



**Love2\_Cook:**  
30 minutes ago

I totally love the pot-filler wall-mounted hot-water dispenser by the stove. How high is the spout on that pot filler? Seems very high.



**Home\_for\_Good:**  
42 minutes ago

The ikat upholstery looks great. Does the banquet seating have storage underneath it? (Looks like it does.)



**home-body:**  
1 hour ago

Love the stone-look floor tile. Very natural!  
Where can we purchase?

# The



**kitchremoprep:**

8 minutes ago

What's the specific color of the gray tile used and perhaps the manufacturer? I see you've mentioned elsewhere that it was purchased at the Tile Gallery, is that right?

# New Must

*It's not enough to just have a presence on Houzz and Porch. You have to do it right*

By Wendy A. Jordan, Senior Contributing Editor

**PR**

**Pro Remodelers Inc.:**

2 days ago

Stick to steel stainless steel for appliances—it's a timeless choice for taps and hardware and has added versatility.

Attention remodelers: If you aren't participating aggressively in an online platform such as Houzz.com or Porch.com, you need to do so. Now.

"Houzz is the Google of remodeling," says April Bettinger, owner of Nip Tuck Remodeling, in Woodinville, Wash. Bettinger attributes \$250,000 in 2014 revenue generated from Houzz leads, and says that she's on track for the same this year.

And Bettinger is not alone.

JRP Design & Remodel, in Thousand Oaks, Calif., completed two projects in 2014 that came through Houzz—totaling \$655,000. While Keil Johnson of DJC General Contractors, in Mill Creek, Wash., says that 20 percent of his volume comes through Porch, his only paid marketing venue.

But it's not enough to display a bunch of pretty pictures on these sites, then sit back and wait for business. Both sites take work and a some finessing to make them pay high dividends. Here are a number of tips remodelers can use to ensure that Houzz and Porch are yielding the best results possible for them.

First, a few quick words about each site.

It's not enough to display a bunch of pretty pictures on these sites, then sit back and wait for business. It takes work.

### Houzz.com

Started in 2009 by a couple who were frustrated with their own remodeling experience, Houzz now hosts more than 600,000 professionals with profiles who are active on the site (the database has over 3 million profiles). The site's popularity is phenomenal, with more than 25 million users visiting each month.

Homeowners mine Houzz for inspiration, often creating idea-books on the site to help in their own project planning. They can get advice, buy products, and read articles about remodeling and design. Homeowners also peruse remodelers' project descriptions and people's comments and company reviews "as a proxy for what it would be like to work with them," says Liza Hausman, Houzz vice president of industry marketing.

The more that homeowners know and like about a remodeling company, the more comfortable they become with the idea of hiring that remodeler and moving forward with their project.

