

Easy Home Remodeling in Tough Economic Times:

Affordable Bathrooms and Kitchens

Locally born and bred, JD Burkholder has developed an innovative idea that makes home improvements accessible to a greater percentage of homeowners, even in this tenuous economy. Coupled with his genuine desire to give back to the community that nurtured him, Burkholder was inspired to launch Affordable Bathrooms and Kitchens earlier this year.

Home & Décor Guide sat down with Burkholder recently to discuss his groundbreaking concept, his unique company and his vision for extending its impact.

Home & Décor (HD): What is the philosophy that inspired you to begin Affordable Bathrooms and Kitchens?

JD Burkholder (JDB): I saw the appeal companies that provide one-day, pre-made bathroom surrounds had for customers. In this down-turned economy, these companies were still busy. I started thinking that there must be some way to provide a complete bathroom remodel without blowing the client's budget and timeframe. It started with bathrooms but was an easy application for kitchens, too.

I wanted to create something that was affordable. So, I approached my vendors and told them my idea. A lot of them said it wouldn't work, but it seemed so simple to me; I ran the numbers on paper and ultimately convinced them we could provide quality results at about the same cost as pre-manufactured products.

HD: What options and alternatives do you offer to people who are looking to remodel on a budget?

JDB: We can fully remodel a kitchen in two weeks for \$15,000. That includes 20 lineal feet of maple cabinetry (complete replacing, not merely refacing), seven

granite countertop choices, nine different fixture styles/finishes, eight styles of under-mounted sinks, and 50 choices of vinyl flooring. We also have a \$16,000 price point, which upgrades the cabinetry to birch arched panels, and for \$18,000, there are three additional wood choices, including cherry. Of course, additional upgrades for tile flooring and/or backsplashes can be worked out, depending on the customer's wishes. But a flat \$15,000 buys you a fully remodeled, updated kitchen.

Similarly, we can totally revamp a bathroom for \$6,000 and complete the job in just one week. That includes a tub/shower surround, a vanity or pedestal sink, a toilet, all the faucets and fixtures, and vinyl flooring.

HD: How are you able to offer such incredible price points?

JDB: We have established solid relationships with our vendors. Particularly in this economy, they're extremely willing to work with us. We pass those savings on to our customers.

HD: Who is your target market and what is the first step when you're dealing with a potential client?

JDB: Our typical customers are people who are looking to update an older home without spending \$50,000-\$100,000 on a new kitchen, for example. They don't want to price themselves out of their neighborhoods. Or maybe they're not going to live in their house forever—they want to improve their surroundings without breaking the bank.

The first thing I do is have a consultation with the client and find out what they're looking to accomplish. Once I know that, I can help them to evaluate whether or not Affordable Bathrooms and Kitchens is a good fit for their project.

HD: What kind of concerns did you have in the beginning?

JDB: One of the most important things to me was that I have installers I could rely on—and I already had that, through

my other company, Burkholder Customs. I use local subcontractors whom I've worked with for years. On every job, I offer a dedicated crew of skilled and trustworthy craftsmen.

HD: The old adage goes, "The best-laid plans. . ." In the event that a job runs over budget, what financial impact is there to the customer?

JDB: There is none. We offer a flat rate that is in the contract. If something happens in the course of a job that causes it to cost more, we absorb it; the customer does not pay more.

HD: Your ads indicate that a portion of the proceeds from every job goes to support the VRC (Veterans Resource Central), a non-profit organization with volunteers serving veterans in Lancaster County to rejoin civilian life by offering resources, programs and events, support groups and access to community mentors. Why did you feel so strongly about supporting this organization?

JDB: It's all about giving back. Part of it is rooted in my personality and my family background, part of it is the result of the valuable lesson I learned early on in having my own business. I was the beneficiary a few years ago of a robust economy, but my balance sheet didn't reflect the responsibility I felt to give back. When the economy went south, I put myself on a tight budget and I became mindful that I wanted to take action to give back to the local community, to thank those who have made the sacrifice by serving in the military—and to welcome them back home.

HD: What do you say to those skeptics reading this interview?

JDB: Give me a call. We'll meet and discuss your needs and what we can do. The contract guarantees that the price is the price. Our name IS our promise. ■

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