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presents



Client Engagement Strategies For Today's Evolving Market

A Seminar for Forward-thinking Kitchen & Bath Designers

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CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Seminar Overview by Ellen Cheever, CMKBD, ASID, CAPS Ellen Cheever & Associates

As an active kitchen and bath designer in the Mid-Atlantic area of the U.S., as well as a trend watcher for our industry, I have seen a “sea change” occur in the way we do business. To win in 2016, and beyond, successful designers are reorganizing, rethinking and recreating how they present their talents to prospective clients, and how they deliver on the promises they make.

We have created this new seminar to help you find the right path to follow as you reimagine your business plan and marketing strategy. The seminar was founded on great ideas that successful kitchen and bathroom business owners have shared with me. Rather than focusing on one business model, we wanted to take a look at many different ones – resulting in a collection of ideas, some of which can be personalized for your business.

I interviewed a wide variety of kitchen and bath professionals:

- Top producers who work out of a home office.
- Specialists who have attracted a loyal clientele working from small design studios.
- Designers who have medium-sized showrooms that are on the main thoroughfare of their business area, or are in a “destination” location.
- Business owners who manage large showrooms with an organized sales staff.
- I spoke with designers who focus on delivering a “wow” experience to the prospective clients.
- I listened to designers who firmly believe the best way work with a client is to show them a little bit of everything that they offer.
- Remarks are included from firms specializing in the plumbing industry, as well as those who focus their attention more exclusively on kitchens.

We hope this combination of insights from such talented individuals, along with my 40+ years of experience designing showroom spaces for firms across the country, will assist you in managing through our evolving markets.

Not to be overlooked is the value of time spent with fellow attendees: be prepared to share insights from your experiences, as well as listening intently to others. Query our respected sponsors, who are ready and willing to share new, innovative ideas with you throughout the day.

All of the information, ideas, insights, tips we share with you during the seminar have been cataloged in this Executive Summary, which I hope you will find useful as you apply any or all of this information to your business – right now.

You will leave this seminar enlightened, energized and ready to innovate and accelerate your business!

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Learning Objectives

1. Review the buying preferences and value systems of the four major demographic client groups kitchen and bath designers serve, so that attendees will appreciate how effective it is to work differently with each group.
2. Present an overview of benefits and concerns for the major types of merchandising spaces, so that attendees will have examples to compare with their business plan, helping them create new or modified plans for the future.
3. Highlight showroom and display planning details and design ideas, so that attendees have clear recommendations to consider when designing new, upgrading or downsizing their display/showroom spaces.
4. Discuss, in detail, successful marketing initiatives for a physical showroom business model, so that attendees can maximize their return on the investments made in such display spaces.
5. Discuss how technology and social media platforms can improve the business efficiencies during the design process and installation, as well as augment and/or replace traditional marketing plans, so that attendees can maximize their market exposure and minimize their cost of doing business.



Session 1

Creating the Right Client Experience Based on
Buying Habits and Lifestyle Preferences of
Different North American Generations



CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Session 1

Creating the Right Client Experience Based on Buying Habits and Lifestyle Preferences of Different North American Generations

INTRODUCTION

It is not too radical to say that our changing client base has led to a paradigm shift in how we conduct business.

What is a “paradigm shift?”

- A profound change in the fundamental model or perception of events.
- A radical change in underlying beliefs or theories.
- Acceptance by a majority of a changed belief, attitude or way of doing things.

Yes, indeed – a major change is occurring: driven by e-commerce and information access, which has led to the dramatic change in the way our clients approach the buying process and make decisions.

- The value of products we represent have moved from being based on exclusivity to being experiential.

Therefore, we are changing the way we present products – it is not about features and benefits, or that only a few can afford it. Value is about how the product or design element will make the client feel.

- The very definition of “luxury” has changed, as well.

We need to realize it is not the product they are really selling that is luxurious, rather it is the buying experience we create.

- The whole concept of “speed” – from returning communications to delivering products – has been impacted by e-commerce.

Simply telling a client they will wait 12 weeks for cabinets is not a part of a successful strategy with today's clients. Engaging activities and communications need to continue during the waiting period. Returning a text or e-mail must be almost instantaneous.

- Social media outlets, as well as the internet, has dramatically changed what the term “showroom” means and what is expected of a merchandising space.

Today's tech-savvy clients have likely seen products on display on-line before they ever visit a store. They expect you to be a friendly expert who respects their research, and uses technology to make the planning and buying process easy.

These three changes (e-commerce, internet information access, social media outlets) and our changing consumer demographics, mean that:

- The way we present ourselves in our marketing efforts;
- The way we demonstrate the products we represent in a merchandising space; and,
- The way we present ourselves ... **IS CHANGING!**

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AS WE BEGIN OUR DAY, LET'S DESCRIBE THE FOUR DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC CATEGORIES OF CLIENTS WE SERVE: WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON AND HOW THEY DIFFER.

Before we talk about their differences ... although these groups approach the buying process differently, one common preference in all categories is clients want to work with “trusted advisors” who will help them manage the overwhelming world of choice. Therefore, we professionals have evolved from being simple “order takers” to being “designers” to being “trusted advisors.”

This was well said when she commented in a September, 2015 *Kitchen & Bath Design News* article, written by Kymberly Weiner of Best Plumbing Tile & Stone

“Today, showroom presentations need to first focus on asking the right questions and listening intently to the customer’s responses. If the driver of luxury purchasing is indeed how the product will make the client feel – perhaps a good starting point is asking customers the feelings they’d like to receive when they use their new kitchen or bath: “How would they like the room to feel?” This question is essential to identify the emotional connection the client wants to have when they enter and use their new kitchen or bathroom. This is what helps the professional specify specific products.

“Being a trusted advisor to customers also simplifies the buying process. Showrooms can leverage information overload by limiting choices and cheerleading information on their customer’s behalf. For example, how can a consumer who searches for a farmhouse sink on Houzz.com ever make a selection from the 77,000 choices available to them. The ability to influence clients in the selection process depends on eliminating impediments that make decision-making difficult.”

What is the difference between ...?

- **An “Order Taker:”** The “order taker” presents all possible choices to the client and then carefully records their preference, and then follows their lead in the selection process.
- **A “Designer:”** A “designer” meets with the client, measures the project, retreats to their office and creatively creates the ideal kitchen or bath solution, prepares meticulous specifications, and then presents their solution to the consumer.
- **A “Trusted Advisor:”** A “trusted advisor” simplifies the buying process. Designers can leverage “information overload” by limiting choices and curating information on the client’s behalf.

Let’s learn about the various attributes, buying preferences and typical value systems of the four demographic groups we service.

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LET'S MEET OUR CLIENTS!

The Matures (Born Between 1923–1945, Ages 71–93)

Commonly known as “Matures” and the “Silent Generation.” Born between 1923 to the mid 1940s (various start and stop years appear in research articles), they are 71 years old or older in 2016, with an estimated population of 41 million. The group is called “Silent,” not because they didn’t speak their minds, but because they had a strong work ethic, were very patriotic and loyal.

These Americans were raised in highly paternalistic families, so they respected authority. They favored consensus and uniformity in the work place. They were good team players, and didn’t start any conflicts with their managers and supervisors. That’s where the name “Silent” came from. The members of the Silent Generation are also called “Traditionalists.” The majority of them are now well into their 70s and even 80s. They are mostly retired, though there are some who’re still working.

From a business perspective, these folks are GOOD clients. They have wealth, they respect designers, and they’re accustomed to paying for professional services. In our industry, they’re a major reason behind the emerging need for multi-generational home design, because they either need or want: to live on their own; to move in with younger family members; or to welcome struggling younger family members into their more affluent life. Most interesting, they’re also exploring communal living arrangements, where like-minded adults who are not related are finding houses or communities to live together, sharing costs for support services.

Attributes of the Mature Client Group

- May be downsizing to smaller, elegant homes or pedestrian-friendly inner city condos. Or, making their family homes or second homes safe to age in. Still interested in high quality products.
- Often have traditional values, enjoy multi-generational gatherings.
- May be more tech-savvy than you realize: it is the way they communicate with their grandchildren.
- Appreciate the elegance of good manners, and old world pleasantries.
- Are very focused on staying in control of their lives, and gracefully “aging-in-place.”
- Not as concerned about “edgy” products or “green” design.
- Expert cooks who enjoy the art of cooking. May be “set-in-their ways.”
- Appreciate being organized and living in a neat environment.

Engagement Strategies for Mature Clients

- Want to have a gracious, elegant, pleasant interaction with their designer. Traditionalists who appreciate order. Focus on your storage plan.
- May be conservative in design preferences.
- Ask this prospective client how best to communicate with them.
- Lead the design process when working with this client.
- Do not “push” new avant-garde products. Keep the equipment simple and easy to use.
- Be accommodating regarding when they would like to meet with you.
- Be patient with this consumer – their first answer might be the most conservative one, or they may initially want to stay within their comfort zone. Gracefully suggest good ideas a second time for them to reconsider.
- Build safety and aging-in-place ideas into your solution. Leave space for expanded family gatherings.

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Baby Boomers (Born Between 1946–1964, Ages 52–70)

Commonly known as “Baby Boomers.” Also referred to as “Trailing Edge Baby Boomers” and “Leading Edge Baby Boomers.” Baby Boomers were born between the years 1946 and 1964. In 2016, age 52 to 70 years old. Baby Boomers have always had an outsized presence compared with other generations. They were the largest generation and peaked at 78.8 million in 1999. There were a projected 75.4 million Boomers in 2014. By mid-century, the Boomer population will dwindle to 16.6 million.

- *Leading Edge Baby Boomers* (also known as “Golden Baby Boomers”) were born between the years 1946 and 1955, and are between the ages of 61 and 70 in 2016.
- *Trailing Edge Baby Boomers* (also known as “Generation Jones”) were born between the years 1956 and 1964, and are between the ages of 52 and 60 in 2016.

Attributes of the Baby Boomer Client Group

Designers should never overlook the Baby Boomer client's impact on our business. The largest amount of disposable income continues to be in the pockets of Baby Boomers.

To understand the continued influence of the Baby Boomer breadth and depth of the market this group offers the kitchen and bathroom designer, consider these statistics:

- Baby Boomers will continue to be a major client we serve. Age 52 and up, they still lead in spending, averaging about double the amount of investment in a kitchen remodel compared with Millennials.
- They represent 70% of consumer wealth, spending 3.2 times what all other groups spend.
- 50.8% of US Baby Boomers are women.
- Baby Boomers are very comfortable with who they are and what they like.
- While they are active on social media, Baby Boomers appreciate beautiful photographs as well.
- They are accustomed to working with designers, and paying design fees.
- They have suffered through mistakenly purchasing poor quality products, thinking they were getting a bargain. This group typically understands “you get what you pay for.”
- The group loves to entertain, considers their memories a part of their very personality, and enjoy celebrating life with their collections of treasures.
- This group might be sandwiched between aging parents who they are caring for or worried about, as well as children and grandchildren of varying ages: a welcoming entertaining area is important to them.
- These facts and figures speak to the enormous market that is America's richest demographic, the 50+ generation, who will want and need services and products that meet their needs today and can evolve with them to suit their needs tomorrow, resulting in a more independent and healthy lifestyle as they mature. The business opportunities that await those who understand this demographic, and know how to communicate with and market to them are enormous.

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Baby Boomers (and Seniors) are often very comfortable with who they are and what they like

A thoughtful comment on the dangers of trying to stay on trend, rather than settling on the pleasure of enjoying your own “tastes” appeared in the November/December, 2015 *Robb Report Home & Style*. The editor, Arianne Nardo, wrote thoughtfully about deciding what pleases you when she said:

“Somewhere between first grade memories of the living room sofa and a fortunate friend-of-a-friend guest house invite for a long weekend, we discover our tastes. If we’re lucky, our design ideas are shaped early on, through museum memberships and a worn-in passport. Realistically, we learn what we want in our homes through a process of elimination: through the subtle coercion of roommates and lovers; from clumsy but well-intended tryst with trends; and by seizing any voyeuristic opportunity to see what other people’s lives look like beyond the front door. Ultimately, one’s home is a lifetime of selections.”

“While artists have canvases; we have four walls (and then some) to command. It is a decorative leap with thrilling and daunting prospects.”

“For our more mature clients, after decades of decorative auctioning, our tastes will do the unimaginable. They will give us permission to deviate. Whether it’s color, mood, or intention, these variances are the interiors quiet riot. A riot leading to personal pleasure.”

Baby Boomers appreciate print media

On the September, 2015 *Conde Nast Traveler* Editor’s Page, Phil Guzman, Editor-in-Chief, stated that, in his view, better print and better digital aren’t mutually exclusive. *“In fact, the more we find ourselves beholden to the utility of touch screen star ratings, paperless check-in, and marriage-saving GPS navigation – the more we long for a sumptuous printed page.”*

Consumers interested in a new kitchen or bath are either dreaming about it, planning it – or under siege in the renovation or building process. The designer can help the consumer navigate the push/pull between inspiration and service, reverie and transaction: *“Between take me there in spirit,” and “Get the project done on time.”*

He concludes, *“The magazine may be a keepsake – it’s like a wax seal endorsement – a counterpoint to social media is a more fleeting ‘tap’ of approval. We feel about the printed page the way we do about – say – a tasseled hotel key – infinitely less practical and far less easy to stash than the magnetic card – but far more evocative.”*

Engagement Strategies for Baby Boomers

- Some Baby Boomers are similar to Generation X clients, some more aligned with the Matures. Designers need to listen to Boomers during their initial conversations, with the strategic goal of determining which group (the Matures or Generation) that particular client is most like.
- Do not shy away from offering elegant solutions, help these clients celebrate their success.
- Do ask how they would like you to communicate with them and how much contact they would like as the planning process proceeds. Be attentive. Be the friend they are looking for to help them make difficult decisions.
- Make sure your jobsite crews are fastidious. Protect their home. They have a great deal of pride in their possessions – indeed, some of these objects define their lifestyle.
- When creating a solution, personalize your ideas, weave in how your solution will support how they would like to live or include their treasured possessions.

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- Offer high-tech options that might make cooking easier and entertaining more fun. Maybe an electric trash drawer? Perhaps an oven that has interactive photographs as part of its control panel?
- Do not assume these clients have visited Houzz or created a Pinterest board. Ask if they have photographs they have collected – cherished imagery that they are anxious to share with you. Be flexible – they could have both, or one or the other.
- Do not assume there is a traditional decision-maker arrangement between two adults you are working with. Definitely do not insist that both adults be present for all of your meetings. While this is the best way to present your ideas, you can offend Baby Boomers if their adult arrangement allows for one individual to make all decisions – and pay for the project.
- Realize that, oftentimes, the Baby Boomer hopes to create a private spa-like sanctuary in their master bathroom, rather than a simple grooming area. Pay close attention to what they value if you are planning a bathroom, so you can “juggle” the budget and the space best suited for their preferences.
- Include “green living” ideas, rather than unusual “green products.” These clients are well aware of the importance of minimizing their “carbon footprint,” but a water filter at the sink to eliminate bottled water may be more their style than a cardboard-based countertop material.
- Gently and discreetly suggest aging-in-place products and/or space solutions as you plan a new kitchen or bathroom for these clients.

Generation X (Born Between 1965–1979, Ages 37–51)

Commonly known as “Generation X,” as well as “Gen-X” and the “Latch Key Generation.” Born between the years of 1965 and 1979. In 2016, age 37 to 51 years old. For a few more years, Gen Xers are projected to remain the “middle child” of generations” – caught between two larger generations of the Millennials and the Boomers. They are smaller than Millennials because the generational span of Gen X (16 years) is shorter than the Millennials (17 years). Also, the Gen Xers were born during a period when Americans were having fewer children than later decades. Though the oldest Gen Xer is now 50, the Gen X population will still grow for a few more years. The Census Bureau projects that the Gen X population will peak at 65.8 million in 2018.

Attributes of the Generation X Client Group

- They only trust “real” people who have “real” experiences. They will listen to “experienced” knowledge.
- Total control of their lives.
- Because they are very concerned about “the dangers” of the outside world, they protect their families by trying to create an almost “‘50s” sense of home life.
- Many are emerging chefs – they appreciate help in learning how to cook.
- Believe that a combination of healthy living and medical breakthroughs will lead to their enjoyment of a long, healthy life.
- Accessible design – for everyone. Not just for their “aging-in-place” plans, but to make it much easier for aging relatives and extended family members to visit them. Want a kitchen that is “command central.”
- Believe if they shop carefully they can find good design at the mid-price point range.
- Interest in both International Contemporary and more Traditional styling.
- “Gadgets,” accustomed to frequent upgrades in “tools for living.” They also value equipment (large and small appliances) that make life in the kitchen simpler.

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- Technology- they will use it as a comparison shopping tool and information source. Multiple computing areas are important.

Engagement Strategies for Generation Xers

- Know your product thoroughly so you can answer their questions.
- Present yourself as a provider of information, not a salesperson. Focus on practical storage/layout solutions. Present a total storage solution.
- Realize they will make up their own minds. They trust their own decision more than a designer's expertise.
- Be prepared for this group to stray into "design by committee" territory, soliciting opinions from everyone from close friends and family to random strangers. Be confident enough to keep them focused on a consistent design.
- Recognize they have roots in the HGTV culture. They feel confident taking on their own projects and may think they have more construction knowledge than they really do. As a designer, you may need to gently lead them back to reality and adjust their expectations.
- Welcome questions - this group craves knowledge and asks questions! Be comfortable being compared to other design firms/product sources.
- Expand your design style knowledge. Remember, younger clients like everything - this can be confusing. Help them "dance" between old and new. Be comfortable with the American definition of Contemporary, as well as avant-garde Modern styling.
- Include technology in solutions, as well as your communication style.
- Include "green" design ideas, and build accessibility into the plan.

Be ready to explain why you are a better resource than the internet!

One successful designer shared how she explains and demonstrates her value to a consumer.

- Searching on-line does not provide the type of service that she can because she has been trained by the manufacturer, and is knowledgeable about the mechanics of plumbing. On-line or in a showroom, all you're really going to see is the "pretty stuff." The consumer doesn't understand what's needed behind the wall. The professional in a showroom can design a custom shower, and then specify the right valves based on the available water pressure, the number of showerheads, and decide if they will work sequentially or concurrently. None of this information is available on-line, and at some multi-branch retailers the trims and rough-in valves are packaged together, so custom showers are not possible.
- She also tries to help a prospective client understand that there can be differences in the quality of products she represents from a manufacturer that might also have engineered proprietary products for a more value-focused organization. The same looking faucet might have a plastic pop-up, rather than the one she's recommending, which is metal. Needless to say, the metal will outlast the plastic.
- One of the big advantages of working with a "brick-and-mortar" large organization that specializes in one area of our industry is the warranty service that is available to the client. When a consumer buys something from a major showroom, and a problem occurs during the installation phase or as the product is used, the consumer needs only to call their trusted professional. The showroom personnel, probably, are on a first name basis with the product reps: they will approach a repair or replacement with a "solution-slanted outlook." They will be much more able to ascertain if a replacement part or a complete replacement of the item is the best approach. On-line shopping does not provide that expertise at all.

(Source: Carla Wersonick, Doc Savage Supply)

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Design specialists must be aware of the misconception that design and installation pricing is available on-line!

As Craig Webb reported in a *Remodeling.com* editorial, designers must be continually aware of the growing trend to have internet service providers present themselves as vetting pros or professionals consumers should consider using.

One service provider is mulling over the possibility of building a service that lets customers enter information about where they live and what they want done, and then have a service list of nearby “pros” who will do the work for a set price. Such a practice tries to commoditize as many tasks that remodelers do. This might work well for handyman jobs – but not for what professional kitchen and bath designers do.

The notion that you can commoditize work that's more often custom will grate on many designers' ears – but the question is, “*What will we do about it to present our unique talents?*”

Generation Y (Born Between 1980–2000, Ages 16–36)

Commonly known as “Generation Y.” Also known as the “Millennial Generation” or “Millennials,” “Generation Next.” Born between the years of 1980 and 2000. In 2016, age 16 to 36 years old. By 2015 Millennials increased in size to 75.3 million and became the biggest group. With immigration adding more numbers to its group than any other, the Millennial population is projected to peak in 2036 at 81.1 million.

Millennials are interested in the new and different, and unafraid of products that are bold and unusual. It is important to realize that they will buy the same way other consumers do, they are willing to spend for genuine value, and they want their homes to be both technologically well-connected and truly representative of who they are.

Homeowners under 40 are data-driven. They know all about your company, your products and your service reputation. They are impatient with traditional sales practices, and prefer to talk with technical experts. “They're people who wouldn't order a pizza without reading the reviews first,” Hoty says, “and this habit's been created into how they shop for everything.”

While Millennials are highly price-conscious because of their penchant for on-line shopping comparisons, they are also value-hungry and relationship oriented. To sum it up, “They want to buy at a great price from a knowledgeable designer/salesperson who they like – someone who's approachable and doesn't overwhelm them.”

That, in a nutshell, describes the buying preferences of Millennials, the 80-million-strong generation whose potential buying power promises to fuel the kitchen and bath, new construction and remodeling markets for years to come.

Attributes of the Generation Y Client Group

- Live a casual lifestyle, they oftentimes grew up in homes with open floor plans and, clearly, understand the concept of a “great room.” They are searching for a kitchen that is not open, but designed so they can “hang out” with friends and family in the space. This means being able to manage the pre- and post-dinner clutter.
- Interest in a casual lifestyle goes hand-in-hand with their preference for a clean, Contemporary design aesthetic. They are focused on “clean lines,” less details, durable construction and easy-to-maintain.
- Responsible resource management and “green” design. They will buy from a company that cares about others.