Professionals can maintain a company profile on Houzz and

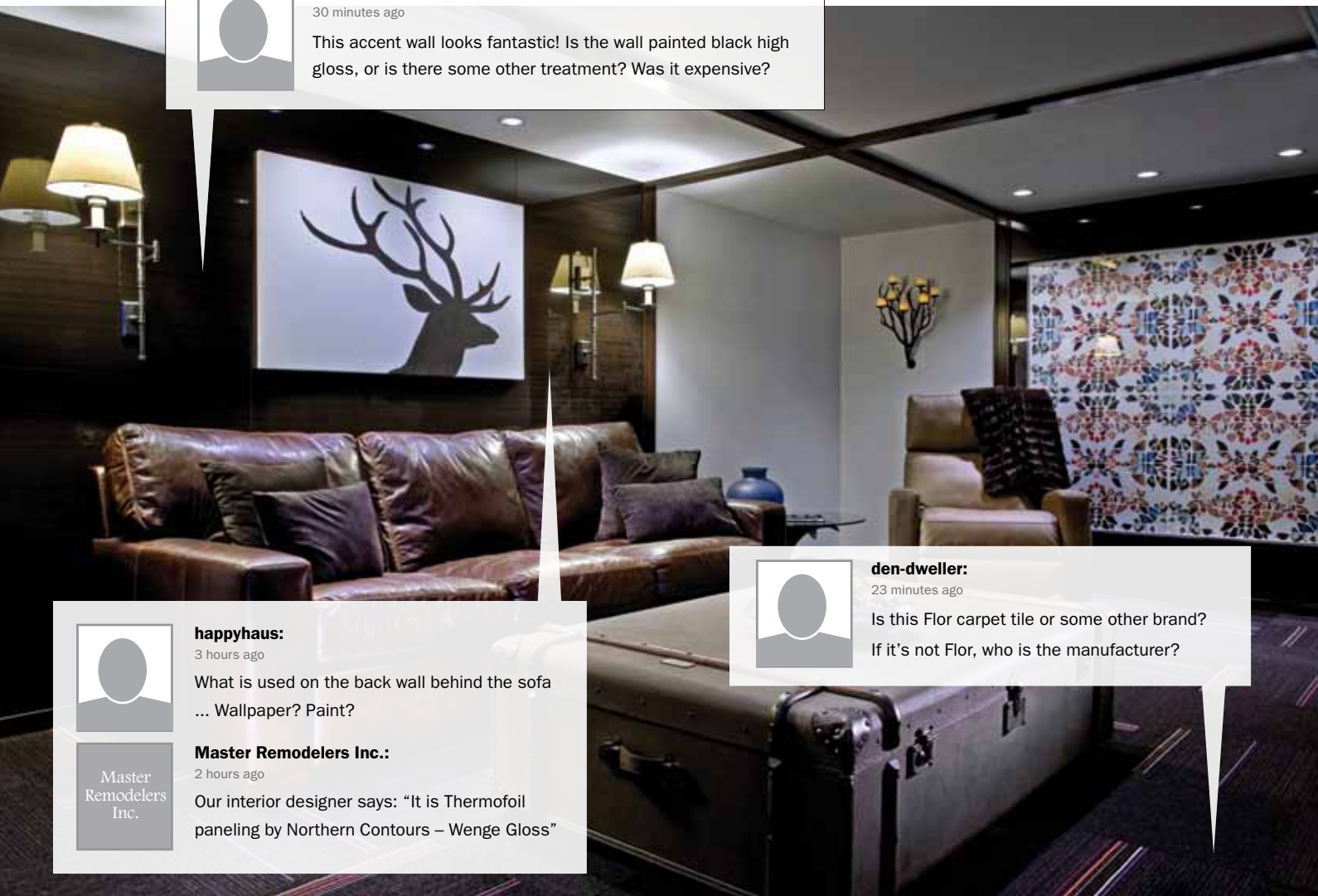
participate on a free or a paid, sponsored (Pro+) basis. Paying participants choose business specialties and specific geographic areas for their Pro+ exposure. Pro+ companies have priority placement in contractor directories for their markets, and Houzz places their project photos in the photo stream.

### Porch.com

CEO Matt Ehrlichman started Porch.com as a one-stop shop for homeowners to find, evaluate, and select remodeling and other home-service professionals. The site features information about 3.2 million home professionals in 128 service categories. Porch encompasses 130 million projects, along with maps that show locations and costs. (Remodelers can choose whether to display this

Porch Professional Features			
Features	Basic	Premium	
Show off your work, build your brand online and monitor your reputation			
Porch Profile	●	●	
Upload Projects & Photos	●	●	
Ratings & Reviews	●	●	
Reputation monitoring		●	
Dedicated Customer Support and Account Management		●	
Efficiently manage your business and clients			
Pro Dashboard/Analytics	●	●	
Contact Management	●	●	
Competitive Insights		●	
Get your business listed correctly across hundreds of Websites and search engines through our Porch Network		●	
Get the right jobs at the right time for your business			
Get Leads from Lowe's Customer	●	●	
Show up in homeowner searches for professionals on porch.com	●	●	
Get first priority when homeowners call our Porch Concierge team looking for the right pro		●	
Guaranteed zip code ownership - secure premium placement across the Porch Network in your target area		●	
Leads from your profile page go directly to you instead of other professionals		●	
Cost			
With Porch Premium you can lock in pricing for 6 months or longer to secure your zip code ownership.		Free ad listing	\$100... starts by zip code listing

On Porch.com, professionals can get a premium membership for \$100 per month, depending on ZIP code. That premium membership gets you a variety of upgrades to the basic package, such as first priority when homeowners call the Porch Concierge team seeking a pro.



**homebody\_too:**

30 minutes ago

This accent wall looks fantastic! Is the wall painted black high gloss, or is there some other treatment? Was it expensive?



**happyhaus:**

3 hours ago

What is used on the back wall behind the sofa ... Wallpaper? Paint?



Master Remodelers Inc.

