

## A Whole Greater Than the Sum

### ***THIS FIRM HAS SUCCESSFULLY DIFFERENTED ITSELF IN DESIGN AND CUSTOMER SERVICE TO BECOME REMODELER OF THE YEAR***

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Possibly the greatest challenge a remodeling company faces in the quest for growth is its owner. By nature, entrepreneurs tend to have strong personalities and a willingness to go it alone. But the very qualities that helped them to succeed when they started their businesses can hamper them down the line. Eventually the owner of a growing business needs to give up some control and hand over some of the responsibilities to his or her employees in order to achieve new and improved goals.

This requires training employees in how to execute those new responsibilities and communicating expectations. This is easier said than done of course, and often requires some training for the business owner beforehand.

"Most remodelers reach a point where they struggle with people and how to nurture them," says Bob DuBree, CR, president of Creative Contracting in North Wales, Pa. His company, *Professional Remodeler's Remodeler of the Year*, is being singled out for successfully differentiating itself in design and customer service. Yet that could not have been achieved without the efforts of many people besides DuBree. The team he has brought together includes two in-house designers, two lead carpenters, an office manager, a production coordinator, a part-time selections coordinator, a part-time marketing director and two more carpenters.

One of the keys to the company's success is DuBree's commitment to ongoing training and development for himself as well as the staff. In addition to hiring marketing and management consultants to advise on strategy, metrics and processes, DuBree works with a business coach on people skills.

"The biggest thing has been learning to communicate better and to mentor people," he explains. "My role is changing to that of a mentor and teacher, helping them through the process."

Finding and retaining good employees, says DuBree, remains an ongoing challenge. He works to keep people engaged and invested in the business. For example, Creative Contracting's mission — "We fulfill dreams by working together to build lasting relationships while creatively designing and building with quality and excellence" — was written almost three years ago by a group that included all employees; DuBree and his wife Kim, the co-owner; a facilitator; a subcontractor; and a client.

Monday morning staff meetings cover not only project progress reports but also budget reviews that reveal everything but individual salaries. Besides educating staff on key metrics — design work in progress, volume in production, signed backlog — the open-book management is helping to set the groundwork for implementing a performance-based bonus plan. The designers and carpenters now have to help create plans for achieving the goals the company needs to meet.

In return, some of the profits are invested right back into them, not only in the form of paid vacation, sick leave and holidays, a Simple IRA and health insurance, but in training. DuBree encourages his staff to pursue professional certification from NKBA and NARI by paying for the training and providing a raise once certification is achieved.

"Hopefully I've become a better leader and mentor," says DuBree. "You have to work on letting go and trusting them." The trust and the teamwork make for a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

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