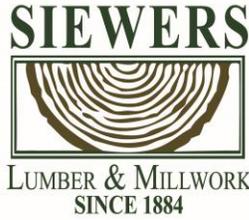


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“Preserving the Past while Building the Future.”



Celebrating 130 Years of Service

A note from the Siewers Family...

The Thanksgiving Season

Fall is here *and Old Man winter is* knocking on our door. During the month of November we celebrate a special holiday, Thanksgiving; a time to pause and give thanks for all that we have. This year, let us all remember our military men and women working to protect our country, the homeless man standing on the street corner begging for change and the single mother struggling to put food on the dinner table for her children. You get the picture. Then, give thanks for the people and blessings in your life!

We are so very thankful for you and for all of your associates.

We hope you and your family have a safe and bountiful Thanksgiving!

-The Siewers Family

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Contractor News

21 Things You Can Do Today to Improve Your Business.

Posted by Mark Harari



Running a successful remodeling company isn't easy. And trying to build one that can run without your day-to-day involvement is even harder. If you want to take your company to the upper levels of success you must first acknowledge that it's a long road.

It takes time. It takes commitment. If it were easy, everyone would be great.

But, there are a few things you can do right now—today—that can make an impact in the short-term. Here are 21 of them:

If it ain't broke, break it. Sustainable success comes from continually looking for ways to improve your operations—one small step at a time.

1. Start your day by saying, "This is what I will accomplish today," and do it. Whether it takes 15 minutes or 6 hours.
2. Focus on the moment. Stay 100 percent mentally focused on what you're doing. Multitasking is your enemy.
3. Map out the specific tasks you need to do to reach your daily goals and plot your progress throughout the day. Most contact-management systems allow for tracking and tallying daily performance.
4. Know how to handle the rejection embedded in the no's you collect, every day.
5. Keep your mind off yourself and on your revenue-generating goals.
6. Turn to your support group. Don't face business challenges alone. And whenever you can, share your lessons with others in the safe environment of a support group of your peers.
7. Keep a journal. It's not enough merely to track daily performance in a contact management system. Record lessons learned, shortcuts, attitude assessment, and interpersonal behavior.
8. Create a process that forces you to systematically perform the grunt work aspect of sales and make sure it covers generating referrals and working leads already generated.
9. Have a system of selling. If you don't, you'll be a prisoner of the buyer's system—one designed to keep you coughing up your expertise for free.
10. Standard Operating Procedures minimize growing pains. From the way you prefer a cornice return to be built to the way a customer is contacted after the job, everything should have an SOP.
11. Divide the anticipated gross profit for your backlog (work under contract but not yet produced) by your monthly overhead to determine how much overhead is "in stock" – it's your safety net. Shoot for no less than 4 months.
12. You—and your employees—need the security of backlog. Don't destroy your backlog security by adding crews whenever work begins to build up.
13. Don't count a job as backlog until it is under construction contract.
14. Consider outsourcing office tasks. Hire a "virtual assistant" and benefit from getting more done without the additional payroll and worker's compensation taxes.

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15. A Gatekeeper will yield more sales. S/he will be the first point of contact with prospects, pre-qualify them, and maintain contact after they sign contracts. You will save valuable time formerly spent on low-quality leads.
16. Ask your employees for ideas about ways to improve the company, simplify procedures, and increase productivity. Give a \$50 reward for ideas that will be implemented.
17. You **MUST** challenge employees. Give them as much responsibility as they are ready for and allow them to fail as well as succeed.
18. Praise is the number one employee motivator. Don't forget to do it. An employee that feels appreciated is an employee for life.
19. Purchase the best business and industry books for a "company library" and encourage employees to read and consult them.
20. To have a superstar team, hire people who know more about their specialty than you do. This is how a company grows!

Boral TruExterior is Growing!

Boral TruExterior is now available in siding and 2x thick trim. Boral has released 5 new siding profiles and can be viewed on their website at www.boralamerica.com/truexterior. The 2x trim, available in 2 x 4 - 2 x 12, is a nice addition to the 1x and 5/4 trim.

The Boral TruExterior, available in 16' lengths only, has provided a nice alternative to wood for exterior applications and provides the following benefits:

- Maintains a high level of dimensional stability.
- Does not require end sealing, special adhesives or any other cumbersome and costly installation techniques.
- Suitable for ground contact.
- Resistant to rotting, cracking and splitting.
- Can be painted any color.
- Installed using wood working tools and methods.

Siewers currently keeps in inventory the 1x and 5/4x trim in widths up to 11 1/4" wide.

To Build a Business That Lasts, Think Like a Redwood

What a 2,000-year-old tree can tell you about prospering for the long term. By: [Craig Webb](#)



I have started to view my vacations not so much as a way to escape thinking about work but rather as an opportunity to view it from a different angle. Case in point: This month's trip to Eureka, Calif., where I stayed at a new bed and breakfast that I had picked based on its Internet page. It turns out the proprietor, Renee Chappelle, had just turned to B&B life following several decades as a full service residential remodeler and commercial contractor. And when we explored her 1930s home, built and trimmed entirely with old-growth redwood, we both were in awe that there wasn't a knot in any piece of wood anywhere in the place.

