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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

I've found that many professionals confuse the terms marketing and advertising. Do you know what the difference is between the two?

Marketing is the process used to define your company brand, which is used to attract a goal set for the share of market you wish to attain. It involves understanding exactly who your target market is and what attracts that market to your product and/or services. Marketing involves company branding which includes elements like logos and all other design elements that will help align the image of your products and services with the interests of the market you have chosen to target.

Advertising, on the other hand, is the method used in making your company's products and services known to your target market. It is the way your marketing efforts are communicated to the market place. It is the consideration of how you spread the word about what your company has to offer and what differentiates your business, products and services from that of your competitor.

That being said, we are approaching the time of year when businesses start to think about new marketing and advertising strategies. The goal of both marketing and advertising should be to generate interest, to generate new leads.

Some things for you to consider when thinking about investing in advertising is whether you want to grow business and if you have the sales team and work force to handle new leads. A company should only invest in marketing if it has insufficient leads and has a work team in place to handle additional business. If you don't have a work team in place to handle additional leads, your business's hard-earned reputation could falter in the mishandling of new leads. If you wish to grow business, make sure you have the workforce in place to handle the growth.

If business is good and you are not interested in growing your company, then you may want to think about investing in the marketing aspect of the business. If your interest is in targeting the millennials, do you have marketing material in place in which may be used for social media? The main method of communication for the millennials is via the internet. Is your website up to date? How are you differentiating your company's products and services from that of your competitor? Keep in mind that technology is always evolving; therefore, the marketing material used to communicate to your target market needs to evolve as well.



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Gulledge Homes Takes Customer Service to Next Level

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Gulledge Homes, a custom builder that specializes in a wide range of styles, is constantly searching for new ways to provide a higher standard of customer service. By utilizing the latest technology, adding passionate members to the team and remaining flexible and current, Gulledge Homes is taking customer service to the next level, according to Steve Gulledge, president.

Founded in 2006, Gulledge Homes is a referral-based business, counting on its reputation for quality to generate new business. “Although we started off building spec homes locally in the Spring Branch and Memorial areas, we have been referred for a three-story, 12,000-sq.-ft. home in Richmond and other projects in the Heights and Galveston,” Gulledge said.

The relationship between the buyer and the builder are key in the homebuilding business, stated Gulledge. “We want to build strong relationships with our clients, so clear and

consistent communication is one of our top priorities.”

Gulledge Homes strives to meet the individual needs of each client. “We offer the same level of customer service, whether we are accommodating those who want more extravagant homes or those who prefer simple and efficient living spaces. Our goal is to make the building process as smooth as possible for our clients and to create an end product that meets our high standards of quality,” Gulledge continued.

“Customer service after the warranty ends is important to us, and we end up helping our clients for several years to keep our relationships strong. We have been fortunate to have worked with great clients and developed many friendships over the years in this process. We find trust and cooperation is integral to the homebuilding process,” Gulledge added.



Gulledge likes to educate clients on their options. “Some clients want the best while others are more cost-conscious. We want to enable them to make informed choices.”

Robby Delmenhorst, vice president, noted, “We pride ourselves on variety and being flexible. One of the best things about building specialty custom homes is that we don’t limit ourselves to one style. We have the opportunity to build something very different in each custom home.

“This variety is beneficial for our business because we are constantly forced to try new things instead of sinking into a basic and repeatable formula. Variety keeps us engaged and innovative.”

While Gulledge handles the field work, Delmenhorst works with vendors and subcontractors, among other duties. Delmenhorst joined Gulledge Homes six years ago as its operations manager after working as the company’s information technology subcontractor. He was promoted to vice president in June 2017.

Delmenhorst’s skills have helped the company grow, Gulledge said. “I recognized that we needed a more technical foundation. We are always searching for new ideas and ways to streamline our operation so we can dedicate more time to interacting with the client and ensuring their needs are met.”

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Dialogue with a Designer

Kara Wuellner – The Design Firm

This month The Metropolitan Builder (TMB) speaks with Kara Wuellner of The Design Firm. Kara and Eric Wuellner have been designing many of Houston's most admired homes for more than three decades. Recipients of numerous American Society of Interior Designers and Greater Houston Builder's Association awards, The Design Firm staff prides itself on having the most versatile, professional interior designers in Houston. The high demand for their work has allowed their multi-disciplinary interior design firm to expand to more than 20,000 sq. ft. of warehouse and design studio space.

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

Kara Wuellner: Interior design just filled my cup! It's an incredibly creative outlet for me (and everyone needs an outlet), and it gives me so much joy to know that my clients and friends live in spaces that not only function for them, but bring them balance, peace and comfort.

TMB: How has the field of interior design changed since you graduated?

