



January 13, 2010

### Upcoming Ohio Valley NARI Events

**February 2, 2010:** The University of Cincinnati will host Ohio Valley NARI's first of two Repair, Renovate and Painting (RRP) classes to be held on the U.C. campus. EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting Final Rule (40 CFR 745) requires that renovations conducted for compensation, must be performed by Certified Firms using Certified Renovators, Renovation firms that wish to work in pre-1978 homes and child-occupied facilities must apply to EPA and pay a fee in order to become certified. Renovators seeking to become Certified Renovators must successfully complete an EPA-accredited renovator course or a course accredited by an EPA authorized State or Tribe. This course is the EPA model course for Certified Renovators and as such meets all requirements in 40 CFR 745.90. The class will be conducted on the U.C. campus at 2180 E. Galbraith Rd. Building A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. The cost for this program is \$179.00 for members and \$229.00 for non-members. Register today at [www.naricincinnati.org](http://www.naricincinnati.org) or call 1-800-498-NARI and RSVP Today!

**Special Seminar: February 10, 2010 - 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m:** Ohio Valley NARI along with Roth & Associates will be presenting a Sandler Sales Training Program. Highlights: Why salespeople fail... and what to do about it. • How traditional sales practices turn salespeople into unpaid consultants. • How to get to the real decision maker. • How to touch 100% of your desirable opportunities, 100% of the time. • Why everyone looks busy, but sales remain low. • Do your salespeople have what it takes to succeed in today's volatile economy and marketplace? • Is your sales management strategy and structure optimized to produce the results YOU need to succeed? For more information or to register visit [www.naricincinnati.org](http://www.naricincinnati.org)

**March 8, 2010:** The University of Cincinnati will host Ohio Valley NARI's second of two Repair, Renovate and Painting (RRP) classes to be held on the U.C. campus. EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting Final Rule (40 CFR 745) requires that renovations conducted for compensation, must be performed by Certified Firms using Certified Renovators, Renovation firms that wish to work in pre-1978 homes and child-occupied facilities must apply to EPA and pay a fee in order to become certified. Renovators seeking to become Certified Renovators must successfully complete an EPA-accredited renovator course or a course accredited by an EPA authorized State or Tribe. This course is the EPA model course for Certified Renovators and as such meets all requirements in 40 CFR 745.90. The class will be conducted on the U.C. campus at 2180 E. Galbraith Rd. Building A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor. The cost for this program is \$179.00 for members and \$229.00 for non-members. Register today at [www.naricincinnati.org](http://www.naricincinnati.org) or call 1-800-498-NARI and RSVP Today!

## **Christmas Tree Recycling Promotes Handyman Division**

*By Morgan Zenner*

Many remodelers have opened new handyman divisions this past year to compensate for the lack of large-scale remodeling work in the tired economy.

Martha Stinson, co-owner of Trace Ventures, is one NARI member who was looking for ways to integrate her lesser-known handyman division into a holiday community service project. Stinson decided to promote her handyman division with an idea made popular last year, a Christmas tree recycling service.

“We had the notion that we needed an excuse to put ourselves in front of people by providing them with a service that is of value to them,” Stinson says. In the winter, that became using their trucks to pick up trees after the holiday and take them to a local recycling deposit.

Stinson promoted the service on Facebook and in a quarterly e-newsletter that reaches all past, current and prospective clients. “We have a few special edition newsletters that focus on the holiday,” Stinson says. “We included a link in the newsletter and asked participants to register for the tree service on our site.”

Stinson allows her customers a couple of weeks to sign up for the free service. She schedules one day for pick up, and her office manager charts a truck route to gather the trees. Last year, the job required two people to spend about half a day on the road.

“At the last minute, we decided to rent a trailer truck, only because we didn’t want to dirty the company trucks for one day, and it held more trees, so it was more efficient,” Stinson says. Last year’s tree pick up required a couple re-load trips to the recycling plant.

Nashville, Tenn. has a number of tree recycling facilities that accept bare trees at no cost. The facility chops up the trees and uses them to re-surface walking trails in local parks and greenways.

Stinson says there’s plenty of opportunity for face-time with her clients during the tree pick up. “We ask that clients place the trees on the curb by their house, but we still ring doors to say ‘Happy New Year,’” Stinson says.

Last year, one client wasn’t able to get her tree to the curb, so Trace employees assisted with taking it down and out of the client’s house. The client was very surprised at how helpful they were.

The idea helps Stinson accomplish a couple of things. First, it helps drive people to the company’s Web site to sign up for the service. It creates more awareness for

Trace Ventures and puts its name out there. And finally, it emphasizes the company's commitment to being green, as Trace is now eligible to offer energy-efficient improvements in conjunction with the state and federal tax credits. (Tennessee offers a statewide incentive program that promotes energy efficiency.) Most of the energy-efficient improvements fall under the handyman division that Trace is also promoting.

"We are marketing ourselves as a green company more this year, and recycling trees only enhances our interest in being green and improving the local environment we live in," Stinson says.

