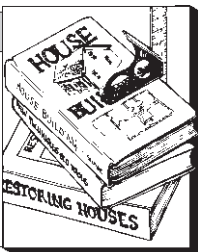


## Marketing

**Marketing for Remodelers** by Linda W. Case and S. Robert August (National Assoc. of Homebuilders, 15th & M Sts., Washington, D.C.; 1987. 207 pages. \$28.50 members/\$36 nonmembers plus \$2.50 handling, paperback)

**How to Sell Remodeling** by Robert M. Gorodess; Craftsman Books, Box 6500, Carlsbad, CA 92008; 235 pages. \$17.50.



*Marketing for Remodelers*, written primarily by remodeler and consultant Linda Case, is an excellent reference on selling your work. In fact, it's so good that I think it has much to offer anyone in the construction (or design) field, not just remodelers. The authors have written very professionally, illustrated their text with a wealth of good photos and anecdotes drawn from almost 100 remodelers around the country, and have chosen to emphasize the importance of customer satisfaction in virtually every chapter.

Case begins by describing the importance of finding a *niche* in the competitive field of remodeling and filling it. Here she notes that "the established remodeler must move out of the competitive bidding arena as soon as possible." Niche options range from the old standards of kitchens, baths, and light industrial work to sunrooms, lighting, and even the tongue-in-cheek suggestion that Southwest builders might selectively pursue the market of "Hispanic doctors and dentists." Other ideas presented include design/build, historic restoration, insurance work and architect-designed remodels. The last two, they warn, are difficult and carry expensive overhead. Practical information on researching a niche is also included.

Another important aspect of marketing is projecting a company image through such things as logo, letterhead, T-shirts and caps, dress codes, brochures, business cards, signs (site and vehicles), and even how many rings to allow before answering the phone and how long to leave people on "hold." Case cites an anecdote where the customer received the impression that a firm was "high-cost-but-worth-it," which she contrasts with how difficult it is to overcome a negative impression. She concludes with a brief description of the HOW warranty program as an asset in both image building and marketing.

Leads are best obtained, once again, through referrals by satisfied customers—all other sources are secondary, although both public relations (PR) and advertising have a role to play in good marketing. PR can include networking, association memberships, civic activities, press releases, a before/after picture portfolio, and pursuit of awards, in addition to actually hiring a firm to blow your horn.

The pros and cons of various advertising media are discussed, but primarily for "less established" or "specialty" firms as a supplement to their PR and image efforts. In short, "Exploit all the less expensive marketing methods and use advertising only as the last avenue," advises Case. Also discussed are home shows, house tours, and showrooms plus a very brief introduction to direct mail, telemarketing (phone sales) and canvassing (door-to-door selling).

Customer satisfaction is talked up

throughout the book. A special section on the topic outlines the importance of having the lead carpenter and job superintendent explain any delays to the clients, and alert them to how progress will appear slow after the gypsum board is hung. It also covers tips on using the punchlist to achieve customer satisfaction, and the importance of jobsite cleanliness. Remember, advises Case, a happy customer will tell three friends, but an unhappy one will tell 15.

The book closes with a summary of how to create a marketing plan and budget its implementation. The worst faults I could find with this book are its poor binding, and the lack of an index.

*How to Sell Remodeling* by Robert Gorodess, on the other hand, is a book to which I took a strong and almost immediate dislike. The author now retired, ran his own remodeling company in Chicago, but seems to be primarily (as the cover aptly describes him) "a natural salesman." This lifelong interest and sales ability sets the tone for the entire book, just as customer satisfaction guides the NAHB book.

Mr. Gorodess writes about selling, selling, and selling, which he says is "the name of the game." The main subjects are such traditional sales topics as "icebreakers," "warm-ups," "overcoming resistance," and of course, "closing."

The focus of the author's chapter on leads is on door-to-door canvassing. The rest (a mere four paragraphs) is on direct mail and advertising. Nothing said about client referrals.

Once leads are developed, the goal is to get a signature on the dotted line. This is achieved by techniques such as enthusiasm, selling the benefits of your work (sage advice which Case and August agree with), taking command, and inviting yourself to the kitchen table rather than the more formal living room. If the clients insist on staying in the living room, says Gorodess, you can regain control of the situation by requesting that they turn off the TV (probably not bad advice). Also, you'll want to push the "pride-in-ownership" buttons and find common interests (the so-called warm-up) to "get under the skin" of the clients.

