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Maintaining a quality customer base when the market has slowed down.

Ethics

NOTE Giselle Bernard Publisher

PUBLISHER'S

Have you noticed that when the market slows down, some builders, remodelers and interior designers thrive beautifully while others struggle to maintain a customer base? These professionals have realized they need to seriously differentiate themselves by thinking outside of the box and discontinue doing the same things repeatedly.

They've realized that their prospective customers do a lot of research before reaching out to a building professional and the more information and the quality of that information, in which they have access, makes a huge difference in whether a prospective client will consider them to do the work. They've also realized that the consumers looking to build, or remodel will choose to do business with a professional who has provided them with all the helpful information and insight they'll need to understand the job at hand. They are going to gravitate toward professionals they feel they can trust. Building a successful business is all about building trusting relationships and meeting the needs of your customer. They are choosing to do business with the person or persons representing the company as opposed to the company itself. People do business with people.

A supplier or subcontractor builds a trusting relationship with their building professional customers when they have proven to be trustworthy and reliable. In doing this, they assist their builder customers in gaining new clients. They become value partners.

The value partners that I represent to the building professionals have been referred by their colleagues as being

trustworthy and reliable. I represent family-owned businesses who realize that their customer satisfaction standards will carry over to the building professionals they work with yielding customer satisfaction and word of mouth recommendations.

The value partners that I represent also understand the importance of profiling a successful company and have chosen to invest in furnishing referred building professionals, featured in The Metropolitan Builder magazine, with a \$4,000 packet of marketing material in which to reach the consumers looking to build, buy or remodel.

Check out our preferred and referred vendors.





















From Childhood Builder Of Treehouses To High-End Residential Builder

By Mary Lynn Mabray, ASID

"Our beautiful future home was almost complete

long to decide this custom home would be a great

Nic and Stacy – Royden Oaks.

when our realtor showed it to us. It did not take

setting for the next stage of our lives."

Bruce Winfrey, Chief Executive Officer of Winfrey Design Build began his career designing kingdoms at ten years old in San Angelo, Texas. Like most boys, Bruce and his friends spent their time collecting spare wood, odd parts,

and anything that might resemble a sub-floor or a window for their "boys only" forts and treehouses.

When you are 10 constructing an impenetrable clubhouse is about the most important thing on a young boy's

mind. Nothing gets in the way of a place to congregate

with your crew, not even English; but most especially frilly, prissy, nosey girls. Eeww!

Somewhere along the way, that opinion changed about

the female sex; but not Bruce's interest or study of highend construction at Texas A&M's School of Architecture graduating with a degree in Construction Science. After graduation, Bruce spent four years perfecting his craft in

> the production of multi-family homes; then nine years with Millennium.

Winfrey Design Build was born approximately 15 years ago specializing in speculative (2) and

(7-8) custom homes at one time in the price ranges of 1.2 to 4 million. Winfrey generally employs a core team of ten, and contracts only the best sub-contractors in Houston.

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Winfrey Design Build spec homes never sit on the market. Potential buyers take one look inside and feel this is the home they have been trying to find. It is hard not to feel completely at home in a Winfrey Design Build residence.

Bruce states that he is constantly thinking about how modern families live, and what can be done during the design and construction phases to improve the quality of homeowners' lives. Greg East, our chief operating officer, and I have worked to define a company that would specialize in leveraging our combined passion for this business with the desire to maximize the quality of our own lives, and that of our families through the way we work and what we do. We each bring a combination of practical business sense, as well as shared expertise in homebuilding.

Rick Wayne is our "jack of all trades". He can solve a construction issue quicker than anyone I know. He can visualize a project or process and then create it. Rick began his career as a high end luxury custom home builder in California, completing homes in Malibu and Beverly Hills. He was a part of my team when I ran a larger construction firm, and I was lucky enough to convince him to join Greg and me at Winfrey Design Build a few years back. Rick also brings a unique skill set to our team with a background in commercial real estate, boutique medical facilities,

