

# Innovative Products 2007

by Patrick McCombe

Our annual pick of products designed to help you work smarter, faster, and better

We're constantly on the lookout for building products that can save time, improve work quality, and increase profitability. No doubt you are, too. But we have an advantage: a mailbox permanently packed with press releases from manufacturers eager to tout the benefits of their merchandise. While many products don't live up to the hype, others strike us as genuinely useful. Here's a roundup of products and tools that we think might help you run a better business.

As always, let us know what you think. If you give any of the items on these pages a try, tell us about your experience. And if you have your own favorite product picks, we'd like to hear what they are.

## FRAMING & STRUCTURE

### Bar Clips

If spending hours — or days — tying off a grid of rebar doesn't sound like a lot of fun to you, check out *Kodi Klips*. Invented by general contractor John Kodi, the plastic clips quickly and easily connect parallel and intersecting rebar. They're color-coded to work with bar sizes from #3 to #6 and with combinations of #3 and #4, #4 and #5, and #5 and #6 bars. A 95-count box of #4 clips sells for about \$15.

**Kodi Klip, 615/449-1880, [www.kodiklip.com](http://www.kodiklip.com).**





### Tech Support

If you're building a deck over a flat or gently sloping roof, Bison's *deck supports* may be just the ticket. Available in several styles with capacities from 500 to 1,250 pounds, the polypropylene supports adjust from 1/2 inch to 16 inches. The maker claims they're ideal for decks constructed over sloping or undulating concrete, too. You can even use them over compacted soil, the company says. Prices range from \$3 to \$4 per square foot.

**Bison Deck Supports, 888/412-4766, [www.bisondecksupports.com](http://www.bisondecksupports.com).**



### Rustproofing

One of the largely unforeseen consequences of modern pressure-treated formulas has been the accelerated corrosion of galvanized fasteners; hardware manufacturers and timber-treaters now recommend using stainless hardware with PT wood. However, the "micronized" copper preservative formula in *ProWood Micro Treated Lumber* is less corrosive, says the maker, making galvanized fasteners acceptable. According to the company, costs are comparable to those of standard PT lumber.

**Universal Forest Products, 800/598-9663, [www.prowoodmicro.com](http://www.prowoodmicro.com).**



### Hug the Curves

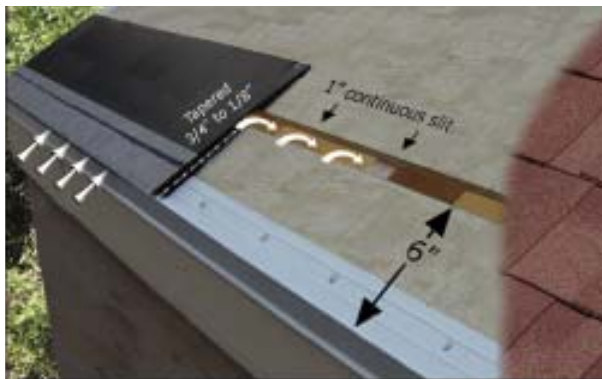
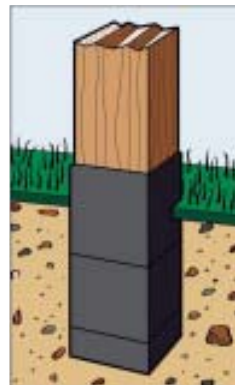
Building a curved wall for the first time makes it painfully obvious why most walls are straight. Luckily, a new product from Flex-Ability Concepts makes building nonload-bearing curved walls and soffits much easier. The *Quick Curve Plate* — which is made from biscuit-shaped chunks of OSB — has a minimum outside radius of 12 inches. A box containing two 12-foot plates sells for \$110.