Use your sales knowledge, says the author, as a chameleon changes its skin color, and have a strong repertoire of *sales pitches and closes* (examples provided). Speak with authority, know the "personality types" of your prospects so you can "size them up," and dramatize your wares.

What about the inevitable objections to your sales pitch? (And who wouldn't have some by now?) First, remember that "Most objections have no validity," then overcome them by rehearsal, reducing the job to fit the budget, urging the clients to buy before the price goes

up or other similar techniques. Then close, or turn the closing over to a colleague if all else fails. Sound like an automobile salesman? The author cites them as a model to copy.

Perhaps the longest chapter in *How to Sell...* is devoted to financing, and how becoming a dealer for a lending agency and selling "easy payments" can be a key to more sales. Another sizable chapter is devoted to insurance work, where the author advises that you get the clients to sign a paper naming you as the insurance adjuster "if it's legal in your state." Another chapter devotes itself to legalities—codes and contracts. Tips regarding the latter include: don't specify *exact* overall dimensions (the clients might seek a discount if you're a few inches under), always spec "or equal" for products and make sure you disclaim all responsibility for any damage done by the concrete truck. (Contrast this with the attitude of seeking customer satisfaction.) This chapter, however, does include a good summary of useful standard contract clauses.

To round out the first section of

the book, Mr. Gorodess includes advice on pricing (70 percent markup) and compensating your sales team, both subjects which don't appear in *Marketing For Remodelers*. The balance of the Gorodess book (15 chapters) is devoted to specific advice on selling additions, awnings, garages, gutters, kitchens and baths, roofing, siding, windows and more. I am tempted to include snake-oil.

As should be obvious by now my overall impression of *How To Sell...* is that selling is the art of manipulating people, for which I have very little tolerance. Despite Mr. Gorodess' folksy, anecdotal style and cartoon-like illustrations, the attitude of lack of respect for clients and a single-minded desire to "win the game" at any cost comes across strongly. Although I picked up a few useful tips from this book, if such a remodeling "salesman," showed up at my door, he or she would almost certainly get the bum's rush. This will be this book's fate in my collection, while the NAHB book will definitely stay on my shelf. ■

—Paul Hanke

## Fancy Renovations

**Fine Homebuilding Remodeling Ideas** (Taunton Press, Newtown, CT 06470; 182 pages. \$21.95).

The *creme-de-la-creme* of articles on restorations, additions and renovations reprinted from *Fine Homebuilding*. From a humble garage remodel to the restoration of houses by Frank Lloyd Wright and the brothers Greene; from adding a shed dormer to Valerie Walshe's curved plexiglass sunspaces; from attics to carriage barns, you'll find exciting

and well-documented projects, plus lots of photos and drawings, many in color. And to top it off you'll get an assortment of nitty-gritty technical articles on period moldings, replacing a sill, staircase renovation, capping a foundation, hands-on plumbing and more. \$21.95 and worth every penny (if you don't already have a collection of FHB back issues). ■

—Paul Hanke

## Old Parts Directory

**The Old House Journal Catalog**, Edited by Eve Kahn; OHJ Corp; Brooklyn, NY 11217; 229 pages. \$14.95.

A product and service directory for everything from ornate columns and Victorian millwork to handmade glass, iron fences, old-fashioned lighting, dumbwaiters, metal ceilings, oak moldings, Tiffany reproductions, hand-blocked wallpaper, pull-chain toilets, antique phone booths, solid

brass "dust-corners" and much more. All admirably compiled by the editors of the *Old House Journal* and presented by product (over 10,000), company (1,426) and paid advertising. What more needs to be said? ■

—Paul Hanke

## Getting Wired

**Practical Electrical Wiring/13th Ed.** Richter and W. Creighton Schwan (NY; McGraw-Hill; 1984; 661 pages; \$32.95 hardcover)

*Practical Electrical Wiring* is an authoritative and seemingly exhaustive instruction manual for electricians. Over 660 pages cover codes, inspections, basic electricity and circuits, wire sizing, grounding, devices, and actual layout and installation of residential, farm, and industrial wiring. This 13th edition is updated to conform to the 1984 Code, and includes information on topics such as cogeneration, concrete floor raceways, suspended ceilings, and manufactured wiring systems, to name a few. The first third of the book is devoted to electrical theory and introductory material. The rest covers the nuts-and-bolts of installation.

