



## guestmessage

# Uphold Your Brand

It is said that the true test of professionalism is not whether you do well in good times, but how you weather the bad times.

The real estate market's severe slump has started a chain reaction in our industry of tightening credit, frightening homeowners and driving up costs. It has also changed the marketplace in which we work. Since the slump has also meant a downturn in new home building, many construction firms have laid off skilled carpenters and workers. It's perhaps natural for these workers to try to earn a living by doing remodeling. Under that circumstance, we may find ourselves competing with severely underbid quotes, from "Instant Remodelers" who will do almost anything to get the job.

Worse yet, you may also come upon potential customers who have already suffered from the results of hiring incompetent or unlicensed remodelers. Twice this year alone, I've encountered homeowners who were in dire straits. They had accepted a contract with no clear cut payment terms, no detailed specifications and no set start or finish dates. Worse yet, the unlicensed contractor's work violated the building code. The homeowners had already paid most of the contracted price and were now being asked for significant additional sums to make unwarranted changes. It was my unhappy duty to tell them that it would cost them more to finish the job than was left in their budget.

What is the ethical, professional remodeler to do in these circumstances and in the face of this kind of competition? *Uphold Your Brand.*

What we are seeing is a change in the entire industry. A change is occurring in how we see ourselves, what our presence and importance are, and what our relations are with our suppliers. We will gain huge opportunities to sell our work and to prosper – when people don't sell their homes, they upgrade their lifestyles through remodeling.

We will only prosper if we are faithful to our brand – if we resist the temptation to lower our prices, discount our services, cut corners and underbid on jobs just to keep a few more irons in the fire. Yes, times may be tough right now, but we cannot and should not short change the quality and service that we have been delivering. If we do that, we will tear down what has taken years to build: our *Reputation*; our *Image*; our *Brand*.

My advice to my fellow HBAM Remodeler members, as we proceed through this market, is to leverage the unique resources at our disposal – our associations, our certifications, our credentials and the educational and training opportunities we have – to work even harder to educate our customers about the benefit of hiring a qualified, licensed remodeling company. That's what *Uphold Your Brand* means. And that's the way we will succeed.

If you would like to learn more about how HBAM Remodelers can help you identify and uphold your brand, call me, Donald F. Lynch, Jr., at 410-879-5510, or Vickie Martin at the HBAM Remodelers office, 410-265-7400, extension 105.

Donald F. Lynch, Jr. CMR, CAPS  
2008 HBAM Remodelers President

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