

Converting Dreams to Reality - By John King CGR

From the Palace at Versailles to the Roman Coliseum, from the Great Sphinx to the Eiffel Tower, humankind has managed to construct some of the world's great treasures that not only inspire, but oftentimes amaze us at the intricacy of form and function. These architectural wonders never cease to amaze us, as these structures have stood the test of time. Since the earliest days of man, the dreams and vision of an idea first took place in the mind, and then were committed to paper. Genius transformed from thought to dimension. The process remains steadfast to this day.

The dreams and vision may even belong to a single person or a group of people, and translated into a one dimensional sketch or drawing by some other individual. The dreamer may not be able to center on a unified vision of what is intended at first, and may elect to revise the vision over time. The sketch artist or drafting person(s) may need several attempts at "understanding and interpreting the dream" prior to it becoming his/her reality; that is, reduce it to paper and lines. Today's architectural firms have the capability of CAD, three dimensional computer graphics presentations that offer greater perspective into the design and function of the project. The creative process from a conceptual point of view is critical. Such is the "work" of the successful architectural firm.

But great treasures of historical value or commercial endeavors are not the limit to these creative people, the residential home is also a notable target of this creative group. A glance at an issue of Architectural Digest or Home and Garden, as well as other fine custom home publications on any given month would suggest that the custom home could be a major vehicle for those talents to best be utilized. Gorgeous homes boasting award winning designs grace page after page. Award Winning Designs Abound.

A review of select neighborhoods anywhere custom homes are built will provide terrific examples of architectural marvels and award winning design concepts. In southwest Florida for example, full sub-divisions of multi-million homes are up and down the Florida west coast; an amazing but true fact. The city of Naples is growing into Lee County; Sarasota is growing south to Charlotte County and north to Manatee County. Growth seems to be a matter of fact here on the West Coast of Florida. Similar neighborhoods are springing up across the country. High priced custom homes with award winning architectural designs are in great demand, despite what some refer to as a sluggish economy.

In the immediate Sarasota market, expensive homes have been built for the past many years, and are reaching the age of the need for remodeling. The Custom Builder performed their function and transferred the vision and dream of the homeowner from paper to bricks and sticks. But as these fine homes age, it becomes the responsibility of the Professional Remodeler to add, not detract from the original design. The remodeling process is one of expansion, renovation or a combination of both. It becomes apparent that specialization within our industry is becoming more and more a reality, as Custom Remodelers grow in professionalism. It is incumbent therefore, that the parties involved in the remodeling of fine homes operate in a team fashion to fully address the needs of the homeowner. Architect, Custom Remodeler and the Trades Partners must subscribe to the same professional standards required to reach a successful outcome.

As a Professional Remodeler, I feel I have a responsibility to protect the integrity of the home, the neighborhood and community by respecting the home's original concept, and remodel accordingly. Should the concept require change, it is the job of the Professional Remodeler to respect and adhere to the idea that the finished project should look like it has always been that way. The Professional Remodeler has a duty to protect the integrity of the home, and that is the approach that Rampart Homes takes. The caretakers of Versailles or the Great Sphinx would not consider for one second altering the original integrity of the structure. Even as modernization occurs to accommodate tourism, the integrity of the edifice is maintained. Through the use of written specifications (more about this in next month's article), the architect's plans, the homeowner's dreams and the Remodelers' responsibilities are laid out in significant detail. It is the Professional Remodeler who orchestrates these specifications.

This begs three questions, however. First, who is best suited to remodel these homes, the original builder, the architect or the custom remodeler? Second, how will the interests of the homeowner best be served, and third, to what degree does the architect or original builder play in determining the final outcome of the project? The building industry needs and truly values the contributions quality architects make to this great industry. It is without question that the value of the Professional Remodeler is becoming more recognizable.

History reflects the greatness of those that designed the world's architectural treasures, but who actually used their hands and labored to make them fully dimensional? It is this writer's opinion that as much as architects contribute to the building and remodeling process, it is the General Contractor (in my case the Custom Remodeler) that orchestrates the efforts, and realizes the dreams on paper that the architect intended. What mind made the connection between lines on paper and the finished product? Who transformed the dreams on paper to fully functional space?

It is none other than the Builder or Remodeler, the Contractor, the Craftsman; the manager of those expectations the dream or vision "owner" hoped would become reality. The hands, mind and soul of the Craftsman are those that transform one dimensional drawing into three dimensional living space. It is the contractor that breathes life into bricks, mortar, lumber and drywall and creates the testament to the dreams and vision of the beholder.

As a Craftsman, the Remodeler, Builder or Contractor is head of the team of professionals that erect or transforms the structures that eventually will be called home. It is that person that serves as team leader. He/she must interpret the plans, meet with the building permit personnel, and arrange for permits and licenses and the like. The Professional Contractor organizes the team of specialists that will construct the home, taking the dreams and vision of the homeowner (by way of the architect's hand) and transforming them into reality. The Professional Contractor therefore, is responsible for managing the expectations of the homeowner, well after the formation of their ideas is solidified. The written specifications mentioned earlier are part and parcel to the management of the successful project.

The management of the expectations of the homeowner is primary to meeting allocated budget requirements, but also the insulate oneself from the ongoing "changes in thinking, or enlightenment" of the owner from time to time. Set price Remodeling or construction has a price tag to it. That is not to say that there is an open checkbook from which to work, however. It is the Professional Contractor that must relate to the homeowner the facts that

things cost what they cost. They become the relay people responsible for keeping the homeowner grounded in reality. Once the design is validated and found to be sound (by way of plans examiners and structural engineers), it is the Professional Contractor that takes over and manages the project to completion. Structural engineers, suppliers, trades partners like framers, painters, drywall and maintenance personnel, swimming pool installers and landscapers, electricians and the like all receive their day to day instructions from the Professional Contractor. The Custom Remodeler translates and coordinates the architectural drawings, and the intent of the plans.

As a Professional Custom Builder and Remodeler, I recognize the value of the architect in our industry, and I also recognize the value of the personnel that handle the bricks and sticks. It is my humble opinion that it is the Professional Contractor that truly orchestrates and delivers on the "creative process" and deserves every accolade along-side the architect at every juncture.