This is not a book you'd want to read from cover to cover (not even a book reviewer), but the chapters I selected to read were clearly written and well organized. The discussion of basic devices and circuits, for instance, describes wires as "one-way streets," and translates the technical term *lamp* into "light-bulb" for

novices on the subject. The authors then proceed through other definitions: series and parallel circuits, toggle switches, receptacles, and three-way switching. New information builds on the previous material, always increasing in complexity, but very clearly and logically. There is good cross-referencing throughout the text.

The chapter on outlet installation is similarly well organized, beginning with three variations on a simple pull-chain device, and proceeding to multiple outlets on one circuit, wall switching, combining devices, switched receptacles, and testing. Illustrations are dry but adequate; for crystal-clear illustrations, I'd turn to something more homeowner-oriented like *Reader's Digest Complete Do-It-Yourself Manual*. *Practical Electrical Wiring* is a standard reference in the field, though, and seems to be a very complete guide for novices and licensed electricians alike. ■

—Paul Hanke

# FREE *or* CHEAP

**Skylights:** Wasco has a free booklet that might be of interest to clients who are considering a skylight. Called *Everything the Homeowner Needs to Know about Skylighting*, the booklet can be obtained from Wasco Products, Dept. M, P.O. Box 351, Sanford, ME 04073.

**Estimating Options for Remodelers:** A packet of information to help remodelers select the estimating system best suited to their needs has been prepared by the NAHB Remodelers Council. The packet includes descriptions of the stick, unit-pricing, and computer estimating methods; reprints of selected magazine articles; a bibliography of books on estimating; and a list of estimating software. The cost is \$3. Call 800/368-5242, ext. 387, or write NAHB Remodelers Council, 15th and M Sts. NW, Washington, DC 20005.

**Insulation Information:** A thin but information-filled brochure describing the benefits and disadvantages of different types of insulation is available free of charge from the National Association of Home Builders. *NAHB Guide to Insulation* includes requirements and precautions for installation of each product, discussions of various standards and specifications, and tables showing R-value-to-thickness relationships. Write to NAHB Technical Services, 15th and M Sts. NW, Washington, DC 20005.

**Renewable Energy and Conservation:** Technical assistance is available free if you have specific questions in the areas of renewable energy and conservation. The National Appropriate Technology Assistance Service has answered more than 15,000 requests for information since 1984, spending an average of two hours research time on each. NATAS also assists small energy-related businesses with business planning, licensing, marketing, etc. You can call them toll-free at 800/428-2525, or write to NATAS, P.O. Box 2525, Butte, MT 59702.

**Remodelers' Free or Cheap Catalog:** A catalog containing information on how to get free or inexpensive resources on state licensing laws, estimating, marketing, remodeling management, industry statistics, and more. Each resource listed in the catalog is accompanied by a brief description and ordering information. To receive a copy of the catalog, contact the NAHB Remodelers Council at 202/822-0216.

**Hollow Metal Specification:** A 115-page manual gives design professionals the current information on manufacturing, door and frame design and details, hardware preparation and location, installation and storage, fire-rated application, common terms, plus guide specifications. *The Hollow Metal Manual* may be purchased from the National Association of Architectural Metal Manufacturers (NAAMM) for \$35, plus \$3.00 shipping. Write to NAAMM, 600 S. Federal Street, Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60605; 312/922-6222.

**Asbestos Abatement for Remodelers:** A compilation of trade magazine articles, information on federal regulations, resource lists, and a bibliography is included in a packet now available to NAHB members for \$3.00 and nonmembers for \$5.00. For a packet write to the NAHB Remodelers Council, 15th and M Streets, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20005; 202/822-0200.

**Specialist Specifications:** A series of seven detailed monograph and specification papers covering some specialty products—roofing systems, blast doors, sound-retardant doors, welded aluminum pools, pressure-resistant doors, radiation-shielding doors, and attack/bullet resistant doors. Available from Overly Manufacturing, P.O. Box 70, Greensburg, PA 15601; 412/834-7300.

**Radon Measurement:** In a report entitled, "Radon/Radon Progeny Measurement Proficiency Program," the Environmental Protection Agency lists companies it recommends to do radon measurement. The report is free from the EPA's Public Information Center, PM-211B, 401 M St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460, Attn. Charles Mooney, or call 202/646-6410.

**Roofing Support:** A package meant to improve the contractor's ability to sell CertainTeed roofing products includes a color portfolio and two weather resistant lob-site signs imprinted by CertainTeed with the name and number of the contractor. The package is available for \$19.50 from CertainTeed SMG headquarters, P.O. Box 860, Valley Forge, PA 19482.