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- Value accessible design. They are interested in open floor space for children to play, a spot for the highchair, an area for pets to nap or play or eat, and a spot for storage for intellectually stimulating games and puzzles.
- They are confident. They are extreme collaborators. They have redefined the meaning of “authentic.”
- Good design at all price ranges. They have not experienced good design as older consumers have. The world of quality has been “flattened” by mass merchants. They believe they can “figure anything out” by Googling it ... and that any price is negotiable. However, they will pay more for something they value. And, they highly value personalized design solutions.
- Technology plays a key role in the lives of Millennials who literally grew up on the internet. They expect to have technology incorporated into their kitchen “great room” that makes life easier, not more complicated.

Engagement Strategies for Generation Yers

- Do not hurry them through the selling process. Understand they require a great deal of hand-holding during the selling process.
- Companies that use any sort of a scripted sales presentation that moves sellers through various steps – introduction, rapport building, company story, etc. – towards a close may find Millennials startlingly abrupt. One expert says, “Stop selling them, and just give them facts.”
- Be real – the more real you are, the better your chances. If asked a question and you don't know the answer – say you don't know the answer. Be honest, fun and have a sense of humor.
- Appreciate that they are a “plugged in” group who values technology and customization.
- Know they are not afraid of buying things that are “edgy,” because they know they can sell them.
- Present eclectic design solutions: mixing bits and pieces of almost anything. Incorporate color and texture.
- Be prepared to demonstrate responsible resource management within your organization and represent “green” products.
- Incorporate technology into your design process and in the solutions you create.
- Be technical: be extremely knowledgeable about your products.
- Be aware of the time they have set aside to meet with you. Millennials like to get something done, and done quickly.

Session 2

Selecting the Right Business Model
For Your Company's Success



Session 2

Selecting the Right Business Model for Your Company's Success

TO BEGIN THE SHOWROOM PLANNING PROCESS ...

First, identify who your targeted consumer is.

The first element in a business strategy is the proper identification of your target consumer. Without doing so, you cannot create a clear marketing message to explain who you are to prospective clients.

Most business advisors today recommend NOT trying to provide products spanning from inexpensive entry-level to high-end luxury. If you agree (and we hope you do) your geographic area, the area's potential client pool, your skillset, your design interests and your financial goals will help you identify who you can most successfully work with. The more clearly you and your business team (sales force, crew members, supplier partners, business advisors) have identified your target consumer, the better you will be able to efficiently and profitably execute your strategy.

- Identifying your targeted consumer will help you decide what level of product to represent.
- Do nothing until you decide what vertical price point level you want to focus on in your business model.
- Realize you cannot be everything to everyone. Why? You will over-design budget-focused projects and under-design luxury settings

Second, identify your business model.

When thinking about your client, consider how you would like to do business! Know who you are so you can introduce yourself to your prospective client audience.

- Space Planning Services ... or ... Material Specification + Space Planning Services
- Offer Drawings for a Fee ... or ... Drawings Only Released with Product Purchases
- Only Product Sold (Collaborate with Allied Pro) ... or ... Product + Design Sold
- Show All Possibilities/Record Client Selection ... or ... Research Client Wants and Needs/Recommend Limited Selections (What did we just talk about?)
- Design/Build Firm ... or ... Cabinet/Top/Installed ... or ... Cabinets Delivered
- Display All Products Sold ... or ... Display Some Products + Partner with Allied Businesses
- Recommend/Refer to Appliance Source ... or ... Specify/Sell Appliances ... or ... No Appliance Involvement
- Refer to Bathroom Showroom ... or ... Display + Sell Bathrooms ... or ... No Bathroom Sales

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Third, know where you are heading and what you want to end up with at the conclusion of your career.

One more thing to be aware of: before you begin taking a look at these different opportunities to choose from, do assess where your professional career is now, what your future aspirations are, and what you want to do with your business when you retire.

- Are you happy where you are, and plan a steady – but familiar – future? Do you have a business to sell, or are you a “name-plate” design practice?
- Are you ready to slow down, to downsize your business? Same question: if you downsize, will the business retire with you?
- Or, are you looking to expand your business so it has a viable future in a family succession plan or as a business that can continue without you and, therefore, can be sold as a stand-a-lone business?

THE MERCHANDISING SPACE: VARIATIONS ON A THEME SELECTING THE RIGHT BUSINESS MODEL FOR YOUR COMPANY'S SUCCESS

Once you've identified your targeted consumer, developed your business model and decided on where you will succeed the most in the vertical positioning of your business: it's time to decide what type of physical space you should work from.

There is a wide variety of successful kitchen and bath businesses operating from a wide array of merchandising spaces! From stand-alone buildings, to houses turned into showrooms, to “strip mall” locations – there's no one right answer. We're going to take a look at many different successful firms.

A Home-based Business

Innovative Designs for Combining Work and Home

We interviewed several designers who successfully operate a business at home, and considered great solutions discussed in a book by Professor Frances Holliss, “Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work.” However, the challenge is most contemporary housing is designed solely as a living space, without the demands of work in mind. Home-based businesses need to resolve the conflict between private living areas and a noisy work space, between quiet private spaces and public areas.

- Home-based businesses have grown dramatically in the last 10 years: today, more than half of businesses registered in the U.S. are home-based.
- In the past, “working from your home” was considered an interim, stop-gap activity for someone looking for full-time employment.
- Today, some of the most successful individuals have opted to live and work in one location.

For kitchen and bath designers considering working from their home, the following concerns need to be addressed:

- Will the workspace be completely separated from the home space, or will they share some attributes?
- Can the actual working office be fully outfitted to maximize the efficiency?
- Where will the designer's sample library be located in relationship to the actual office space?
- Will clients be invited to this home-based office, or will all client meetings occur in industry partner product showrooms or outside allied professionals' conference area?

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Attributes

- The owner/designer is a sole proprietor with out-source associates: notably, a drafting/CAD specialist and assistants.
- Overall business success rests on principle's reputation and ability to work.
- At the end of owner's career, this type of business is not easy to sell.
- Works closely with allied professionals.
- A resource center organized in the home space. May have working parts of the home serve as displays.
- Limited number of projects completed each year.

From the Pros: Strategies to Create a Winning Client Experience

Lindy Weaver, Lindy Weaver Design Associates

Lindy Weaver has a design practice in New York, and is nearing retirement after a successful career as a kitchen specialist. Early in her career she did work in a traditional showroom, but decided she wanted to strike out on her own, and be very selective with whom she worked.

Over the years, she has established a working relationship with interior design professionals, who have provided a steady stream of referrals – leading to Lindy working across the country on second, third and fourth homes for her discerning clients. She's almost always part of a team – the designer or architect leads the team, Lindy coordinates all of the cabinetry and other built-in furniture pieces.

- One of the secrets to successfully working out of a home-based office is to develop a respected working relationship with allied professionals who bring work to you.
- Convince the tradespeople you know what you're doing.
- It's important to find a cabinet line to partner with that has invested in a website that serves as a "virtual showroom" of their product.
- Lindy has other strategies she shared with us, they are listed on page XXX in the Executive Summary.
- Today's affluent clients want to "take their team with them" when they build second or third residences.
- Therefore, focus on developing a rapport with the new on-site construction crews.
- Show them that you are not a designer who will make their job more difficult.
- Prove to them that you want to do everything you can to keep the project moving.
- Determine the skill level of the installation crew. If you are working with installers you are not familiar with, ask them "Have you had experience installing pre-finished cabinetry?" Trim carpenters are accustomed to having painters fill nail holes and puttying miters. With pre-finished, furniture-grade cabinetry, the installer must be responsible for these tasks, and treat the cabinetry as though it was fine antique furniture.
- Never trust anyone to take final field measurements for you! Regardless of the distance, Lindy is retained for at least one jobsite visit so she – in person – can measure the project after rough framing and windows are in-place.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Mary Maurey, That Design Place

Mary Maurey “grew up in the business” working with her father. She has an enviable experience-based expertise gleaned over years of in the field design work.

Mary was affiliated with a respected showroom in the D.C. area early in her career. She observed some of her fellow designers anxious to share every detail of the space with clients – almost as though they had a planned presentation. Mary always had a different approach: she would sit down with her clients and say, “Tell me about you and your new room before we look at product.” She wanted to learn all about the client, how the client lives, what their dream space would look like, and how their dream space would “feel.”

- Regardless of whether you work in a showroom, in an office or out of your car, today’s consumers want their space personalized. Therefore, start the process with an in-depth discussion and interview focused on what the prospective client’s dream space looks like and feels like.
- When it comes to pictures, Mary asks, “For what reason do you like this picture? What is the reason you’re showing me this picture?” She never asks, “Why do you like this kitchen?” – it’s too broad of a question. Make sure you understand why the client is showing a Pinterest board, a photo from Houzz or a magazine clipping.
- Create a “real life” showplace by having prospective clients talk to or visit former clients. Mary tells us, “Make sure the new client understands that you might not have been responsible for the decor.” Help them understand why you have selected a particular kitchen for them to visit.”
- Develop a small, select group of contractors and tradespeople who you work with over and over. If you’re working outside of your area, collaborate with the homeowner, ask them to select the subcontractors – but you should be involved in some type of interview to make sure the team will be cohesive and will understand your plans.
- When interviewing tradespeople:
 - Get an overall estimate.
 - Make sure the time table you’ve established for the project is workable.
 - Make sure they are comfortable working with someone outside of the area, younger/older.
- When you are working from home, know your most creative time and adjust your working hours to maximize your creativity.
- Use electronic digital design elements to minimize and manage paper clutter.

Dana Miles, DEM Designs

Dana Miles works from an elegant home in Saint Louis, Missouri. As she launched her home-based business, she established a relationship with a cabinet company, and was their first “studio” dealer. She has created “living displays” in various rooms of her house.

- If you work out of a home-based office, it’s important to think of your clients as your friends – you’re inviting them into your home. It creates a very relaxed atmosphere.
- Your home does not have to be “perfect” whenever clients come over. The house can be “lived in.”

As we spoke with other designers, this seems to be a very personal business decision. You will hear how others are very careful about inviting clients into their home-based office/“live-in” studio showroom.

- Use this business decision as an advantage: stress that you are saving the consumer money. Therefore, working with someone who practices out of their home is an advantage, not a disadvantage.
- You must have resources to replace a showroom: a photo gallery on Houzz, your manufacturers’ websites, homes of past clients.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

- Remember, your reputation is everything. If you are a sole proprietor: referrals are your life blood. Your level of success will be determined by the level of after-sale care you give the consumer. If a mistake is made, it doesn't matter who made it – just take care of it!

Shelly Preziosi, Shelly Preziosi Designs Inc.

Shelly Preziosi started in the industry as a traditional interior designer – she was Bloomingdale's Design Director. She moved into kitchens and baths when clients kept asking her, "While you're doing the master bedroom, can you handle the bathroom as well?"

When Shelly began her family she wanted more flexibility, so she opened her own home-based business. One of the keys for being based at home is that it gives a working parent flexible hours to match their children's schedule and to suit their "internal clock."

- Find ways to be recognized as an "expert" Your value is not determined by a large display space: but by what expertise you offer to your prospective clients.

Here's a good example of what Shelly, who has a home-based office, did to be recognized as a leader. She was referred to a plumbing fixture company that wanted to feature the work of 10 designers from across the country as they launched a new line of faucets. Shelly volunteered her time and talents (expecting no compensation), worked closely with the marketing team to feature the products they wanted to specify, met their timeline (these projects are always rushed!), and supplied all materials as requested. The result: now Shelly's featured on their national website.

If you have such a wonderful opportunity, make sure you share your recognition through other social media sources.

- Without a showroom, your website is your professional presentation: make it a great one! Shelly feels that investing in Houzz for her targeted territory was worth it.
- Shelly feels her most important social media avenue when working with clients is texting and e-mails. "I'm texting all day – back and forth, back and forth. They'll text me a picture and I'll comment back."
- If you are in a home-based business, make sure your office is a separate space, and decide where your sample/resource library is going to be created.
- Because working at home can be somewhat isolating, Shelly feels it's critical that home-based designers actively network within their professional community. A home-based professional loses the day-to-day contact with other designers or vendors stopping by a traditional showroom. Therefore, a home-based designer needs to enrich their own development by being active in design organizations and attending association events: just about any activity in their community that's business related should demand their attention.

Most importantly, when you're home-based you cannot succeed unless you develop a team of trusted resources and partner with allied professionals. Shelly considers herself an interior designer first; so she's quite comfortable collaborating with kitchen designers who have more specific product knowledge in the cabinetry catalog. Indeed, Shelly's strong point is collaboration.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Missi Davis, CKD, Bailiwick, Inc.

During Missi Davis' successful career she has worked for a traditional kitchen and bath design firm doing business in a showroom. She also had a small studio showroom of her own.

Missi learned the hard way how important it is to be located where your target clients are. She made the mistake of opting for an affordable, GREAT looking store front in Ft. Myers, which was away from her targeted clientele in affluent Naples, Florida. While she loved her Ft. Myers showroom (a 1920s building with brick walls and floor to ceiling windows), she realized she needed to be located in Naples. When she investigated available spaces in Naples, all she could get was a "drywall box," so she decided to work from home. Missi's kitchen is her showroom. She has her office and a resource center on the lower level, which doubles as a guest room.

- When working from a home-based office, assess your clients' reaction to such a location before you invite them to your office. Only invite people to your home-based office who will think it's "smart" – it's sophisticated because the business has less overhead. For clients who might be judgmental, meet them at the interior designer's office you've partnered with or in another showroom setting.
- Missi creates an "experience" for her clients, where they are an integral part of the design process. She has found clients enjoy the collaboration of looking over her shoulder as she suggests option after option.
- You must be extremely disciplined when working from home. You get up every morning, you get dressed and you "go to the office" on time. You maintain the space as a real office.
- You can be very successful if you partner with an outside design/drafting service.
- If you're going to work from your home, you need to align yourself with a small group of allied professionals who can bring business to you on a regular, repeat basis.
- To be really successful, have an extremely strong, respectful relationship with your primary cabinet supplier. If you're searching for a cabinet supplier to work with, find out what systems and/or services the manufacturer offers to support a designer.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

TIPS FROM AN EXPERT: HOW TO EFFICIENTLY WORK WITH AN OFF-SITE INDEPENDENT DRAFTING SERVICE

- **Computer Software:** Understand what computer format you want the work to be sent to you (i.e. DWG, PDF, JPEG). What other means of communication are available? For example, do they use Go To Meetings or Skype? How will they share large files? Do they use Dropbox or Hightail for file sharing
- **Accurate Field Measurements:** Include adjacent rooms and complete dimensions. Even if cabinetry is not going on a wall, give complete room dimensions. You never know if further in the process additional cabinetry or space will be needed and your draftsman will not be aware the surroundings. Incomplete dimensions on the initial sketch is a common oversight that is easily avoided. Spending a little more time on this detail early in the process will save time and money.
- **Time Frame/Business Hours:** Be clear about when you want your drawing completed. Leave room in your time frame to review the drawings and make revisions. Remember that your service or draftsman probably has other clients. Make sure they have the bandwidth to handle your project in the time allotted. Be conscious of when you give the project to them and when you want it returned. Understand your draftsman or service's business hours. Do they work on evenings or weekends?
- **Cost:** Is the project going to be billed hourly or will they bid by project? Bidding by project is a little more difficult for the draftsman because of potential revisions. Breaking down the costs of different stages is helpful. An hourly rate is generally more fair for both parties. This is because you are only paying for time spent and no more. Even if you use an hourly rate, it is very helpful to make your draftsman aware of your budget for the project. They want to keep working with you and will want to be mindful of your budget.
- **Drafting vs. Designing:** Understanding the difference between drafting and designing is critical. If you have a concept sketch and rough ideas, then you need design help and not drafting. If this is the case, make sure you're using a designer, not just a draftsman and expect to pay a higher rate.
- **Client Feedback:** Give complete client information with general appliances, number of seating needed at the island, etc. Too much information is better than not enough.
- **Legible Handwriting and Notes:** Make sure your field measurements and notes are clear and easy to read. Since you're not sitting in the office together you need know your draftsman understands everything. This is especially helpful if your draftsman keeps different hours than you. For example, they may work in the evening.
- **Photographs:** Existing photographs with the field measurements are really helpful. The draftsman may see things in the photo that will help in the layout of the room. Angled ceilings and baseboard heat are just a couple of examples.
- **Cabinetry Knowledge:** Make sure the draftsman is familiar with cabinetry sizes and manufactures. It takes different planning skills to layout a full overlay compared to an inset cabinet.
- **References:** Make sure you contact previous professionals that have worked with your draftsman.



Karen Dorion, CKD, Dorion Design Studio,LLC.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Jaclyn Wike, AKBD, Studio Swann

Jaclyn Wike has worked in a large showroom in Chicago's sophisticated Merchandise Mart, as well as for a showroom in the Chicago suburbs that was designed to feel as though you were walking through a home. She decided to go out on her own when she learned that she could represent a cabinet company without being required to have a showroom.

Jaclyn works out of her second-floor home, which is a rented space. She has created the front of her home (a beautiful Old World setting, bathed in natural light) to serve as her office. A door then closes off her private space behind. Jaclyn noted that this worked for her because, as a single woman, she was able to manage the combination business/living space. Interestingly enough, because it's rented – her builder-grade kitchen serves as a “this is not what you're going to get” display. She has built a beautiful hutch to demonstrate the manufacturing capabilities of her cabinet company and to manage her samples.

- If you have a high-profile display opportunity, make sure you maximize the marketing potential of your contribution.
- Your name must be prominently displayed and associated with the project.
- The staff needs to know how to explain the products specified – create a “cheat sheet.”
- For a permanent installation, plan your own community outreach marketing programs in that space. (Jaclyn has four seminars planned in the next 12 months.)
- Partner with the hosting company. For example, an e-mail blast from Whole Foods about Jaclyn's company was a part of the marketing plan.
- Realize that you can meet anywhere. Jaclyn feels this is very acceptable with her younger clients. She is comfortable meeting at a coffee shop close to her client's home in that so many locations have followed Starbucks' lead. Her supplier partners are creating meeting spaces she can use as well
- When working from your home, keep the business and the personal space separate.
- Always have your first meeting at the client's home so you can get to know them before bringing them to your studio.
- From a marketing standpoint, Jaclyn echoes many other designers' comments about the importance of Houzz.

Rebekah Zaveloff and Nick Nichols, KitchenLab LLC

Rebekah Zaveloff and her husband/business partner Nick Nichols work from a home-based office ... with staff. When they moved into their new home 8 years ago, their home office was a bit haphazard and disorganized. While working in such a space, they conceptualized what a real home-based office should look like.

They learned what didn't work from their cramped work space – and it's recently been renovated! They have devoted the entire first floor of their home to office space where Rebekah, Nick and two associates work. Rebekah noted that they had associates in the past who worked out of their home – but planning a home-based office area for additional staff members needs to be considered as well.

- It's important that you and your staff have a space that is comfortable and efficient. And, the entire area must be maintained. This can be facilitated if you plan multi-tasking work spaces.
- Use apps and other on-line services to organize your office and increase its efficiency.
- A strong social media presence is critical. Rebekah was an early part of the Houzz review team. She feels her presence on house “legitimized” her home-based business.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

- Rebekah does not feel a big showroom is important – or, in some cases, useful. Clients can make quick decisions when you're working with samples in their home. It's hard for the client to see something in a showroom and then transition that idea, or internalize the concept, when they're away from the display space and in their existing space.
- Develop a strong relationship with all the showrooms you work with: the lighting supplier, the stone fabricator. Oftentimes, they have spaces that you can use to meet with designers and clients.
- Have an organized, clear set of rules around how and when you meet with clients. Clients appreciate this, and it reflects on how well you'll manage the job. Stress to the client how cost effective it is for them to work with a designer who's working from their home.

A Studio Showroom

Being home-based has its advantages and its challenges, one of them being there is no opportunity for the business to grow into a sellable retirement asset. Therefore, some pros start out in a home-based location with a plan to re-locate to a studio.

Other professionals invest in a small studio space that offers them the opportunity to display their talents, and manage other staff members in a very inviting space. They can also build a reputation based on the talents of the firm, not just themselves.

An important consideration when selecting a name for your firm: should it have your name in it – or not?

Attributes

- The owner/designer is the sole proprietor with out-source associates retained on an “as needed” basis, or a small internal support staff.
- Overall business success rests on principle's reputation and ability to work.
- At the end of owner's career, this type of business is not easy to sell.
- Showroom may be part of a home office, part of a shared space, in an office building setting, or in a small private display space.
- A limited number of projects completed each year.

From the Pros: Strategies to Create a Winning Client Experience

Terri Salazar, Corona del Mar, California

Terri Salazar is a designer with 30+ years experience in the Corona del Mar area of California. Terri's a designer who, like many of us, faced challenging times during the great recession. She closed her large showroom and has worked from her home for some time. She now has decided to rent a studio along a high traffic, important street in Southern California that's considered a design district. She wants to open up a “boutique jewel box” merchandising space.

If you're considering a studio, you need to ...

- Develop a business plan so you know what is the maximum you can pay based on your projected sales and other fixed costs.
- Be a good negotiator. Be patient, be concise and clear with the landlord during your discussions.
- Do not be rushed in decision-making process.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Find Your Location!

The ideal location would be in an area that meets current needs and offers a great growth opportunity, terrific demographics for your products and services, little direct competition and is in an area where you and your clients feel safe.

Following is a "Location Checklist" that you might use to help you in this important decision. Please add any other items that would be important to you. Once you have marked your checklist for strengths and weaknesses, you can determine the value of this location to the strategic success of your business.

