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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Giselle Bernard
Publisher

I've learned that life is unpredictable. I don't know about you, but with all of the uncontrollable events going on in the world around us and just managing daily life, I often find myself overwhelmed with an abundance of emotions. It's why I try hard to live in the moment and focus on the now.

According to Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., psychologist and educator at the University of California at Riverside and author of *The How of Happiness*, "focusing on the now" elicits happiness and other positive emotions. I have to admit that it's not easy, but when I do focus on "the now," it makes all the difference in my world. I've read that living in the moment can reduce stress, boosts immune systems and lower blood pressure. Also, those who practice living in the moment are more secure, have higher self-esteem and are more fulfilled and happier people. Well, I'm working on it.

I try to notice the world around me. Paying attention to things that make me happy, even the simple things like

listening to my favorite music, can make a huge difference in how I feel. When I take time out of my day to relax and listen to a little soft jazz, I feel content. It puts a smile on my face. And speaking of smiles, have you ever looked in the mirror and just smiled? It's a great way frame your state of mind and influence how you feel for the rest of the day.

Purposely performing random acts of kindness warms my heart. I love looking for opportunities to give a compliment or assist someone in need. Living in the moment and making others smile improves that moment for me and that someone else. Something else that gives me a sense of happiness and fulfillment are expressed feelings of gratitude and being thankful. They put my life in perspective.

Have you ever had your mind so preoccupied by the realm of worries and future possibilities it made you sick? I find that when I acknowledge the fact that the situation is beyond my control or that my worries are not yet a reality and may never be, I am more likely to be able to relax and just let go. Focusing on problem solving in the here and now gives me more of a sense of peace.

Want a little peace of mind? Turn off the TV, turn off your cell phone, tablet and computer, slow down, FOCUS and savor the present. You're sure to find clarity and contentment.



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Colina Homes Provides Value through Quality, Finishes

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Most successful builders focus on a single market niche, but Colina Homes has expanded beyond one market into three: entry-level/first-time homes, inner loop town homes and move-up/semi-custom homes. Colina Homes builds in just about every area of the metro Houston area, both in established and new neighborhoods.

But no matter what the product or where the neighborhood, Colina Homes' emphasis is the same: providing the best value through the highest quality and best finishes in the market.

"We generally do provide the best value. We focus on what the customer can see – the fixtures and paint and trim – but also on what the customer can't see, what's behind the walls – the framing and plumbing and wiring," said Kenneth "Ken" Williams, co-owner.

"Every Colina home is built with attention to detail and craftsmanship," added Michael Lucas, co-owner. "Most importantly, our homes are built to offer lasting value."

Lucas noted that Colina Homes' primary product line is in its entry-level home line, which is 70 percent of its business. Colina will close on 260 homes in this market during 2017, although it will be completing 300-320 homes during the year, he said. Colina's entry-level homes range from \$160,000 to \$240,000.

Some of the neighborhoods that feature Colina Homes are Pine Trace Village, Plantation Lakes, Tidwell Lakes, Heron's Landing, Brenwood Manor, Almeda Crossing, Balmoral, Wedgewood Forest and Villas at Willowbrook.

Colina also builds two- and three-story town homes as urban in-fill projects within the inner loop. These single-family homes range from the upper \$300,000s to the \$400,000s, Lucas stated. The town homes comprise about 20 percent of Colina's business each year.

Finally, Colina is expanding into single-family homes on estate-size lots for homebuyers who are moving up from their first home. These homes range from the upper \$200,000s to the low \$400,000s, according to Lucas. This product line comprises 10 percent of Colina Homes' business.

Before launching Colina Homes in 2006, both Williams and Lucas had worked for large production builders, Lucas as a construction manager and Williams as a division president.

Lucas, who "had been around construction most of my life" because his dad was a developer, had thought about going to law school after graduating from the University of Texas with a liberal arts degree in sociology. But he said he got a job with a production builder right out of school and knew immediately "I had a passion for it and wanted to do it for a



long time.”

Williams said he is “a manufacturing guy” with an undergraduate degree in industrial engineering and a master’s in business administration. He was recruited into the building industry in the early 2000s after working in major corporations, such as Texas Instruments, General Electric and U.S. West, because of his Six Sigma background.

After Williams hired Lucas in 2003, they found they had a similar goal of owning a company, although their motivations were different. Williams thought he could approach building differently after seeing the mistakes made and unnecessary risks taken by other builders. Lucas, who had a drive to do something on his own, wanted to compete with the big builders.



