



Clean Sweep

When excess building materials clutter the warehouse, it's time to get organized.

To break Thompson Remodeling employees of the habit of hoarding unused products, Ben Thompson decided to shrink the storage area in the Grand Rapids, Mich., firm's 24-by-30-foot garage warehouse. "Warehouse space is a bad habit. It allows you to hold on to inventory and accumulate clutter," he says.

To jump-start the cleanup, Thompson held a sale and used the company's radio show to promote the event. Any materials that did not sell were donated to Home Repair Services, a Kent County, Mich., nonprofit that provides training, tools, and materials to low-income families to repair and restore their homes.

Thompson then instituted a rule that items can remain in the storage area for no longer than a year. He assigned an apprentice to keep the space organized and help carry out a quarterly check of the items.

To discourage items from being brought to the storage space to begin with, Thompson works with homeowners and crews to identify and deconstruct salvageable items



that can be given to Home Repair Services. "It costs less to take the time to deconstruct versus putting it in a Dumpster and paying to have it hauled away," Thompson says. In addition, the homeowners receive a tax rebate for the donation.

Thompson has also increased the company's recycling. His firm has been recycling concrete and metal for years — as an incentive, Thompson puts the proceeds from metal

Thompson Remodeling renovated a ranch house with a new sunroom addition and an updated master suite. Soon after, the local utility offered a buy out the homeowners, intending to demolish the house and replace it with a substation.

The homeowners asked Ben Thompson to salvage and reuse some of the bathroom suite in their new condominium remodel.

In addition, Thompson asked the utility to allow Home Repair Services, a nonprofit organization, to take any additional salvageable items, including new windows and tubular skylights.

recycling into a breakfast fund for his crews. The company recently added a cardboard recycling service, and now pays \$100 per year for a plastic and glass recycling service.

"We've just made these small cultural changes at the company," Thompson says. In addition, clients are impressed by the deconstruction and recycling. "It demonstrates that we really think about what we do and look for better ways to do it," he says. —*N.P.*

Rebate Alert

Clients appreciate support in processing energy rebates.

Crimson Design & Construction's monthly electronic newsletter is created by a consultant who last year included a story alerting homeowners to federal tax credits for energy-efficient home improvements.

The tax credit was available from January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2007 for improvements to primary residences, including Energy Star replacement windows, doors and skylights, insulation, water heaters, and certain high-efficiency heating and cooling equipment. Homeowners could receive up to a maximum of \$500 for approved improvements over the two-year period.

Immediately after the newsletter was distributed, owner Neil Kristianson began receiving calls from current clients of the Naperville, Ill., company, asking how they could receive the rebate for products in their remodels. Kristianson created separate invoices for products from specification lists. "[Homeowners] don't have to send in the receipt with their taxes," he says, "but if they were audited, they would need proof."

Posting the information in its newsletter added to Crimson Design & Construction's credibility. "People felt we were an advocate for them. It makes you a professional," Kristianson says. —*N.P.*