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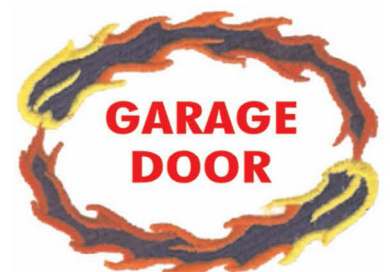


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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Giselle Bernard
Publisher

The holidays tend to bring out the best in all of us don't they? We start the holiday season in celebration of Thanksgiving by focusing on all that we are thankful for. Christmas rounds the corner and we then focus on all that we've been blessed with: the love of family, good friends, joy, peace on earth and goodwill to all.

Before you know it, we are ringing in the New Year and focusing on a set of New Year's resolutions.

Today, I pray that you all had a Merry Christmas and wish all a prosperous, Happy New Year! Let's make this next year Rock!

Giselle Bernard, *Owner/Publisher*



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Incredible Renovations Guarantees Quality Work Delivered On Time, On Budget

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

When Adam A. Bakir created Incredible Renovations in 1979, he considered what his potential remodeling and custom home customers would value. He anticipated that all of his customers would want a team that would answer their questions, handle changes efficiently, complete jobs as promised and stick to budgets and timelines.

And now, almost 39 years later, he has never strayed from his original concept.

In fact, he feels so strongly about the concept that he provides a written guarantee of up to \$300 a day if any of Incredible Renovations' projects are late. He noted that his is the only company in the nation to offer this guarantee.

"I am a strong believer in quality work that gets delivered on time and on budget at every price level," said Bakir, who holds certifications as a professional engineer,

graduate master builder, graduate master remodeler and certified green building professional.

A team of professional engineers, architects, interior designers and support staff comprise Incredible Renovations' staff. Adam, a civil engineer who majored in structural engineering and minored in architecture, leads a staff of eight. Other staff members include his wife Raghda, an interior designer; Carolina, an architect; Aaron and Scott, project managers; Garrett, an estimator and project manager; Deanna, an accounting and purchasing manager; and Judyth, a public relations and marketing manager. Of course the company also works with many trade partners.

"We are a true one-stop shop that looks at projects through the eyes of our clients. We consider the clients in every decision and every policy we make," Bakir said.



“Our embrace of customer service is incredible. We service our clients after delivering their new or remodeled home and again after three months. We check back again at six months and then at one year and even years after that if a problem arises. We stand behind our work,” he emphasized.

Bakir noted that a typical project lasts three to four months. “This journey is like a marriage, when you consider the warranties that may last up to 10 years. Consequently, we need to spend more time interviewing prospective clients to make sure we are a perfect fit with their needs and expectations.

“We define success as keeping our clients happy so they will refer their friends and family. We strive to have every client refer at least one new client. Now our track record of client referrals is over 50 percent, but we plan to increase our referral rate to 67 percent within the next five years. It will then be the highest in the industry!” he added.

According to Bakir, the reason for the high level of referrals is because his staff listens to its clients intently, sets realistic expectations through its process and expectations procedure and designs and builds what the clients want. All of that in addition to delivering on time and on budget!

As part of its procedures, Incredible Renovations provides

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Dialogue with a Designer

Teresa Cwik, owner of Showcase Staging Houston

This month The Metropolitan Builder (TMB) speaks with Teresa Cwik, owner of Showcase Staging Houston, which is Houston's premier, award-winning, home-staging design company. Her experience includes more than 25 years in the real estate industry and more than 20 years of professional home staging.

Teresa's notable skills as a "stage-to-sell" designer have earned her a reputation as one of Houston's top professional home-staging experts. She specializes in staging vacant high-end luxury homes, designing each home to appeal to targeted buyer and specific Houston markets. Teresa and her talented team of professionals create sophisticated, beautiful designs in their staged homes. Homes designed by Showcase Staging Houston sell quickly and for top dollar. Ninety-nine percent of the homes staged locally by Showcase Staging Houston have sold.

The Metropolitan Builder: *What motivated you to go into the interior design field?*

Teresa Cwik: I have always loved beautiful homes and furnishings. Before becoming a home staging professional, my mother and I would visit model homes. I was always fascinated by the various designs, styles and color schemes. I was motivated because I saw a need within the real estate industry for home staging. I believed I could fill the need and offer a great service.