Location Checklist

Questions	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Is the facility large enough for your business?			
2. Does it meet your layout requirements?			
3. Does the building need any repairs?			
4. Will you have to make any leasehold improvements?			
5. Is the facility easily accessible to your target audience?			
6. Is it convenient for good employees?			
7. Is the facility consistent with the image you want to project?			
8. Is the facility in a safe neighborhood?			
9. Are neighboring businesses likely to help attract clients?			
10. Are there competitors located close to the facility?			
11. Can suppliers conveniently make deliveries?			
12. Does the facility allow room to expand?			
13. Does it have good visibility and signage?			
14. Are there windows to show off your displays?			
15. Is there plenty of convenient parking?			
16. Is the outside and inside lighting sufficient?			
17. Will the public restrooms meet your needs?			
18. If you rely on new business, is the car and foot traffic?			
19. Are the lease terms and rent favorable?			
20. Is the location zoned for your type of business?			
21. Can you live with all the other regulations, restrictions?			
22. Are there other building product businesses in the area?			
23.			
24.			
25.			

What else is important to you?

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Larry Fischer and Joseph (Joe) Rispo, JL Design

Larry Fischer and Joe Rispo are life partners who have also been business partners since 1987. Joe is an architect, Larry a contractor. They have a very strong working relationship with architects and builders in the area.

They both feel that Joe's architectural background is a key advantage when working on a new home design. They never try to out-think the architect – they suggest the consumer bring their architect's plans to them in the preliminary stage so that they can “simply look for missed opportunities,” or “tweak the architect's vision.” Their goal is to validate what the architect has done and help them create the best space possible.

Their studio is really an office in a small commercial building in New Jersey. If you're considering an office building as a studio ...

- Avoid a large office park loaded with small buildings: you don't have a sense of community.
- Don't “go off the beaten path.” The studio needs to be approachable, comfortable and convenient. With good parking!
- Keep the studio/office space casual.
- Make people understand you are open for appointment only.

Kayron Brewer, CKD, Studio KB

Kayron Brewer, like many designers, had a challenging business experience during the great recession. She opened her independent business in 2005, and when the economy tanked in 2008 she went back to work for a building/design firm until 2012. Kayron works with several cabinet companies and operates in a small studio. She's located in a good part of the town, and has an excellent reputation.

Kayron carefully built her Houzz profile, and then went out on her own in December of 2012. She first found space in a shared space which served a community of “creatives:” she liked this atmosphere and shared public meeting spaces very much. When the building was sold and she had to move: she searched for a small studio in the right area, but without “street front “ costs.

- Kayron feels her exposure on Houzz is very important.
 - She was featured on the site, which brought her several very good referrals.
 - She is very attentive to her page, engaging in conversations with a focus to be honest, helpful and transparent.
 - She doesn't fear “giving away” her knowledge.
- When looking for a studio, Kayron recommends:
 - Before you plan on a studio, know what your cash flow is.
 - Consider renting a space that has offices you can share with and that's designed for “creatives.” These type of rental spaces have everyone sharing a coffee center, a conference area – within a separate office.
 - Don't feel you need to be on the street – your clients will come to you. Kayron's office is on a main street, but it's at the back of the building: “My only traffic is the UPS man!”
- Use your small studio as a “springboard.” Meet your clients in their home first, then meet in your studio to get started. After these sessions, then you go shopping.

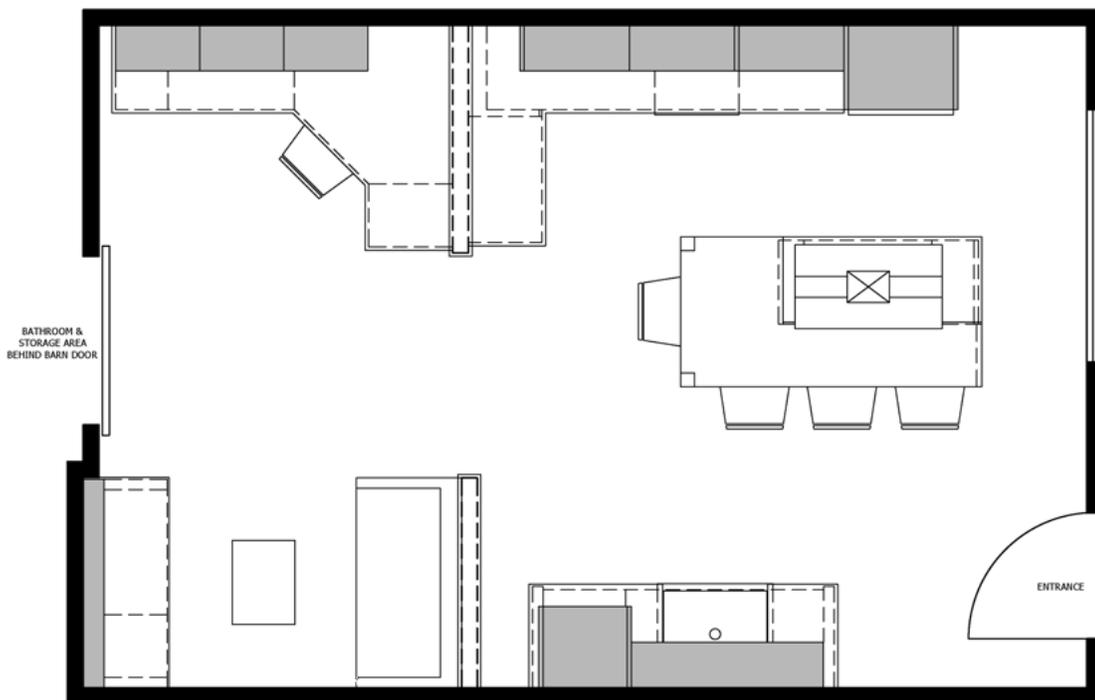
CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Michele Dugan, Marin Cabinet Studio

Michele Dugan began her career in management consulting – but just was not fulfilled. In 2004, she started her own business, working out of her home, in general remodeling. For the first six years, Michele found cabinetry was often “the bane of her existence.” So – to get rid of the headaches, take more control over her projects and be more profitable – she decided to open a second firm, partner with a cabinet company and integrate cabinetry into her product mix.

Michele opened a street-level showroom in Larkspur, California, an affluent community in Marin County. When you look into her studio, it has:

- Two kitchen vignettes: one a coffee center; the second a kitchen with all appliances “live” so she can serve dinner. The island in the kitchen serves as her conference area.
- A TV seating area that can be a kid “work” area, which demonstrates other storage/media center capabilities.
- A home office where she actually works.
- Barn doors that conceal the bathroom and a storage area.



Showroom 2: Marin Cabinet Studio's Overall Showroom, 375 SF

- When it comes to marketing, Michele shared that:
 - Her website is her foundation.
 - Her portfolio is on her iPad – no paper!
 - She uses her Houzz Pro account to reach-out to designers and architects. Michele feels Houzz is very, very important.
- She communicates electronically with her younger clients – one partner may be in London, and the other on vacation in Southern California. She organizes meetings “in the Cloud.”
- She uses technology for operations, and believes this is a point of differentiation.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

- When looking for a studio, Michele recommends:
 - Before you begin actively searching for a location, decide what you want your space to say about you – what are you trying to achieve, and then “stick” with your plan.
 - Be in the right zip code. Rent a space for your studio where your targeted consumers live or shop. Get the right location – go smaller, rather than bigger if it's a trade-off between location and rental costs.
 - Look for a space where people will feel safe coming to see you in the evening. Don't forget about parking. Search out an area where there is a sense of “community.”
 - Have a financial plan in-place. Have a budget for the project, and a little extra for the overages that you'll probably experience.
- Have enough on display to assist the consumer in making decisions. Smaller vignettes can show more cabinet applications. Show items and details the client can't usually visualize.
- Don't drag out and don't skimp on the details when “finishing the space off.” Get it done, and get it done right.

A DESIGN PRACTICE WITH SMALLER SHOWROOM

Attributes

- Very narrow, well researched product mix.
- Destination showroom location.
- Partners with other product-specific showrooms.
- Oftentimes, a family business. Succession plan is key to continuing the business.
- Family members are primary designers. Design associate or drawing specialist retained to expand number of clients served.
- Number of projects based on number of designers.

From the Pros: Strategies to Create a Winning Client Experience

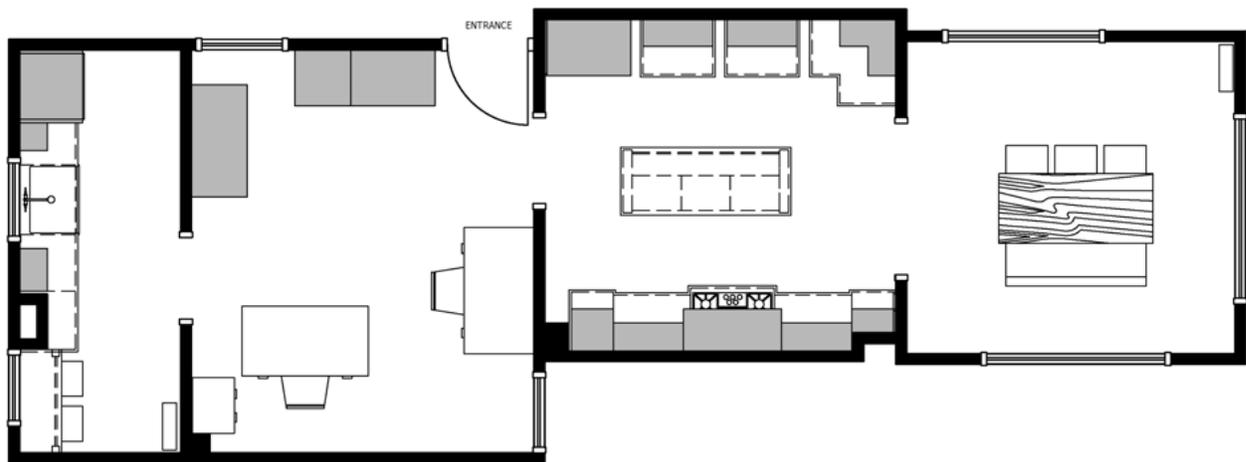
Jill Jarrett, Jarrett Design, LLC

Jill Jarrett is an engineer by education. When she began a family, she designed a home and enjoyed the process tremendously. After working in a small showroom for two years, she went out on her own, working from her home. She learned the business by hiring a 30-year veteran in our industry.

Three years ago, Jill opened a studio on the first floor of a home converted to a commercial property. Her studio consists of three rooms with a welcoming front porch. In addition to Jill, her staff consists of a full-time Senior Designer, who has a BA in Interior Design, a part-time Associate Designer and a full-time Intern. The four of them “team design.”

Here is a floor plan of the studio. Jill used the four rooms to their full advantage.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET



Showroom 3: Jarrett Design's Overall Showroom, 548 SF

An interesting approach: when you walk into the space, you enter the “operations center: desks and people.” We have all read about prospective clients’ reactions to entering a work environment; this works very well today: they want to work with “real” people.

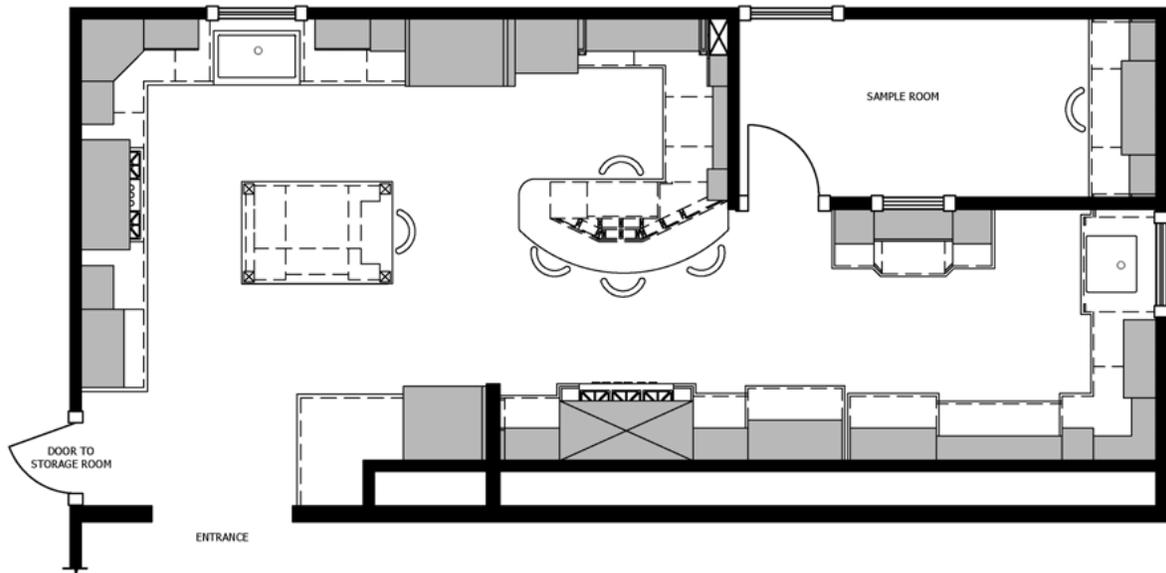
We would simply add one comment: a neat desk, an organized resource center, no food consumption, no shouting matches with the plumber who did not show up on the job – you need to promise and deliver on a “no-hassle” installation experience!

- Jill feels Houzz has changed her business. In the past, her business was 95% referral. Today, people contact her who don't know her and she doesn't know them – sometimes from all parts of the country. This means there's much more time needed to qualify these new prospects, which has led to her business decision to increase her design fees.
- Today, many clients want to work with a firm that will embrace the entire project, not just the cabinetry. They want expert opinions on every decision, and for the designer to “touch” all parts and pieces to create the best possible outcome – functionally and aesthetically. Technology gives you the ability to bounce ideas, thoughts and product recommendations off of everyone involved very quickly for faster decision-making.
- Use your studio to impress the client with your expertise. Make your studio a retreat from the noise of the internet. Jill's approach is, “We're happy to search for you. We're going to wrap our arms around you! You may not know what you want, but we'll help you find it!”
- Lead the design decision by organizing your studio to minimize the choices you share with the client. For example, Jill is creating “Jill's top choices” in various categories that offer style differences and various price points.
- Make sure you align yourself with suppliers and vendors who have the same mindset as you do about customer service.

Louis (Lou) Nardolillo, CKD and Louis Nardolillo, Jr., AKBD, Cabinets Plus

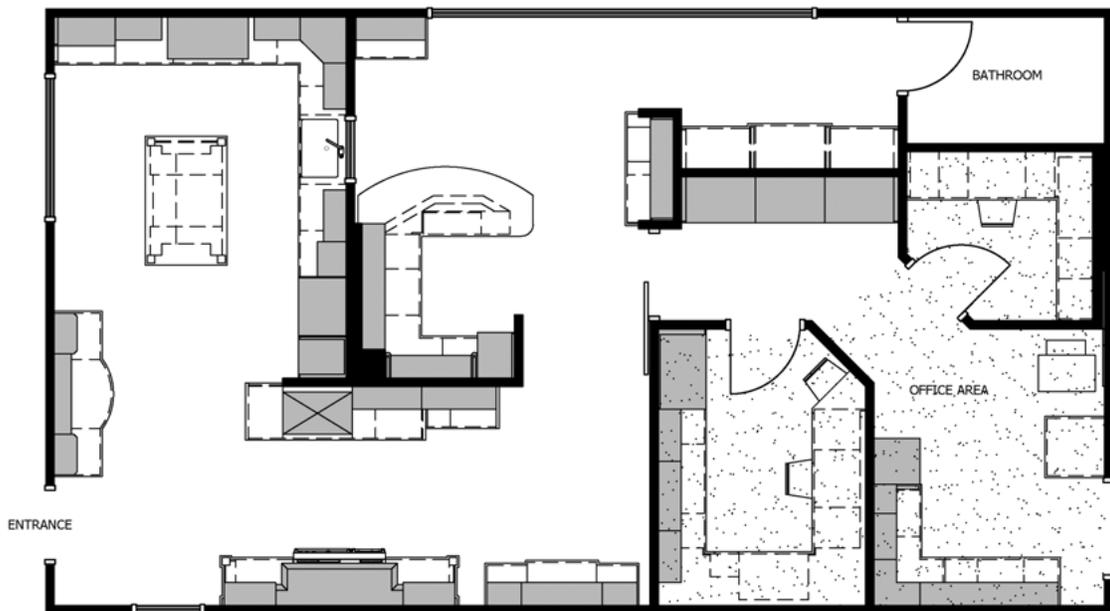
Lou and Louis Nardolillo are a father and son team in Aquebogue, New York (that's near Riverhead on Long Island). Lou started the business in 1987 in a second floor studio location, above a paint store on a busy street. Because the firm's targeted consumers are affluent second home owners who are building or renovating a home, their primary clients are the designers and architects who the consumers have retained to design and/or manage their projects.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET



Showroom 4: Cabinets Plus' Original Overall Showroom, 488 SF

When Louis joined his father in the business, the team decided to consider a new location. They opted for a smaller foot print in square footage to manage the costs. Their new space is a stand-alone building that is approximately 950-square-feet of showroom and office space.



Showroom 5: Cabinets Plus' New Overall Showroom, 950 SF

- Before you consider moving, carefully evaluate your current client base. Are you moving to change your client base, or to better serve your current client base?
- If you have a strong referral-based business, don't worry about a high profile location: become a "destination" showroom.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

- A smaller space in the right location, or a smaller space to minimize expenses is the best decision. Be creative about storage! They use trailers, hidden from sight behind their building.
- When searching for a studio location, tall ceilings trump square footage. Homes are being designed today with 9' or 10' ceilings; therefore, you need a studio space that can demonstrate grand design details. This will increase your profits as you are able to visually show clients these elegant design details.
- When planning your new space, don't think that all the displays need to be "new." Because clients don't visit you regularly, be aware of what you consider "new" and what a prospective client will consider "new." Top-selling, well-designed existing displays are easier to relocate, less expensive to relocate, and are much less time-consuming than designing new settings from scratch.

A DESIGN BUSINESS WITH LARGER SHOWROOM OR DESIGN CENTER

Attributes

- Showroom may be in a business district or a destination location.
- Offers a wide variety of products.
- Owner/manager may or may not be principle designer/salesperson. *If this individual is also the key salesperson, there may be another business manager, or a strong reliance on support staff.
- Showroom with multiple displays/vignettes. *One model is based on partnering with allied firms (plumbing wholesale showroom, marble yard, tile studios, appliance wholesalers). Second model has all items in-house for presentation.
- Has attached or separate warehouse/shop facility.
- Has own installation team, good network of subcontractors: or a combination of both.
- Business is an entity unto itself: it can be sold independent or with the real estate!

From the Pros: Strategies to Create a Winning Client Experience

Kathleen Donohue, CMKBD, Neil Kelly Company

The Neil Kelly Company is a well-respected design/build firm with four locations in the Northwest. It's one of the largest organizations in our industry. Kathleen Donohue has been a part of the Neil Kelly Team since 1989!

Kathleen has led the design team for three of their showrooms. Being a team leader has its challenges! Kathleen's focus is to interface with the designers who will work in the showroom, as well as the manufacturers, vendors and industry partners who will have products on display in the showroom. Her challenge is to be sensitive to showing what the resident designers are enthusiastic about, while introducing new products or innovative design concepts appropriate for the targeted consumer ... and, at the same time ... balance the product selections between what the manufacturers want to show in that they are oftentimes donating product, and what she wants to show to make sure that the overall finished product is a cohesive presentation.

Kathleen's Design Philosophy

Kathleen's showroom design approach has evolved from three-walled enclosed displays attempting to be as realistic as possible, to a much more open, inviting space to allow the visitor to survey the entire display space as they enter. Kathleen commented that she believes this is a distinctive difference in space management between entry-level or low-end product presentations and more luxurious ones. Lower end product

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

presentations seem to favor showing the most amount of product, while the luxury presentation has less product and more people space.

One of the highlights of Kathleen's showroom design philosophy is creating a selection center. She actually got the idea for such a center from an area Ellen designed some years ago for the Morris Black organization, located along the Mainline in Philadelphia.

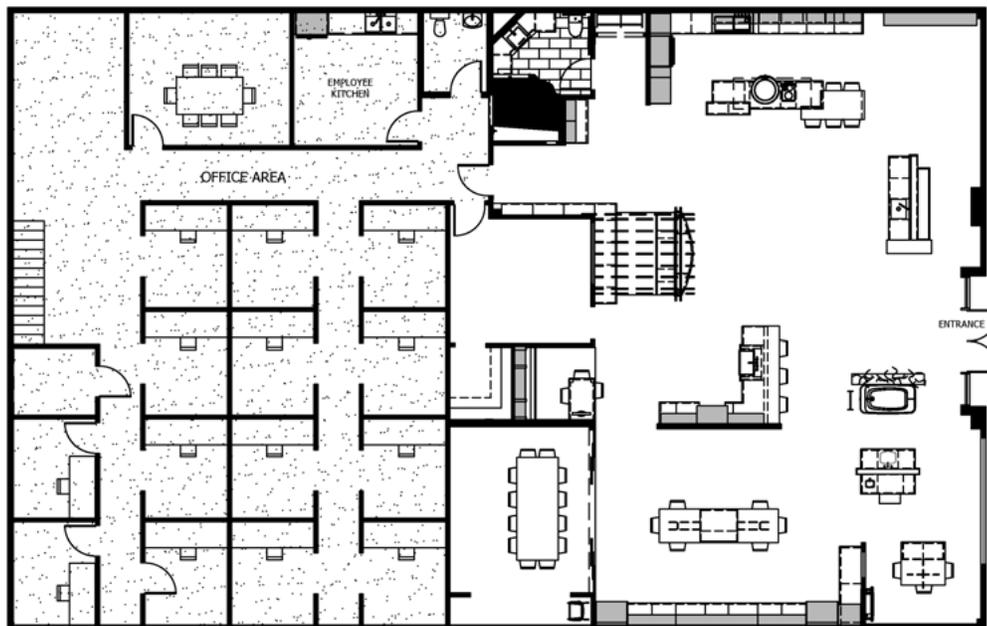
Here's the idea: if the firm believes that clients today enjoy the interactive nature of touching and handling samples, and looking at potential combinations together with their design professional, an organized sample area (a selection center) needs to be a major part of the space. Being able to manage all samples in an orderly fashion, and making them easy to browse is the key.