Work thoughts continued a few days later as I walked through Founders Grove, part of a California state park featuring some of the tallest and oldest redwoods in the world—and by tall and old, we're talking here about a species that can live 2,000 years and top out over 300 feet.

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Yes, they're beautiful. But I also thought about how they got that way, and what made them special.

Redwoods may be long-lived, but that's in part because they have to start out fast if they hope to get their share of precious sunlight. Trees can grow several feet in a year and typically have passed 100 feet in height in just 50 years. As with any species, the early days are a fight for survival.

Their bark can be up to a foot thick, protecting it from forest fires, and is rich in tannins, thus helping prevent insect damage. Even when fire destroys part of the trunk, the rest of the tree remains standing.

Redwoods also are adaptable. They can survive for a time on less sunshine than other species, and because they are so tall their treetop needles are different than the ones on lower branches to accommodate for differences in moisture and light. Coast redwoods love the rain, but they also can create their own rain by capturing fog on their leaves, producing water droplets that's absorbed by needles and drips to the ground.

Finally, redwoods work together. Their shallow root systems extend several dozen yards from their base and often link up with other redwood roots. As a result, each has a better chance of standing up to winds and floods. Ironically, the climate change that leads humans to worry about our survival appears to be good for redwoods; they're growing faster now than they have in the past century.

Of course, there's a reason why you only see coastal redwoods in a narrow strip of Pacific Coast from southern Oregon to central California. These redwoods have adapted to thrive, but only if they are in their element. Still, the ways they've adapted provide lessons for remodelers no matter where you live.

Start fast. Redwood saplings race each other to get to the sunlight. Your race is to financial solvency. Strive to grow as fast as you can to a point where you're not one sprained wrist away from going out of business.

Disaster-proof your business. Create systems that protect you from money-sapping predators such as misplaced orders, low estimates, and poorly timed payment schedules. Build cash reserves to help you get through business droughts.

Rely on others. Communities like Remodelers Advantage can give you the educational and emotional support you need to survive and thrive. So to, we hope, can the advice from our columnists and "How-To" articles as well as events such as the [Remodeling Show and Remodeling Leadership Conference](#).

These Days, Take Extra Care to Monitor Your Online Transactions

Follow these four steps to help guard against cybercriminals

By: [Leslie Shiner and Melanie Hodgdon](#)

With the recent attention that cybercrimes have received in the media, it's hard not to think about the risk to your (and your business') security and privacy every time you swipe your card or

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order something by phone or online. Here are four suggestions that may help you sleep a little better.

1. If you use debit cards, **research how much protection you have from unauthorized transactions**. For example, major credit cards limit the amount you must pay if your card is used without your authorization. However, debit cards do not offer similar protection; once the money has been withdrawn from your account, you may be stuck with the entire loss. As long as you have the self-control to pay credit cards in full each month, you may be safer using credit cards.
2. **Setting up auto debits** is convenient. You don't have to remember to make a monthly payment and you can easily budget for the cost. However, monitor your banking activity to be sure that these payments are being withdrawn correctly. One case of fraud was caught when the owner discovered that the bookkeeper set up an auto debit for *both* the business account as well as her personal utility accounts. Another bookkeeper accidentally set up an auto debit to be withdrawn from her boss's personal account instead of the business account, then panicked and shut it down, causing the vendors' bills to be unpaid. Review your banking activity on a regular basis by accessing your account online at least twice a week and comparing with the transactions listed in your accounting software.
3. **Consider creating a separate checking account** for use with debit cards and auto debits. Keep a minimum amount in this account: only enough to cover anticipated purchases. Just remember to transfer sufficient funds to cover anticipated charges. Discuss options with your bank, such as creating a maximum daily withdrawal amount. If the account is hacked, at least you won't lose much.
4. **Reconcile your bank statement as soon as you receive it**, without fail! Look for unusual activity, duplicate payments, unfamiliar names on debit transactions, and if your statement includes check images, be sure that the name on the cashed check is the same as the name recorded in your accounting software.

It's frustrating to add fear of crime to the list of topics to keep contractors awake at night, but putting in place a few simple controls may help.

Remodeling Market Index – Reclaims All-Time High

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Remodeling Market Index (RMI) reclaimed the high water mark of 57 in the third quarter of 2014. This is the sixth consecutive quarter for an RMI reading above 50.

The RMI above 50 indicates that more remodelers report market activity is higher. Future market conditions index rose to 58 from 56. All four of its subcomponents – calls for bids, amount of work committed for the next three months, backlog of jobs and appointments for proposals – increased or remained level with the previous quarter's reading.

For the full report, visit nahb.org/RMI. For more information about remodeling, visit nahb.org/remodel.

The Contractor Coaching Partnership by Mark Paskell

Does your budget include money for OSHA, HIC or RRP fines?

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OSHA has decided to increase the fine structure, citing that the fines were not high enough to deter contractors from working unsafe.

Many contractors will be required to renew their RRP Certification in 2015. Those who do not will be getting fines if they are not re-certified.

