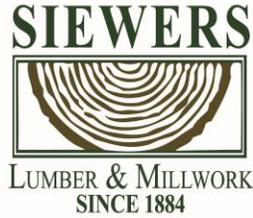


December 17, 2014



“Preserving the Past while Building the Future.”



Celebrating 130 Years of Service

A note from the Siewers Family...

It is hard to believe that we are wrapping up another year. We are finally coming out of the recession and it has been a great feeling. There is still a ways to go, but it seems like things are on the upswing. We owe this to you, our customer! Thank you for your patronage over the past year and we hope we have met your expectations.

During this busy Christmas season, we want to stop and say “Thank You” for making our business such a success. We feel so proud of our team here at Siewers and hope that the team has enhanced your business throughout the year!

We hope that you and your family have a joyous Christmas and a happy Hanukah! Use the holidays to catch up with your loved ones and cherish all the special moments.

We are looking forward to an even more successful 2015 and want to again express that we want you to tell us any ways we can make your experience with Siewers Lumber a better one. We want to continue to grow and prosper with you and your business.

A very Merry Christmas to you and yours!

-The Siewers Family

December 17, 2014

Contractor News

Why Resolving Business Disputes in Court May Not Be the Best Alternative Posted on October 7, 2014 by Dr. Rick V.

If you're in business for yourself, you have likely come across challenges dealing with conflict – who hasn't, right? But as you may know, some conflicts can't be resolved with just an apology and an "I'm sorry." In my work with many entrepreneurs and business professionals, I have seen conflicts of large and substantial consequence heading towards law suits along with high attorney fees.

Courtroom arguing for most businesses, there seem to be THREE main areas where substantial conflict occurs. They are:

1. With Vendors due to contracts, unclear scope of work and etc.
2. With Clients/Customers due to finished work, unclear objectives and etc.
3. With Staff/Employees due to harassment, workplace misunderstandings and etc.

When issues involving any of these three areas occur (and as long as your business employs, hires and works with people, these will continue to occur), the business owner seemingly has only one option – Small Claims Court.

There are two common assumptions people have about going to court: 1) I will get a chance to tell my story to the judge; and 2) the judge will hear how I was wronged and force the other person to pay me money.

The trouble is the rules of evidence will make most of your story irrelevant or inadmissible. The judge must rule based upon law, not morality. You have to prove what you say, having evidence to support the facts you present. It also means you have to deal with any litigation tactics the other person's attorney might bring to bear, raising your risk of winning. In addition, your day in court will not be only your day in court. Along with your case, the judge will be hearing a long list of other cases, so you will only have a few minutes of the court's time to present your case, your facts, and your evidence. The quality of the job you do could determine the outcome of your future – raising your risk yet again.

Let me ask you some important questions:

- How much money does your business lose each quarter because the risk and the cost of going to court is too high to even try and retrieve it?
- What if you could present your case in a setting where you had all the time you wanted to present your story?
- What if you could present your facts and your story without being bound by the rules of evidence?
- What if you could have complete control of the outcome, not being stuck with an unacceptable outcome?
- What if you could do all of this without having to pay expensive retainer fees? Time and Money

December 17, 2014

The cost to get your money back would be considerably less and the risk would be considerably low. Lower risk and greater potential for gain is typically a formula for a wise business decision.

As a business owner, would you participate in a legally binding process where you sit with a conflict specialist hearing your case if it meant a greater chance of getting your money, in less time, while maintaining complete control of the outcome? If Mediation is something you've considered but never tried, or haven't considered at all, please share your thoughts and questions in the comments below, few of us know the rules of evidence, which means, the risk of getting your money just went up. Therefore, it is often wiser to go to court with an attorney, raising the cost of getting your money.

Top 10 Lists Alerts Employers About Commonly Cited Standards by *Amaxx Risk Solutions*

OSHA annually publishes this "**Top 10**" list to alert employers about commonly cited standards, so employers can take steps to find and mend recognized hazards before OSHA ever takes punitive action against a company. Normally, OSHA does not grant advanced notice of its inspections, and inspections are generally performed at sites where imminently dangerous situations are known, fatalities or catastrophes have occurred, complaints or referrals have been given, the work site has been issued a citation in the past, or inspections may be pre-planned or programmed.