**Flex-Ability Concepts, 405/996-5343, [www.flexabilityconcepts.com](http://www.flexabilityconcepts.com).**

### It's a Wrap

By now it's widely known that the newer pressure-treating formulas are more corrosive than CCA — but not everyone realizes that they also leach their preservatives faster. According to its maker, self-adhering *Post & Pole* protective wrap prevents this leaching and eliminates contact with soilborne organisms that can cause premature decay. It's also suitable for posts set in concrete. A pair of 3-inch-by-25-foot rolls costs \$7.50 on the company's Web site.

**MFM Building Products, 800/882-7663, [www.mfmbp.com](http://www.mfmbp.com).**



### Breathe Easier

It's a common dilemma: How do you provide eaves ventilation when you don't have an overhang? I like DCI's *SmartVent*. Each 3-foot section of the shingle-over vent — in tandem with a continuous slit in the roof sheathing — provides 9 square inches of ventilation. The product can also be used at the top of a roof (when the top of the rafter cavity is blocked by a fire wall or ridge beam, for example) or on shed roofs. It sells for \$3 to \$4 per foot.

**DCI Products, 800/622-4455, [www.dciproducts.com](http://www.dciproducts.com).**

### Bricks Fix

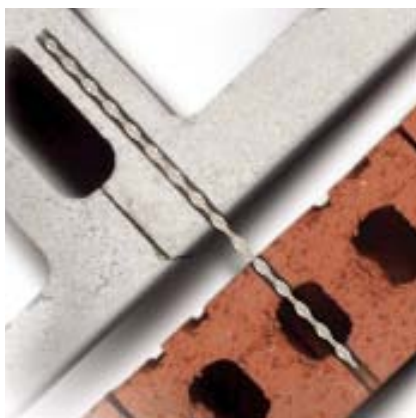
Brick and stone veneer should last as long as the building they clad — but corroded ties can quickly turn a beautiful façade into a dangerous liability.

Until recently there wasn't much to be done about this problem, but now there's Powers' stainless-steel *Heli-Pin*. This twisted metal anchor installs from the outside to secure loose veneer to block or framing. Since the installation tool countersinks the pin 1/2 inch, the repair is virtually undetectable after patching.

Prices range from

\$4 to \$4.75 each, depending on the length. The installation tool costs \$200.

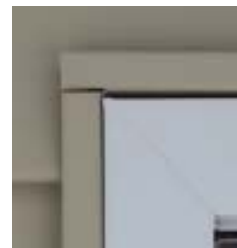
**Powers Fasteners, 914/235-6300, [www.powers.com](http://www.powers.com).**



### Tight Corners

Sloppy J-channel corners can really detract from an otherwise good-looking vinyl siding job. Even worse, water running through poorly executed corners can easily find its way into the building. *Kwik Corners* are meant to address both issues. Available for Alcoa, Royal, Kaycan, and GP siding, they have a surprisingly intricate shape that assures a tight fit and proper drainage. A box of 100 costs about \$110.

**RLC Technologies, 207/495-3441, [www.kwikcorner.com](http://www.kwikcorner.com).**





### In Hot Water

With its high-performance burner and 90 percent efficiency rating, the 50-gallon *Vertex Power-Vent Gas Water Heater* can deliver as much hot water as a standard-efficiency 75-gallon unit, says maker A.O. Smith. It has taps for hot-water space heating and can be vented vertically or through the wall using 2-, 3-, or 4-inch PVC pipe. According to the company, the unit delivers 3 gpm at a 45°F rise and 1½ gpm at a 90°F rise. Prices are determined by individual dealers but are purportedly comparable to those of 75-gallon power-vented gas water heaters.