In the Seattle showroom, this is elegantly accommodated by a selection center with a wall of samples that is then faced by an elongated island where groups can gather at either end – so two appointments can be handled at the same time.

Nearby is an "internet library" – a 10' x 10' space that the initial architectural plan envisioned as the only place that all samples would be. That would just not do! This becomes either a part of a presentation in the selection center, or a third place that someone can meet. As Kathleen said, "So, if we can't find the light fixture that the client likes out of the 50 lighting books we have, we can meander on over to the internet library and start searching on-line!"

The selection center is designed to invite the consumer to be part of the design process as they work with a Neil Kelly professional. Plans can be pinned up on the corkboard wall, samples can be pulled out and studied.

Kathleen commented that when she has her preliminary design presentation after visiting the client's home, she always schedules that meeting in the showroom, where her samples are. She not only shows the consumer a preliminary design solution, but also preliminary material selections. This is so helpful because the client will say, "I love that backsplash. That countertop is way too dark!" Kathleen can then save time in the design and specification process by getting a good idea earlier on in the planning process of what direction the client is heading.



Showroom 6: Neil Kelly's Washington Overall Showroom, 5,533 SF (Display Area 2,969 SF, Office Area 2,564 SF)

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Kathleen's Approach to Space Management in a Large Showroom Display Center

Kathleen explained a visitor's initial experience that she designed as follows:

- As a prospective client enters, there is no greeter right at the door. The client can see the entire showroom space: there's a lot of empty space right by the front door so they don't feel crowded. They will see someone slightly in the background, who will immediately acknowledge their presence. The consumer can then feel that they can walk around without being "crowded:" they are free to enjoy the spaces and ask for help when need be.
- As the visitor walks through the spaces, they will see room settings that are familiar and attractive, leading to a sense of "I could work in this kitchen," as well as seeing designs, products and ideas that (hopefully) they haven't seen elsewhere or haven't thought of: "Wow, I never thought of that. I'd love to have that in my new kitchen, or in my new bath, or in my new home office." Or, "Wow, this is my kind of style!" The client can visit the showroom at a comfortable pace – they are not assaulted visually or physically.
- As they move through the display space, there is an area to be seated – or to "perch" – in every display. Designers can observe where the client most comfortably settles in – that gives them a clue as to the type of room they might be the most comfortable in.
- Returning to the open, generous space allotted in the front of the showroom: Kathleen feels that this is a critical part of merchandising a showroom, because you need space to "mingle:" for partying, gathering, conversing, learning. Bistro tables can be pulled out for standing around and visiting over beverages, or chairs set up theater style for one of the many seminars the Neil Kelly Company is known for.

Kathleen's Winning Strategies

- Create a selection center that is an open, inviting collaborative area for clients and designers to work together in.
- Have an internet resource library computer station nearby.
- Plan seating and counter space so that more than one meeting can take place at the same time.
- Make sure you can see the samples under a variety of light sources.
- Create defined, organized spaces for all the types of material you will need to house in the area.
- Have a "dream area " where the homeowner can imagine what their space will look like: pin-up or lean on boards or walls.

Session 3

Enhancing the Client Experience During
the Design and Installation Process

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

TIPS FROM AN EXPERT: HOW TO EFFICIENTLY WORK WITH AN OFF-SITE INDEPENDENT RENDERING SERVICE



Nick Miller,
Nick Miller Design

Be realistic about how long a rendering will take. This is typically determined by how much detail and size is involved in the project. The amount of finishes specifically requested, and the amount of specified furniture pieces can greatly impact the design time as well. One item that is always a surprise is how long the CPU takes to process a rendering. A typical kitchen view will generally take 45 minutes to an hour-and-a-half for the CPU to process. Ask if you will be charged for this time. I do not charge for it as the renderings run in the PC's background. However, when processing 4-5 views for a kitchen, it will take 4-6 hours to process.

Do not promise when you will have a rendering to share with a client until you have a commitment from the rendering service. Designers must work with the “ebb and flow” that a renderer's company manages as they work with many clients as an independent contractor. So ask first – promise second, and add a day or two for revisions. I would add one last point: pay the renderer within the terms agreed to between your firm and his/hers. If you are delinquent or a “late payer” your work will go to the bottom of the list.

Send clear, clean file to save time and money: I see a wide variety of information. Some designers will send a full CAD, generated by either an architect or someone on their staff (PDF or DWG file). Others send 20/20 line drawings or hand drawings to scale. However, I also receive notes and dimensions scribbled on something that looks like a cocktail napkin. Obviously, the better the info is from the designer, the more accurate the rendering will be on the first pass.

Five things NOT to do to keep the expense down:

1. Do NOT hastily send information that is incomplete. If items are forgotten or disregarded that are critical to your design, expense will go up when revisions are needed. AND don't forget the CPU processing time required to generate the revision. In most cases, designers will lose at least a day due to incomplete info.
2. Do NOT send information that contradicts itself from one sheet to the next. (Elevations should match the floorplan.)
3. Do NOT just take pictures of tile, wood finishes and countertop textures with your phone and think that is all a renderer needs. An experienced renderer can work with those items, but a manufacturer link to the product will help to expedite the design process.
4. Do NOT ask a renderer to match any items that are unnecessary to your project. Think of each item in your design as a real, physical item that needs to be sourced and placed by a renderer. It takes time to source and place each item. It's not as easy as simply pulling something from a 20/20 catalog. You are asking to custom match something. This takes time.
5. Do NOT assume that a renderer will know what you mean when you send a picture of a kitchen with a request to “match that style.” This could mean to match the door, finish, tile, countertop, cabinet configuration, etc. A renderer could spend hours matching everything in the picture, leading to unnecessary charges. BE SPECIFIC.

One last bit of advice: try to work with a renderer who is a kitchen designer. In the same way that you would not hire a brick mason to install a kitchen, you should not hire a renderer that does not have kitchen design experience. Critical details could be missed that could lower your the accuracy of your rendered design. This could lower a potential customer's satisfaction level, or even worse, could lead to a mistake in the field. A kitchen designer should also understand aesthetics better as to how the details should look. For example, wood grain will need to run certain ways on different pieces throughout the kitchen. A picture might look pretty, but if kitchen design basics are missed and the kitchen doesn't “work”, you will be forced to explain the inaccuracies to your customer, and they will quickly lose faith in your abilities. You could ultimately lose the sale or a good referral.

Session 4

Re-energizing Your Existing
Showroom Displays



CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Session 4

Re-energizing Your Existing Showroom Displays

MAKING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR EXISTING SPACE

Before you spend the effort or time considering a new showroom location, a new display or any type of major renovation – make the most out of your existing space.

Devote 1/2 day per week for the next 4 weeks “tidying up.”

- **Cleaning Up**

- Do you dress appropriately each day based on who you are going to meet, and what your activities are?
- Is your presentation as professional as possible? Think about your briefcase, your logoed paper. Your car. The flower boxes outside your office front door.

- **Fixing Up**

- Is your office space and your showroom complete? That means no missing appliances. That also means no UPS boxes sitting on floor.
- Is your showroom in need of a “Punch List” to get everything in perfectly functioning order?

- **Freshening Up – Re-accessorizing**

- Remove all accessories in each display. Put them in a central location. Then evaluate what you have. Should each item be returned to its original display or given away to Goodwill?
- Create a theme for each room, and add real plants: get rid of plastic.
- Go on a shopping spree and make sure each display is not accessorized with cast-offs or leftovers from your home – use appropriate accents that make each space “sing.”
- Add fabric and furniture to create realistic room settings.

- **Lighting Up**

- If you use fluorescent, is it time to re-lamp the entire space?
- If you use incandescent lamps, is it time to replace all of them with LEDs?
- At minimum, make sure there are no burned out lamps – anywhere!

If you're replacing all of those recessed cans with LED fixtures: these bulbs used to be \$50.00 a piece – now they're two for \$18.00.

Make sure you use 3,500 Kelvin in one area and 5,000 Kelvin in another, so you have warm light similar to incandescent, as well as daylight. Consider re-lamping your resource area with different types of light sources.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

AFTER REFRESHING YOU AND YOUR CURRENT SPACE ... EVALUATE YOUR EXISTING DISPLAYS.

- Do they reflect emerging “on-trend” styles? A Contemporary setting is a must.
- In addition to considering replacing a display, can you refresh existing spaces with new wall coverings, backsplashes, decorative hoods, countertops, furniture?
- Make sure a new display is what your showroom needs. Perhaps a selection center is a better investment.

Following are two showrooms that have just been updated.

- Peter Salerno, Inc., Wyckoff, New Jersey
- Busby Cabinets, Orlando, Florida

PETER SALERNO, PETER SALERNO INC.

Peter Salerno has been in the industry for over 30 years. As 30+ time design competition winner, he is considered one of the most respected designers in our industry.

For much of his career, Peter worked out of a home converted to a showroom (located on a commercial street) that had each room featuring elegant vignettes. Peter bought the land next to his home with a vision of building his own “mini design center.”

He realized his dream 4 years ago. In addition to his showroom, he leases space to a tile company, as well as a satellite appliance showroom. Therefore, when you visit his firm, you can easily move to the selection process of surfacing and appliances.

Peter’s showroom goal was to present the most elegant of environments with “out of this world” and “off-the-wall” design ideas! This is his defense against “price sensitivity.”

Regarding price sensitivity, Peter has this theory: it all comes down to what the client’s “hot button” is. If they see something that they really want, they will compromise in another area. He said he’s seen it over and over: the client says, “I will not go beyond \$40,000.” However, when they see something they literally love, they’re ready to purchase it and they spend more!

Peter said, *“Why would you ever have a display with a Shaker door? They can see that in a picture. Show them something else so they will say, ‘I must have that!’”*

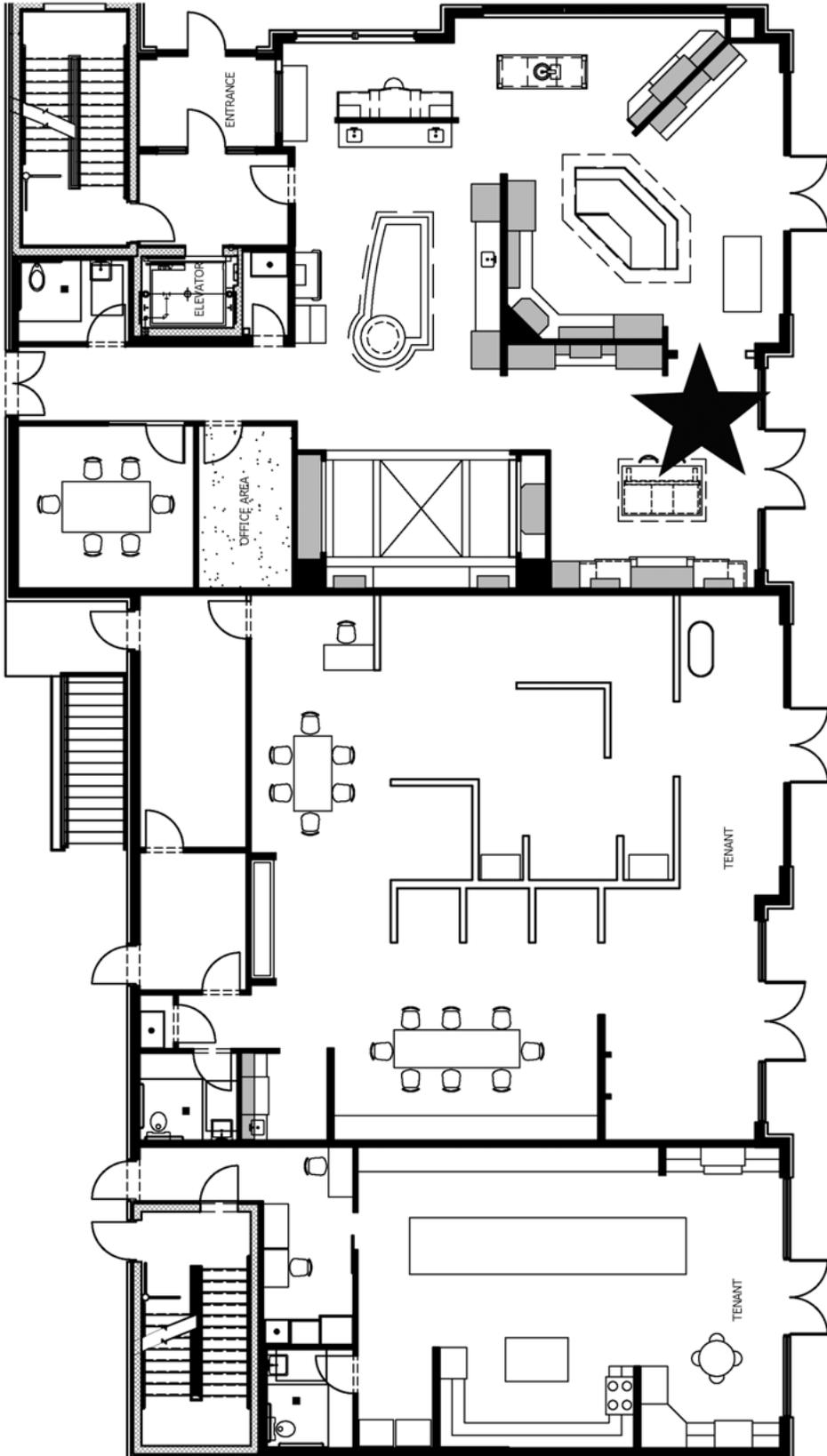
Regarding how clients are invited to experience the showroom – in some cases, he invites a client to just wander on their own through the space. However, if they have time, he or his team gives them a step-by-step presentation.

He will ask, *“Now, have you ever seen anything like this anywhere else?”* His goal is for their clients to either say or think:

- *“You’re right – we’ve never seen anything like this!”*
- *“We’re talking to the right person!”*
- *“Wow, what else does this guy have in his head that would make our space unbelievable!”*

Peter feels that, when you’re presenting your showroom, if this is the reaction you get, *then “you’re halfway to the finish line.”*

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET



Showroom 7, Option 1: Peter Salerno's Overall Showroom, 5,346 SF (Display Area 4,823 SF, Office Area 523 SF)

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Interestingly enough, when Peter opened his showroom, he included an entry-level display, but he found it too predictable. It made it too easy or logical for a prospective client to compare him with other competitors. Peter doesn't want anything in his showroom to be comparable to any other design firm who might serve his targeted consumer. In the Fall of 2015, he replaced this entry-level display with an elegant Transitional space that offers a fresh Contemporary take on a styling popular in his area.

Following is the new showroom plan, along with the display we're focused on. I think it's also interesting that he transitioned a U-shape display to a more welcoming L-shape with an island.

Peter's new display better suits his marketing plan of "being the best of the best." Plus, it's a much more modern presentation in his showroom space. Peter's signature style prevails, as he features an antique ceiling floating above the space.



Peter tells his clients, *"I'm going to take you out of your comfortable zone. I'm going to take you to the edge of where you're comfortable and then you tell me, 'Peter, I'm on the edge, I can't go further.' And that's where I will stop."*

Such a great strategy for a Northern New Jersey design firm. Peter knows his targeted consumer, he knows what his sustainable competitive advantage is, and he knows how to communicate this winning strategy to visitors to his showroom.

Peter's layout draws the client from vignette to vignette – so as they see the first space, they can glimpse something just beyond that they are "called to." Whether it's a crystal ceiling or a red Corvette, or a wine bottle that then turns into a faucet and pours water into a sink – it's unique!

One of the keys to Peter's presentation is that he tells clients that there are two things that must happen for them to work together:

- *"We must have fun."*
- *"I'm going to have fun, you're going to have fun."*

A 2015 AWARD-WINNING SHOWROOM: BUSBY CABINETS

(Designed by Jack Busby, Diane Mulligan and Dave Stanley, Busby Cabinets; Kathryn Dunagan and Marc Thee, Marc-Michaels Interiors)

A Florida firm was recognized as having an outstanding showroom by a national trade magazine in the Fall of 2015. The organization has four Florida showrooms in the Orlando area. As we all know, once a showroom is installed, renovations are needed from time to time. Jack Busby, the owner of the firm, says he cycles through the locations to see what needs attention in an effort to keep them up-to-date.

The award-winning 242 sq. ft. area was within a 3,000 sq. ft. showroom, and was transformed through a \$90,000.00 renovation. The goal, according to Mr. Busby, was to create a space that illustrated to clients that the company offered more than just Traditional cabinetry. As he said, *"Many clients assume that that is all that we offer, despite our best attempts to dissuade them – this completed display has completely changed that perception."*

The overall display is appropriately named "The Organic Contemporary Kitchen" – it's a mixture of Contemporary and organic materials that introduced a new style to the Orlando market.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Key elements of the space:



- An oversized island accommodates five chairs. Additional stools are hidden behind an organic edged door that slides open to reveal a TV that can be used as a monitor for sales presentations.
- The overall display is outfitted with the latest Contemporary chrome pantry pull-outs and special corner units.
- A combination of materials are featured: soft light, high-gloss acrylic on the doors and drawers is paired with softly glazed, rustic knotty pine oak on the island and sliding doors. Mr. Busby said it well, *"The combination of materials offers an opposing - yet somehow natural fit."*
- The space was created by combining footage that formerly had two small, infrequently used conference rooms. This display can still serve as a private area, because three 4' doors open and close together on a sliding track mechanism.
- Take a look at the corner - even though this display is against inside walls, Busby created the feel of a natural Florida kitchen by creating a "window." He fused a custom local lake image to Plexiglas and lit it from behind with LED strips. He commented, *"This initiates a huge impact and surprise element when our clients enter this area of our showroom - it accomplished exactly what we were hoping for."*



Session 5

Marketing Strategies for a
Traditional Showroom Environment



CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Session 5

Marketing Strategies for a Traditional Showroom Environment

DEVELOP THE PLAN TO PRESENT WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU DO.

Let's now turn our attention to proven, successful marketing plans that other professionals have used. This information, again, comes not only from my experience and Ellen's, but from the series of interviews she conducted. We hope one or more of these ideas will work for you.

TIPS FROM THE PROS

If a showroom is the foundation of your marketing plan, start the planning process after you have identified your targeted consumer.

When planning a new showroom space, don't initially focus on the displays. You need to have your people spaces sorted out first. Then you can think about the visitor's path through your space.

- What are the space needs for your staff?
- How will visitors experience your space?
- What is your display philosophy?
- How will you manage the selection/meeting center direction?

Next, decide if you should design vignettes or full room settings, and what your selection center will look like – all with a focus on what your marketing message is, and how these areas of your showroom support this message.

FIRST, GET THE DESIGN TEAM'S SPACES SETTLED FOR TODAY – AND TOMORROW.

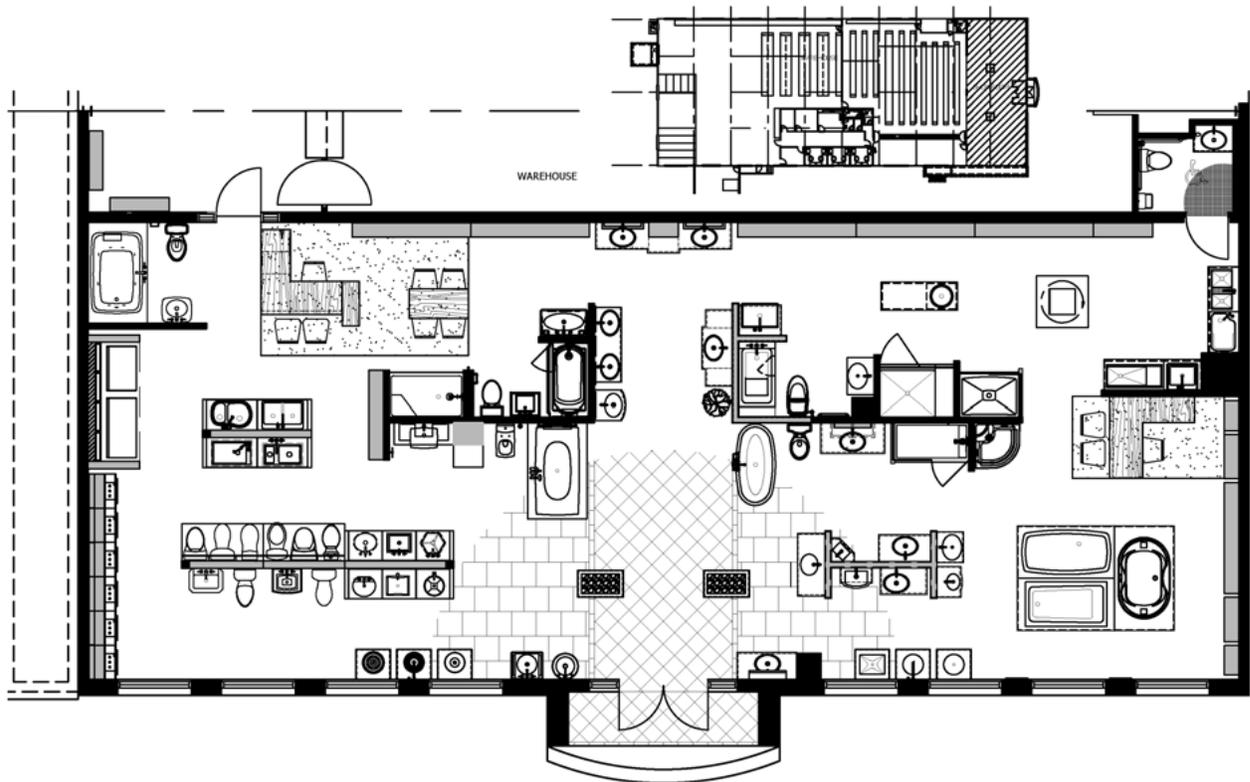
Here is a list of the sales/design people spaces you need to consider.