While it poses no threat to replace the heroes of late night television, OSHA is meeting its goal of reducing fatalities, injuries, and illnesses in the workplace.

Too many preventable injuries occur on the job, leading companies to spend unnecessary dollars on fines and healthcare costs.

Medcor offers a variety of safety compliance training courses designed to meet the requirements and needs of companies, including OSHA compliance, emergency medical, emergency response, industrial fire suppression, and technical rescue. For more information, contact the author at Raymond.loch@medcor.com

Yes, OSHA citations can be costly, but for the most part, they are avoidable.

And now... here are the "Top 10" Most Frequently Cited OSHA Construction Standards for 2013:

#10: 1926.451(b)(1) – Scaffolds not fully planked at each work level.

#9: 1926.451 (e)(1) – Scaffold access/egress. Many citations involve climbing on the cross bracing.

December 17, 2014

#8: 1926.453(b)(2)(v) – Fall protection in aerial lifts. Users must receive training in the manufacturer’s instruction.

#7: 1926.501(b)(10) – No fall protection for flat roofing. Consider using parapet guardrails and portable-type fall arrest anchorage.

#6: 1926.451(9)(1) – Fall protection on scaffolding. Fall protection starts at 10 feet.

#5: 1926.102(b)(1) – No safety glasses. Hundreds of eye injuries occur each year from working without safety glasses.

#4: 1926.100 – Hard Hats. Fatalities occur when workers are hit by falling objects.

#3: 1926.501(b)(1) – Open sided floors that were more than six feet in depth were not protected with standard guardrails or equivalent. Guardrails must be able to withstand 200 pounds of force.

#2: 1926.1053(b)(1) – Training in the safe use of ladders. Ladder falls killed over 100 workers in the last 10 years. Ladders need to extend three feet above the landing.

#1 citation for 2013 is... 1926.501(b)(13) – Fall protection in residential construction. Having no fall protection has been the ongoing #1 OSHA citation since 2007.

Additional OSHA Facts: Falls account for a little over 39% of all fatalities in construction. It is not only the number one citation but the #1 cause of death.

Some of the most common violations: Simply not having any fall protection; not guarding fall hazards properly-floor holes skylights, improper guard rails; increasing work height using buckets, etc.: working in lifts without fall protection; working on scaffolds without fall protection; working off ladders unsafely; poor housekeeping; working off job-built surfaces that don’t meet safety standards; tying off with the wrong equipment and the list goes on and on.....

How to Make Your Designers’ Work Easier: A few policies and practices can reduce stress and boost productivity *By: Paul Winans*

I had the opportunity to work with a remodeling company’s design staff a while ago. The company was very busy, and as a result the designers were being pulled between the company’s desire to have them do more work and clients who required more time to make decisions.

How could the designers feel more in control and be more likely to have solid successes with these clients? How could designer use their time more effectively? How could their stress be reduced? How could the designers become more efficient and productive?

December 17, 2014

Here are some of the suggestions I offered:

- Establish rules clearly and up front about the working relationship with the client. It is best to do this referencing all the problems that the designer has encountered in the past, saying when doing so, “I’m not saying this is what will happen when we work together but ...” and filling in whatever is of concern that the designer wants to avoid.
- Set clear expectations about how to communicate. Address with the client the preferred method of communicating, be it email or phone or text.
- Agree to a schedule for meetings and the client’s availability in general. Doing this early in the relationship enables all involved to feel better served as they work together.
- The designer should establish clear boundaries with the client regarding her availability for meetings and for responding to communications. Here is what it might sound like: “Between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. I will be totally focused on my design responsibilities. After 5 p.m. I will be refreshing myself so that I can be available for you the next day. So, if you leave me a message/send an email in the evening and don’t hear back from me right away, be assured I will get back to you the next day.”
- Have a clear handoff of responsibility from the salesperson to the designer. Set a procedure for doing this. Use that procedure for any department-to-department transfer of information and responsibility. And ALWAYS follow the procedure.
- Train the client to communicate more efficiently by having the designer bring the client’s printed-out emails to each meeting. This shows clients we are addressing their concerns. Check off things in the emails as they have been dealt with. Having the printed emails on the table also helps clients see how many emails/text messages they sent. They will more likely try to restrain themselves after this if they see a huge pile of pages.
- Address with the salesperson how the client’s personality might affect the amount of time that would likely be needed for the project. Any preliminary budget offered to the client must include the cost of the time that this specific client will need for decision-making and hand-holding during the design and construction processes.