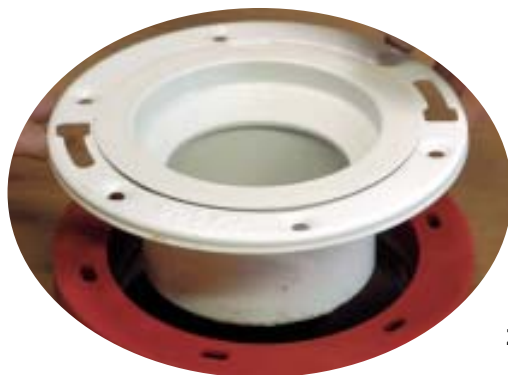
**A.O. Smith, 800/447-1953, [www.hotwater.com](http://www.hotwater.com).**

### Heat Exchanger

Maintaining comfort in a home with a fireplace, a woodstove, or a poorly designed heating system just got a lot easier.

Tjernlund's new *AirShare Room-to-Room Ventilation Fan* — a squirrel-cage blower that installs inside a partition wall — allows a warm room to share its heat with a colder adjacent room. The AirShare can also be used with air-conditioning. Prices start at about \$125.

**Tjernlund Products, 800/255-4208, [www.tjernlund.com](http://www.tjernlund.com).**



### Flange Solution

One of the many headaches associated with building bathrooms is getting toilet flanges set to the correct height. *Set-Rite* closet flange spacers promise to eliminate rocking toilets and multiple wax rings. Plus they're more reliable than conventional spacers, says the maker. Available in several thicknesses to match virtually any type of flooring, they're typically installed during the rough-in phase but can be broken in half for retrofit applications. Prices range from about \$2 to \$6, depending on thickness.

**Zurn, 800/245-4277, [www.set-rite.com](http://www.set-rite.com).**

### All in One

It's hard not to sound like a late-night infomercial when describing the *Matrix*. This product is a condensing furnace, a heat-recovery ventilator, an instantaneous water heater, and a condensing boiler all in one. No, it doesn't slice tomatoes, but it can do its intended functions with surprising efficiency. The hot-water, domestic hot-water, and hot-air functions rely on a 90-plus modulating boiler. The Matrix is also prewired for AC. It lists for \$8,500 — which sounds like a lot but is less than what the four appliances it replaces would cost.

**NY Thermal, 506/432-1130, [www.nythermal.com](http://www.nythermal.com).**





## Gap-Closer

Producing tight-fitting inside corners with baseboard and crown molding can be a challenge. When the corner isn't in the same plane as the rest of the wall, the resulting gaps (especially at the bottom) often require copious amounts of caulk or putty. The *Trim Adjustor* can help. Here's how it works: First you run in the headless screw until it bottoms out on the framing. Then you turn the screw in the opposite direction, which forces the trim outward and closes any gaps. Last, you fill the  $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch hole with putty or cover it with a shoe molding. An 80-count package of Trim Adjustors costs \$28.

**Copemaster, 800/630-1104, [www.copemaster.com](http://www.copemaster.com).**



## Wireless Alarms

Interconnected smoke alarms have been the norm in new construction for many years now, but a lot of older homes still don't have this life-saving feature. Innotek has a great solution: Its battery-powered *Protek Wireless* interconnecting smoke alarm uses wireless technology to sound all the smoke alarms in a house whenever one goes off. It satisfies HUD regulations and most inspectors. List prices start at \$90.

**Innotek, 877/476-8133, [www.innotekcorp.com](http://www.innotekcorp.com).**

## Juice Box

Installing receptacles in kitchen islands and other spaces lacking a wall or backsplash inevitably involves some kind of compromise. Wiremold/Legrand's *Pop-Up Power Units* bypass this problem quite cleverly. The 15- and 20-amp receptacles sport gasketed, spring-loaded covers and come in a variety of finishes. The company sells similar products for data connection. Prices start at \$75.

**Wiremold/Legrand, 800/621-0049, [www.wiremold.com](http://www.wiremold.com).**



### Now You're Cooking!

Surveys show that almost everyone prefers home-cooked meals — but the fact is, few people have the time to make them. TurboChef says its *Speedcook Oven* can help. The appliance relies on a microwave element and convection cooking to prepare foods fast — a 12-pound turkey takes about 45 minutes, for instance — and comes preprogrammed for 400 common dishes. It's sold in two models: a double (for about \$7,900) and a single (for \$6,000). Customers can choose from seven finishes.