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

Teresa Cwik: Home stagers can create lots of value in a home's sale price. They can transform a cold/vacant home into a warm/inviting home. It is difficult for buyers to visualize furniture placement. Staging takes the guesswork out of visualization. Staging will appeal to the vast majority of buyers regardless of their personal taste. Staging helps our clients sell their homes faster and for top dollar.

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

Teresa Cwik: Our service. Our custom staging designs. Our stylish, quality furniture, art, rugs and accessories.

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

Teresa Cwik: We custom-design the staging for every home we stage. We design the staging to match the homes style and colors. We also target the market area and buyer profile for very effective staging.

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

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Builders Confident as Market Primed to Expand in 2018

December 18, 2017

Builder confidence in the market for newly-built single-family homes increased five points to a level of 74 in December on the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI) after a downwardly revised November reading. This was the highest report since July 1999, over 18 years ago.

“Housing market conditions are improving partially because of new policies aimed at providing regulatory relief to the business community,” said NAHB Chairman Granger MacDonald, a home builder and developer from Kerrville, Texas.

“The HMI measure of home buyer traffic rose eight points, showing that demand for housing is on the rise,” said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. “With low unemployment rates, favorable demographics and a tight supply of existing home inventory, we can expect continued upward movement of the single-family construction sector next year.”



Derived from a monthly survey that NAHB has been conducting for 30 years, the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index gauges builder perceptions of current single-family home sales and sales expectations for the next six months as “good,” “fair” or “poor.” The survey also asks builders to rate traffic of prospective buyers as “high to very high,” “average” or “low to very low.” Scores for each component are then used to calculate a seasonally adjusted index where any number over 50 indicates that more builders view conditions as good than poor.

All three HMI components registered gains in December. The component measuring buyer traffic jumped eight points to 58, the index gauging current sales conditions rose four points to 81 and the index charting sales expectations in the next six months increased three points to 79.

Looking at the three-month moving averages for regional HMI scores, the Midwest climbed six points to 69, the South rose three points to 72, the West increased two points to 79 and Northeast inched up a single point to 54.

Editor’s Note: The NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index is strictly the product of NAHB Economics, and is not seen or influenced by any outside party prior to being released to the public. HMI tables can be found at nabh.org/hmi. More information on housing statistics is also available at housingeconomics.com.





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Teresa Cwik: Placement of the dining room light fixture. Don't know why, but often the dining room light fixture is not positioned over the table but centered on the room. For accuracy, investors that I work with will wait to place the dining room light fixture until the dining room table has been placed.

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

Teresa Cwik: The last contractor in the home prior to listing

should be the stager (other than the photographer). It is important that all construction projects are complete and the home is cleaned before staging.

TMB: How do you keep yourself up to date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?

Teresa Cwik: It's easy. I love all styles, and I search the internet sometimes for inspiration. I like viewing High Fashion Home and Restoration Hardware websites, among many others.

TMB: What is your favorite design style?

Teresa Cwik: Contemporary and/or modern. I especially

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Cornerstone Overhead Garage Door Sets the Stage for a Beautiful Home

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Your garage door gives visitors the first impression of your home. Therefore, it should be the home's best feature. If your home deserves a custom garage door, Cornerstone Overhead Garage Door is the place to shop.

"Our customers are not restricted to a catalog of designs," stated Iris Espinoza, owner. "We offer custom-built wood overlay garage doors. We also supply full-view glass doors and standard steel garage doors. We have built many one-of-a-kind custom doors."

Cornerstone also specializes in the installation of low-headroom garage doors and high-lift garage doors.

"Our garage doors can be found in homes built by award-winning builders in The Woodlands, River Oaks, Bellaire, West University, Memorial area, Memorial Villages and other areas of Houston," she continued.

Garage doors' prices depend on many factors, but the most significant factor is the type of wood selected (cedar, knotty alder, cypress, mahogany or others), the size of the door opening and design.

All of Cornerstone's wooden doors are built in-house. Why? So Cornerstone can control every detail of the process to ensure that the door is of the highest quality, Espinoza said. By building the doors in-house, the company can ensure a quicker turn-around time, too.

In fact, Espinoza's father, who has more than 20 years' experience as a construction framer for a high-end builder, constructs all the wood overlay doors for Cornerstone. "The detail and care he puts into each wood door is a testament to his expertise," she said.

Her father is not the only family member involved in the company. While Iris is in charge of most of the day-

to-day operations, including scheduling, invoicing and networking, her brother-in-law Saul is the main installer. He joined Cornerstone after working in the HVAC field for ten years and serving as a Marine. "Saul's attention to detail runs parallel only to his desire to always do the job right," she noted.