Thanks to Greg Harth of [Harth Builders](#) for asking me to spend some time on the phone with his designers. And thanks to Ellen Wise and Cindy Aman, Harth’s designers, who prepared the notes which I used as the basis for this article.

By adopting these pretty simple steps, the designers were able to feel better about the work they are doing and to provide their clients with a more predictable process. Don’t the people working at your company deserve the same?

Keep Your Workers Safe in the Cold

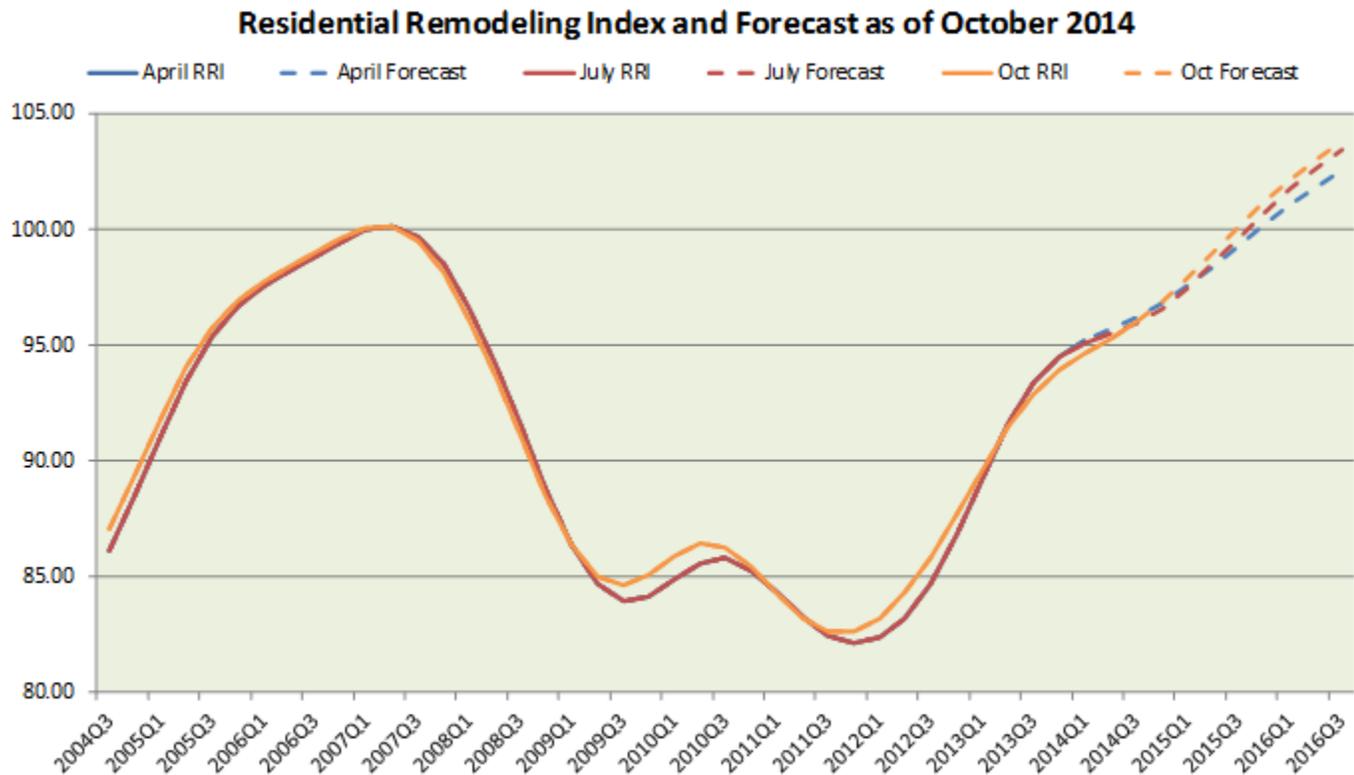
It's easy to be deceived by a sunny winter's day, especially when you're working hard. But when you work in the cold and wet conditions, you're at risk for serious cold illnesses. Hypothermia and frostbite can sneak up on you unexpectedly, especially when you're focused on your job. Hypothermia occurs when the core temperature of your body falls below the normal level. Symptoms include shivering, chattering teeth, confusion, slurred speech, lack of coordination and eventually unconsciousness.

