


# Qualified Remodeler

Dedicated To Professionalism In Remodeling

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- 
- **Should You Start a Handyman Division?**
  - **PROFILES OF SUCCESS: Harrell Remodeling, Inc.**

Art Bryan, president of Southwestern Remodeling Contractors, has grown his company from a one-man roofing and siding operation with sales of under \$50,000 in 1970 to a full-service residential remodeling company with 34 full-time employees and sales in excess of \$4 million.



*Using an unusual approach, Art Bryan has grown Southwestern Remodeling Contractors from a roofing and siding operation to a full-service remodeling firm*

#### **A team approach**

Although salespeople work in specialized areas, they never lose a former client to another salesperson when that client comes in for a second or third job. "If a client comes back, they still work with their previous salesperson, even if it's a different type of project," Bryan explains. "The previous salesperson takes the 'new' (specialized) salesperson with him to the client's home. This way, both are involved; they're partners for that project. They aren't competing against each other. If the project requires several salespeople (for instance, if it is a whole-house remodel), then three or more would work on the project, each concentrating on his or her area of expertise." Bryan also notes that sometimes the collaboration is done in-house. "The salesperson may not take the second salesperson with him,

*'Specialized Salespeople'*  
Lead Specialty Contracting Firm Into

# Full-Service Remodeling

by Mary Burkart

**A**s most professional remodeling contractors already know, keeping up with all the latest products and technologies is tough. So when Art Bryan, president of Southwestern Remodeling Contractors, Inc., in Wichita, KS, wanted to expand his specialty contracting business into full-service remodeling, he "decided to specialize the sales staff so they stay knowledgeable about their particular areas. If each salesman were selling everything, it would be almost

impossible to keep up [with new products] and give clients the proper information."

Southwestern Remodeling Contractors currently employs seven full-time salespeople (known as remodeling consultants), each with his or her own area of expertise. For example, one salesperson sells room additions and decks, another sells kitchens and baths, and a third sells replacement windows and siding. "We try to keep similar areas together," notes Bryan.

but he'll make the presentation to the client after getting input from that second salesperson." According to Bryan, though, 70% of "major" projects are handled by two salespeople because "the project doesn't run as smoothly if the salesperson is not knowledgeable about this second area."

The salespeople at Southwestern Remodeling Contractors, who are paid on a commission basis, sell, order materials, write the work orders, meet with the job superintendents and job foremen to go over each project step by



*Bryan has plaques showing each of the September Top 500 issues of Qualified Remodeler in which his company appears, and has hung them in the reception area to promote his company's professionalism.*

step, and maintain contact with the job and client while the project progresses. "From start to finish, they have a responsibility to their customers and their company to make jobs flow as smoothly as possible," says Bryan.

"This division into specialized areas also allows crew members to become more proficient at their particular craft," he adds, explaining, "Our work force is similar to our sales staff. For example, we have one person who installs 80% of our replacement windows. Our crews are specialized to make the job run smoother. A lot of them are

capable of doing stuff other than their specialty, though."

#### How the business grew

Bryan started his business in 1970, concentrating on roofing and siding. "I did 90% of the work myself," he recalls. "The first five to seven years I really didn't have a plan. Things fell into place. When people started calling for other things, it expedited our growth into full-service remodeling. After seeing this demand, we hired two or three salespeople to sell remodeling projects. Once we hired these salespeople there was a complete

turnaround in business. Sales for roofing were less than 5% of sales in 1994; 95% was in remodeling."

Though he started out without a plan, Bryan now knows it's essential to have one. "If I tried to start my business today the way I did in 1970, success would be harder. It's more difficult to start a company." He suggests newcomers "join an association to learn about the industry. Do your research before you get started. Realize the customer is the boss, and charge enough money

to make a profit. If you don't, you won't be successful for long. That's probably the biggest problem we have in this industry. People are not aware of the expenses they incur, so they don't know how much they should mark up."

Bryan says the industry "hasn't reached its potential yet," but adds that he's not planning on being aggressive in terms of dollar volume. "We want to be more aggressive in terms of customer service," he explains. "It's better to control the amount of work you do, and do it right. That's how we remain successful after 25 years." **QR**



*Southwestern Remodeling Contractors' seven salespeople are shown, along with Bryan, in front of five company vehicles. Company and vehicle signs are similarly designed to present a unified image. Offering a number of employee incentives has allowed Bryan to keep employee turnover at a minimum.*