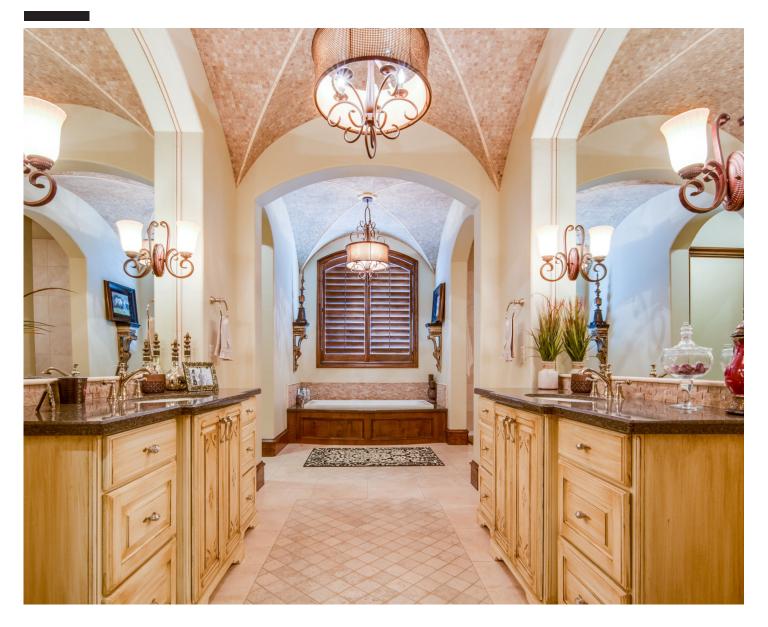
adaptive reuse developments, and added commercial developments.

Most of our projects come to us through referrals and happy clients whose goals have been met and exceeded. At Winfrey Design Build we believe that details matter. They are the difference between acceptable work and an excellent outcome based on our core philosophy of first designing and then building once all the details have been worked out and agreed upon.

Ultimately, it is our goal to give clients the best products and craftsmanship. We want to create the flexible yet creative environments for families who choose us to complete their dream home that is both enjoyable and aesthetically practical yet beautifully innovative. Winfrey Design Build is currently constructing residences in River Oaks, Tanglewood, West University, the Memorial Villages, and the Heights. They will even build a treehouse or fort for young minds to play in and imagine their very own kingdoms.

> For more information regarding Winfrey Design Build call 713-443-8269 or visit www.winfreydesignbuild.com





Conlin Woodworks - A Step Above The Rest

By Mary Lynn Mabray, ASID

Mark Conlin's passion for creating unusual and unique cabinetry began in the late seventies as a trim carpenter. He perfected that craft, which is an art unto itself, and began a career as a sought-after cabinet maker. Mark and his son Luke are not your everyday cabinet makers. They are actual woodworking artists completing complex as well as difficult designs for high-end residential builders in the College Station and Houston markets.

Do you want intricate cabinetry with hidden drawers or maybe your preference is French Provincial with a farm house feel with a little bit of Louis XV thrown in. All you have to do is visit with Mark or Luke, communicate your wants or needs, and before you know it, they will have the

drawings completed, and your vision will be well on its' way to being integrated into your dream house.

There is no need for special instructions. After all, you wouldn't hire Michelangelo and then tell him how to use his brush. Your vision is in the hands of experts. Builders across the Houston area, know without a doubt that Mark and Luke will deliver a product that is not only excellent, but superior in every way.

Mark and Luke begin each project by listening carefully to the client, as well as the builder. Listening skills are so important when implementing well-designed and functional cabinetry. Many builders feel cabinetry showcases their

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Freestanding Tubs Are The Focal Point For Wellness And Renewal

By Linda Jennings

The perfect bath design begins and ends with an exceptional tub, especially during these stressful times when pursuing wellness at home has become not just desirable but essential. It's no wonder that the freestanding tub – which was already gaining momentum – has become a must-have upgrade for homeowners across the country. From elegant sculptural shapes to organic materials, the tub has

rightly assumed its position as the lead fixture in today's bathroom design. A freestanding tub inspires a sense of renewal and feels like a five-star hotel where relaxation and pampering abound. Here is a sampling of the newest styles of tubs that help to create a bathroom space that is both classic and contemporary and also offers therapy options to enhance wellness for the whole family.



MTI Baths' Alva tub

A NEW CURVE ON BEAUTIFUL DESIGN

With graceful curves and an elegant silhouette, the Alva tub by MTI Baths is the perfect embodiment of the brand's The Bath as Art® philosophy that blends high-end style and sensual beauty with personal wellness. The freestanding Alva has an organic oval-shaped bowl that rests snugly on a low-profile base, bringing a sleek, luxurious look to today's modern bathrooms. Measuring 74" x 36"x 20", the Alva is a soaker tub with a semi-rolled rim and a continuously curved interior bowl that is generously sized to accommodate two bathers with comfortably sloped backrests. It is crafted from MTI's proprietary SculptureStone®, a largely organic blend of natural minerals and high-performance resins that creates the look and feel of molded stone. Each tub is completely solid with a non-porous surface that is easy to clean and resistant to stains, mold and mildew. Alva tubs are offered in a soft

matte white finish or optional hand-polished deep gloss. The exterior may also be ordered in a choice of six colors, including dramatic hues such as sapphire blue, terracotta and onyx. Each tub is handcrafted in the USA and finished according to MTI's demanding standards of quality and excellence.

