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International Flooring Wants to
Be Part of Builder's Team

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By Kathy Bowen Stolz

You've heard that saying, it takes one to know one? Well, Richard Arnold, co-owner of International Hardwood Flooring, LLC, is living proof of the truth behind the saying.

You see, Richard is a former builder, and he knows from experience what builders want and need in a flooring supplier. He and his partner Luis Hernandez make sure they fulfill those needs. "We understand the situation, the needs, the budget, the timing and the scheduling. We understand about holding trades accountable. We do our best to keep our schedules. We hold our suppliers to a very high quality.

"We are not just a flooring company. We look out for our builders. We want to be a team with our builders. They are our partners." One of the things that allows International Flooring (IF) staff to have a strong relationship with its customers is that the staff sees themselves as partners, not customers, he added.

International Flooring is a business-to-business company, Arnold continued. He and Hernandez prefer to deal with like-minded, professional builders. "We spend time with our customers. We're able to focus and do really, really good work for them. We get to do really nice stuff, work in some of the most beautiful homes in Houston and get to meet great people."

He said that their clients are typically custom builders who construct three to six houses a year with a lot of square footage. He said IF as about 35 builders for whom it does all of their flooring projects. "Our customers match our dedication to quality, attention to detail and excellent value for the buyer."

Arnold said the company offers a great service to builders. They will email him a .pdf of their plans and/or specs and ask, "What can you do at this price?" Because he knows what buyers and designers want, he will help the builder choose the best flooring to produce a Wow! factor that people will want to buy.

The flooring industry in Houston is very competitive and the building industry has its ups and downs, according to Arnold. "International Flooring has grown and grown because of our constant desire to keep doing better for our customers by offering better products, service, reliability, quality and prices. Always learning, always improving, it's what we are all about."

Builders, interior designers and homebuyers meet with Richard or Luis by appointment in International Flooring's private showroom. "One of our services, one of our strengths is our 15 years of experience. Clients can see



products we've been working with for years. We ask a lot of questions, such as is it a glue-down or a nail-down or a floating floor? And we answer all of their questions, educating them and allowing them to feel very comfortable about their choice of flooring. We help manage the buyers' expectations about the flooring. Expectations lead to the biggest conflicts between buyers and builders," he added.

"I respect builders. It really takes a thick skin to put up with all of the issues that buyers have. Our job is to help the homebuyer feel confident and comfortable with their flooring decision and help make the homebuilding process a little easier for our builder clients."

For example, IF replaced a floor after a complaint from the homeowner whose installed floor was markedly different than the showroom sample. Richard said the supplier had changed the product after producing the sample.

International Flooring's primary products are solid wood and engineered wood flooring, but it also sells wood countertops and reclaimed antique beams, carpet and tile. The company technicians also refurbish, refinish and restain old or damaged floors. They serve both residential and commercial clients of all budgets.





Richard's role with the company is sales and marketing, and Luis' role is finance and sales. The company also employs an accounting clerk, an office project assistant, a field manager, two back-shop workers and installation teams. Its installers follow the quality standards set by IF and use IF's products and installation methods, Richard noted.

In the next few years the company plans to grow its business by expanding its showroom and reaching out more to the designers in the great Houston community, Arnold added.

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