- **Manager's office with meeting area.** Everyone agrees the manager needs a private space.
- **Receptionist/greeter. Focused person? Multi-tasking team member? Or, designer daily assignment?** There's a big discussion about how and where visitors should be greeted, and if designers should be based in the showroom or in a separate office space. A dedicated receptionist/greeter is not needed unless your business plan is based on a high volume of "walk-in traffic." (I prefer to call them "visitors!")
 - Most firms have this greeter role filled by a staff member who has other duties, as well.
 - For some firms, this all-important welcome is handled by the design team, who then must juggle their current workload with the responsibility of assisting visitors who may or may not be in your target consumer group. The designer cannot consider a first time visitor a "bother!"

To create a "great" first impression experience, whoever this person is must be passionate about making the visitor feel welcome, as well as have a clear understanding of your firm's planned path through the space.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

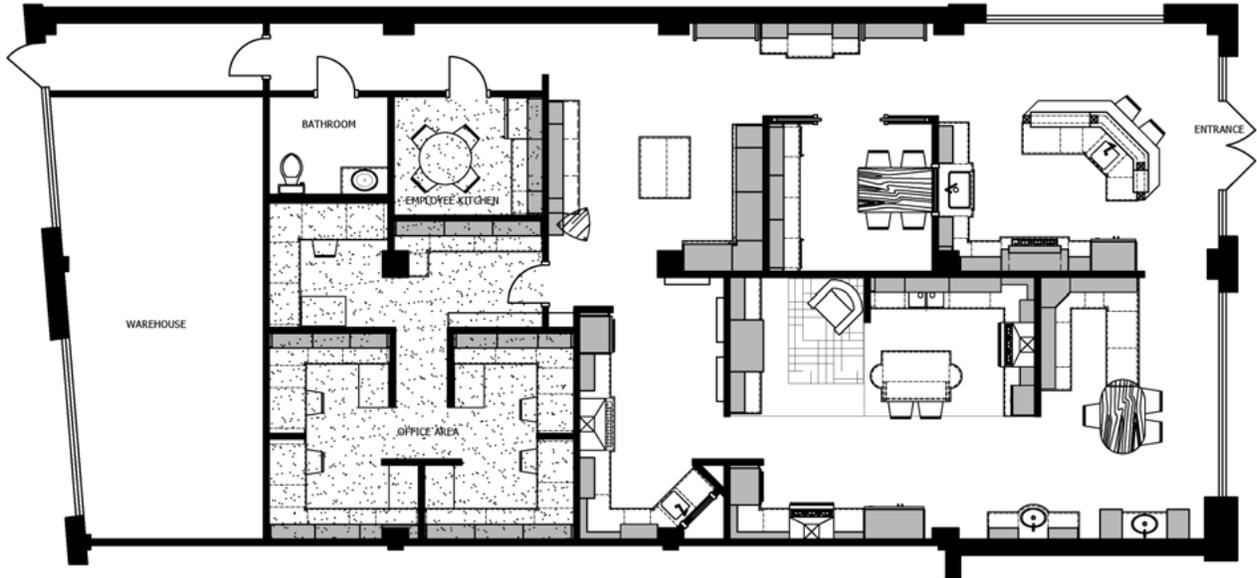
- **Sales/design team space. In the showroom or in a separate area?** When it comes to where to locate the designers' offices, as well as their support team of CAD operators or drawing specialists:
- Design staff mixed into the display spaces seems to work well for product-focused firms. With the explosion of device-based pre-cut information, rows of catalogues need not clutter these open desks any longer.
- Make sure you have a resource room somewhere nearby.
- Showroom-based staff members require a secured locker and a lunchroom to keep personal stuff safe and lunches out of the display spaces.



Showroom 8, 2,520 SF: Design staff mixed into the display space works well for product-focused firms.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

- Separate office spaces are the best solution for design-focused firms. Much like a restaurant, the showroom is the “front of the house,” the office space is the “back of the house.” Noise and temperature controls are important in tight spaces serving the team.
- There’s an ongoing discussion about open office plans versus enclosed spaces: designers seem to prefer a separate space that they can claim as their own. A good compromise is separate workstations with a central, open, shared resource area.



**Showroom 9, 2,179 SF (Display Area 1,667 SF, Office Area 512 SF):
Separate office space works well for design-focused firms.**

- **Design and/or CAD workstation location.** Finish the people planning phase of the marketing plan by locating support staff and functions.
 - Accounting/Human Resources
 - Purchasing
 - Production Manager
 - Public Restroom/Staff Restroom
 - Staff Break Room/Lunchroom/Lockers
 - Receiving/Storage Area
- **Meeting space. Separate conference room? Or, mixed into displays?** In addition to where people sit and work: where they meet clients and share their ideas and solutions is the heart of any showroom space – regardless of size.

It is a well-documented fact that our younger clients are not comfortable being ushered into an enclosed “conference room.”

- One of the best solutions we have seen today is a glass enclosed gathering area, with drapes that can be pulled if privacy makes the client more comfortable.
- Or, as we saw in the renovated Florida showroom, a conference room with one long wall utilizing a stacked glass door system so it’s able to become a part of the overall showroom.
- Other firms find gathering at a large table, tucked in a corner of the showroom, to be the best solution.

Remember what Kathleen Donohue shared with us this morning: do include places for people to “perch” in various parts of your overall showroom. This way, when the visiting client is ready to talk, show you their plans or just learn more about your organization, you’ll have a comfortable place for them to settle in.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Tips from Ellen: When Planning the Showroom ...

- Partner with design specialists to get the best results!
 - Your Suppliers
 - Work with your manufacturers' territory managers to design spaces.
 - Consider reproducing or purchasing pre-designed displays created by manufacturers used in place of custom displays.
 - Allied Professionals Who You Respect
 - Architect hired for space management, collaborate with manufacturing representatives for actual product.
 - Architect or design professional creates space study. Business owner then collaborates with manufacturer's representative to identify products to be displayed.
 - Interior designers invited to accessorize the space.
- Evaluate if a "live" kitchen or bathroom shower area is critical to your success.

Have a "Road Map." In addition to displays, you must consider:

- Reception
 - Choice #1: A person with internal responsibilities at the front door.
 - Choice #2: Staff monitors with a television camera.
 - Choice #3: Design/sales staff shares showroom duty through a rotating assigned time schedule.

"Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping" by Paco Underhill

Research has determined that it takes furniture shoppers at least 20 seconds to become acclimated to the store's layout before they're ready to do any serious looking. Therefore, salespeople need to stay a discrete distance, wait those important seconds to tick by before approaching customers after they enter the store. These first few second also allows the consumer to get a feel for the retail atmosphere - therefore, it is very important what is by the front door. The best way to use this space is to create entrance presentations with "traffic stopping" impact.

Don't forget to plan for the following:

- Showroom Statement: "Who We Are"
- Conference area big enough to roll out large plans and review project (consider proximity to copy machine).
- Coffee/refreshment station (separate from staff luncheon room).
- Interactive web site kiosk or internet library.
- Functioning bathrooms, which provide working displays.
- Separate conference room for small training groups, meetings with manufacturer representatives and presentation meetings with clients.
- Selection center for door styles, samples, swatches and catalogs.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY’S EVOLVING MARKET

SECOND, MANAGE THE PROSPECTIVE CLIENT’S SHOWROOM EXPERIENCE BY CREATING A “PATH WITH TOUCH POINTS” PLAN FOR THE SPACE.

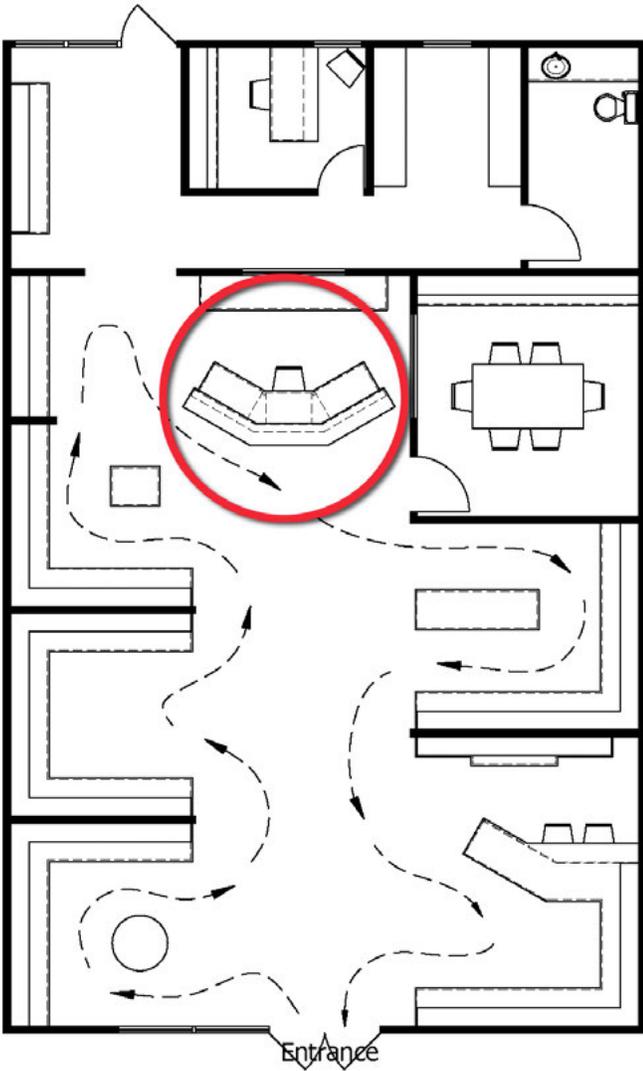
Now we’re – finally – ready to lay out the space. Begin by plotting the path you’d like the client to follow as they are introduced to your firm, your products and your talents.

Ellen has create a series of drawings demonstrating different path options based on a showroom she designed – she even named them!

“Race Track” Experience Path

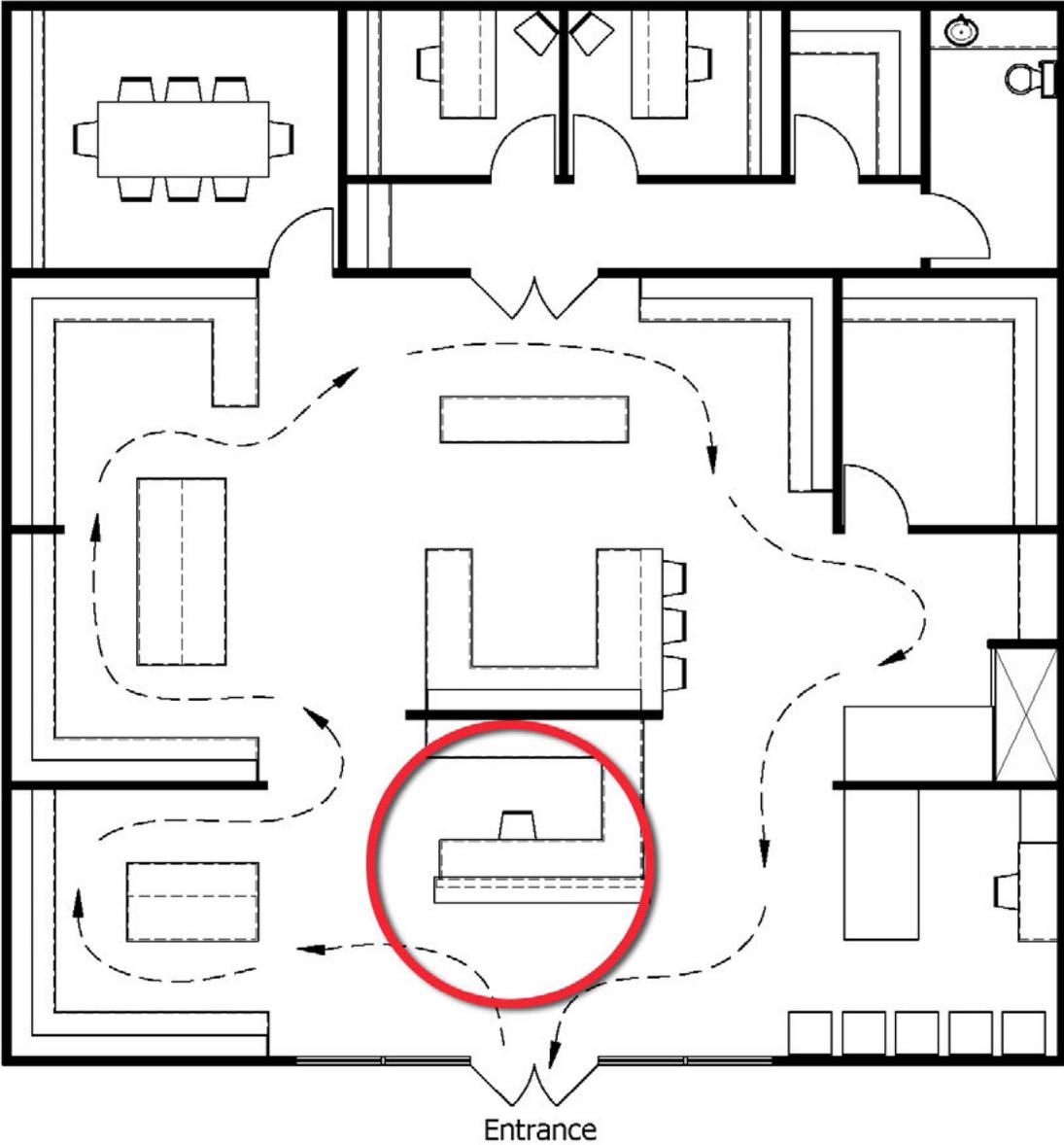
An open plan makes the visitor feel comfortable because they can see the “greeter” and be greeted! They can scan the entire space before they start browsing – with or without your assistance.

Rectangular Shaped Showroom Plan 1,800 SF



CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Square Showroom Plan 2,400 SF

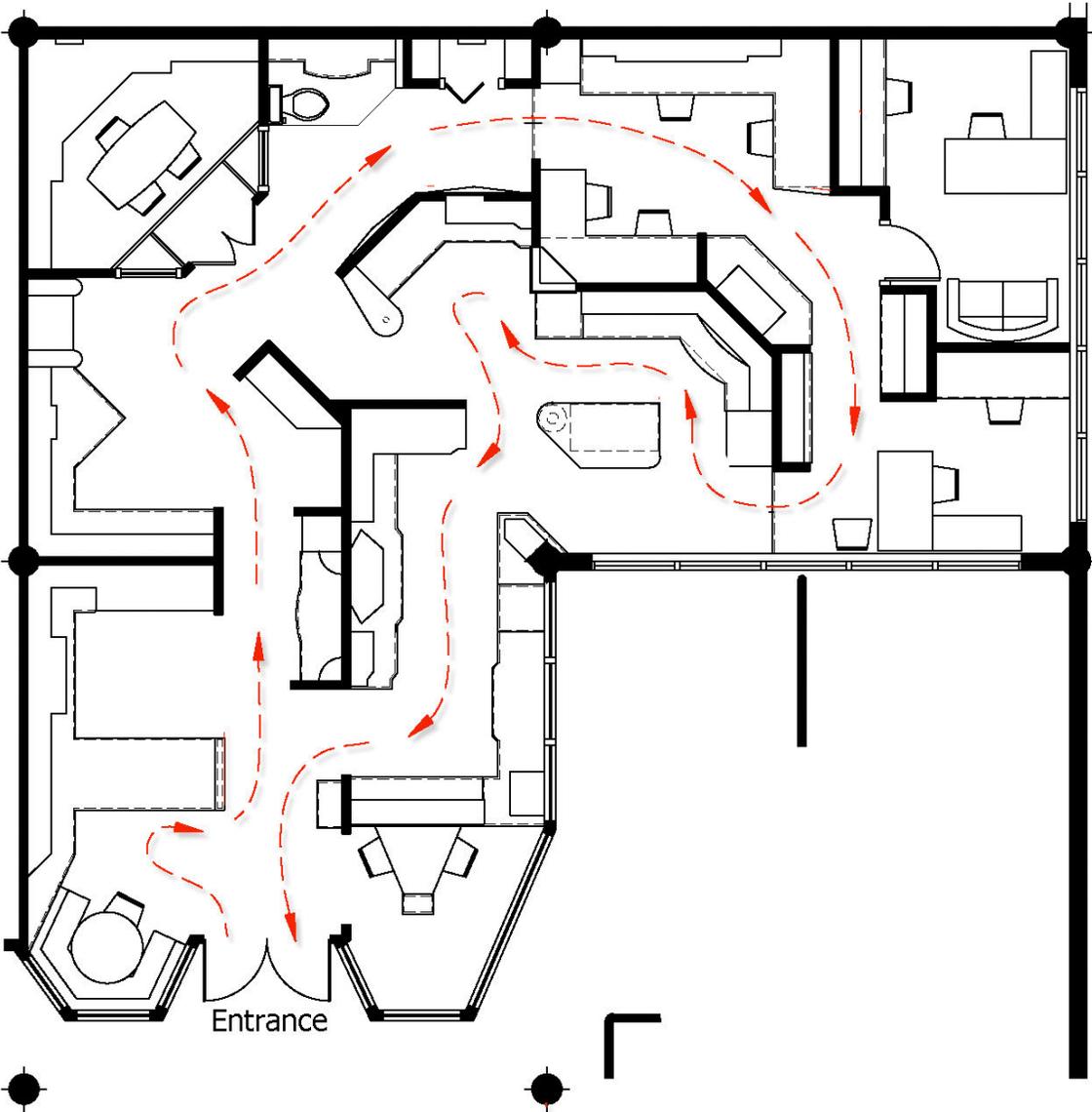


CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

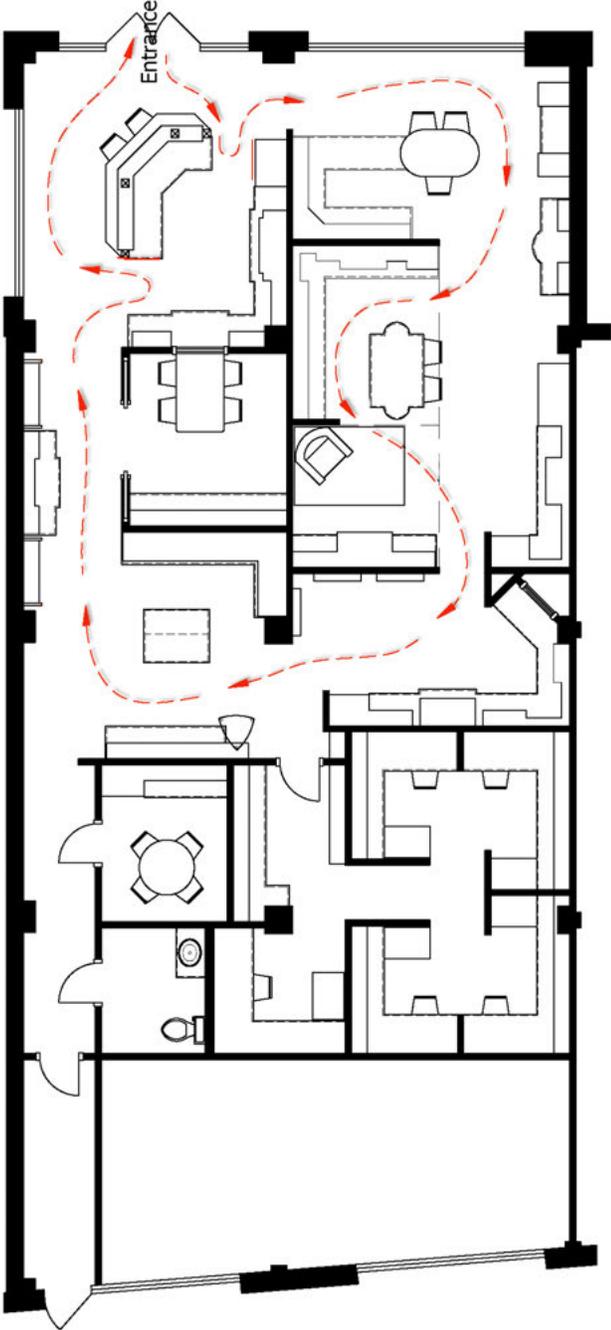
“Road Map” Experience Path

Placing the display in the center of a space allows visitors to tour the entire space in a circular fashion: they can “see” what’s ahead, removing any fear of “being cornered.” A good way to make the path clear is to keep the flooring consistent. This type of path works very well in a showroom that features mostly vignettes.