STRIKING LINEAR FORMS

Straight lines mark the silhouette of the modern Apex bathtub, perfect for the minimalist. Its sloping sides have been designed with the comfort of the user in mind, who can choose between two sizes: a 59" or 66" bathtub. The sleek lines and roomy interior makes a decided statement about style and yet offers blissful comfort. The more daring can create a dramatic focal point by choosing from a range of colors available for a striking freestanding bathtub with integrated overflow. The Apex tub measures a roomy 66" x 33" x 24" and is made from Acquabella's signature



Acquabella's Apex tub

Dolotek® material, a superior mineral composite that is silky smooth to the touch and forms a flawless finished surface. With an amazingly durable and easy-to-clean antibacterial surface, Dolotek is a practical choice for today's bathrooms. The Apex tub is offered in a beautiful snow white with either a matte or gloss finish, or four other exterior color options, including black and snow white as shown.

THE BEAUTY OF BALANCE

BainUltra brings symmetry to their Libra Collection with the addition of a second freestanding tub – the Libra Oval 6635. This newest iteration features the same harmonious flow and celestial inspiration that is a signature of the Libra line and adds a graceful oval-shaped shell with raised ends. The look is elegant and refined, allowing the simple purity of classic design to elevate the entire bathroom into a sanctuary of wellness and relaxation. The Libra Oval is slightly larger than its counterpart, measuring a generous 66" x 35" x 27" with longer and deeper dimensions that easily accommodate two bathers. Symmetrical raised ends provide comfortable headrests while molded armrests ensure a supremely restful bathing experience. As with all BainUltra designs, the Libra Oval is crafted from 100% pure acrylic and meticulously polished by hand to create a non-porous surface that is exceedingly durable and easy to maintain. Choose from a beautiful glossy white finish, a dramatic black and white combination, or the brand's sumptuous UltraVelour matte finish. BainUltra extends the full range of their luxurious therapy options to the newest Libra model in two distinct configurations, either a soaker or Thermomasseur collection for unparalleled indulgence.



BainUltra's Libra Oval tub

To find out more about the freestanding tubs mentioned here, visit their websites: www.acquabella.us • www.bainultra.com www.mtibaths.com





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BATHS OF AMERICA opened its doors in January 2005 when brothers Ali and Zeeshan Sultanali decided to start selling plumbing and tiles to the Houston market. Baths of America focuses on customer service and partners only with brands offering quality products and customer service. In addition to plumbing, Baths of America now offers door and cabinet hardware, major appliances, cabinetry, and countertops. It has turned into a one-stop shop for designers, builders, and architects, offering the latest designs and trends in the market.

This month BATHS OF AMERICA speaks with Kimberly Degner, founding partner of Renaissance Design and Construction, LLC. And her partner Stephen Wells. Kimberly has spent most of her life in the design/construction industry. As a teenager, she started out designing window treatments and managing her workroom. After building 2 houses, and working on multiple construction and remodeling projects, it didn't take long before she evolved into residential construction full time. Designing living spaces for clients and helping them realize their dreams is one of her greatest joys.

Kimberly has owned her design firm for the last 22 years. She has designed and has been the project manager for

several new homes; however, her main focus has been designing and project managing multiple high-end home remodeling projects. Kitchens, bathrooms, whole house, space planning, and exterior structures are her specialty.

BATHS OF AMERICA: How can an experienced interior designer help a custom home builder or a remodeling contractor with their building or remodeling projects? **Kimberly Degner:** Anyone who has done a remodeling project knows that there are about a million decisions that a person will need to make to complete the project. Questions like: "Can that wall be moved," or "How can we open up the space," or even, "How can we make this kitchen more functional?" Most of those questions cannot be answered without some professional guidance. All too often a designer with no background in construction creates a beautiful plan which is not practical or is prohibitively expensive. Because Renaissance handles both design and construction, we can not only help the client realize their vision for their new living space but also ensure that the remodeling plan is both practical and affordable. Many times, the design elements we bring to the table are not even options the homeowners have considered. For many clients, visualizing the new space is difficult, particularly if moving walls is involved. We help clients see the space



before construction with drawings and design details.

BATHS OF AMERICA: How do you begin the material selection process when working with clients?

Kimberly Degner: We start the process with the space planning. Knowing how the space will be used is important in determining what materials will work best for the homeowner. In general, the selection process starts with the most limited choice, and that is with countertops. There are many choices of countertop material, but there are fewer options than most of the other materials, like tile, for example. The countertop sets the tone for the space and will be the focal point. Tile selection is generally next. We make sure that the tile not only coordinates (rather than competes) with the countertop but we also make sure that the style is complementary to the ultimate final design we are working to achieve. Lighting and cabinet hardware come next. Lighting, which is chosen any time during this process, is a particularly important element and is too frequently overlooked or its importance is minimized, which would be a mistake. Lighting can make or break a design and should be considered at virtually every step of the process. The last selection is the paint color. Paint color is the last item chosen because you literally have unlimited choices when deciding on color.