**Master Remodelers Inc.:**

2 hours ago

Our interior designer says: "It is Thermofoil paneling by Northern Contours – Wenge Gloss"



**den-dweller:**

23 minutes ago

Is this Flor carpet tile or some other brand? If it's not Flor, who is the manufacturer?

COURTESY OF CRAIG THOMPSON

*This finished basement photo from Master Remodelers, in Pittsburgh, garnered more than 12,000 views in one month on Houzz. The company also leverages star projects such as this in its print advertising and marketing.*

information.) Through a partnership with the Better Business Bureau, Porch also displays the BBB rating for professionals on its site.

Remodelers can upload project photos and descriptions, as well as company information and advice to consumers. A dedicated phone number sends calls to remodelers while tracking them through the Porch system.

As with Houzz, professionals can participate on Porch on a free (basic) or paid (Premium) basis. Premium professionals select ZIP code areas where they wish to be featured. They pay \$100 per month or more per area based on population, income level, and other demographic measures. Up to four companies in each service category can subscribe in each ZIP code. Premium benefits also include access to a dashboard of lead tracking analytics.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

# 1

### Post professional photos

Top-quality project photos, and lots of them, are a must. The more photos you post with your profile and the more interesting the projects they show, the more exposure, attention, and homeowner interaction your company will get. Upload as many photos as you can as often as possible.

If you include "before" photos, make sure that they are clearly labeled as such. You can position them to appear following the "after" shots to avoid confusion. Hire a professional architectural photographer to shoot the completed projects, and stage the rooms if necessary.

Homeowners peruse remodelers' project descriptions and people's comments and company reviews on websites such as Houzz and Porch "as a proxy for what it would be like to work with them," says Liza Hausman, Houzz vice president of industry marketing.

## 2 Be assertive in getting reviews

Today's consumers heavily rely on customer reviews when making buying decisions; so don't be shy about requesting them. Satisfied clients generally are happy to help you by posting positive feedback. Both Porch and Houzz contain features that help professionals send requests for reviews to clients. The responses go back to the website. The sites will send out a reminder in three weeks if no response has been received. Porch uses a "Verified Review" label to distinguish reviews verified to be from homeowners who worked with the professional.

Another option is to craft a template and send it out yourself. There are also third-party companies, such as GuildQuality (guildquality.com), which provide that service.

Remodeler Bryan Sebring, of Sebring Services, in Naperville, Ill., has an impressive 62 reviews on Houzz. To obtain reviews, he requests them early and often. When the contract is signed and at job completion he asks clients to review the company. He informs clients that he will reward their project manager for a review of a job well done. (A small bonus per project per site—Houzz, Yelp., etc.). Project managers monitor customer satisfaction during the project, and Sebring asks clients to contact him directly if any problems need to be resolved. At project completion, Sebring sends clients an e-mail explaining the importance of customer feedback in the company's online marketing and provides links they can use to submit reviews.

By managing client satisfaction throughout the project, Sebring is confident that the reviews will be positive. Houzz has a reputation management guide for professionals to help them respond to negative reviews in a polite, constructive manner.

## 3 Tag and code

When homeowners explore online platforms, they use search terms. Maximize the number of times your projects match the search by blanketing your photos with tags and codes. These are invisible to consumers but connect to

searches they enter. With each photograph, start at one side and make your way across, adding tags for everything small and large—from product colors, materials, styles, sizes, names, and models to design features and details.

Consumers drill down to very specific details, and your anticipating that will make your photos come up on more searches.

## 4 Stay active, update often

Keep your company presence fresh and dynamic, uploading new project photos, arranging photos and displays for variety and interest, and revising company and project narratives. Marketing directors may spend several hours a week on their Houzz work. Randy Strothman, whose company handles Internet marketing for Master Remodelers, in Pittsburgh, says that it's time well spent: He uses Houzz as a "satellite website" for the company. This holds true for Porch as well. Nicole Ryback, of Synergy Builders, in West Chicago, Ill., says that on Porch, "It's easy for people to see



*Porch.com maps show by locale the project details and cost history of work done in the area. The maps also provide information about professionals who have previously worked on homes in these neighborhoods.*



COURTESY OF LAUREL MULLIKIN



**bestdressed1:**  
55 minutes ago

Super creative, original shower door with arched opening. I've never seen anything like it.