Espinoza's sister Stephanie, a recent graduate of St. Edwards University, is helping with daily operations and opening new accounts. Another sister, Miriam, is in charge of accounts receivable.

Unfortunately, the family member who started Cornerstone Overhead Garage Door in 2007, Iris' husband, Anthony H. Munguia, passed away in 2013. At that time Iris was studying to be a nurse. "When it came time to re-enroll for nursing classes, I had to decide whether to continue nursing school or continue with the business. At that time our daughter, Valerie, was four, and I knew that continuing with Cornerstone would allow me to spend more time with her. With support of family and builders familiar with Cornerstone, I was able to continue my husband's legacy. I could have never imagined that four years later I would see our garage doors all over town."

During the next five years Espinoza said she would love to establish Cornerstone as the leader in garage doors in

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its clients with a copy of its Homeowner's Emotional Chart, showing them when, where and why in the process they are likely to have concerns. "We know that remodeling can be a rollercoaster emotionally, and, therefore, we hold our clients' hands the whole way through the process," Bakir stated.

That attention to its customers has been recognized by those in the building industry. Incredible Renovations received the Pinnacle Award from the Houston Better Business Bureau in 2011 and in 2017 and the organization's Award of Excellence for the last eight years. It is rare that a company is awarded the Pinnacle more than once, according to Bahir. Incredible Renovations also received Best of Houzz awards for customer service in 2016 and 2017.



But the company is not resting on its laurels. It plans to implement a customer relations calendar system to keep its staff, trade partners and clients informed of the ongoing building schedule and product deliveries. "This new generation of clients is asking for more information, and we want to keep them informed," Bakir said.

"Our clients are becoming more educated about the process of construction due to the continuing growth of the Internet as well as confusing or false information on YouTube. Clients educating themselves has been a challenge for us because not all of the information they obtain is correct or applicable. Thus, we have to spend more time explaining and educating than we did in the past." The company's public relations/marketing manager helps meet that need.

Most of Incredible Renovations' work is for busy, college-



educated professionals between the ages of 35 to 55 with a household income of more than \$150,000 who own homes valued at more than \$400,000. They are likely to live in southwest Houston within 30 minutes of Incredible Renovations' office in the Galleria section of town.

About 60 percent of Incredible Renovations' work is large remodeling projects, such as second-story additions, full-home renovations or attic conversions ranging from \$100,000 to 1 million. The company completes 25 to 35 projects each year.

Its build/design custom home projects range from \$1 million to \$1.5 million for homes of 4,000 to 5,000 sq. ft. It built three custom homes in 2017 and plans to build more next year.

Bakir said he loves to use his engineering skills to find creative solutions to difficult problems. As a member of the Foundations Performance Association's Structural Committee, Adam has co-authored several papers on best practices and improving foundation performance.

Incredible Renovations is a proud member of the Greater Houston Builders Association and strives to keep its customer service top notch, Bakir stated.



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Houston while expanding to areas beyond the city.

Besides building and installing garage doors, Cornerstone Overhead Garage Doors offers many of the important services needed to keep garage doors in working order. Cornerstone provides spring replacement, gear and sprocket assembly, re-tracking and maintenance (tuning, lubrication and balance).

Espinoza suggests that homeowners schedule an annual preventive maintenance appointment, noting that the garage door is the largest moving part in a house and is used multiple times each day and in every season.

Because most of Cornerstone's customers are builders, Espinoza said she focuses the company's marketing and advertising efforts through the Greater Houston Builders Association and the Metropolitan Builder magazine. "Although our primary customers are custom builders, we like to treat all of our customers as primary customers."

Referrals from satisfied customers are the greatest source of new business. Cornerstone Overhead Garage Doors has been growing through customer satisfaction and customers' referrals through the years, she added.

"At Cornerstone, we like to establish a relationship with

our clients. By choosing us, they will get the highest quality of work done at the fairest prices," Espinoza concluded.

*For more information, contact
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Continued from page 8

love the new mid-century modern look.

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

Teresa Cwik: Doing unexpected pairings of color choices. Also, mixing styles for an amazing, fresh, new design.

TMB: How would you characterize your personal style?

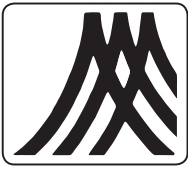
Teresa Cwik: My personal style is transitional with pops of contemporary/modern.

To contact Teresa Cwik at Showcase Staging Houston, call 281-979-555 or visit www.ShowcaseStagingHouston.com.

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