Kara Wuellner: For me it's about the vendors and products we source for our clients. The technology behind our fabric selections and furniture vendors' products is just WILD! Used to, we would use colors like white or cream with some trepidation. Nowadays, whites and light neutrals are "go to" color for us! Fabrics have become more cost

effective, durable, accessible and functional for our clients. I love all the textiles too! It's incredible to think that a photograph can become inspiration for an actual fabric pattern or color. I love personal touches like this, too!

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

Kara Wuellner: In our case we create a detailed communication book that acts as the go-between client and builder. It specs out all the details and leaves no room for error. Once okayed by the client, everything is loaded digitally, and then everyone gets "the book" in hard copy! This way, at any given time, questions can be answered, changes can be made easily and everyone is happy. After all, a new build or a remodel should be FUN!

TMB: What sets you apart from other designers?

Kara Wuellner: We have definitely set the bar high with our detailed design process. We begin with time spent getting to know the client inside and outside of the jobsite. For us it's about building a relationship first. Our team spends hours upon hours procuring furnishings, designing ways to feature architecture in the home and negotiating good pricing. We are known for a "finished" look, and that look takes time and diligence. From our digital illustrators to our rendering

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artists, everyone shares an equal passion for interior design.

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

Kara Wuellner: Challenges are everywhere; that's what makes interior design fun! However, I think one of the most challenging projects we completed was one for which we ended up winning several awards. We took a home that was half-way built in a Mediterranean style, which the client did not prefer, and created a gothic-inspired, richly textured, embellished retreat that was fit for a king...and our wonderful clients! It's funny because each spouse had his/her own idea of the style they wanted, and to this day both still say we nailed it for each of them!

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

Kara Wuellner: We begin every project with a detailed list of likes and dislikes. Idea-books are always helpful

so that we understand what the client has in mind too. I believe the most important aspect about helping clients with selections is giving them a brief education on the products themselves. Our team takes time to learn about new products on the market, bring in vendors for up-to-date product info and READ about the latest and greatest on the market.

Having a designer in on a new build or remodel project takes an unnecessary weight off the builder and contractor as well. Everyone can solely focus on his or her trade. We can be the sounding board, spec out the proper amount of products needed, double- and triple-check sizes and dimensions and lessen the opportunity for mistakes. Staying on time and in budget are crucial elements for our clients. Designers help clients make sound, efficient, practical decisions that will be timeless and function for everyday life.

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

Kara Wuellner: I think the most common mistake is that homeowners and builders think about the project from beginning to end, instead of end to beginning. That's where a designer can be so helpful. We look at the project in a way that speaks to the end result and where everything will fit – long before the home is even built. Always looking at a space with a discerning eye is critical.

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

Kara Wuellner: I keep myself up to date buy reading! I love to peruse magazines, I read tons of blogs on the web, I stay current by listening to podcasts, and I love to attend Dallas Market to see all my favorite designers and showrooms. I don't just read about design specifically. I read about technology, new gadgets, market growth and changes, new developments in real estate, what other countries are doing in the design industry, etc., etc.



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House Passes Joint Employer Bill, Providing Certainty for Small Businesses

November 08, 2017

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) today commended the House for passing the bipartisan Save Local Business Act, legislation that would amend the National Labor Relations Act and Fair Labor Standards Act to restore a common sense joint employer standard for home building firms and other small businesses.

“Under current law, it is possible for a home builder to be considered a joint employer through such a basic business act as setting the work schedule of their subcontractor,” said NAHB Chairman Granger MacDonald, a home builder and developer from Kerrville, Texas. “This bill would reinstate the sensible criteria that has worked for the



American business community for more than 30 years and provide legal certainty for all business owners.”

In 2015, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) overturned decades of precedence in the case of Browning-Ferris Industries of California Inc. by affirming that a company could be considered a joint employer if it has indirect control or the potential to determine the key terms of an employee’s employment, including hiring and firing, supervision, scheduling and the means and method of employment.

The question of what can be deemed indirect control and just how much of it could legally constitute joint employment was left open-ended by the NLRB, causing confusion and uncertainty for the housing and small business community.

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Operation FINALLY HOME Continues to Aid Veterans, Families

When people talk about Operation FINALLY HOME, the conversation is most often about the deserving military families the non-profit organization supports with its mortgage-free homes to military veterans and families.

But the unsung heroes are the builders, builder associations, corporate sponsors, developers, individual contributors, and volunteers across the country, including the Greater Houston Builders Association (GHBA). Without all of these groups, Operation FINALLY HOME doesn't exist.

After 12 years, Operation FINALLY HOME is thriving due to the generosity of those groups. Through the end of July, there were more than 200 projects in more than 30 states that had been completed or are in construction or planning stages. In Texas, Operation FINALLY HOME has completed over 75 homes!