BATHS OF AMERICA: What are common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?

Kimberly Degner: When a homeowner is considering a remodeling project, too many times they try to "save costs" in inefficient places. They give up some design details that really won't add much to the project cost but could result in a tremendous loss when gaining efficiency and comfort if they aren't included. There are smart ways to stay within a budget, and we actively help clients get the most out of the money they have budgeted for the project. We understand that remodeling is not inexpensive, but it is an investment in one of the biggest long-term investments people make —



in our homes. In the process of working within a budget, we believe in functionality, and we ensure that the space is as functional as possible, using organizational cabinetry and space planning for efficiency.

BATHS OF AMERICA: What fascinates you and how have you incorporated that into your designs.

Kimberly Degner: I love functionality. I believe that

Kimberly Degner: I love functionality. I believe that our homes should not only fit our lifestyle but should

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be functional and efficient. Designing spaces that make sense for the family is our joy. For example, clients tell us that they didn't realize how inefficient their kitchen was until they had it designed and remodeled by our company. Many times, we put up with our spaces because we haven't considered any other options. I love to show clients how we can remodel their existing home so that it fits their lifestyle perfectly.

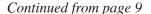
BATHS OF AMERICA: What would be your recommendation for "what to do first" in a remodeling project when working with the homeowners? Kimberly Degner: The first step in any remodeling project is planning. We will walk our clients through from the very beginning with space planning, cabinet design, and then all selections, including countertop, tile, flooring, cabinetry, lighting, plumbing fixtures, accessories, and paint colors. The secret to a successful remodeling project is good planning and communication. We work hard on the front end of the project to make sure that the project will run smoothly, and we make sure that our clients are kept up to speed by giving them daily/weekly schedules. Especially in this environment, we want to make sure that all the materials we will be using will be available when we are ready to install them. Some project delays may be unavoidable, but we do our best through careful planning to ensure that delays are kept to a minimum and that we are communicating with our clients daily.

BATHS OF AMERICA: Any last thoughts or comments? Kimberly Degner: We have a wide variety of clientele. We have some that want a great deal of design assistance, and we are more than happy to help. We have some that like to do the selections on their own, and we are happy to assist in helping them to put together a cohesive design that enhances their home. We also work with clients that have already hired a designer. We love those clients as well! We are happy to work with any designer to bring their vision to reality. We do this by creating a cohesive team. We have several designers that consider us their "preferred contractor." We don't get in the way of the designer, but rather, we help them by ensuring that creating their design is our ultimate goal. Again, we believe communication is key, and we are here to help the designer in any way possible.

For more information contact: Kimberly Degner, Founding Partner, Renaissance Design and Construction, LLC Phone: 832-957-2289 Address: 1608 White Willow Lane, Pearland, TX 77581 Website: www.rdccompany.com







homes and communicates their dedication to the craft of excellent homebuilding.

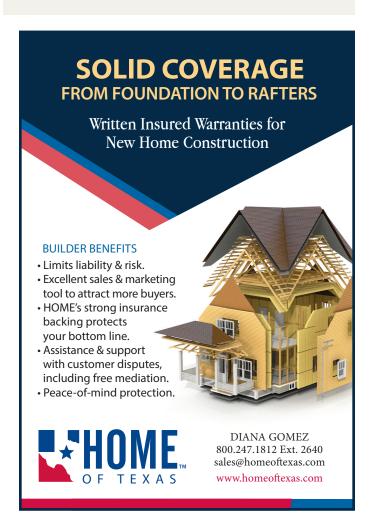
Styles have evolved over the years from traditional raised or recessed panels to a simpler, clean look of transitional shaker to sleek contemporary. In many ways, a clean look is more difficult to accomplish. It must be perfect in every way, style, type, and grade of wood, hardware, and paint technique. All cabinet interiors are birch with hardwood faces such as beech.

Until the war in Ukraine, Baltic birch was relatively easy to purchase. Now, it is harder to come by and of course like every other material in the building industry, costs have risen. All hardware is European with German drawer guides and hinges remaining a favorite for their "soft close"



ability. Above all else, details matter to the Conlins. "Do it right the first time" is a familiar mantra in their Navasota shop. "Give the client a well-built and designed product, and you will always have repeat customers that will trust, respect, and refer to your shop."

> To contact Conlin Woodworks and Cabinetry Call Mark Conlin - 936-828-7451



DIRECTORY OF SUPPLIERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

As a service to area building professionals, The Metropolitan Builder presents this listing of local suppliers and service providers in which are working with some of the most outstanding builders in the Greater Houston area. They have all been referred and/or vetted. Shouldn't they be working for you?

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