“We don’t have a desire to be multi-multi-millionaires. We don’t have big egos. We didn’t want our names on the company. We wanted to do something and be proud of it,” Williams said.

They wanted to have a Spanish-type name for the company to draw Hispanic buyers, Lucas said, noting that he is bi-lingual English/Spanish. Lucas looked in a Spanish dictionary for appropriate names. They landed on “colina,” which means “rolling hills,” although they admit Houston itself does not have rolling hills. They like that “colina” also connotes “colonies” and therefore “homeland.”



Anticipating a normal economic downturn, Williams thought the timing could be right to start the business in 2006. “I was at a point in my career, it was either do it or not. I thought a downturn was a good opportunity because we would have access to unsold lots. What I did not see coming was the complete train wreck of 2008, with a freeze in banking. The economy was a lot uglier than we anticipated.

“We were lucky. There was some activity in the market. And we had access to enough banking. We were a couple of guys without any overhead. We kept the business small,”

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Dialogue with a Designer

Pamela O'Brien, Principal of Pamela Hope Designs

This month The Metropolitan Builders speaks with Pamela O'Brien with Pamela Hope Designs.

As the principal designer of Pamela Hope Designs, Pamela O'Brien provides creative solutions to a variety of residential and commercial clients. She has completed hundreds of projects throughout the greater Houston area as well as in Dallas, Fort Worth and the Texas Hill Country. In addition, she has worked with clients coast to coast, from Kennebunkport, Maine, to Ketchikan, Alaska.

Pamela Hope Designs' commercial work includes many local and national companies, including Bellows Construction, Tradition (now Prosperity) Bank, Allergy and Asthma Associates, Cricket Communications, Dean & Draper Insurance Agency and Jansen International. Tradition Bank Plaza, the adaptive reuse of the former Plaza Hotel, won a Good Brick Award from Preservation Houston. Most recently, the design firm has helped transform the historic former Houston Star Soda bottling factory into a wealth-management office and leasing space.

In addition to winning design awards on national and local levels, Pamela Hope Designs has received extensive media coverage. Its work has been featured in many publications, including the Houston Chronicle, House Beautiful, Houston House & Home, and Bayou City Magazine. Pamela has also enjoyed many television and radio appearances as well

as co-hosted the popular Home Improvement Hotline with Tom Tynan.

She is active in the local design and construction community, with memberships in the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), the Greater Houston Builders Association and the National Speakers Association.

In between design projects, she enjoys speaking on a variety of design-related topics, including decorating, color and Feng Shui.

TMB: *What motivated you to go into the interior design field?*

Pamela O'Brien: I have always loved houses. I was raised in a real estate-oriented family, and homes were an important part of our culture. My mother, grandmothers and aunts were all very good hostesses and took pride in their homes. No matter what their circumstances or means, they always strived to make their homes beautiful, comfortable and inviting.

TMB: *How has the field of interior design changed since you received your training in design?*

Pamela O'Brien: I actually studied languages and business in college and trained in design afterwards. Design has changed a lot since I started in the early 2000s. That was

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right on the cusp of the Do-It-Yourself trend and the advent of the internet for everyday use. I embraced the fact that some people really like to be involved in the design work and that they had many tools available. I think most design relationships are more interactive now with clients gathering ideas, brainstorming and collaborating with us designers more than ever before.

TMB: *How can an experienced interior designer help custom home builders or remodeling contractors with their building or remodeling projects?*

Pamela O'Brien: Some of my best projects have been referrals from builders or large remodelers. I like to sit down with the client and the builder or contractor at the very beginning. I think from the outside in when designing a house. I think about how the client will live in and use the home, not just what the house will look like and what materials will be used. I concentrate on lifestyle details.



For example, is the pantry easy to access while cooking? Can people come and go without disturbing the whole household? Is there enough privacy for the master suite? We can help create a home that supports the lifestyle of the client and make their lives easier and more comfortable. We love working with builders and contractors. I think they appreciate that we are organized and help keep the project on track. Sometimes it is overwhelming for clients to do it alone, and a large project can be almost a full-time job. We can help streamline the process, make it a lot more peaceful for the client and create beautiful results.

