

Remodeling

How Smart Companies Grow

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Primary Care

Some people dread going to the dentist. Not Rhode Island remodeler Patrick Crowley.

page 78

A Connecticut cottage goes year-round
page 62

Remodelers battle the elements
page 88

REMODELING WEB SITE CONTEST

Click on the winners
page 96

REMODELING'S BEST WEB SITE CONTEST

web wonders

What makes a Web site "good"? In many ways, it's the same things that make a big remodeling project "good."

Does it look attractive? Is it easy to move through? Is it set up efficiently? Does it relate to its environment, inside and out? Is it full of useful, up-to-date features, without being cluttered? Does it reflect professional quality?

Does it meet the owners' needs? Do the people that see it want to know more about the firm?

The companies that entered their Web sites in REMODELING's first Web site competition were rated on a 1 to 5 scale in areas that reflect these criteria.

- Depth, breadth, and timeliness of information
- The way the site reflects professionalism
- The way graphics and design make for ease of use
- Connection to the rest of the Web
- Ease of customer feedback and interaction

Our panel of three judges—a Web site designer, a new media expert, and a Web-savvy remodeler—rated all 60 entries. Best in Show gets a link from REMODELING Online to its site. All five top scorers demonstrate good ideas, executed well.

Kathy Rausch

Interactive Ink
Columbus, Ohio
www.interactiveink.com

Kathy Rausch began working on non-violent new media entertainment for kids in the early 1990s. Now vice president for new media at Interactive Ink, she has helped



build a company that designs, develops, and hosts Web sites, integrating them with clients' business aims. The firm also provides e-commerce, database, virtual tour, and intranet services. One area of special focus for the company is real estate and contractor Web sites, including the site for J.S. Brown & Co. (www.jsbrowncompany.com).

Michael Menn

Design + Construction Concepts
Northbrook, Ill.
www.dcc-llc.com

Architect Michael Menn and his partner, Andrew



Potcha, have provided design/build construction services to the Chicago suburbs for the past 10 years. The firm now employs five staff architects for its full-service remodeling and custom home business. Menn clearly recognizes good Web site design as well—DC+C's top-quality Web site was designed by Biz-comm, Reston, Va. (www.biz-comm.com).

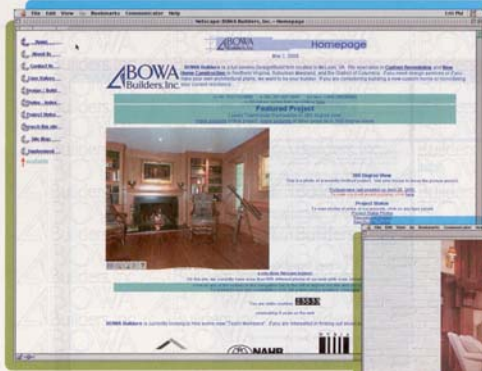
Kristin Beadle

Insite Web Publishing
Portland, Ore.
www.ivpr.com

In her three years as art director for Insite, Kristin Beadle has helped



clients create a Web presence from the initial consultation through to the end product. She has designed a variety of sites, including two outstanding sites for remodelers: The Neil Kelly Co. (www.neilkelly.com) and Decking Northwest (www.deckingnw.com).



BEST IN SHOW

BOWA Builders

McLean, Va.
www.bowa.com
 Designer: James S. Little,
 BOWA Builders

BOWA has become a successful company by doing the unexpected. After all, who'd have expected a chemist and an accountant to partner and create a highly regarded, consummately professional design/build construction company grossing \$10 million a year in the Washington, D.C., area?

The company Web site reflects BOWA's somewhat unorthodox approach—let's call it on-the-fly professionalism. Four years ago, the firm's production supervisor, Jim Little, pulled together a Web site in his spare time (he's a computer hobbyist), and he's been busily fine tuning, tweaking, and totally overhauling the site on a regular basis ever since.

BOWA's site has a fresh-scrubbed, homegrown feeling;



while it looks attractive and energetic, it doesn't have the polish of a Web design studio product. But Little has avoided the pitfalls of the inexperienced amateur. There aren't any annoying sound effects or animated characters, no frustrating "under construction" areas, or any gee-whiz technology such as Flash—so often misused just to prove that the developer knew how to include it. This site's priorities are easy to identify—straightforward information that's easy to find and clearly presented. And good photography in quantity. **Vast quantity.**

Using his digital camera, Little posts weekly update photos of ongoing jobs. That means

clients no longer have to take curious friends trooping through the house, because they can direct them to the site for the latest look. And custom home clients don't have to drive to their building site to see how things are progressing.

This is a site where a homeowner might profitably spend a lot of time learning about the design/build process and about BOWA, as well as jotting down ideas while clicking through the impressive portfolio of professional-quality pictures of completed jobs.

Little has plans for the next version of the site. He's working with a shareware program that will let him produce 360-degree virtual tours of some of the company's projects. As

BOWA grows, Little's time on each jobsite becomes more limited, so he plans to have laptops and digital cameras for each project manager so they can help out with the weekly updates.

It's pretty much guaranteed that this site will look different next year. But the focus will be the same: giving the world a clear and friendly look at the way BOWA does business.

Best Features:

- Depth of information
- Site map and search engine
- Good links to press coverage, community organizations
- Easy to navigate (top tier)

Consider Changing:

- Lose the tiling pattern of logos in the background. Even though subtle, it's distracting.
- Make navigation consistent at second level