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Reality Checks

Remodelers are in the popular media more than ever these days. Make the exposure — the good and the bad — work for you.

Source: *REMODELING Magazine*
Publication date: 2005-02-01

By **Hayden Alfano**

Once upon a time, not too long ago, the public face of home improvement wore a beard and a plaid flannel shirt. He was Bob Vila, his show was *This Old House*, and he was it when it came to remodeling in the mainstream.

Times have changed. While only two of the four major networks currently broadcast remodeling-related shows, any homeowner armed with cable television and a remote control has access to a full menu of home-related programming. There's even an entire station, HGTV, dedicated to shows about remodeling, interior design, and other around-the-house hobbies.

Several remodelers have gotten into the act. Matt Plaskoff, president of Plaskoff Construction, in Tarzana, Calif., serves as the “construction consultant” for perhaps the most high-profile of these shows, ABC's “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.” Each week, the program features the complete renovation of one home. The catch? The whole project has to be finished in seven days.

Plaskoff, whose company has done five remodels for the show, says that his involvement has given him a

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sales and marketing boost.

“When I tell clients I've done the show, they immediately connect me with speed and credibility,” he says.

Keith Steier has the same point of view. His company, Knockout Renovation, in Brooklyn, N.Y., recently did a project for Bravo's hit series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. The episode won't air until April, but Steier is already promoting it, referencing it on the company Web site and displaying posters autographed by the show's famous hosts in both locations. He's already reaping the benefits.

“It's a reference by association,” Steier says. “There's no limit to how long something like this can create residual leads.”

Along with the extra credibility, though, come extra — and often unreasonable — expectations. Plaskoff says he occasionally comes across homeowners who want their project done in the same fashion as the ones they have seen on television. When that happens, Plaskoff tells them “ABC can afford to do what it takes to get it done quickly. Can you?”

The good news is that some of them can. While completing projects on this kind of accelerated schedule isn't for everybody, a company that is set up to do it can find it quite lucrative. One of Plaskoff's recent clients is paying him 50% more in exchange for a speedy completion.



In addition to running Plaskoff Construction in Tarzana, Calif., Matt Plaskoff is the “construction consultant” for ABC's Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.

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