

Sales & Marketing

Part I – Building a Successful Luxury Spec Home



Bluewater Darren Andreoli & Bob Sprouls



Deirdre & Darren

On May 17th, Bob Sprouls and Darren Andreoli of Bluewater Home Builders, and Deirdre Andreoli of Westport Beach & Country Homes, hosted a Sales & Marketing Council meeting at their newly staged spec home on Mayflower Parkway in Westport.

Bluewater has the unique accomplishment of having won Spec Home of the Year for each of past three years, and their newest spec home, a 6,100 sf 4 level modern farmhouse on a premium site within walking distance to Compo Beach, is listed at \$3.7 million.



SMC Chairman, Joanne Carroll, opened the meeting with some comments on the Westport market.

“Over the past few years, Westport and Greenwich have been the HOT towns for new construction,” Carroll said. “Last year, Westport had an enviable 92 housing permits and Greenwich had 138!”

“Over the last year, the high end market has been flat in Westport and throughout Fairfield County. That’s why a prime location like this one, and knowing your buyer, like Bluewater does, is so important to success,” Carroll said.

Then, she asked Bob and Darren to talk about their approach to building a luxury spec home: how the market has changed over the past years; what has contributed to their



Bluewater Exterior front

success in the Compo Beach area of Westport; and the unique features of 32 Mayflower Parkway.

How the market changed over the past 10-15 years

Bob began by describing their current workload as 40% custom and 60% spec.

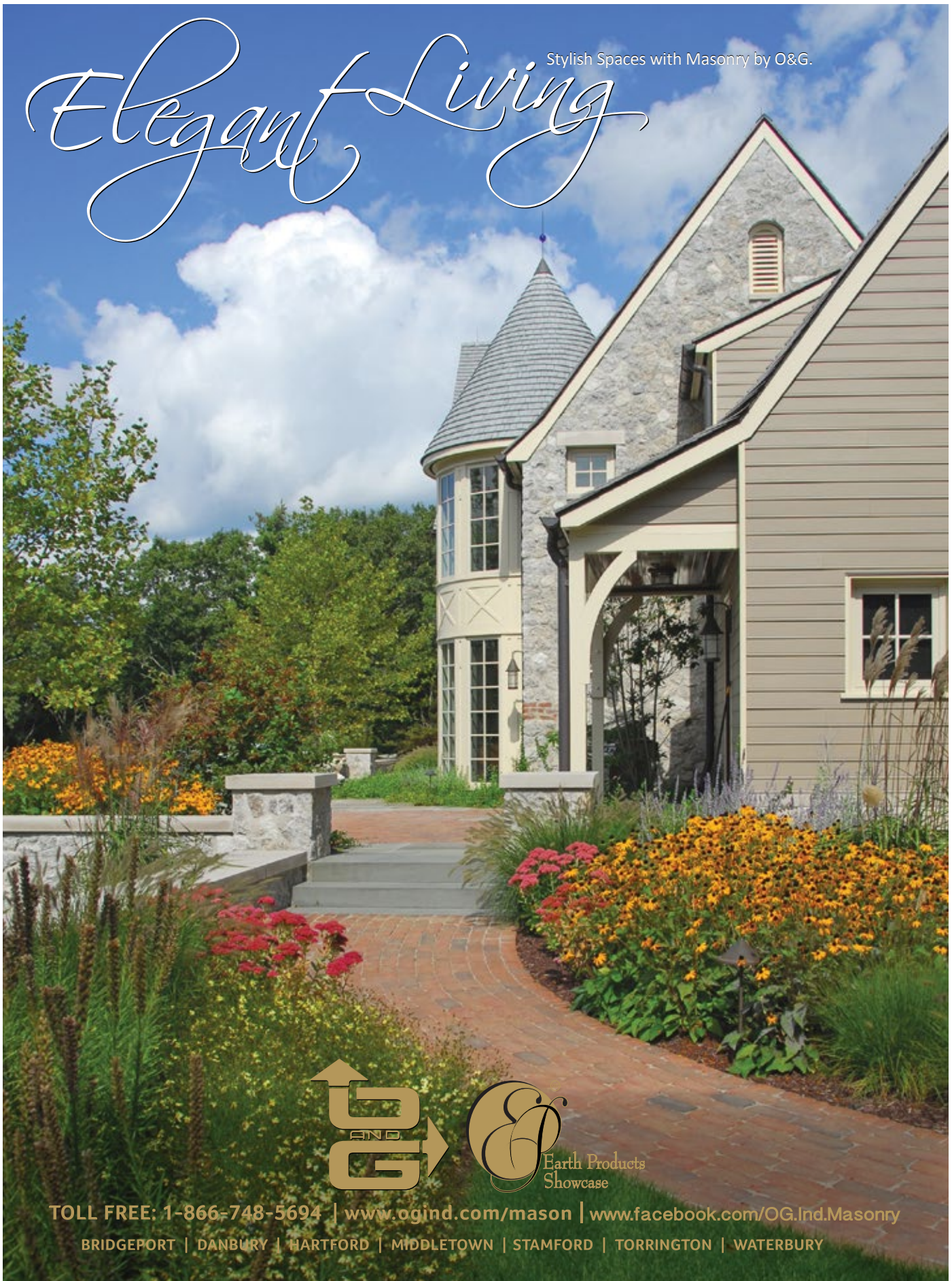
“Darren and I have been partners since 1998, and back then, a lot in Westport cost \$200,000 and the sales price of the home was \$935,000. Today a 1 acre lot is \$1 million and a premium lot \$1.4 million. We’ve gone from using basic moldings and a chair rail to fully paneled walls and ceilings.

