

# The Business of Remodeling

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## You Can't Be All Things to All People

**W**hen you need to see a doctor, you typically make the first appointment with your general practitioner. You explain your aches and pains, and sometimes the doctor will recommend a course of treatment. But for a broken bone, eye issue, or other malady, the doctor is likely to refer you to a specialist, who has a specific area of expertise and a separate team of support staff. Specialists focus only on what they are good at, and they usually charge more because of their specialized expertise.

With remodeling, however, the situation is not so clear-cut. Most remodelers handle a wide variety of projects, from a door or window replacement to building a room addition and everything in between. As with medical specialists, the skill sets and the teams needed to perform each of these projects differ, and so do their costs. These differences are not just in the construction: pre-construction due diligence, planning, designing, and product selection differ for each type of project, as do requirements for support, management, close out, and warranty procedures.

Remodelers who are prepared to perform all of these types of projects may not be a good fit for all clients. Their pricing and processes may provide enormous value to some clients, but they may encounter problems with homeowners who don't need a high level of service.

We learned this lesson just before the economy slowed. We had completed a custom deck and porch project that won a couple of awards and received a lot of local media attention. I thought the project demonstrated our design and construction skills, and at a cost well over \$100,000, I hoped it would attract more work from the same type of client. Instead, we were inundated with tons of deck leads, most of which had budgets that were one-third of the custom project. To hit our revenue goals with this type of work, we would have had to follow up on more leads, and close more sales on smaller projects.

The experience was a good wake-up call. We pulled all our small-job ads, and focused instead

on larger design/build projects. The change paid off. As the economy slowed, we stayed diligent on the types of projects we featured in the media, and while many of our competitors saw average job sizes shrink, ours continued to grow each year.

You can't be everything to everyone. Get clear on what you and your company are good at and where you bring the most value to the client, then focus on that. Make sure that your marketing message is clear and consistent, and that everyone on your team understands it in the same way.

### WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT

Job size was a focus for us, but your focus could be on a particular type of job or a type of client. It could be on projects requiring a high level of custom design or replacement work in a single line of products, like siding or windows. The key is to present your company the right way to the right potential clients. To avoid attracting the wrong type of work, ask yourself if your message to the market aligns with the work you want to attract.

One way to think about this is to determine your unique selling proposition. What makes you better than everyone else? What makes you unique? What is your passion? What is your brand known for? Is it modern design or traditional design? Accelerated production schedules? Early adoption of sustainable construction practices? Pull-and-replace kitchens or high-design bathrooms? If you aren't sure how your company differs from everybody else, you can be sure your employees, clients, and trade partners aren't sure either.

Read more from Craig Durosko at [www.ProRemodeler.com](http://www.ProRemodeler.com).



### COMMUNICATE THE DIFFERENCE

Once you determine your unique selling proposition, it's critical to get the message out in all of your marketing. Most of you probably have had a past client who hired someone else for another project that differed from the work you did for them. When you asked them why they didn't call you, they say, "Oh, I didn't know you did that." Remember, not all of your past clients understand everything about your business; their perspective is informed mainly by the type of work you have done for them. And prospective clients know only what they hear from past clients or what you tell them in your marketing.

**Learn to focus on what your company does best and where you bring clients the most value.**

What you communicate to the world and how you communicate it is what determines who contacts your company and the types of projects they want you to undertake. Look at your office, your vehicles, and your online and print marketing to check for inconsistencies. Ask others, including past customers, if they see any misalignment between how you think of your company and how your community perceives your business. If you discover that your marketing and sales approach don't match your preferred job type and size or your ideal client, change your message. **PR**

*Craig Durosko is the founder of Sun Design, a design/build firm located in McLean and Burke, Va., that is celebrating its 25th year in business. The company has won more than 80 design and service awards and was recently named one of the "Best Places to Work" in Virginia for the second year in a row. Durosko can be reached at [craig@sundesigninc.com](mailto:craig@sundesigninc.com).*