L- Shaped Road Map Showroom Plan 1,550 SF



Rectangular Race Track Plan 2,700 SF

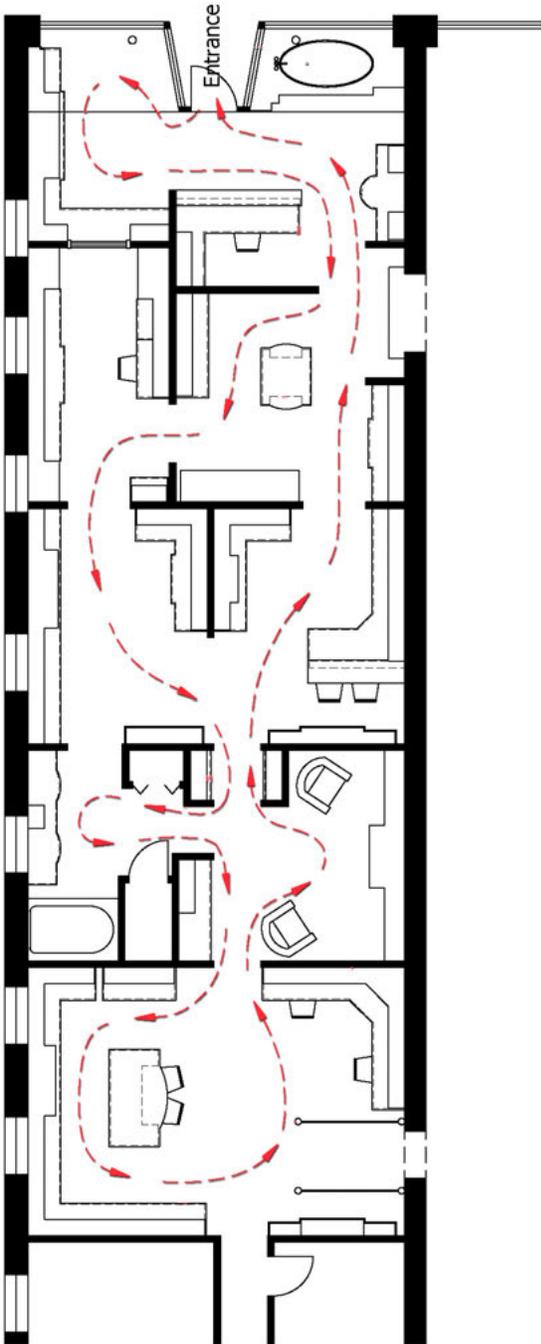


CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY’S EVOLVING MARKET

“Live-in-this-Space” Experience Path

If the showroom features full room settings, it’s important to connect the spaces with wide, gracious openings between the rooms. I’ve seen these types of spaces very well lit, with sensors turning the lights on and off as a visitor travels through the space. This type of space is best experienced with a “guide” – a showroom specialist or a designer on duty).

Live-in-this-Space Showroom Plan 2,325 SF

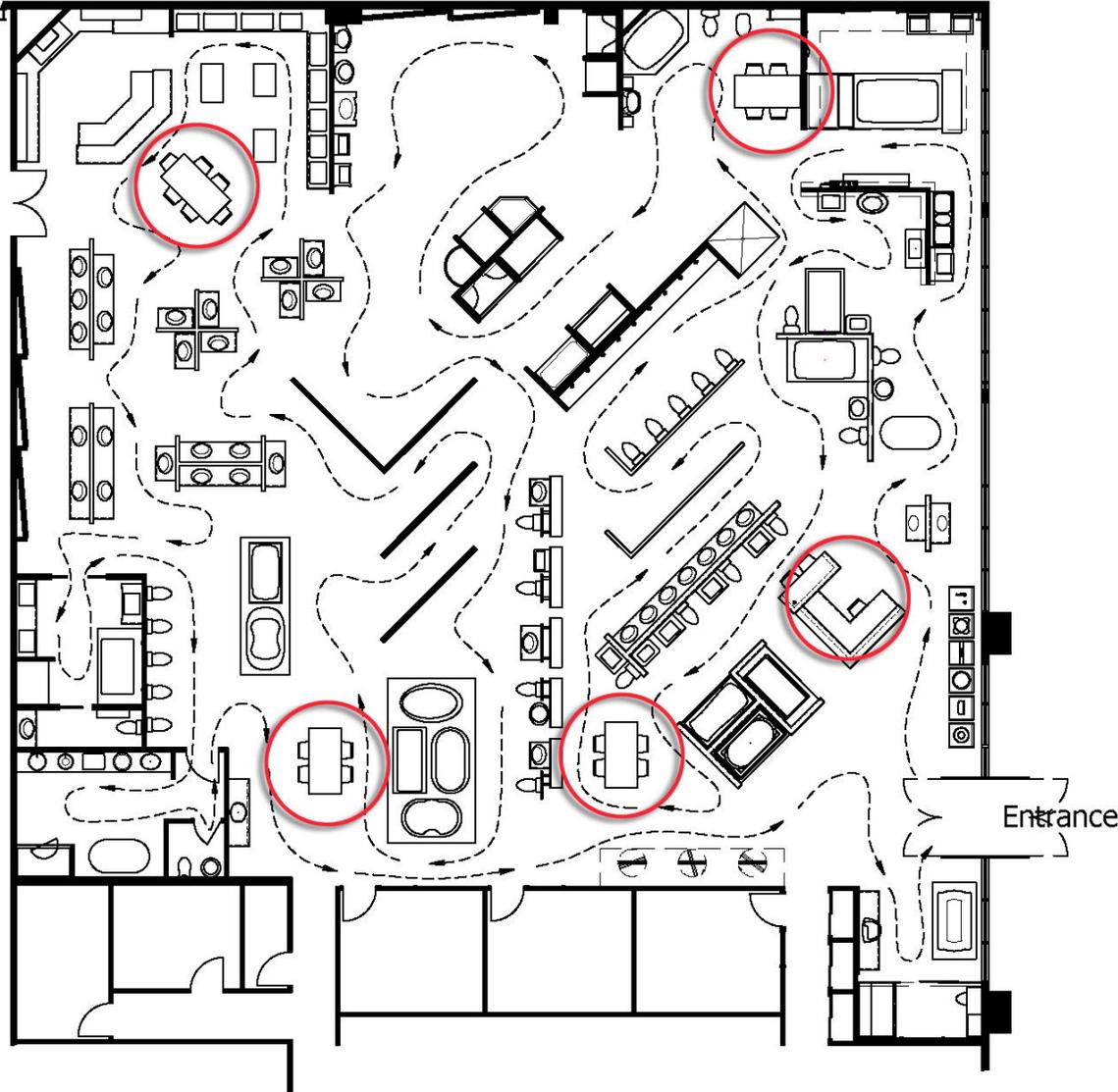


CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

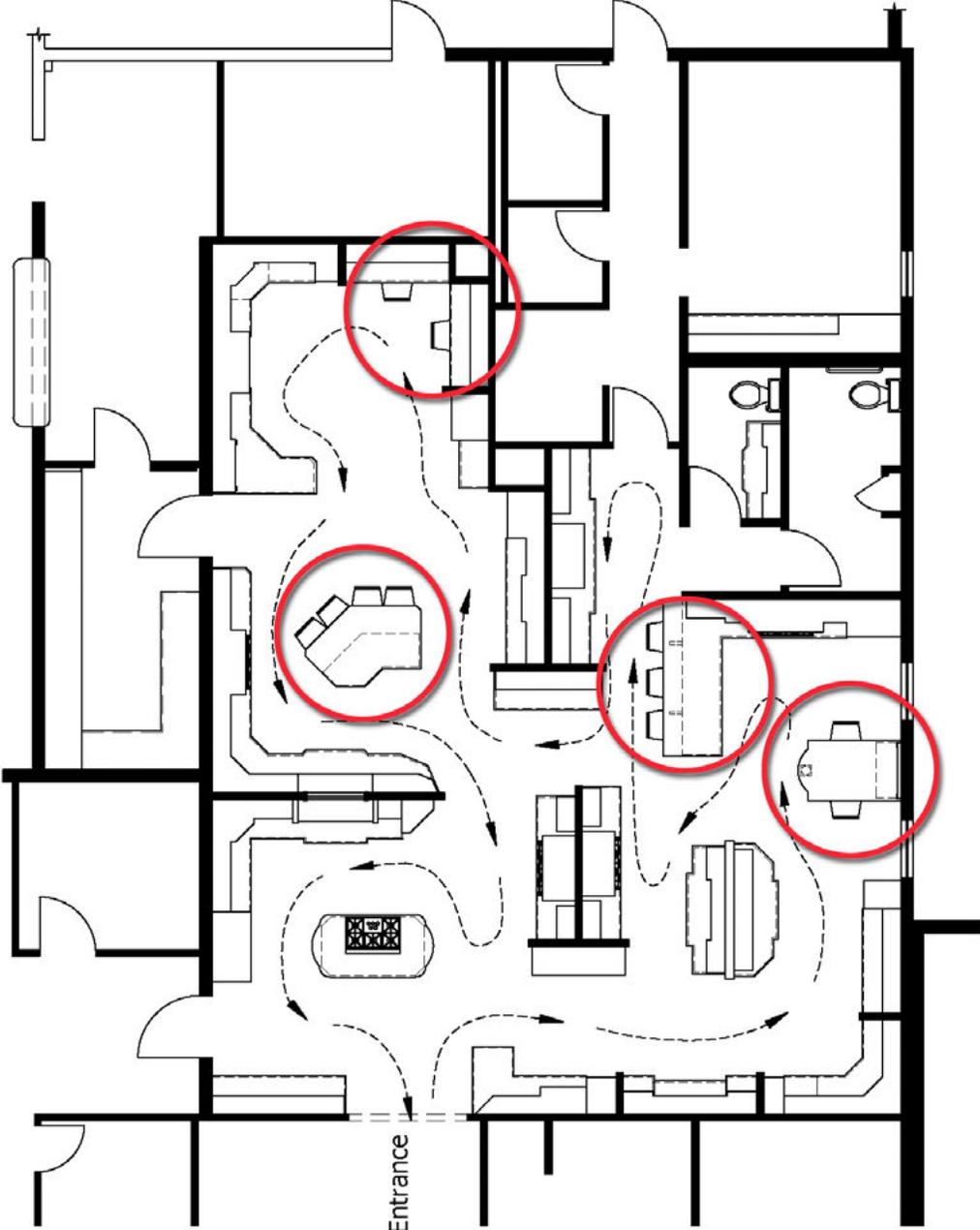
“Meandering” Experience Path

Big spaces should have partial walls so the visitor can see what's ahead of them, or behind the next wall. Plenty of places to meet with a staff member at tables, islands, counters or desks is a good idea.

Meandering Showroom Plan 7,500 SF



Meandering Showroom Plan 2,400 SF



CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

THIRD, ESTABLISH YOUR SHOWROOM EXPERIENCE.

Once you have:

- Identified your current and near-future staffing needs;
- Outlined the space required for the folks who will be building the business with you;
- And selected the path you'd like to create in the new space ...

There are a series of layout decisions that will impact the client experience.

All are successful: your style, the area of the country you work in, and the pre-cut mix you represent will help you to choose the best choice for your firm.

- Vignettes or full rooms, or a combination?
- Fill the space, or leave room for showroom gatherings?
- One continuous floor, or specific to each display?
- One continuous ceiling treatment, or specific to each display or several key displays?
- Show as much as you can, or show as little as possible?

Show as much product as you can, or show capabilities in full room settings?

The question of showing as much as you can or as little as you can should be answered after you've decided if you're an order taker, a designer, or a trusted advisor!

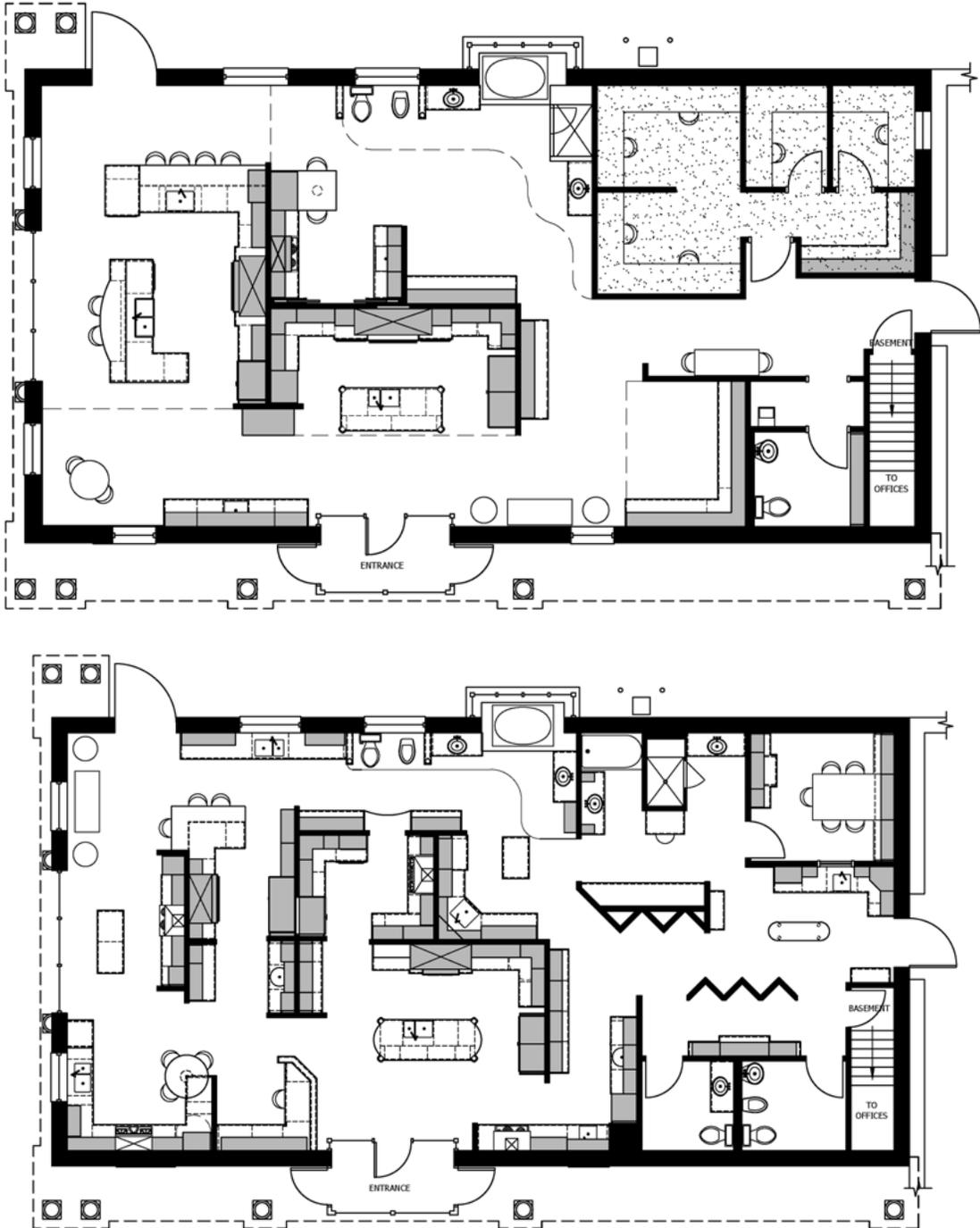
- Order takers need a lot of product on display, so vignettes and displayed material choices work well. The plan on the right is the best choice.
- The other two seem to function better in large, total room settings, or in small studio locations. Therefore, the design on the left might be the best choice.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Before you decide, maybe you should prepare two plans? Here we see the two options side-by-side.

By the way, this business owner moved his staff offices downstairs (shown in the plan on the right) to really maximize the available display space.

One Space, Two Designs



CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Be on the look-out for emerging technology that will impact your approach to showroom planning.

Richard T. Anuszkiewicz, Annapolis, Maryland: Richard is the Director of the Kitchen and Bath Division, for an architectural firm in Annapolis, Maryland, and is actively pursuing exposure within the industry.

When it comes to “what’s new, what’s in the future,” Richard feels that augmented reality (while still in its Beta stage) will impact our industry in the future. Although still uncharted territory, Richard feels that it may become a way for prospective clients to be able to “live in” their new space through a virtual reality session based on the designer’s proposed kitchen plan.

Interestingly enough, this idea of a client being able to “be” in their space may be just right for consumers who need a little convincing: that client who doesn’t really trust anyone. Alternatively, other clients may shy away from this type of presentation method, preferring to have their design professional “curate” a collection of products – selected just for that client, relieving them of the terrors of comparative shopping.

Trust/Distrust Issues Impacting How We Present Our Ideas

Path #1: “The client must be convinced that the designer’s right.” An augmented reality experience of being in the proposed space before the client makes the decision may be the best marketing tool for the consumer who needs to be convinced. In Path #1, the designer stands in front of “the wall of doors,” proving that they can provide whatever the client would like. The prospective client selects the doors they’re interested in and the planning process begins.

Path #2: “The client buys into the designer – they’re excited about the ‘ride’. They want to image their new room, and create it hand-in-hand with the designer.” Beginning with ideas, demonstrated in mood boards, leading to that all-important, “I trust you,” sense on the consumer’s face. This leads to the magical idea that the project will unfold as we go along together creating it. The designer paints the picture: it’s a work of art being created together. In Path #2, the designer “curated” selection scenario is quite different. For example, doors are stored away, not readily available. After an in-depth survey (that information gathering stage conducted early on in the planning process), the designer’s approach is to pull out several doors and begin the discussion by saying, *“You can see we have hundreds of doors – so not to worry, we certainly can find the one just right for you. But, rather than searching through these doors, based on what you’ve told me – the dreams you have for the new space, the way you’d like your house to ‘feel’: these are the styles I believe would work for you.”*

Richard’s Winning Strategies

Richard focuses his design presentation on answering the question, *“How can I create value or increase my value to my prospective client?”* He has experienced – as many designers have – the difficulty of being “shopped.”

“We must realize that information is everywhere, making pricing easy to dissect: but what is not easy for the client to manage through on their own is the huge selection facing them. The designer can ‘curate’ a collection of products – selected just for that client, relieving them of the terrors of comparative shopping.”

Richard feels that it’s critical to create a personal experience for the client as they wander down the design experience path. By moving beyond products – even moving beyond design – and focusing on providing a personalized service based on a personalized experience is the key: *“You’re taking them through the process.”*

Richard feels this might be the new definition of “luxury” – how the space is designed, how and why it’s a personal experience for the consumer, the client feeling as though you are catering just to them. *“People want to fee very special – our society is just more ‘egocentric’.”*

Some examples Richard suggested as appropriate for a physical showroom:

- Immediately greet guests with a beverage.
- Create a “living room” feeling in the showroom, where you can sit down and really connect with a client: developing a “relationship” from early on.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

AFTER THE SPACE IS DEFINED AND DESIGNED, PLAN YOUR MARKETING CAMPAIGN – ON YOUR OWN OR WITH A PRO.

Whew, a lot of work while you're trying to design, present and install kitchens and bathrooms. If possible, search out a professional who you can afford to organize your marketing campaign. A pro can organize a cohesive overall strategy.

Tips From An Expert: Denise Grothouse, The PerfectSix



We interviewed a very successful firm familiar with our industry. Here are Denise Grothouse's suggestions.

- **Ask to see examples of their work.** Different companies provide offer types of posts. Social media interactions can take many forms and seeing their work will give you a better understanding of their arsenal of skills. Do they provide text based posts? Photographs? Videos? GIFs? Their technical savvy can make you stand out above your competition. Posts should be visually appealing and should include short tips and information that your fans will want to share with their personal network. Use short, impactful copy and striking images. The more “shares” you get, the more people you will reach.
- **Do they understand YOUR target audience?** It is paramount that your social media representative has a clear understanding of the clients you want to attract. They should be asking you for information on the age, gender and social status to understand what platforms are ideal for your campaign. If you are targeting 16 year olds, you should be posting on Snapchat, choose Facebook for a 40-year-old demographic. For Millennials, you need to be on Instagram. Each social media platform has an audience – understanding your prospects and which social media source they prefer will enable you to target your marketing. Focus your efforts where they will have the most impact with your prospects.
- **How would they create posts that resonate with your audience?** Ask for an example. For example, Facebook Company Pages do not automatically show your posts to all of your followers. Facebook shows the posts to more people based on the activity around the post. The more “likes,” the more people it shares your post to via their timeline. Facebook analyzes the interest around your post and then shares it accordingly. If there is no activity, it stops sharing it.
- **Do you feel comfortable with this person representing your brand to the world?** You should only work with people you have met in person to make the best selection for your company or brand. You'll be working closely with them and should have a level of comfort with this person.
- **Do they have experience in your industry?** Having experience in your industry will give them the leg-up on creating relevant posts, and will require less time from you educating them and more time for them to fine-tune your voice to the public.
- **Do they have relationships with your customers, vendors and industry peers (your social media neighbors)?** Interaction on social media on your behalf with your social neighbor helps your posts go viral.
- **What are they posting?** Are they creating the content or are you? Are you supplying photography/video/content, or will they be creating it? Be specific about this part as it will have an impact on your schedule and resources.
- **Ask for a written proposal** that outlines their fees and specific services they provide, including the timeframe. Be clear on what you are paying for and what you expect to receive in return.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

GREAT MARKETING IDEAS FROM SUCCESSFUL DESIGNERS

Once you have your space in-place, and you have organized your marketing plan – it's time to establish yourself as an "expert."

- Be a design competition winner.
- Be a recognized expert who has been published.
- Be recognized as a community advocate.

Become an advisor or columnist in a local publication.

J. D. Norris, DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen of Aiken: J. D. Norris and his wife are the owners of a DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen franchise in Beech Island, South Carolina. They started out in a 300 sq. ft. showroom space that was a part of a 3,000 sq. ft. space for a related building products company.

During the great recession, problems developed with the owner of the building, which reflected poorly on J. D.'s business. He and his wife decided to relocate to a destination showroom environment. The destination location was selected to set his business apart from competitors located in more commercial areas, and it also was a more cost-effective way to open a small studio.

J.D.'s approach was to make a minimal financial investment in the physical space, and a maximum investment in his intellectual capital to reach out to prospective clients and provide service that they never expected. He has a small showroom in a renovated house.

J.D.'s success in establishing himself as an expert is unique and worth sharing.

Several years ago, J.D. noticed that his local daily newspaper, The Aiken Standard, was featuring more and more columns and less and less news. He approached the editor with the idea that he would write a do-it-yourself column: it would not be self-serving, it would not be written for his specific targeted clients, but would give him exposure. The editor said, *"That's an interesting idea. Write three articles."* He did, but the editor said no, he wasn't interested.

A year or so later, while J.D. was in his booth a local home show (a home show that was sponsored by the same newspaper), the owner of the newspaper graciously came by to visit with each of the exhibitors. J.D. asked why the editor said no – because he never got a response from the editor – he didn't learn anything from this rejection. The owner said, *"Send me the articles."* Shortly thereafter, the owner said, *"Can you write a column for us weekly."* Well, J.D. thought he might write a monthly article – but he's been writing weekly articles for two years now, and this has become one of his best lead sources.