The quality has cranked up, and there’s a lot more competition. A core group of successful builders in town has forced each of us to be better . . . We are dealing with more challenging lots, which requires skillful engineering and terracing . . . and since 2007, there’s been an explosion of information, with Trulia, Zillow, realtor.com and social media. It’s made the buyer more knowledgeable, and that’s great, because we want the smartest,

(continued)

Elegant Living

Stylish Spaces with Masonry by O&G.



Earth Products
Showcase

TOLL FREE: 1-866-748-5694 | www.ogind.com/mason | www.facebook.com/OG.Ind.Masonry

BRIDGEPORT | DANBURY | HARTFORD | MIDDLETOWN | STAMFORD | TORRINGTON | WATERBURY

Sales & Marketing

(continued)



Entry hall at 32 Mayflower Parkway



Master bath at 32 Mayflower Parkway

most educated buyer. To market our properties, we must get our brand out there with website marketing and much more.”

What has contributed to your success in the Compo Beach neighborhood?

“We focus on land and location, and being steadily in the beach area, you become expert. However, we’ve been forced to build in tougher zoning areas and on smaller lots.

For example, Westport regulations requires 25 ft from a drainage area to any structure, including a pool, and the topography of most of our lots is challenging and requires skillful engineering and terracing.”

To be successful in this or any market, you have to be true to yourself. We care about our product, and spend a great deal of time marrying the house to the property.”

– Bob Sprouls

What are some of the unique aspects of 32 Mayflower Parkway?

Darren spoke about their design team, as well as some of the home’s special features.

“Westport architect Anthony Tartaglia designed the house in a bungalow style, with an open floorplan and main areas accessing the back yard. Interior designer, Michelle Hogue, Hogue ID, helped choreograph all stages of design, from space planning to molding treatments, keeping in mind the end buyer and functionality.”



Bluetwater Bob Sprouls, Michelle Hogue & Darren Andreoli



Bluetwater terraces and pool

(continued)

Family owned and operated for over 67 years

SINCE 1949



You Tube™

ROSETTA
THE LOOK AND FEEL OF NATURE

Pavers by
Ideal

Techo-Bloc
Precious Stones™

UNILOCK



www.newenglandsilica.com

1370 John Fitch Blvd., Rt. 5, P.O. Box 185
South Windsor, CT 06074-0185

860.289.7778 phone

860.282.9885 fax

- ◆ Manufactured and Natural Stone Veneers
- ◆ Outdoor Kitchens, Fireplaces and Firepits
- ◆ Granite Steps and Cobblestones
- ◆ Granite Benches and Birdbaths
- ◆ Low Voltage Landscape Lighting
- ◆ Natural Fieldstone and Flagging
- ◆ Antique & Reclaimed Natural Stone
- ◆ Masonary Saws and Diamond Blades
- ◆ Interlocking Concrete Pavers & Retaining Wall Systems
- ◆ Premium Bluestone
- ◆ Tools and Accessories
- ◆ Bulk Decorative Stone



Sales & Marketing

(continued)

It's all about creating VALUE by bringing great design and real quality to the marketplace.

– Darren Andreoli

Darren went on to describe this house and their building process.

“This is a modern farmhouse in a beach area – fresh and new, with custom features and timeless quality . . . For a 2/3 acre lot, which required terracing, a pool house didn’t make sense, so we have an outdoor stair leading from a lower level changing area and gym to the yard . . . Before buying a lot, we envision what we are going to build and the price point. Most of our plans are unique, and we spend 3-4 months in design and permitting, and 9 months in construction.”