In extremely cold weather, your extremities, such as your ears, feet, fingers and cheeks are prone to frostbite.

BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!

Big-Ticket Remodeling Activity Grows 3.3% in 3Q

Index forecast to fully recover by 3Q2015



Source: Metrostudy, October 2014 RRI Report

December 17, 2014

Remodeling and replacement activity nationwide grew 3.3% in the third quarter, reported Metrostudy, a Hanley Wood company, in today's Residential Remodeling Index (RRI) release.

The index follows a 4.3% year-over-year increase in the second quarter, and a 6.5% increase in the first quarter of 2014.

This quarter's index of 96 is a 0.8% improvement revised second quarter result of 95.3. To date, this is the 11th consecutive quarterly improvement since the market bottomed out in 2011.

The RRI is calibrated against data from 2007, so today's numbers indicate remodelers are doing 96% as much business as they were seven years ago. According to the most recent forecasts, the index should reach 100—a full recovery—by the third quarter of 2015.

"The remodeling market thus far in 2014 is mimicking the muddling along of the overall housing market. The 2014 housing market [saw] its share of first-time buyers hit a 27-year low, while the share of renter occupied housing reached its highest level on record in second quarter," said Brad Hunter, Metrostudy's chief economist.

"Yet, remodeling activity is being buoyed by growing families and baby boomers, the demographics with deeper pockets, and contractor sentiment is high for these groups." added Hunter.

According to the most recent report, 359 out of 381 Metropolitan Statistical Areas should see year-over-year growth in remodeling and replacement projects in 2014, with average growth of 4%.

"Despite the moderation seen in current 2014 growth, our forecast for the remodeling market to reach full recovery in third quarter 2015 has not changed, mainly due to continually positive job and economic reports that point to a firming in housing fundamentals over the near term. Wage growth, which remains stagnant, will be key to watch heading into next year," said Hunter.

Six Ways to Boost Referral Leads in 2015

These strategies will make it easy for homeowners to recommend your company By: Jim Cory

Does your 2015 marketing budget include money for referral leads? Having customers do your marketing for you via referrals can lower lead costs while raising sales conversion rates. But you won't get recommendations simply by wishing and hoping.

Contractors need to budget for more referrals, says Brian Kaskavalciyan, president of g|Four Marketing Group, in Miami, and author of *The Definitive Guide to Relationship Marketing*. Kaskavalciyan says that the biggest obstacle to generating more referral leads—the hardest kind of lead to get— is the business owner's belief that those leads

December 17, 2014

will naturally follow if the company does a passable job. “If you’re willing to spend \$300 on a TV lead or an Internet lead that closes at 27%, why not spend those dollars on a lead that closes in the 40% to 50% range?” Kaskavalciyan asks.

