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High-style Loft Kitchen

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*Sleek, compelling
kitchen from The
Design Studio Inc.
Sioux Falls, S.D.*

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NKBA Design Education

Selling quality? Choose the right trade. . .

The right trade contractor might be the one that represents your company best

By Benjamin Wojcikiewicz, A K B D

This week one of my colleagues sat next to a remodeler at a Texas Hold'em tournament who spoke of a new breed of competition . . . a production builder was hurting his business. They had crews with no work, so the builder decided to go after the kitchen and bath remodeling market. With low material and labor costs the likes of which the smaller remodeler can only dream, the production builder was able to easily underbid the small remodeling professional. How can we make a potential client understand the importance of choosing a remodeling professional over simply a price-point?

We should keep a couple of things in mind. First, there's something satisfying to the customer about a job that is done right the first time, on time, within the estimate and with minimum disruption to their lives. Kitchen and bath designer Louis Nardolillo, CKD, attributes customer satisfaction to the overall experience and to the quality of workmanship.

"About 90 percent of my business comes from referrals," states Nardolillo, a 30-year veteran in the industry. "When I started my business, I was doing it part-time, but was handling the design through the fabrica-

tion to the installation . . . it's easy to keep a handle on things when you are taking part in all aspects of the work."

Don't compromise standards

Secondly, remember that the person who walked through your door doesn't always have the same goals

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that you do.

"One thing that I learned early on through seeing others make mistakes is that you never compromise your standards to meet a price," Nardolillo says. When you sacrifice quality, you can create a client turned adversary. In a business where a large percentage of business comes from word-of-mouth referrals, this can be a less than desirable situation.

When you look at the design and building process, the bigger you are, the more difficult it is to control the details. This is to your advantage as

a smaller remodeler and to the disadvantage of a larger competitor. As you grow your business, how do you maintain that advantage? The simplest answer is surrounding yourself with good people and using refined selling skills to explain the benefits of working with you.

Rock-star installer

So how did he find this rock-star installer? "I heard about him through a friend. We talked and in the end I asked to see his van. In the back the tools were stacked neatly, and it was clean. This was enough for me to try him out; he put that same level of care and detail into his work and his dealings with the client's home."

Lou elaborated while his contractor costs more, because he uses higher-end tools and spends more time ensuring the quality of his work and cleanliness of the site, he serves as a great representative of his business.

Understanding that your potential referral could be very heavily influenced by the craftsmanship of the end product as well as the overall experience with the installer, doesn't it make sense to get somebody that packs the gear and the skills to get the job done right? We're all aware of the market and how tough things have been, but could it make a difference if your potential client knew that you and your installer would take as much pride in the job as they do in their home? As professional remodelers with a mission to provide the best solutions for our clients, we should do all we can to show it's about more than a price-point. | QR

As Lou's business grew to become his full-time job, he took a more active role in the design process and began delegating the install work. "At first I felt that I would need to explain the job to the guys in the morning and run back to the job-site twice more during the day to make sure they were doing everything that I needed . . . we've been working with a guy now for about two years who doesn't need me to check up on him. I'm very satisfied with his work and we never really get any call-backs."