The Best Marketing Can Be Free or Worth Every Penny You Spend

Donald Trump’s presidential campaign proves at least one thing: you don’t have to spend the most money on advertising to beat (at least for the moment) the competition. His advantage largely stems from the seemingly non-stop publicity in the press – publicity that costs him nothing, but has significantly more value than traditional paid advertising.

Using standard advertising rates, the media coverage Trump has received – for free – thus far in his campaign was reportedly valued at \$2 billion. Yet the money he’s spent on advertising is a small fraction of that of the other candidates. For those of us not named Trump, it’s slightly more difficult to gain media attention. But it’s still very possible, and definitely worth the effort.

The keys to effective media relations include recognizing the right opportunities and knowing who to contact.

2015 NAHB Remodelers Chair Robert Criner, GMR, GMB, CAPS, knows the tremendous value of working with the media, which has long been a big portion of his marketing strategy. Criner, owner of Criner Remodeling in Newport News, Va., was recently interviewed via Skype.

“It’s a significantly better validation of the quality of your work and enhances the overall reputation of your company,” said Criner. “It requires very little effort, and you’ll get a lot more bang for buck compared to paid advertising.”

Criner admits that being in the news won’t beef up business overnight and it can’t be your only marketing strategy. But he says it will certainly help to better position yourself as an authority on a given subject, setting you apart as the go-to professional in your area.

PR and housing specialist, Joanne Carroll, owner of JMC Resources, agrees, but her experience has been that most builders either don’t have the time, the staff or the expertise to handle PR and media on their own. But whether you do it in house, or hire a pro, here are a few pieces of advice:

- ▶ Look to the local media. Local media outlets will reach a much higher percentage of your potential clients. You are also much more likely to get a response from a local reporter, and you can more easily build a rapport with them over time. Determine which news programs and publications are the most relevant to your potential clients, and then identify specific people to contact. Many reporters and editors include their email addresses on their company websites and at the end of the articles they write.
- ▶ Lean on your local HBA. Leaders at your HBA can help you get started. And being affiliated with your HBA also connects you to NAHB and its staff, who can create a customized media list of reporters you might want to contact. NAHB can also supply supporting data or information to help further emphasize the significance of the story topic.
- ▶ Proactively pitch story ideas. Not everything is considered newsworthy, no matter how important something might be to you. Focus on recognizing unique connections between your expertise and topics of broad public interest or timeliness (i.e., the weather, local economy, holidays, seasons, community events, etc.). When reaching out to reporters, be as brief and concise as possible. Boil down your story idea to just a few sentences explaining its significance. If you can readily provide a visual, such as high-quality photos or video, be sure to mention it. But do not send email attachments until after the reporter responds.
- ▶ Show some social media savvy. Being featured in a news story is just the beginning. Social media gives you the power to get some extra marketing mileage out of that story. Posting video, photos or links to the story on your company’s social media accounts could open up opportunities for follow-up interviews and lead to additional coverage.
- ▶ Hire a Pro - If you don’t have the staff, the time or the natural ease talking with the media, a PR pro who really knows the housing business, can do all of the above, and the payback in getting you noticed will be worth every penny!.

NAHB offers its members free access to several toolkits with resources to help develop media strategies. The list includes a comprehensive toolkit for New Homes Month in April specifically created to highlight the benefits of purchasing a new home.

(continued)

TUFF-N-DRI H8 and Northeast Foundation Coating

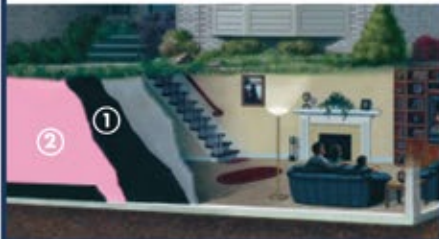
A powerful combination to fight basement moisture.

MOISTURE OUT. | CONFIDENCE IN.

MOISTURE OUT. TUFF-N-DRI® H8 Basement Waterproofing System and Northeast Foundation Coating team up to battle basement moisture. The unique black-and-pink combination of TUFF-N-DRI H8 – skillfully installed by Northeast Foundation Coating – guards against moisture from basement walls by preventing leaks, stopping seepage and reducing interior condensation.

CONFIDENCE IN. TUFF-N-DRI H8 is backed by a 30-year transferable performance warranty.* Its long-term strength has helped make TUFF-N-DRI H8 the brand preferred by builders for a quarter of a century.** For more details about TUFF-N-DRI H8, call today.