It all began in 2005 when Dan Wallrath, a custom home builder, was serving as president of the Bay Area Builders Association (BABA), a division of GHBA. Wallrath led an effort to remodel a home for an injured Marine and his family. With that, Operation FINALLY HOME was born with a mission to provide custom-built, mortgage-free homes to America's military heroes and the widows of the fallen who have sacrificed so much to defend America's freedom and values.

"As a custom homebuilder for more than 30 years, I understand and appreciate the sacrifices made by those builders who step up for our families," Wallrath said. "Resources critical to an income or a company's bottom line are being redirected in the name of helping others."

The GHBA continues to support Operation FINALLY HOME by making the group one of two beneficiaries of the construction and sale of two Benefit Homes. Each year GHBA members build two to three homes are built for the fundraiser with donated materials, labor and services. The homes are sold at market value with the majority of proceeds benefiting Operation FINALLY HOME and HomeAid Houston.

Since the GHBA Benefit Homes fundraiser began 37 years ago, it has raised nearly \$10 million for local charities. The GHBA has committed to support Operation FINALLY HOME through 2020 through its Benefit Homes program.

GHBA members Chesmar Homes and Westin Homes are



Photo Courtesy of Howard Hughes Corporation

U.S. Army Specialist Cliff Betcher and his family were surprised with the news they were receiving a home at the Houston Texans playoff game Jan. 7. Beazer Homes and The Howard Hughes Corporation partnered with Operation FINALLY HOME and the Houston Texans to build the Betchers' home in the Bridgeland Community in Cypress.

both building homes in the greater Houston area. Chesmar Homes is building a home in the new community of Elyson in west Houston. Newland Communities, the developer of Elyson, donated the home site. Westin Homes is building a home in the Lago Mar community located southeast of Houston. Land Tejas donated the home site. This is the fifteenth lot that Land Tejas has donated for the Benefit Homes Project.

"It all starts with the builder and the builder associations," Wallrath said. "Whether you are a family-owned company or a larger entity, making the decision to engage your vendors, raise money and donate your time and expertise is unbelievably commendable. "It reflects the character of our industry, and I'm extremely proud of that.

"I've always been a huge proponent of the Benefit Homes program from my time as president of BABA and serving on the board of GHBA," continued Wallrath. "These organizations have been extremely generous to Operation FINALLY HOME through the years, and I'm extremely grateful that we will be able to put these proceeds to work for deserving families in the Greater Houston area."

Will Holder, chairman of the Benefit Homes Project, added, "Operation FINALLY HOME has a special place in



U.S. Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Stephen Comeau and his family joined representatives from Operation FINALLY HOME, Bilmar Homes and Christian Brothers Automotive to dedicate his new home in Santa Fe in April.



Operation FINALLY HOME teams with Coventry Homes to build a new home for U.S. Army SFC Demitra Jarrett in Montgomery. Jarrett and her mother were surprised with the news May 15.

the hearts of GHBA members as, through BABA, we have been there since the beginning. We are proud to be able to continue to support this great organization as it provides much-needed housing for the men and women who have given their all for our country.”

Operation FINALLY HOME will use funds from the Benefit Homes to help build even more homes for military families in the Houston area.



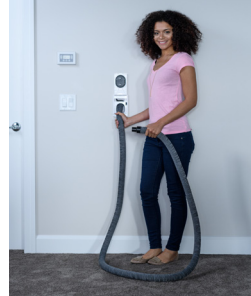
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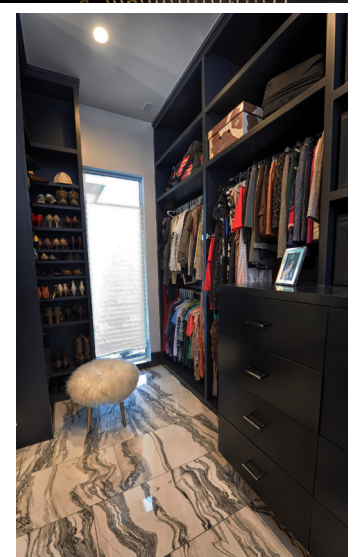


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Several years ago Delmenhorst brought in new software for estimating and accounting to help the company work more efficiently and keep better records. One piece of software that customers appreciate is the PlanSwift construction takeoff and estimating software. “They really like seeing the detailed measurements made in real-time on their plans, along with the pictures they found on Houzz overlaid on the screen,” he said.