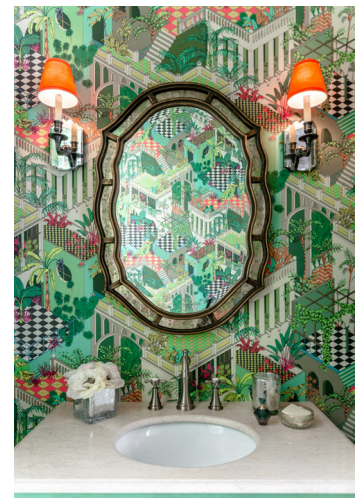
TMB: *What sets you apart from other designers?*

Pamela O'Brien: Well, there is an awful lot of good design in Houston. I am really proud of that and admire many of my colleagues. My team and I are professional, organized and excellent communicators. We are also very good about respecting a budget. We are also nice people and are a lot of fun! We want the client and the builder to really enjoy the design experience with us. We want them to look forward to our meetings. We forge deep relationships with our clients, builders, contractors and vendors. We are good team players and are easy to work with. We also are very flexible in the way that we work with our clients. They can be as involved as they like or leave the details up to us. We don't have to be control freaks, we just like everything to be under control.

TMB: *What has been your most challenging project and why?*

Pamela O'Brien: We recently remodeled an historic soda bottling factory in downtown Houston. It was a weird, dark, quirky labyrinth of tiny rooms. As you can imagine, with a turn-of-the-century building, there were lots of unknowns. We had to make all of the selections months before the project started in order to get precise bids. Of course, there were many changes that popped up along the way. Luckily, we had great architects on the job, and we worked as a team to solve problems efficiently. In fact, it turned out so well that the architects decided to lease the unused office space

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Dakota Quartz Showcases Nature's Art



Quartz is one of nature's most dazzling art forms. And Dakota Quartz allows homeowners to showcase nature's art on their countertops, backsplashes, walls and other surfaces. Located in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Dakota Quartz supplies natural quartz slabs, tile and mosaics, along with engineered slabs in different thicknesses, to builders across the country.

Dakota Quartz's engineered quartz slabs are comprised of 93 percent ground quartz joined with polyester tars to bind it and an assortment of colors to shade it to create a wide range of options, according to the company website www.dakotaquartzllc.com.

Its eight collections include more than 77 colors of quartz slabs as well as 32 types of nature's treasures. All buyers can find several options to enhance their home's surfaces.

Launched in 2016, the Executive Line includes 28 semi-precious natural stone colors. This collection includes an array of semi-precious slabs, such as shell stone, pyrite, agate, petrified wood, ammonite and many other types of the earth's treasures. These semi-precious stone pieces are crafted from jewelry stone, which is converted into slabs. Each is a piece of art, handcrafted to show off the patterns in its natural beauty.

Quartz is more attractive than other natural elements in

many homebuyers' opinion. Its shimmers and veins may give it the look of stone or marble. Its shades and grains are more consistent than rock. It appears in a wide variety of colors, including flame motor red and apple green in addition to natural tans, blacks and creams.

Harder than rock and easy to care for, quartz is a homeowner's most durable choice for kitchens. Heat-, scratch- and stain-resistant, quartz's smooth and impenetrable surface simply does not allow bacteria and microorganisms to develop and grow. In fact, quartz is so non-permeable that NSF International certifies countertops made from this material as safe for direct food contact. It is ideal to be used in cafeterias and laboratories, according to the company website,

For more information about Dakota Quartz, visit the website at www.dakotaquartzllc.com or the showroom at 6520 N. Powerline Road, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309

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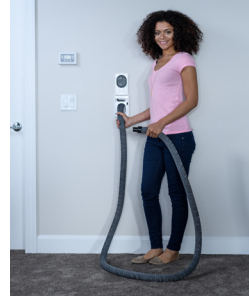
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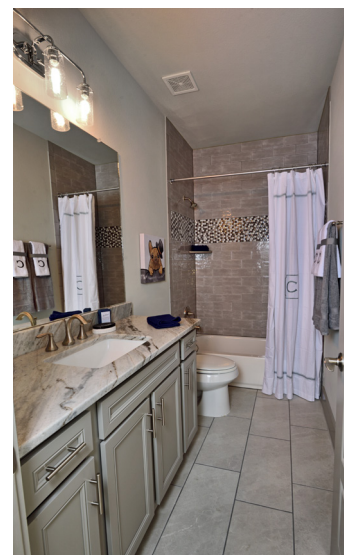
Williams continued.

Lucas added, “We worked out of my house. We did all of the work. We didn’t have any employees until six or seven years ago.”

