered corners and knurled details in satin brass.

Bold Ingenuity

Inspired by the massive gantry cranes in Los Angeles' harbor, the Gantry Pull-down Faucet's dramatic design statement makes it a stand-out piece in any kitchen.

Its spray arm spring technology gives the sprayer an easy, smooth pull, and its pull-down sprayer instantly diverts water from spout to sprayer the user holds the handle. Made from solid brass, the Gantry is available with a 12- or 18-inch articulated spout. It comes in an impressive variety of 32 finishes, including various tones of bronze, copper, pewter, brass, nickel, graphite, gold and stainless steel.

The Gantry faucet is made in the US and comes with a lifetime functional warranty.



*For more information on these products,
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