To get more referral leads:

1. **Establish your target.** Start with intention. “The first thing I suggest is to set a goal for the year,” says speaker and author Dennis Schaefer, whose Visible Builder offers home improvement contractors a turnkey social media service. “Make every client aware that you’re looking to please them and that you won’t ask for a referral unless you’ve exceeded their expectations.” This process starts at signing but doesn’t end there. Assume, Schaefer says, that nine out of 10 clients are on Facebook. Ask them to post project pictures and discuss their experience there.
2. **Track referrals like you track any other lead source.** Toms River Door & Window, in Toms River, N.J., recently contracted with lead-generation consultant , Chash Giovenco, to improve marketing ratios by, among other things, boosting referrals. Giovenco made referral leads trackable in the marketing database and set a goal that in 2015 15% of business would come from that lead source.
3. **Provide homeowners with an easy, obvious way to refer you.** You may think that you and your company do an outstanding job. Homeowners may think so too, but that doesn’t equate to a referral. Customers need a process that allows them to easily take satisfaction a step further. There are plenty of great systems. Toms River Door & Window used to send a small check to customers when a job came in that had resulted from their recommendation, “but there was no hoopla,” Giovenco says. She upped the reward to a percentage of the job and created both a referral package that includes cards that customers can fill out to ensure that they get rewarded, and a simple one-page form to log the cards.
4. **Make it personal.** Twenty years ago, San Antonio contractor Scott Barr set out to move his company’s referral rate from single digits to 50% of business. Today referrals make up 45%, largely because direct marketing efforts also expanded. Homeowners, Barr says, like to have one person to deal with from start to finish. And that person is the one who, in “the honeymoon phase” immediately after the job is finished, should close the loop by requesting referrals.
5. **Give clients something to write home about.** Exceeding customer expectations is a lofty ambition. It’s also vague. You should make it specific. For instance, Bee Window, in Indianapolis, decided to wow customers with its one-and-done installation procedure. Everything installed in one day, no return trips needed. In an age when online retailer Amazon is seriously toying with the idea of same-day delivery via drone, co-owner George Faerber says, the home improvement company aims to reduce the six-week period between signing to completion by a third. Referrals are “not about the sales rep asking,” Faerber says, “but rather, about delivering an extraordinary experience, then following up by letting customers know how they can help you.
6. **Spread the word.** These days, that help can come either as a referral or as an online review. No matter how happy they are with the work your company did for

December 17, 2014

them, marketing and sales consultant Tony Hoty says, most homeowners aren't going to take the time to do the heavy lifting. It's not their calling, so Hoty suggests doing it for them. That can take the form of either calling past customers and offering to reimburse them for recommendations that become jobs, or indicating to new customers that such recommendations equate to a discount. With their agreement, Hoty says, handwrite a letter under the customer's name, "tactfully boasting" about their recent home improvement project, along with a photo of the homeowner next to the company yard sign, with the phone number visible. Handwrite the address and the return address and hand-deliver the letter to neighborhood homes. "Let your customers know that for every job you get in their neighborhood, you'll compensate them with a \$100 referral fee."

Quick Contractor Tip

Guess what can help?

Did you know that toothpaste can be used many ways, like cleaning out a porcelain sink or cleaning grout. It can also be used for removing the nasty odors of oil or parts cleaner from hands or tools. *Tina Wolfe Remington, Virginia.*

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 *Eric Kauffman* our
December winner!**

December 17, 2014



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>
November 2014	5.8%	88.7	1,028,000
Prior Month – Oct. 2014	5.8%	94.1	1,045,000
Prior Year – Nov. 2013	7.0%	72.0	1,105,000

	<u>Gallon (\$) Of Gas</u>	<u>Existing Home Sales</u>
November 30, 2014	\$2.77	N/A
Prior Month – Oct. 2014	\$2.98	5,260,000
Prior Year – Nov. 2013	\$3.27	4,830,000

Market Summary

	<u>December 17, 2014</u>	<u>1/01/14</u>	<u>11/30/13</u>
DOW	17,068	16,576	16,086
NASDAQ	4,547	4,176	4,059
S&P 500	1,972	1,848	1,805

Long & Foster Market Minute / November 2014

New Listings	Current Contracts	Sold Vs. List Price	Months of Supply
1,513	1,204	97.9%	6.8
	Median Sales Price	Days on Market	
	\$198,000	66	

December 17, 2014

Company Mission

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



“There is only one boss; the customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.” Sam Walton

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....Next issue January 22st.