Recently he reworked the accounting system and added a construction management software and construction app for home builders and remodelers. “Our clients expressed that they wanted quicker access to information regarding their projects, so we invested in the leading builder software package, Buildertrend, to help us meet their needs. The tools Buildertrend offers have enabled us to scale up our operation while simultaneously improving the experience for our clients,” Delmenhorst said. Using more efficient methods for tracking bids and client selections has reduced the time it takes to reach the construction phase of each project.

In addition to improving the accounting system and introducing new software, Gullede Homes recently added Brenna Delmenhorst to provide operations support.



“Bringing Brenna on board has allowed me to spend more time face-to-face with our clients and in the field. She has allowed us to be more effective in our daily operation,” Robby Delmenhorst noted. “Brenna has given us a fresh perspective on how we do things, enabling us to streamline the entire process.”


Even though he graduated from college with a business degree, Gulledge admits that his on-the-job training has been much more valuable to his success as a builder than his college courses. “I’ve worked in construction most of my life. I worked on my dad’s projects while growing up.

“I enjoy the process of building. It can be challenging, but it’s never boring. As a builder, you’re always on the move. I enjoy working directly with the clients. It can be stressful, but I like stress. The rewards are worth the time and care we put in.”



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TMB: What is your favorite design style?

Kara Wuellner: “Spin-offs” of the core design styles! I personally live in an ultra-modern style home that has lots of different living spaces, white leather seating and art that offers bold pops of color. I love natural light, so my house has tons of beautiful windows!

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

Kara Wuellner: I am fascinated by texture and color in design. There are so many colors and hues and shades, it’s just incredible! We love to play up ceiling heights and to use various textures to add depth in our clients’ homes. And we definitely aren’t afraid of color!

I personally love the beach and draw inspiration from how the ocean is a different color, how the sand has various layers and how the sun always sets a different color each time we go to our beach house.

TMB: How would you characterize your personal style?

Kara Wuellner: My personal style is clean lines with pops of color! I like to have fun with art and fabric and use them in unique ways. I never shy away from a charismatic piece of furniture either. I like to call them “conversation pieces.”

TMB: What would be your recommendation for “what to do first” in a decorating project when working with the builders and/or homeowners?

Kara Wuellner: Hire a designer first! Ha! First thing I always tell my clients is to let someone else look at your floor plan, ask questions and give you a little “food for thought.” Sometimes it’s that fresh perspective that can make all the difference. I also suggest taking a

good inventory of what you already have that will be incorporated into your project. Final thought, never leave home without your tape measure!

TMB: How do you keep yourself up to date with current design trends in the market?

Kara Wuellner: I love to read any and all design magazines and books. I am an avid collector of coffee table books too. There is never a time that I don’t look through them (after having looked through them hundreds of times before) and say to myself “I can’t believe I didn’t see that before!”

TMB: Any last thoughts, comments?

Kara Wuellner: We are super excited to be launching our new website and logo this winter season. We continue to evolve and grow, and this launch is just another step in the right direction. We have some new faces on our marketing and social media team, and they are thinking outside of the box. 2018 is sure to be another fabulous year!

You may contact Kara Wuellner, owner and principal designer of The Design Firm, at kara@thedesignfirm.com or by 281-494-4433.

The Design Firm is located at 13013 Southwest Freeway, Houston, TX 77477. Its website is www.thedesignfirm.com







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“Since the indirect test is so vague and non-specific, the NLRB has not excluded the possibility that a home building firm could be found to be joint employers of its subcontractors if it merely asked for additional subcontractors to complete a job that is running behind schedule,” said MacDonald.

This is especially problematic for the housing industry, given that most home building companies employ fewer than 10 workers and rely on an average of 22 subcontractors to complete a home.

The Save Local Business Act offers a common-sense solution to the uncertainty generated since the NLRB’s ruling by proclaiming that a company may be considered a joint employer of a worker only if it ‘directly, actually, and immediately’ exercises significant control over the primary elements of employment.

“By codifying this definition, the legislation eliminates the uncertainty that has threatened to upend the residential construction sector and provides employers with a clear standard for joint employment,” said MacDonald. “We urge the Senate to promptly introduce similar legislation.”

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

Network in Action & The Metropolitan Builder bring together a coalition of like-minded individuals who understand the power of building business. All professionals are known personally and professionally and valued for their integrity and outstanding work ethic. They will help you realize your own professional success as you grow your business.

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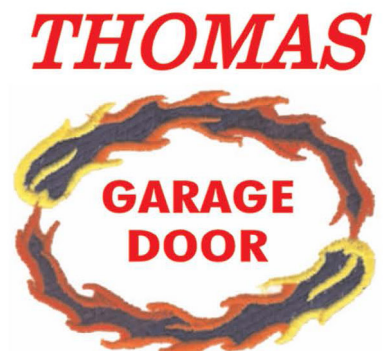
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