**TurboChef Technologies, 866/543-6569, [www.turbochef.com](http://www.turbochef.com).**



### Get a Grip

As baby boomers enter their golden years, home modifications that allow homeowners to age in place are becoming increasingly popular. Moen's *SecureMount* grab-bar mount uses extra-large plastic toggles to accommodate bars of numerous styles and lengths; unlike another popular retrofit mount, it's suitable for 1/2-inch drywall. Most impressive, it's rated for 600 pounds. A pair of mounts costs about \$22. Bars are sold separately for about \$25 and up.

**Moen, 800/882-0116, [csi.moen.com](http://csi.moen.com).**

### Wide Load

A second dishwasher is showing up on more and more wish lists, but some kitchens just don't have room for two. Dacor's 30-inch-wide *Epicure* holds as many dishes as two 24-inch units (20 place settings) while taking up less space. Other features include a stainless interior, a 158°F rinse temperature, and a hidden control panel. The appliance costs about \$2,000.

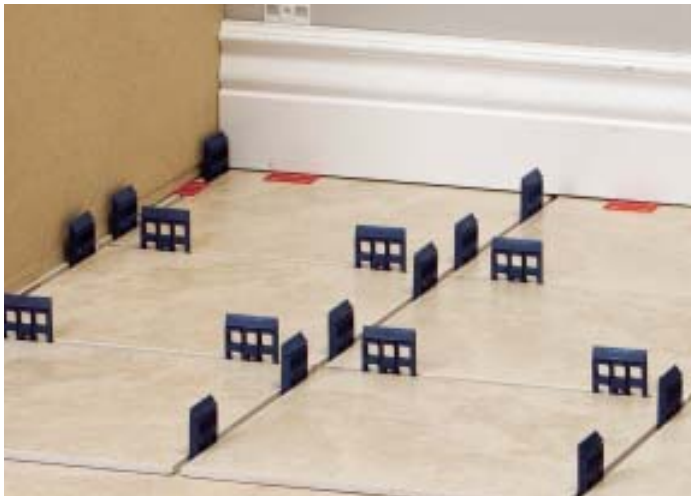
**Dacor, 800/793-0093, [www.dacor.com](http://www.dacor.com).**



### Inner Vision

How many times have you wished for X-ray vision? Getting Superman on the payroll is unlikely — but buying a *SeeSnake Micro* isn't. This tiny waterproof camera is mounted on a flexible 3-foot cable (extendable to 30 feet) so you can see inside wall cavities and other inaccessible spaces. The image shows up on a 2½-inch color LCD screen — which means you can show clients any problems. The camera head has adjustable LED lights and can be equipped with a mirror, a magnetic tip, and a small hook, all of which are included in the \$220 kit.

**Ridgid, 800/474-3443, [www.ridgid.com](http://www.ridgid.com).**



### Making Space

It's tough to improve on cedar shim shingles, but *Handi-Shims* may be a better option for some tasks. At about an 1½ inches square, these plastic shims come in 1/16-, 1/8-, and 1/4-inch sizes, all of uniform thickness — making them ideal for creating reveals and spacing deck boards and tile. They contain a countersunk hole in the center for a bugle-head drywall screw and break apart for applications that don't require the entire shim. A bag of 100 costs \$11.

**Handi-Shim, 203/733-5630, [www.handi-shim.com](http://www.handi-shim.com).**

### True Grit

Suitable for one-handed operation, Porter-Cable's 371K compact belt sander is about 11 inches long and spins a 2½-by-14-inch belt at 1,100 surface feet per minute. It looks like the perfect tool for fine-tuning scribes and trim. The kit — which includes a case and an 80-grit belt — sells for about \$120.

**Porter-Cable, 800/487-8665, [www.porter-cable.com](http://www.porter-cable.com).**