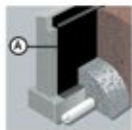
Northeast Foundation Coating • 860-872-5874



- [1] The black, flexible membrane of TUFF-N-DRI H8 seamlessly seals out water leaks and seepage.
- [2] Pink WARM-N-DRI® foundation board insulates basement walls on the outside to reduce condensation inside.

*Valid TUFF-N-DRI.com for full details on the 30-year performance warranty. **Builder magazine Based On Studies: ©2009, Tremco Barrier Solutions, Inc. TUFF-N-DRI® is a registered trademark of Tremco Barrier Solutions, Inc. WARM-N-DRI® is a registered trademark of Onuma Coating.

Think this is the potential for basement profitability?



WATCHDOG H3 (A) features a flexible, polymer-enhanced waterproofing membrane that's spray-applied to seamlessly bridge foundation settling cracks and seal out water penetration.

Think Again. When a basement is Guaranteed Dry, its reliably usable space is a feature homeowners are willing to pay more for. And that can mean big profits for you. WATCHDOG® H3 delivers dependable waterproofing protection to meet your needs, and your budget. WATCHDOG H3 also includes a 10-year transferable performance warranty.* So increase your profit potential. Call Northeast Foundation Coating today.

*See actual warranty for details. ©2009, Tremco Barrier Solutions, Inc. WATCHDOG WATERPROOFING® is a registered trademark of Tremco Barrier Solutions, Inc.



**NORTHEAST
FOUNDATION COATING
860-872-5874**

Sales & Marketing

(continued)

5 Ways Google Analytics Can Boost Your Sales

Google analytics makes intelligent marketing and business decisions remarkably easier. First off, Google analytics will help you spend your marketing dollars more effectively, thus saving your money over the long run.

Whether you spend your budget on search engine optimization, a new website, public relations, social media or a combination of promotional activities, you can see your marketing dollars at work within your Google analytics account reports, and track each of your tactics or campaigns' return on investment. This will help determine what you should do and what you should stop doing. You can quickly transition underperforming tactics and use your budget more effectively.

Second, the Google analytics software is free to use. Unlike other software, you can improve performance across all of your sites, apps and offline marketing with just a click of a button and at no cost. It's also easy to use. Just copy and paste the code or script from your Google analytics account to the website pages you want to track. Then, let Google analytics do the rest.

You'll be able to set up goals, create reports and start making better decisions from there. Here's how:

1. Understand Your Target Market. Google analytics gives you a lot of visitor demographic data. Most consumers use their mobile devices to surf the Internet for new products and services. When customers search for your brand on their phone and are logged into one of the social networking sites, Google analytics can pinpoint their demographic data, and combine it with their user behavior, instead of just logging the Web pages they are visiting. With this information, you can figure out whether you're actually reaching your target market. A marketing program should produce qualified traffic to your website (of the age and gender of your target market). So if it's not bringing in the folks you need it to, you'll know that you need to modify your content and messaging.

2. Overview of Traffic Sources. Computerized geographic data (or geodata) allows you to see if the locations you serve are the locations that drive your website traffic. Additionally, it is helpful to know the source of your website traffic (organic, direct, paid, referral, social, etc.). You can also compare the level of engagement of the different sources of your traffic.

3. Track Your Conversions. We all want our websites to be engaging and user friendly enough that our visitors take action. Whether clicking your phone number on their mobile phone to completing a "Contact Us" form, Google analytics allows us to separate our goals and conversions, to better understand them. Reports show conversion rates: the percentage of visitors who called the sales center, or filled out the online form, or clicked on the directions to the community and (hopefully) drove in for a visit. An increase from 1-3% per month is great news.

4. Measure Behavior Flow. What path do your visitors take when on your site? Google analytics will show you which products and services people find important, based on the pages they visited, in the order they visited them. You can see what visitors research before making a purchase or submitting a form. This information will show you the areas of your website that need improvement. For example, when you see that visitors who make it to a particular page or section of your site tend to leave directly from there, as yourself why. What is it about that page or that product that could be improved? The solution may be as easy as adding a more effective call to action – ask them to do something, such as fill out a form.

5. View Page Data. In addition to seeing the users path, Google analytics will highlight the most popular pages on your site. From the landing page, to the blog, to the contact page, you can analyze overall page engagement and see which pages need work.

These are just a few ways Google analytics has improved the ability to track your marketing tactics. Of course, there is much more to the software, and it continues to change and improve as technology advances. So make sure to take advantage of this free resource that can help you stay on the cutting edge with your next home buyers.

Modified and reprinted with permission from the January/February issue of Sales + Marketing Ideas magazine. Authored by Mitch Levinson, MIRM, mRelevance. 