**sal\_snivvens:**  
42 minutes ago

I was looking for a warm travertine for the floor in my bathroom, but this tile with its varied sizes looks interesting. Is it porcelain?

how many of each specific type of project a contractor has done and in what areas.” To keep that information current, Sebring’s company uses Co-Construct management software, which integrates with Porch to automatically upload new project information.

## 5 Win awards

Each January, Houzz presents “Best of Houzz Design” and “Best of Houzz Customer Service” awards, with accompanying website badges, to professionals.

These designations are powerful marketing tools. You can boost your chances of getting them by managing your profile. Design awards are determined by how many of the company’s photos have been saved by homeowners. The more you tag, keyword, and post high-quality photos, the more saves you should see. Service awards are based on how many reviews the company has received.

Once you win, post the award badge on your website and add it to your e-mail signature and marketing materials.

*If consumers ask about something in a photo, such as who the faucet manufacturer is, always respond, even if you don’t know the answer. A quick sentence or two showing professionalism and willingness to help may be as beneficial as actually providing the answer.*

## 6 Communicate with consumers on the site

Participate in online discussions, even if the homeowners are not in your market. You will be increasing exposure for your company and showcasing your creativity, knowledge, and industry engagement.

And if consumers ask about something in a photo—what store did the pillows come from, for instance—always respond, even if you don’t know the answer. A quick sentence or two showing friendliness, professionalism, and willingness to help can be as beneficial as actually providing the answer.

A new Porch app alerts professionals to incoming inquiries and enables them to instantly respond.

## 7 Put personality into your profile

Consumers get to know you through your company profile and may make a decision about your company within a few seconds of being on your page. Along with great project photos, include informative, friendly project descriptions that include something about you and the remodeling solutions you provide to your clients. Consider including photos of yourself as well. Homeowners will feel like they know you before you arrive for an initial consultation.

## 8 Track your account activity

Many remodelers report excellent results with paid participation on the Houzz and Porch networks. Combined with a well-managed site presence, the premium exposure provided to paid subscribers has yielded an eye-popping number of hits and leads. Infinite Home in Suwanee, Ga., for instance, drew 1,500 hits in one month last year, says Laurel Mullikin, the company’s co-founder. Since upgrading to paid status a year ago, Ryback has garnered more than 50 leads, all but five of them qualified.

But the most important thing is the strength of your page and site participation. Tracked data tells the story. Kristina Ferrigan, director of marketing for Normandy Design Build Remodeling, in Hinsdale, Ill., says that Normandy augmented its free Houzz profile with paid status for a year. When Houzz account representatives reviewed the remodeler’s robust site presence and performance data, they told Ferrigan that most of the benefit came from Normandy’s hard work supporting the company’s free profile. After analyzing the data, Ferrigan came to

Normandy Design Build Remodeling designers sometimes create Houzz ideabooks for clients as a way to suggest ideas and share what they envision for the project.

the conclusion that the paid status wasn't necessary for her company's profile. (Remodelers can request a free profile consultation at support.houzz.com.)

Washington state contractor Keil Johnson values the dedicated Porch phone line that channels callers to his company. He says it's primarily used by homeowners, so it functions as a tool to track site performance. Porch's Pro Analytics Dashboard shows additional data to help him manage his Porch activity.

**9 Listen to the site experts**  
Paid or free, you can find expert support on Houzz and Porch. Take advantage of it. Remodelers say that the analysis, evaluations, ideas, and suggestions from site representatives are spot on. Listen to the advice and follow it.

**10 Work with ideabooks**  
Remodelers work collaboratively with clients via online ideabooks (Houzz) or scrapbooks (Porch), which function as electronic scrapbooks where clients can collect and store ideas. Early in the project planning process, you can ask to review your client's ideabooks to get a sense of their taste, style, and wishes. Ferrigan says that Normandy designers also may create Houzz ideabooks for clients as a way to suggest ideas and share their vision for the project.

Design/build remodeler Michael Sauri, president and co-owner of TriVistaUSA, in Arlington, Va., uses ideabooks to zero in on clients' design preferences. He asks them to sign up for a free Houzz account and assemble an ideabook with no more than 10 photos. Homeowners enter private comments identifying which seven or eight photos they love and which two are examples of what they don't like. "It makes them focus," Sauri says. "There's always one image that really speaks to them, and the whole project design may revolve around that image." PR



astria  
FIREPLACES®

astria.us.com



Scan to find out more.