A screenshot of a newspaper article from The Aiken Standard. The article is titled "J.D. NORRIS' HOW DO I: Make the right choice between contractors?" and is dated May 14, 2013, at 5:41 pm. The article discusses the challenges of hiring contractors and the importance of loyalty. It includes a sidebar with a realtor advertisement for Sandra Willis and a "Most Popular" section with various local news headlines. The newspaper's masthead and navigation menu are visible at the top.

What he found is that, although what he writes about is appropriate for the do-it-yourselfer (who are not his targeted clients), his targeted consumers enjoy the columns too – they read them and say to themselves, *"When I'm ready, this is the person I'm going to work with."*

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

J.D.'s Winning Strategy

J. D. feels there has always been a disconnect between sales promises and what service delivers. His goal is to deliver an installation experience far beyond the consumer's expectations. Quite simply, J. D. said:

"If you cannot have a 'perfect location' for your business, you need to work hard to be the 'perfect source' that the prospective client selects to execute their project. It's all about delivering on the promises you make."

To accomplish this, J. D. works very closely with all his subcontractors. He advises:

There needs to be an absolutely clear and established set of standards for all of the trades and craftspeople working on the project. J.D. sets the standard, trains to the standard, expects the multi-crafted Lead Carpenters to deliver on his standard, and if they fail to do so, they must redo it to meet the standard at their cost.

- To balance this firm – yet important – approach, the Lead Carpenter's incentive is that if he manages his project well and comes under budget, the remainder of the estimated labor budget for that project is given to him.
- Logistics must be top-of-mind to maximize efficiency, as well as timeliness of the execution of the installation. The firm preorders everything, double-checks everything, works very hard to never have a procurement or product availability cause delay on a jobsite. J.D. hates the phrase "back-ordered."

A Designer Showcase: Home partner with the interior design community.

If an organization sponsors a showhouse, a Christmas tour, a garden tour – anything that relates to residences in your marketing area – try to become one of the selected designers.

An alternative to a showhouse is a cooking school kitchen, a portable kitchen – any activity where you can be in the public's eye and be recognized for your design expertise.

Ellen's Winning Strategies

- Get to know all the other designers. Make sure they understand you're available to collaborate with them. One designer made her team of installers available to help anyone needing a little carpentry expertise for the two days before the preview party – it was really appreciated!
- Realize there's a very good chance everyone will need to be traveling through your kitchen during the frenzied end of the set-up time (because the designer who is doing the entry hall will not allow anyone to walk through their space!). Therefore, have a BIG cleaning crew ready to completely freshen up your room hours before the preview party.
- If possible, host some type of event for the sponsoring organization and all the designers at your showroom.
- Have your staff man the room on the busiest days.
- Follow-up with personal visits to the designers' firms: maybe provide a "lunch and learn" program for them?
- Make sure the showhouse leaders know that someone must pay for the kitchen you are presenting – you cannot remove it when the showhouse is over!
- Put the effort into the presentation to be selected.
 - Use some of the tools discussed.
 - Partner with your suppliers to get deep discounts.
 - Make sure everyone receives proper credit.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

BECOME PART OF A MANUFACTURER'S MARKETING INITIATIVES.

Develop a strong business relationship with the reps that call on you: they may be able to refer you as the designer of record for a project their company is working on.

A few opportunities to consider:

- Write for your cabinet companies' blogs. Provide great photography!
- Offer to help create a corporate showroom display, a trade show exhibit, a home show exhibit.
- Enter association and manufacturer competitions for design and company recognition.
- Submit your work to trade magazines.
- Create video tours of projects you have completed.

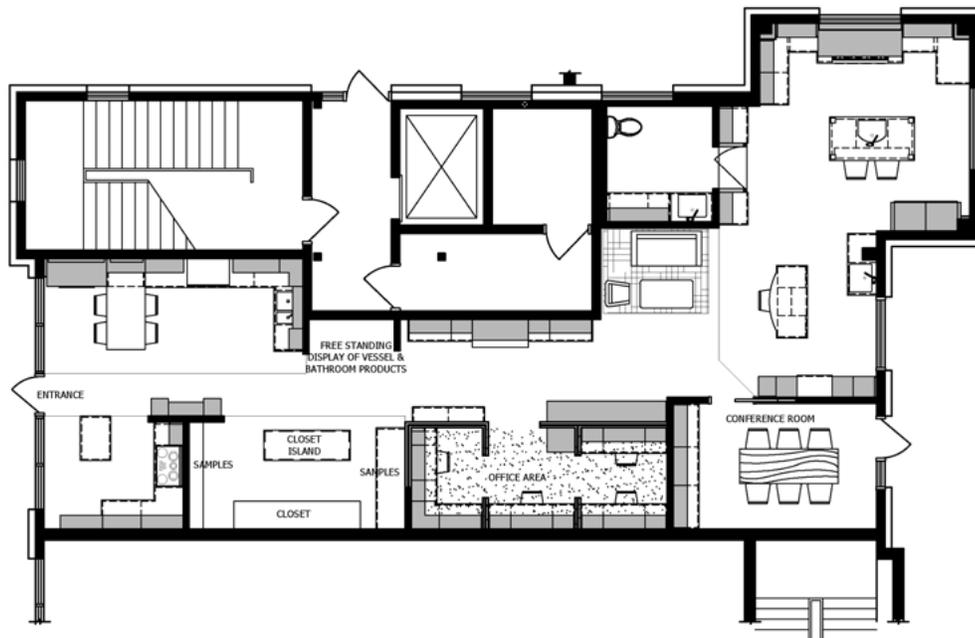
Be active in your community.

One of the best ways to stretch your marketing dollars is to develop a community event calendar for the year.

Tracey Martin, Blue Lotus Kitchen & Bath Design: Tracy Martin has had her 1,500-sq.-ft. boutique showroom (her studio) for 8 years. Tracy has paid close attention to the world of social media for the last 3 years. She uses her Houzz presence and website to communicate two points to prospective clients.

- First, who she is as a person and as a designer.
- Second, what her work is all about.

Tracy feels that one of her strongest business attributes is her ability to collaborate. She works closely with allied professionals and the real estate community: offering her showroom as a place that they can meet and make selections. Tracy has an organized discount system based on the manufacturer's list price for her designer and builder clients. This ability to collaborate is a winning strategy for Tracy – she's in a very competitive New Jersey market: there are 5 kitchen and bath design firms within 15 minutes of her location.



Showroom 11: Blue Lotus' Overall Showroom, 1,330 SF (Display Area 1,198 SF, Office Area 132 SF)

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Tracy's Winning Strategies

One of Tracy's major marketing strategies is to be active in her community. Some of her currently community outreach activism includes:

- She's is a leader in the Business Professional Association. (Interestingly enough, most of the businesses participating in the association are strong-willed, successful women!) Their latest activity supported the Capital Health Center's Oncology Department. In its second year (the first year was a 1-week event, the second a 2-week event), the individual businesses came up with their own way to support the cause, "Hope is in the Bag." Money is raised to cover the cost of wigs for women who are going through chemotherapy – hair loss is expected and wigs are considered cosmetic by insurance companies. The efforts of the local business association has raised thousands of dollars.
- Tracy hosted an event in 2015, sponsoring a woman's group called "Pretty in Pink:" for \$45.00 they came to the studio and painted cancer heart flags. They raised \$500.00!
- Tracy is also a Board member at the PTO high school (Tracy has 2 high school students and a college student). She is, of course, interested in fundraising for the school, but would also like to leave a legacy for the children who will follow her. Her interest is keeping the arts in school activities.
- She recently chaired a fundraiser program, called "Building Community Through Music," for her child's school, Hopewell Valley Central High School. She also hosted a silent auction on December 5, 2015, which will then culminate in a concert on April 13, 2016. They have raised \$9,700.00!

Tracy sums it up this way: *"From a business standpoint, all of my community outreach programs not only help the community, but give me a great deal of exposure in my tightknit community. When I stand in front of 800 parents or organize an event at the school, it exposes me to the audience and helps my business, as well as the school!"*

Pietro Giorgi, Sr., CMKBD, Thomas Giorgi and Joseph Giorgi, Jr., CKD, Giorgi Kitchens & Designs

Giorgi Kitchens & Designs, a 55-year-old firm started by Ellen's husband Pete, and now owned and managed by his two nephews, Joseph and Tom, is located in Wilmington, Delaware. The firm has always operated out of a home-turned-showroom on the first floor and offices on the second, in a commercial area.

As the President of Giorgi Kitchens, Joe Giorgi manages a team of designers and an in-house installation crew. The company's motto is, *"Where Classic meets Contemporary," and ... "A Giorgi kitchen is not created by a Giorgi, but by the Giorgi Team."* Joe feels it's very important that all of his designers are recognized as "Giorgi designers," and are equally talented: the client need not feel they missed working with a Giorgi family member.

When it comes to marketing, the firm has always focused on community outreach programs.

- One of the things they have done is create a portable kitchen that they make available to organizations hosting any type of cooking demonstration. For example, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania is the mushroom capital of the world – and the city hosts a Mushroom Festival each year. Giorgi Kitchens provides the stage: a great way to meet people who care about food!
- The firm actively supports organizations and activities that appeal to their targeted consumer, which are upscale community members. For example, they have a full-page introduction to the company as part of the brochure for the Grand Gala, an event supporting the Opera House in their community.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Joseph's Winning Strategies

- Support community events with your talent and/or products related to the kitchen and/or bath. A portable kitchen can help a lot of organizations. Make sure it has your logo on it!
- Donate products and/or your talents to auctions sponsored by recognized charity organizations. AND pay to attend these events for networking.
- Participate in activities that are attended by your target client. Giorgi Kitchens supports the Opera House because they find their target consumer is very culturally active.
- Participate in kitchen tours. Joe's community has a bi-annual kitchen tour, and he works hard to submit great spaces for consideration so that there is always a Giorgi Kitchens' room on the tour. AND he mans the tour: he's not going to let a volunteer explain a Giorgi creation!

Offer consumer educational programming, host festive events in your showroom.

Following are a few ideas.

- Designer dinners: a seminar over dinner while a chef is cooking.
- Artisan events, where artisans the firm works with (furniture maker, custom glass tile maker, custom iron worker) set-up their wares in their showroom for a festive event.
- Education seminars for the consumer in the showroom. Kathleen commented that, in addition to in showroom seminars, the firm conducts seminars off-site: in Bend, Oregon at a local resort in their community, or golf resorts nearby.
- In showroom or in parking lot mini product fairs, with vendors displaying their wares.

Hosting events in a showroom is just a great way to introduce your firm to your targeted consumer or stay "top-of-mind" with past consumers.

Hank's Winning Strategies

Haskell Interiors, in Cleveland, Tennessee, is a full-service interior design firm. Hank Matheny, the owner of Haskell Interiors, recommends:

- Participate in any event that relates to food, fun and a great lifestyle. Make sure your showroom's perfect whenever you host an event.
- Invite past clients and prospective ones to attend anything you're hosting. If there's a fee to attend, consider paying the fee for your clients, and invite them to bring their best friend along.
- Be active in your Chamber of Commerce's business initiatives.
- Provide a meeting space for area clubs and groups. They appreciate a "no charge" place to gather – and love it if you offer refreshments!

Be a part of your local industry associations' activities.

This will lead to new business collaborative possibilities.

Doc Savage Supply: Ed Donahue, the owner of Doc Savage Supply in Albuquerque, New Mexico, broke ground for a 7,500 sq. ft. showroom on September 15, 2008 – one day after Lehman Brothers announced it would file for bankruptcy, setting off the financial crises which, in turn, exasperated the great recession! Ed's glad he did it, though – it has set his firm apart from his competitors.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Ed's winning strategy for the showroom was to make it comfortable, airy and open – not cluttered. He feels you need to match your showroom character with the character of your community. “Glitzy, over-the-top” designs might be right for some areas of North America – but not for Albuquerque, New Mexico. Good advice when considering a new showroom.

For a plumbing wholesale showroom or a kitchen and bath showroom or studio – make sure displays are easy to change, or that products are easy to switch-out within a display. Updating and refreshing the space is part of regular maintenance. An excellent point!

Carla Wersonick is a major force within the Doc Savage organization. Ed attributes much of the company's success to Carla's ability to engage the allied professional community, which has led to strong business-to-business relationships, as well as a profitable repeat and referral business.

Carla's Winning Strategies

When asked how she approached being active in the industry, her comments were:

- When she joins an organization, she becomes active in it. Carla feels, “You only really get out what you put in to such an endeavor.” Carla's active in the Home Builders Association, with a focus on several committees: the Remodelers Council, the Green Council, the Custom Council. She's on the Board of Directors, and has worked hard for these organizations.

Because of this interaction with other professionals she's built a business referral base through her reputation as a volunteer leader. She's known as, “Carla from Doc Savage.”

- She feels this volunteer work is well worth it because other association members like to work with someone they have a relationship with. Carla's secret is in creating a business partnership where she (representing Doc Savage) and the builder/remodeler/designer truly are focused on helping each other be more successful. Now, Carla's a realist – and she says you're always going to have a builder or remodeler who doesn't have a collaborative nature or might not be as honest: but they're far in the majority.
- Carla strives to reassure all of her industry partner clients that she's there to help their client. She'll show their client products and answer their questions thoroughly because she has been educated by the manufacturer, as well as being trained in the mechanics of plumbing. Carla feels the most important thing a “brick-and-mortar” showroom can do is to educate the consumer on why certain products should be selected over others. Her builders are comfortable sending in their clients without feeling the necessity of being there themselves.
- Her builder clients also know that Carla keep their budget in mind for the project – she doesn't simply try to up-sell. Carla knows her products and she tries to help the consumer “get the most bang for their buck.”

However you decide to communicate with prospective clients ...

Speak to them clearly, truthfully and in a friendly manner about the “rules of the road.”

Following is a reprint of a great article from a California Home magazine.

Know Thy Builder

HOMES ARE STILL BUILT BY HAND
TEXT BY RICHARD LORING

WE LIVE IN A TIME when nearly all the essential products we use to live are created by hands or machines we never see.

Think of your mobile phone, your car, the shirt on your back, all made by invisible hands, or machines in some factory on the other side of the planet.

Now think about your home, particularly if it has been custom built just for you. If you're in the least bit curious, you've not only met your builder, but you've met the folks who poured the foundation, framed the walls, installed the electrical wiring and set the tile in your shower; you get the idea.

While we're surrounded by objects created by invisible hands, the most important object in our lives, our homes, have been created by hands we know. In an age of computers, technologically advanced cars, magical medicines and "advanced metrics", our homes are still built by hand, by craftspeople doing things the way they've essentially been done for hundreds and sometimes thousands of years.

The construction process is virtually the last important piece of our everyday lives that still retains a character our great grandparents would easily recognize.

Is there some lesson in this little homily? Well, it's important to remember these are human hands creating your home, not machines programed for absolute perfection.

Can the tradesperson's hands create something of great beauty? Yes, but any artist worth their salt will tell you within great beauty lies some sort of imperfection; think Lauren Hutton and that wonderful gap between her two front teeth, or closer to Los Angeles the Watts Towers, the most imperfect object of artist perfection in Los Angeles.

Your new home can never be as perfect as your new BMW, or that new Boeing 777 rolling off the assembly line, and it shouldn't be. Your new home is the ultimate "crafts" object and you should never forget the thousands of hands that have collaborated to bring together this ancient object, your new home. **CH**

Session 6

Marketing to the New Consumer

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

Session 6

Marketing to the New Consumer

REFRESH YOUR “PROFESSIONAL “STYLE” WHILE MANAGING YOUR CLIENTELE’S EXPECTATIONS ... WITH THE HELP OF TECHNOLOGY!

In the new year, a winning strategy for design professionals is to use technology to be strategic in your business and marketing approach.

- Refreshing your marketing presence without spending a fortune by becoming a better room stylist and amateur photographer is a good place to start.
- Sharpening your communications skills and learning how to manage your on-line reviews is an important part of marketing in our emerging market.
- And, becoming familiar with tech tools for after-sales support and casual client communications is an important strategy to employ.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR WORK LOOK SPECTACULAR ... WITH THE HELP OF TECHNOLOGY

It is disappointing to see a photograph of a beautiful project on a designer’s website or in a portfolio that is “underwhelming” because it looks awkward, barren or cluttered. The age of digital photography makes it very feasible for designers to photograph their own work, or take videos of the completed project (perhaps with the happy client singing your praises?). However, this imagery will be “flat” if it is not styled properly.

Take the time to learn how to look at the kitchen through the lens of a camera, rather than as an individual standing in the space.

When styling the room, think of the following:

- Your goal is to make the space look enjoyed and lived in – but not cluttered.
- “Real life” should be eliminated: the coffee pot, the toaster, the telephone should be removed! Always look closely along the edges of the photograph to make sure you are not seeing some mundane items of everyday life in the environment.
- Make sure you pay attention to what is being seen through doorways leading into other parts of the house. De-clutter. On your own – or with a photographer – learn how to use Photoshop to take things out or put them in: perhaps a great piece of art that really did not exist in the project.
- Include furniture in the kitchen! If you have a showroom environment: pick out great looking stools for your different displays, and take them with you to photo shoots. If you do not have access, talk to various stores in your area (Pottery Barn, Crate ‘n Barrel and the like) about purchasing and returning chairs for a photo shoot.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

- Have oversized accessory items in place of small groups of clutter. Remember, odd numbers make the best arrangements. Here are some ideas:
 1. A series of large glass jars with pasta, rice or legumes in them.
 2. A large, flat bowl of the same type of fruit or vegetables: apples, artichokes, eggplant, cabbage are all good ideas.
 3. A breadboard with several pieces of fresh bread: spray them with lacquer to make them shine.
- Unless you really have a “green thumb,” stay away from fresh flowers. Think about a live plant if you want some greenery. I cannot stress enough that when arranging flowers – use a lot of one type! A large bouquet of daisies is far better than a mixed bouquet. Here are a few more tips from the editors of House Beautiful Magazine.
 1. Conquer your fear of flower arranging. Anybody can arrange one type of flower in one color, cut short.
 2. Buy twice as many as you think you should – too much of a good thing always works with flowers. Put any extra stems in small glasses.
 3. Or, buy really big leafy plants. Place them in a very tall, clear vase.
 4. Mix fresh herbs into your flower arrangement, instead of florist filler.
 5. Arrange your flowers in anything but a vase: go through your pantry and find a pitcher, a tureen, a mug, a teacup.
- If you want a table in the shot, or want to set a meal at a counter, make sure glassware has something in it. Only use top-quality, good-looking (and simple) placemats, napkins and dinnerware. Bring your own selection along: do not rely on using the consumer’s.
- Do not overlook windows. Try to wait to photograph the room until after the client has installed great window treatments.

Once the room is styled, it is time to take the shots!

Tips from Eric: How to Become a Better Photographer and Edit Your Images

Lights, Camera, Action!

Ready to take your online portfolio one step further? Video marketing is here to stay. The content draws in homeowners and showcases your work from all angles.

- Start by creating a YouTube channel to house your videos.
- Consider creating short how-to videos as you work on your projects.
- More advanced? Create a time lapse video of your project from start to finish.

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET

EXPLAINING YOUR VALUE – OR DEFENDING IT – WITH YOUNGER, MORE INTERNET-SAVVY CONSUMERS ... WITH THE HELP OF TECHNOLOGY

- A recent Gallop Poll stresses that the threat of “showrooming” has been greatly exaggerated: the vast majority of consumers do plan on making their purchase from a real person in a real store.
- Be ready to explain your value – or defend it – with younger, more internet-savvy consumers. Be prepared to demonstrate that you offer experiential knowledge – while the internet simply offers information and comparisons.
- Make sure you know your area’s competition so you can highlight your strong points without ever negatively mentioning a competitor.
- Do not be shy about asking prospective clients if they are considering other firms. You need not know the name, but simply ask what type of firms they are considering: a design/build firm, an architect, another kitchen designer?
- Make sure your prospective client understands that you cannot try a kitchen on, or drive a bathroom around the block. The consumer does not know what they have purchased until they have cooked their first meal or taken their first bath. In reality, when it comes to quality, they do not know what they have purchased until they have had the room in-place and in use for a number of years.
- Do not waste your time with clients who are not your targeted consumers. It is important for you to know if they are “shopping around” – in person or on-line.

TO USE SPECIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SUCCESSFULLY, START BY LEARNING HOW TO USE THEM.

(Source: “Using Social Media to Develop Your Personal Brand,” The Wolf Organization www.wolfleader.com)

It always comes down to the customer. Homeowners are doing more and more research before they start their projects – and that research is being conducted on-line.

Did you know? 79% of consumers say they trust online reviews as much as they do personal recommendations.

You need a professional, credible digital presence. Social media is a great (and free!) way to start.

Building Your Plan

Before you start posting and pinning, read through our guide and use the worksheets to create a list of goals for your social media accounts. Take inventory of what resources you already have and get started.

If you want to showcase completed projects, think about visual-heavy channels like Pinterest. Want to answer homeowners’ questions quickly? You’ll want to try a fast-paced channel like Twitter.

Key Questions to Ask Yourself

- What do you hope to achieve? Consider goals like increased homeowner interactions, real-time business updates, or a better connection with other designers.
- How often can you share updates—daily, weekly? Make a commitment to keep your accounts active before signing up.
- What resources, like great project photos or expert knowledge, do you already have at your disposal? Use what you have as a starting point.

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FACEBOOK

Facebook is an online network with both personal profiles and business accounts. The network has more than one billion users and more than 25 million active small business pages.

Creating a Business Page, Not a Personal Page

This is important; there is a difference between a personal account and business page – both in function and the capabilities. Customers can “like” a business page, but they can only “friend” a personal page. Note: in order to set up a page for your business, you’ll need to create or use a personal account.