Now Colina Homes employs 28, with a third in sales, a third in administration and a third in the field as superintendents. With its expanded staff requiring more room, Colina Homes constructed a new three-story office building and moved into it in April.

“We’ve always been pretty lean, with no middle managers until the last six months or so. We’ve recently added a purchasing manager, a customer service manager and a sales manager,” Williams said. “We hired them to create more sales, more customers down the road.”

In addition to signage, realtors, a website and its own model home sales staff, the company also is using social media to get the word out about the quality and value of its homes. “An online presence is going to be critical in the future,” Williams added. Colina Homes recently contracted



with a third-party consultant to boost its social media presence and therefore its sales.

Williams noted, "One of the things we pride ourselves on is that we fairly price our products and accurately represent ourselves in the market. We try to emphasize what we're good at."

In the future Colina Homes' co-owners expect to continue the company's growth and stay in its current three markets. Williams noted, "We've experienced measured growth every quarter except one. We leave all of the money in the company. Bankers love it."

*For more information about
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or mlucas@colinahomes.com.*

*The office is located at
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An Energizing Show

The 17th Sunbelt Builders Show™ closed its doors on another successful two-day event on Aug. 3 inside the Hilton Anatole Dallas. More than 200 exhibitors and nearly 3,500 attendees walked the Trinity Expo Hall with a specific goal in mind – to build and better their businesses.

The Show opened with ballroom seats filled in anticipation of former Dallas Cowboy Darren Woodson, who was the Show's keynote speaker on Wednesday. Woodson, a three-time Super Bowl champion and now ESPN analyst, inspired the attendees with a lesson on "Accepting Change." From his experiences on and off the football field, he provided several valuable keys to running any business successfully. His biggest take away from football were his lessons on commitment. Woodson stressed four levels of commitment that are applicable to both professional and personal lives and are easily identifiable. They are Existent, Compliant, Committed and Compelled. The audience was sold on "Accepting Change" and left the ballroom invigorated.



Twenty-four hours later, Nate Holzapfel was tasked with energizing the crowd for the second consecutive day. He took the stage to engage with audience members on "Building. Business. Relationships." Holzapfel is most famously known for his appearance on ABC's hit show "Shark Tank," where he blew away all the sharks on deck with his work ethic, common-sense approach and sales savvy. He gave an open and honest discussion on what needs to happen for businesses to start selling to millennials in this age of digital disruption. Holzapfel says the solution

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Continued from page 14

to this problem boils down to one thing: stop trying to figure out how to solve your own business problems, and start solving your customers'. He provided three tips on how to move forward with millennial-mindset customers. First, make them the star of your show. Second, you have to love people and, finally, never make it about price.

The ever-growing Star Awards concluded the conference Thursday evening as 183 trophies, including four Grand Awards, were handed out. The event brought together hundreds of Texas' top builders, remodelers, architects, designers, sales and marketing professionals to showcase their outstanding work in the residential home building industry.

Regardless if you came to the Show to walk the expo hall, take in the education sessions, listen to the keynote speakers or attend the Star Awards you left energized.



Everyone needs to mark their calendar to attend the 2018 Sunbelt Builders Show™ on August 8-9 inside the family friendly Hilton Anatole Dallas





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area and are currently building it out to suit their needs. I am proud that we gave an old building new life.

TMB: *How do you begin the materials selection process when working with builders' and remodelers' clients?*

Pamela O'Brien: I like to meet with the client and the builder early in the process to get an overall feeling of the style and design of the house. We brainstorm and collaborate to learn preferences and must-haves. We talk about the budget and allowances right away so we can help guide the client. I like to have a conversation about splurging and saving because that is bound to occur at some point during construction. Today's easy access to photographs and great design photos allow us to learn the client's taste fairly quickly. Our first showroom visit or "show and tell" session in our studio is always an exciting meeting.

TMB: *What are some common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?*

Pamela O'Brien: Not being upfront about costs and budget can cause a lot of stress in a project. It is worth sitting down for a few hours to review the contract line by line so everyone is clear on what is expected, how long it could take and what it will cost. Everyone also needs to understand that few things go exactly as planned. Many problems are the result of lack of communication. Clear communication can prevent many issues and help solve others.