Not to mention, the impression Stinson leaves with clients for doing something nice during the holiday season. She says it leaves a lasting impression that Trace cares about client relationships and is eager to reconnect with past clients, especially if they had any needs.

Those needs may be handyman services around the house. Stinson is sure to leave behind a small brochure that describes the handyman services and energy-efficient improvements her company now provides.

The handyman division was started in the summer 2008 as a way to bridge the gaps between large projects and smaller projects throughout the year while increasing revenue and making sure that everyone stays busy. Then the market tanked, and the handyman division gained a whole new set of responsibility in an extra cautious market.

"Less people were signing up for large remodeling work but still felt the need to maintain what they had," Stinson says. The handyman division allowed Stinson's company the flexibility to stay afloat and retain all of the employees as the recession set in.

With the more diverse handyman division, Stinson says that she had to develop a completely different business model and pricing strategy in order to make a profit. She describes two different levels of small project work: The actual handyman repairs around the house like caulking or door replacements, and the small project work like siding replacements, leaking roofs or widow replacements, many of which fall into the energy-efficient category.

She found that most clients preferred a fixed price on the smaller projects and an hourly rate on the handyman repair work. Also, she hired a new lead carpenter to manage the handyman work and kept another lead carpenter to handle the remodeling projects.

Over the last year and a half, Stinson estimates the handyman division accounted for 18 percent of the company's revenue, and she is looking to pour more

marketing dollars into the division next year.

“We’ve been working out the kinks and perfecting the model up until this point, but I am confident that this division could grow larger with the new tax credits for energy-efficient improvements,” Stinson says. She is hoping to catch the handyman clients on the opposite end when the economy improves and they decide to remodel.

Now the tree recycling service comes full circle. Last year, several handyman work clients were also Stinson’s tree service clients, and this not just a coincidence.

“For us, it’s no big deal: There’s no cost, it’s easy for us to do at only a couple hours of our time, but for them it is such a great relief to not have to recycle it themselves,” Stinson says. Stinson is dedicated to recycling every Christmas tree in Nashville if it means she can bring business to her handyman division.

### **Building Your Own Lead-Generating System**

*By: Leah Thayer*

Come to grips with this, remodelers: Like it or not, many of the "leads" you buy are the names, simply, of individuals who have some interest in doing some remodeling at some point in the vague future. Unless they’ve been personally vetted (which most automated lead providers don’t do), they may or may not have the money to do the work right away, or a serious plan to move forward in the foreseeable future, or even the home they wish to remodel.

So, two lead-generating essentials are up to you, says Mark Paskell, a former remodeling sales executive who now works with remodelers through The Contractor Coaching Partnership.

First, if you choose to work with a lead-generating service, establish a strong “capture process” that will enable you to stay in touch with those leads over the long term. At a minimum, incorporate the names into your database, and make them part of an ongoing marketing program. “Nurture them and be there when they’re ready. Stay in front of them with good information,” Paskell says.

This step alone will give you an advantage over most remodelers, Paskell says. “Ninety percent of contractors in America don’t have a good capture process.”

Second, and vitally important regardless of whether you work with a lead provider, train your staff well to ensure that “the majority of your business is coming from your customer base and the neighborhood around it,” Paskell says. His building blocks of a house-made lead-generating system:

1. Establish a proactive production-delivery system in which the work is done neatly, communication is paramount, and clients receive outstanding service.

“Number one is to take care of your customer – your bird in hand,” Paskell says. By creating a remarkable client experience, you’ll have happy clients, and happy clients are generally happy to suggest referrals. A good time to ask? When they’re giving you a check.

2. Ensure that your jobsite exposure is professional and upbeat. Good-looking and high-quality job signs are critical, as is a clean site. Equally important (and frequently overlooked), however, are friendly employees. “Teach your employees to say hi to everybody in the neighborhood, even if they don’t know them,” Paskell says. “Teach them to wave and smile.” The good vibe will catch on; neighbors will start to feel they know you.
3. Train your employees to capture referral information directly. Paskell suggests this policy: Give every employee a personal business card. On the back of the cards, have lines for ‘name, address, email, phone number, notes.’ Tell employees to give two of the cards to anyone who expresses interest. Have the prospect complete one card and return it to your employee, and keep another card. When the prospect leaves, have your employee call the prospect’s information in to the office. Finally, reward employees for their initiative by giving them a bonus – say, \$25 – for every lead they acquire.
4. Line up the rest of the system: Absolutely have a good website that allows prospects to learn more about you. Have a solid policy of responding to all inquiries within 24 hours at the most. (Faster, if possible, companies that do well with purchased leads contact prospects within minutes.) And have a real lead sheet that lets you ask questions to quickly qualify leads.

These are fairly basic steps that are remarkable only for the fact that most remodelers don’t systematically follow them, Paskell says. “It requires a little bit of sales people, a little bit of employee empowerment, and a little bit of encouraging your staff to really communicate with people.”

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