

# NKBA

## INNOVATION+ INSPIRATION

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL KITCHEN + BATH ASSOCIATION

# SEASIDE REDO

KITCHEN + BATH TREND REPORT  
PURSUING WHOLE-HOME PROJECTS  
BATH VANITIES + TUBS

JANUARY + FEBRUARY 2019 / NKBA.ORG

# GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

## Looking to expand your kitchen and bath business? Start with these tips

BY CHRIS WOOD

**Keith Steier is a man with a plan.** The founder of New York-based design/build firm Knockout Renovation spent last year helping HGTV's Anthony Carrino and John Colaneri remodel a new studio kitchen for the *Rachael Ray Show*, then moved his firm's headquarters to midtown Manhattan so his team would be closer to a slew of 2019 kitchen and bath and whole-house remodels that will position the business for continued growth and long-term success.

It's been quite the journey for the New York City-based remodeling pro, who quit a co-op maintenance supervisor position in 1992 to start his own handyman service. Finding success with kitchen and bath contracting jobs across Manhattan and Brooklyn, Steier eventually grew the business into a one-stop remodeling shop and says the crucial thing he has missed along the way has been a cadre of mentors to help guide his efforts.

"If you're interested in growing your kitchen and bath expertise into a larger business, find a company that's doing it successfully and emulate their approach and best practices," Steier says. "My shortcoming was that I reinvented the wheel because I had no role models, and it took me some time to discover that modeling success is always a good approach."

To that end, Steier and others who have successfully expanded beyond kitchen and bath work—including International Flair Designs principal designer Kymberlyn Lacy and An Acquired Style co-owner Ashlie Campbell—sat down with NKBA to share their top tips for kitchen and bath professionals who are interested in growing their businesses to include whole-house design and remodeling.

Knockout Renovation has parlayed success with kitchen and bath remodels into a whole-house business across metro New York City.

PHOTOS: COURTESY KNOCKOUT RENOVATION





**Knockout Renovation's founder, Keith Steier, regrets not having had mentors as he developed his business. He encourages K&B designers to enlist the guidance of seasoned pros.**

PHOTO: COURTESY KNOCKOUT RENOVATION

### **You've Got This**

Let's face it: Kitchen and bath jobs—with endless design options and product selections and the need for specialized subcontractors and intense project management—are already some of the most complex and complicated jobs under the roof. Kitchen and bath pros can leverage their ex-

isting expertise as they move into other areas of the home.

In fact, many whole-house remodeling opportunities come at the request of homeowners already enamored with their kitchen and bath pro. Embrace the momentum and realize you're already better positioned than others who may be gunning for the business.

**Kitchens and baths still make up the bulk of the budget in a whole-house remodel, offering a natural growth avenue for K&B specialists looking to branch out in their business.**



PHOTO: COURTESY KNOCKOUT RENOVATION

“We moved into full-house co-op and condo renovations in large part because it was simply a natural next step,” Steier says. “The level of involvement in a kitchen and bath renovation, in terms of design and products, typically isn’t exceeded by the other rooms in the house.”

### **Find Your Niche**

At a recent 9,000-square-foot home remodel in Memphis, Tenn., Kymberlyn Lacy ended up working on the kitchen and bath elements last, a reversal of the typical process her Little Rock, Ark., firm, International Flair Designs, follows for whole-house remodels.

Whatever the order, Lacy tends to follow one cardinal rule when bringing on new clients: “I don’t like to touch kitchens

unless the homeowner is willing to invest at least \$75,000 and, more than likely, \$100,000,” says Lacy, who likes to set an investment threshold that enables greater efficiencies of scale as her team progresses through a job. “I tend to stick around the budget, and the bulk of the money is spent in the kitchen, so we want that to guide the project and inform decisions across the rest of the house.”

On the other side of the spectrum, Steier says he tends to avoid larger luxury projects that he feels may begin to consume corporate attention and resources. Either way, both pros recommend finding a market demographic that’s a good fit for your firm and staying focused on it, while still allowing for some ancillary project variation to diversify the business.