Once you’ve logged in through a personal account, visit facebook.com/pages/create/ to get started setting up your business page. Select “Local Business or Place” and fill in the details for your company or create a personal business page for yourself as a designer.

What to Share

With a wide variety of users, Facebook is a great channel for a variety of content types– including links to articles about design trends, DIY YouTube videos, or news from your business.

Consider creating a gallery of before-and-after transformations or share a favorite kitchen each week. Some designers post a new project on Facebook every Monday!

Best Practices

- **Frequency and Timing:** You can maximize your audience by varying when and how often you post through Facebook’s scheduling tool. Click the clock below your post.
- **See What Sticks:** Share different types of posts – videos, photos and links – and see what types of content get the most likes, comments and shares. Learn as you post.
- **Dealing with Negativity:** The best thing to do is respond quickly, calmly and kindly by posting a response and inviting the customer to continue the conversation offline by offering your email.

Posting photos directly from shows and events is a great way to show you’re up on the latest trends.

To Pay or Not to Pay

Organic reach on all Facebook pages is down, thanks to new changes in the Facebook News Feed algorithm. Recent research from Social@Ogilvy estimates that only 6% of your Facebook fans will see your post.

This doesn’t mean it’s time to abandon your Facebook page. However, it may mean it’s time to explore paid advertising through Facebook. Even small promotions, between \$5 and \$10, can increase your reach by thousands of users. The trick is knowing which posts to promote. Make sure your post will be relevant days in the future and features a link or key message to encourage engagement.

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PINTEREST

Pinterest is a social network driven by sharing, collecting and displaying photos. These photos are organized on themed pinboards.

Creating a Pinterest Page

Unlike Facebook, which requires a personal account to create a business account, you can skip straight to creating a Pinterest page for your business.

Visit <http://www.pinterest.com/business/create/>. You will be prompted to fill in details about your business, select a business type and add a profile photo.

What to Pin

Once your account is active, you're ready to go! Pins can be pulled from other Pinterest accounts, anywhere on the web or uploaded from your computer.

- First, take stock of the photos you have. Completed project photos, detail shots and works-in-progress are all great for Pinterest.
- Then, group these photos to create pinboards –much like image galleries. Consider sorting by material, brand, location or style.
- To fill out your boards, use the “Pin it” button as you browse other accounts.

Best Practices

- More Than Just Photos: Pinterest is a great way to promote articles, infographics, videos and blog posts. Copy and paste the URL of the content you'd like to pin and choose the best graphic for your content.
- Share the Pins: Add your pins and Pinterest boards to your website. The site makes the codes available to add boards to your site. Just copy and paste! business.pinterest.com/widget-builder.
- Learn What They Love: Ask homeowners to show you their own Pinterest boards. You can get a sense of their favorite designs and personal style – making your job a bit easier!

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The social network Houzz (pronounced how-zz) focuses exclusively on home remodeling and design. The site has more than 15 million monthly users.

Creating a Houzz Profile

Visit houzz.com to get started. You'll be asked to use your e-mail address to create an account. Check the box and indicate that you're a home improvement professional.

To Pay or Not to Pay: Decide if the benefits of having a paid subscription tied to your targeted zip code is equal or greater to you than the fees.

After you create your account, you'll be prompted to upload photos to an online portfolio.

What to Share

Like Pinterest, Houzz runs on photos.

You'll want to display your highest quality photos – this means your largest files and highest resolutions. Houzz users want to see detail and quality, along with clear descriptions of the products and any methods used.

Keywords are an important component of Houzz; they help homeowners locate your projects. Include colors, textures, locations, styles and product names.

Best Practices

- **Bright Ideabooks:** Think of Ideabooks like Pinterest boards. You can collect photos from across the entire site and compile them in your own Ideabooks.
- **Get in the Know:** Houzz releases a yearly Houzz & Home Survey. It has great insight into the market and is available for free: <http://blog.houzz.com/post/122865703303/houzz-home-2015-survey-renovation>
- **Join the Discussion:** Check out the Advice tab on the Houzz main menu and see what homeowners want to know. There's even a pro-to-pro section for industry chats.

Houzz has a great resource section that includes how-to videos and guides for every part of the site. Check it out: info.houzz.com/howtohouzz

CLIENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S EVOLVING MARKET



INSTAGRAM

Looking for a social platform that's all about visuals? Try Instagram, a photo-based social site perfect for sharing beautiful details or intricate design work.

Instagram started out as an independent photo sharing social network. Users would take one picture at a time, apply a filter to it and post it. Users could tag their pictures with a hashtag. If you were interested in looking at pictures of curtains, for instance, you could search for the hashtag "curtains" and see all of the pictures tagged with that word. The appeal of Instagram has always been that it's less "noisy" than other social networks. Users are encouraged to share one carefully curated picture at a time, rather than a barrage of pictures.

In the past few years, Facebook has acquired the social network. Broadly, not much has changed under Facebook's ownership.

How can you use Instagram as a kitchen and bath designer?

For one, it can be a great way to share pictures to Facebook. There are also many communities of other design professionals that use it to share work. It can be really interesting to see what other designers are up to by browsing their pictures.

In terms of lead generation and sales, Instagram doesn't have the power of a more focused social network like Houzz. It can, however, serve as a great and ever-changing digital portfolio. This can allow customers to have a more intimate view of the work that you do on a regular basis.

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TWITTER

Twitter is a social network that allows users to post short updates or “tweets” to their followers. By following other users, you’ll get a stream of news and updates in real-time.

There are more than 200 million active users on Twitter.

Before the First Tweet

There is no difference between personal or business accounts on Twitter. Visit twitter.com/signup to create an account.

Choose a username that is short, easy to remember and reflects the name of your company. Upload your logo as your profile photo – a square graphic is best.

Take some time and search for contacts, businesses and news sources. Follow these accounts to receive regular updates.

What to Tweet

Twitter runs in real-time, and users want latest information. It’s a great place for thoughts on the industry, local news and links, and business updates.

Whatever you post, keep it short and sweet! There’s a 140 character limit. Tweet photos of projects in progress and business in action by downloading the free Twitter app to your phone.

Best Practices

- Retweet, Reuse, Recycle: See something on your feed that you’d like to share with your all of your followers? Click the retweet button under the tweet.
- Making a List, Checking It...Every Day: Twitter allows you to organize the accounts you follow into lists. It’s a great tool that helps you never miss an update.

A Comment from Eric: Twitter is great, but I find that most designers don't have the time to take full advantage of it. Also, I believe it's great for networking with other professionals, but not for finding new clients.

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BEYOND THE BASICS

You've created the accounts. You've pinned a few photos. You tweeted a tweet or two - now what? Now it is time to create a schedule of activity.

Sample Calendar

Being active on social media doesn't mean you have to be glued to your computer. Doing one or two small things each day across the various platforms can be more than enough to build an audience and attract new customers. Take a look at the calendar below to see one way you can break down your social media activity.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	Post new project or product photo		Post update on a current project		Post a customer testimonial	Post a DIY project or decorating idea	Post an article about Design trends
	Retweet two pieces of industry news	Tweet new project photo		Tweet Throwback Thursday photo of past project		Tweet link to recent blog post	
	Add new Project photo			Create an Ideabook with style ideas			Join one Discussion on Houzz
		Create one new Pinterest board			Add 5 photos to Pinterest boards		
<p>Your Blog</p>	Brainstorm for 2 new blog post ideas		Blog post on a recent trend		Blog post on a favorite project or new product		Check for comments on recent blog posts

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SOCIAL MEDIA GLOSSARY

Avatar – Across social media platforms, the small icon that serves as your logo is your avatar or profile picture. Try using the same image across all of your platforms. Bitly– Bitly is a free service used to shorten links and track link clicks. Visit bit.ly to create a free account.

Blog – An online publishing platform, a blog is a space to post entries, much like a public diary about your business. Free platforms like Wordpress and Blogger make creating a company blog easy.

#FF or #FollowFriday – On Fridays, twitter users tweet out their favorite Twitter accounts with the hashtag #FollowFriday. It's a way of recommending great accounts to your followers.

Friends vs. Followers – Friends are users joined through personal Facebook accounts; you send a friend request to make a connection. Followers are the Facebook users that have liked your business page.

Hashtag – A word marked by a pound sign is a way to link relevant tweets. Adding hashtags like #remodeling or #design connects your tweet to the industry conversation.

Hootsuite – Hootsuite is a free social media management tool. Some manufacturers use Hootsuite to monitor our accounts and schedule posts.

LinkedIn – LinkedIn is a business-oriented social platform. Connect with other design professionals, join industry groups and create a business page to share updates and post jobs.

Promoted Posts – As few as 10% of your total audience may see a post on your page.

By Promoting a Post – Paying \$5.00 or more through Facebook—the post will appear more often on your fans' feeds.

Reach – Reach is the total number of users who see your post. You can access this information by clicking “See Insights” on your Facebook page's control panel.

SEO – SEO stands for search engine optimization. It's the practice of using key words throughout a website to improve your site's ranking in Google search results.

#TBT or #ThrowbackThursday – On Thursdays, social media users post photos from the past with the #TBT. It's a great way to show the early days of your business, past projects or an old design trend.

Viral – Ever hear of a video going viral? Yes, it's actually good thing! It means a piece of content is being shared rapidly between online users.

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DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO COMBAT HGTV MYTHS

We all know these television shows over-simplify and underprice the remodeling process – and we realize they are based on fantasy. However, lots of prospective clients watch them!

- Peruse the various television or on-line shows so you have an understanding of the themes of various titles. It is important that you are somewhat familiar with a program that your client might favor.
- Watch the shows (preferably “On Demand” to eliminate commercials) so you know what is being said.
- The best approach is to have a good laugh with a prospective client, and then move on to discuss what you can do for them. Add a comment or two in your initial presentation with prospective clients, with an “off-the-cuff” or humorous comment about the unrealistic nature of the shows because:
 1. The timelines are not realistic (lead times, permitting process, curing and/or installation process timelines).
 2. The products are, oftentimes, donated.
 3. The labor may be provided in exchange for a credit at the show’s end.
- Have reliable information about typical kitchen and bathroom renovation project costs in your market, or figures that reflect your typical projects. Be prepared to explain your business philosophy, compliance focus, jobsite prep endeavors.

LEARNING TO MANAGE YOUR ON-LINE REVIEWS

First, focus on avoiding having one posted!

Be a good listener when something goes wrong.

(Source: *Remodeling Magazine*, “Re-do Resolution: With the right approach, client conflict can turn from problem to opportunity,” Victoria Downing, President, Remodelers Advantage, Maryland, www.remodelersadvantage.com)

A great article recently appeared in *Remodeling Magazine* entitled “Re-do Resolution: With the right approach, client conflict can turn from problem to opportunity.” The insightful article, written by Victoria Downing, President of Remodelers Advantage (an organization dedicated to helping remodelers build high-performance, profitable businesses) shared the following key ideas.

Every company has some conflict with clients from time to time. The way your team handles these occurrences can mean the difference between creating a loyal client for life or a disgruntled homeowner who will spread dissatisfaction throughout the community. There are four stages to the client conflict cycle. Following are four tips on how to manage a disgruntled client throughout the process.

- **Respond to the notification.** When your client first voices their concern – regardless by what means (phone message, e-mail, text), resist the urge to respond in the same fashion – pick up the phone and call them. Set a time to meet face-to-face.
- **Remove the splinter.** The longer it takes you to address the problem, the bigger it gets in your client’s eyes. While no one enjoys facing unhappy clients, speed is one of the most important elements in handling these issues effectively. The minute you hear about a problem – whether directly from a client or through an employee or tradesperson – reach out immediately. This shows that you are concerned and dedicated to client satisfaction.

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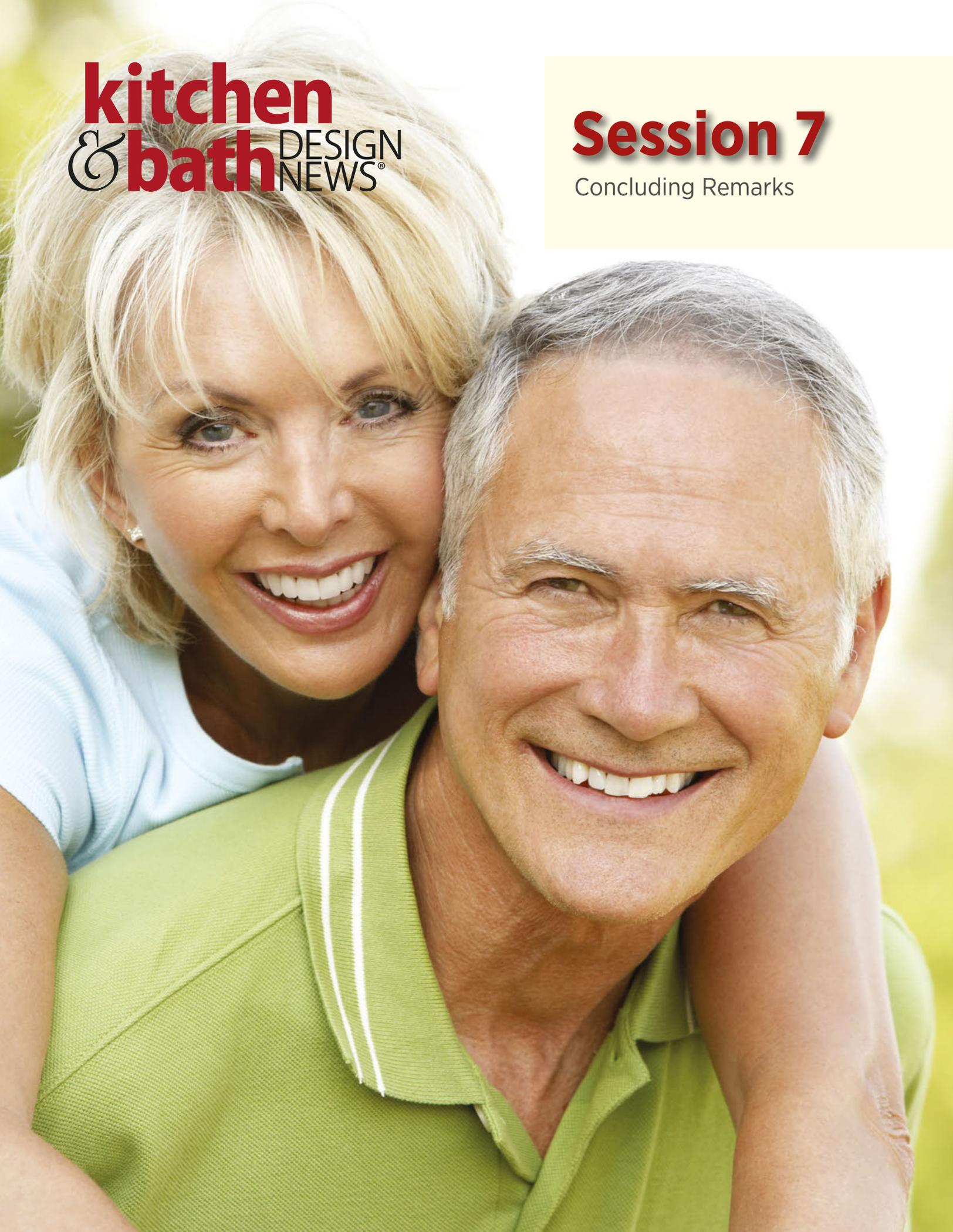
- **Release the pressure.** When you meet with your client, keep your cool. Most important – listen first. You may be tempted to try to solve the problem right away (or worse, defend your position) but, by this point, the problem has been festering. You need to allow the client the opportunity to vent. Don't interrupt. Listen carefully to what's being said – make sure you clearly understand the problem. Good listening shows that you sincerely care about the problem and want to help. Remember, most importantly – losing your temper will get you nowhere and can damage your relationship forever.
- **Create a solution.** Once the client has released all their pent-up emotions, it's your turn to talk. The first words from you should repeat the concerns the client has voiced. This reinforces to the client that you were listening and understand the problem. Additionally, by repeating the issue, you will make sure that you and the client are in agreement about the full scope of the problem. If you're not certain what will make the client happy: ask him – the client may have some input about resolving the issue. At times, the client might offer a solution that's less intensive or expensive than you had expected.

If you do receive a negative review: “Should you engage with negative on-line posters – or not?” That's the question! (Source: *Qualified Remodeler Magazine* Article by Chris Behan, SEO, Internet Marketing Expert, Speaker and Consultant, www.chrisbehan.com)

To engage or not to engage with users of on-line review sites can be a tricky dilemma. Handled correctly, you can save the referral. Handled incorrectly, you can do great harm to your reputation.

Chris Behan, who has more than 16 years of internet marketing experience, in an article written for *Qualified Remodeler*, offers three important guidelines:

- Do not over engage on-line. If someone leaves a negative post about your company, make sure your response is brief – after deciding if you should respond at all. Long responses in which you try to explain what happened can be misconstrued. The back-and-forth that can happen between you and the individual complaining about your company increases the number of responses and can drive your negative review higher and higher in search engine results. Mr. Behan suggests a simple, to-the-point response: “We apologize that you were dissatisfied with your project. Your satisfaction is very important to us. Please call us, and we will do our best to address your concerns.”
- Realize that you cannot reason with an unreasonable person. An outrageous poor posting might be best ignored.
- Mr. Behan's best advice: “The value of ‘killing with kindness.’ Always resist the urge to argue your point, telling reviewers' it was not your fault – there is just no winning this game. Focus your efforts on making a person who posted a negative review feel that their concerns have been heard and that you will do everything in your power to rectify the situation.”



kitchen
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Session 7

Concluding Remarks

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Session 7

Concluding Remarks

TO BEGIN MY DAY AS A SEMINAR ATTENDEE, I WILL ...

- Keep an open mind. Yes No
- I will not let the pulls and pushes of my every day professional responsibilities distract me for the next 6 hours. Yes No
- Upon my return to the office/showroom, I will invest at least _____ hours or _____ minutes each week to reviewing and implementing ideas I discovered today.

TO COMPLETE MY DAY, I WILL NOTE ...

- The 5 most valuable business insights and/or merchandising ideas appropriate for my organization.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU FROM ELLEN CHEEVER!

I would like to thank the following designers and industry experts for taking time out of their busy schedules to speak with me about their successful business models, as well as allowing *KBDN* to use floor plans and imagery of their showrooms and/or projects as examples in this seminar.

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Respected Cabinet Manufacturers Also Contributed To Our Program:

We would also like to thank the following cabinet manufacturer executives for supplying me with the names of these "best of the best" designers/business owners to interview.

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- Karla Krengel, Greenfield Cabinetry, www.krengel.com
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- Phil Shepherd, Artcraft Kitchens, [www.phil@artcraftkitchens.com](mailto:phil@artcraftkitchens.com)
- Andrea Tobias, CKD, Premier Custom-Built Cabinetry www.premiercb.com
- Brian Yahn, Plain & Fancy Custom Cabinetry, www.plainfancycabinetry.com

Author's Note: This publication is intended for professional use by residential kitchens and bathroom designers. The procedures, information and advice herein have shown to be appropriate for the applications described; however, no warranty (expressed or implied) is intended or given. The reader of this handout is cautioned to: (1) be familiar with and adhere to all manufacturers' planning, installation and use/care instructions; (2) be familiar with and adhere to all applicable local, state and federal building codes; (3) comply with all licensing and legislative requirements governing the designer's ability to perform tasks associated with design and installation standards in the kitchen and bath industry; (4) collaborate/hire/refer only licensed practitioners/installers/craftsmen who meet all required local building/business and health and/or safety regulatory requirements. The material in this workbook is copyright by SOLA Group ©2016

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Our Seminar Creator

ELLEN CHEEVER, CMKBD, ASID, CAPS

Ellen Cheever brings a dynamic combination of design excellence and best business practices to her manufacturer, distributor and dealer clients in the kitchen and bath industry today.

A Certified Master Kitchen and Bath Designer, Professional Member of the American Society of Interior Designers, and a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist, Cheever manages both a private residential design practice and a consulting firm that develops innovative products, designs memorable showrooms, and creates highly effective training programs for all segments of the industry.



Her residential design clients stretch from California to the East Coast. In conjunction with Giorgi Kitchens & Designs, she is active in a flourishing residential design practice. Her work has been honored by the American Society of Interior Designers, the Sub-Zero Design Competition, the KWC Design Competition, and the National Kitchen & Bath Association Design Competition.

A respected trend analyst who regularly travels the world to stay “on trend”, Cheever recently attended the 2016 Milan EuroCucina Kitchen Fair in Italy and the 2015 LivingKitchen show in Cologne, Germany.

Ellen is a member of the National Kitchen & Bath Association Hall of Fame, and served on the management teams of several innovative and respected cabinet companies. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Home Economics from California State University.

The prolific author first gained prominence in the industry when she wrote two textbooks considered the basis of design education: *Beyond the Basics: Advanced Kitchen Design* and *The Basics of Bathroom Design and Beyond*. She then served as the Director of Educational Services for the National Kitchen & Bath Association, where under her leadership the *Kitchen and Bathroom Industry Technical Manuals* were first published.

Today, she continues her focus on educational leadership. She authored and updated four of the authoritative volumes for NKBA’s *Professional Research Library*: “[Kitchen & Bath Products](#)”, “[Design Principles](#)”, “[Kitchen & Bath Business Management](#)” and “[Kitchen & Bath Project Management](#)”. Cheever is also a member of the Jenn-Air Design Advisory Board and a key contributor to Jenn-Air’s training initiatives for the kitchen and bath professional. Expanding into electronic education opportunities, Cheever now offers a collection of on-line, CEU-approved courses.

As a regular contributor to *Kitchen & Bath Design News Magazine*, and a much sought-after speaker at national and international industry events, Cheever continues to shape the face of the kitchen and bath industry today with her in-depth analysis and understanding of emerging design trends and winning business strategies.