It is wise to figure what you need to do to protect your people and work safe. In the long run it is better for your men and much cheaper. Go to www.thecontractorcoachingpartnership.com for more information.

Quick Contractor Tip

Neal's Way Cool Home-Made Truck Bed Storage By Neal Bahrman



Like many tradespeople, I'd always lusted for a shiny new work truck with utility-bed locking boxes — plus a high-security shop-garage to park it in and a five-digit checking account that could bankroll the whole shebang. But instead I had a middle-aged half-ton pickup, an unfenced driveway, and a budget with about as much fat as a figure skater. So I took what I had and went to work.

I didn't need much: just a truck-bed tool-storage unit that would keep the weather out and my valuables locked up but readily available, their presence hidden from passersby — all with a minimum of disruption to my truck bed's hauling capacity.

The solution I settled on was a set of pullout drawers that deliver reach-and-grab accessibility. I built the plywood drawer case in three separate sections. The two side boxes had to fit around the wheel wells, so I installed them first, pushing them over to their respective sides and scribing them for a snug fit. I designed the center section to interlock with the sides via cleats, so the three sections function as an integral unit.

A sheet of diamond-plate aluminum protects the plywood storage case from weather and wear. The center section contains three deep, full-length drawers (left). The two narrow side compartments have full-length drawers on top (right) and shorter ones — which end at the wheel wells — underneath.

I assembled the sections with Titebond glue and Kreg pocket-screw joinery, then painted them with a durable alkyd-enamel. I covered the top of the case with diamond-plate sheet aluminum, screwed to the 3/4-inch plywood platform. And I added reinforcing wood strips (glued and screwed) along the top and bottom of the sides; they supply anchorage for my tie-down hooks. The drawers and lift-out trays have plywood sides and pine ends. I used butt joints, fastened with glue and countersunk screws, followed by several coats of marine spar varnish. To protect the contents from moisture I set the ends a couple of inches in from the handles. I also sealed the top edge of the platform with sponge-foam compression-type weather stripping, which keeps water intrusion to a minimum. Since the front end of the drawer case is boxed shut, there's little danger

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that water will get into the drawer area when it drains down between the case and the front of the bed.

To avoid paying for oversized drawer hardware, the author installed plastic furniture glides on the bottom back edges of the drawers (left inset) and at the front bottom of the openings (right inset). The drawers slide easily and are supported by the tailgate when open.

Everyone asks me the same question about my setup: Do the drawers slide easily? The boxes are heavy when full, no doubt about it. But I installed plastic furniture glides on the bottom back of the big drawers and at the front of their openings, and people are always surprised by how easy they are to operate.

Because the open tailgate supports the extended drawers, I didn't need to install any supporting drawer hardware. I prevent sticking and minimize friction by periodically rubbing the drawer bottoms with beeswax and polishing the sides with car wax.

For security, I added a simple aftermarket Pop & Lock tailgate lock. But the best security feature, in my opinion, is how well the drawers are hidden: A glance into the back of the truck reveals nothing to indicate the presence of valuable tools below deck.

When the tailgate is closed, there's no sign of the tool storage. A lock secures the tailgate. I do have to admit that the whole time I was working on this project, a nagging inner voice kept asking, "Is this really going to be worth the time and trouble?" Once the drawers were finally finished and I'd begun using them every day, though, a new question took over: "Why didn't I do this a long time ago?"

How would you like to be published in a future issue of Siewers Newsletter?

Be sure it is a quick tip that can help another contractor and one that is simple to understand ("Even I need to understand it!") It also must be economical to create. Submit your tips to us at laurenf@siewers.com .

Feel Lucky!

*Be sure and bring your business card next time you visit Siewers. Just drop it into the glass fish bowl on the counter to enter a monthly drawing.
Good Luck!!!*

**Congratulations to *Chris Rietveld* our
November winner!**



Economy Snap Shot.....

	<u>Unemployment Rate – Entire U.S.</u>	<u>Consumer Confidence (Indexed to value of 100 in 1985)</u>	<u>Total Housing Starts/Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rate</u>
October 2014	5.8%	94.5	1,009,000
Prior Month – September 2014	5.9%	86.0	1,038,000
Prior Year – October 2013	7.2%	72.4	936,000

	<u>Gallon (\$) Of Gas</u>	<u>Existing Home Sales</u>
October 31, 2014	\$2.98	N/A
Prior Month – September 2014	\$3.34	5,170,000
Prior Year – October 2013	\$3.28	5,130,000

Market Summary

	<u>November 19, 2014</u>	<u>1/01/14</u>	<u>10/01/13</u>
DOW	17,687	16,576	15,545
NASDAQ	4,702	4,176	3,919
S&P 500	2,051	1,848	1,756

Long & Foster Market Minute / October 2014

New Listings 2,131	Current Contracts 1,458	Sold Vs. List Price 98.2%	Months of Supply 5.9
	Median Sales Price \$198,750	Days on Market 64	

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Company Mission

To serve the needs of contractors and do-it-yourselfers.



“Be undeniably good. No marketing effort or social media buzz word can be a substitute for that.” Anthony Volodkin

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....Next issue December 17th