TMB: *Speaking about staying current, how do you keep yourself up to date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?*

Pamela O'Brien: As a designer, I am lucky to have design

ideas circling around me endlessly. From the internet to magazines, books and events, there are constant sources of new trends. The trick is working through the vast number of options and finding the trends that will stick. Houston has a vibrant design community, and we have constant sources of inspiration. From the outstanding showrooms and TWO design centers to the industry reps around town, new ideas are everywhere. One of the "high points" of the year for me is the fall Furniture Market in High Point, N.C. It's inspiring to see the creative things people are doing. I also love to travel, and, not surprisingly, I focus mainly on the design, art and architecture of the places I visit.

TMB: *What is your favorite design style?*

Pamela O'Brien: In my heart I am a classicist, and I appreciate design that is timeless. However, I believe in growth and progress, so I like to mix numerous periods and designs that work together to create a whole new style.

TMB: *What fascinates you and how have you incorporated that into your designs?*

Pamela O'Brien: Creativity fascinates me. Seeing new designs, new ideas and new styles allows me to take inspiration from those creations and, in turn, create new designs of my own. I also love color and lighting. They do so much for a room or a space. They also change every day. I find that fascinating, fun and a great design challenge.

TMB: *Any last thoughts, comments?*

Pamela O'Brien: I believe good design is a great pleasure. We want our clients, their builders and contractors and everyone who works with us to enjoy the design experience as well as the results.



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Action Coach: Is Your Business Stressing You Out?

By Doug Winnie

More and more often when asked, “How are you doing?” people instantly say, “Busy!” as their eyes widen and they release a huge sigh. In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, there are many businesses that have had to close their doors because of the lack of customers. At the same time, there are businesses that have to work longer hours, hire extra help, and, in some cases, even turn work away. Most companies just don’t have the capacity to handle the inflow of extra business without compromising the quality of customer service. For instance, the building and construction industries are booming right now, yet they still experience the fear of going out of business because of the vast increase in demand of their services. Below are some simple tips to help you stay afloat amidst the chaos that your business may be experiencing in these trying times.

Make An Action Plan

In order for your business to be successful, you need to know where you are going and how you are going to get there. When your business has a rapid change of pace, your

action plan will be the thing that keeps you focused. Make sure you create a daily action plan at the end of each day. When you walk into the office the next day, you’ll feel more prepared because you can refer to the plan whenever business gets hectic.

Take A Break

Your brain needs time to recharge when you’re dealing with work stressors. Take a 10 minute break and go for a walk just to get a change of scenery. This could help you clear your mind, so you can approach your work from a new perspective. If you can’t leave your desk, listen to some relaxing music to reset your mental gears. At home, make sure you’re getting enough rest because a tired brain becomes an unproductive brain.

Communicate With Others

Sometimes talking it out with your team can be the best way to approach a problem. You can get a sense of peace

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- Create and post a short video to Facebook* and tag ‘@ActionCOACH Houston’.
- The winner will be announced at the ‘Business Growth Workshop’ on #GivingTuesday (November 28th). **You must be present to win.**

* If you don’t have a Facebook account, simply record the video and email it to us at n3marketing@actioncoach.com and we will post it for you. If you need any additional help filming or posting the video, please reach out to us and we will help you get it done!

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just by voicing your concerns aloud and this helps you better process your situation. Also, someone else might provide you with a solution that you hadn't considered before. Be open to discussing your business with the people that support you. This will show that you value and trust them, which improves their loyalty to your business.

Keep A Positive Attitude

Last, but not least you need to keep a positive outlook in these stressful times. Surround yourself with positive people, read inspirational books, write down and say some positive affirmation statements...positive change won't happen in your business unless you believe it will and stay dedicated to making it happen.

Hire a Business Coach

Every great performer, whether it is an elite athlete, business legend or performing superstar, is surrounded by coaches and advisors. A business coach will make you focus on your business and hold you accountable to the things you should do and to where you want your business to be.

Doug Winnie, owner of ActionCOACH Business Coaching, is an international public speaker, profit strategist and award-winning business and executive coach.

For more information on how Doug can help you build a better business, contact him at n3marketing@actioncoach.com or 713-936-3814

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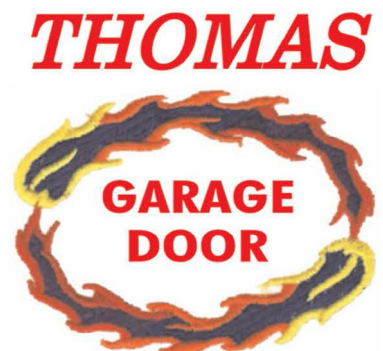
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