



Home Schooled

With “Kitchen and Bath University,” **Gehman Design Remodeling** provides a nuts-and-bolts education for homeowners considering a remodel of their kitchen or master bathroom.

DENNIS D. GEHMAN AND MEMBERS OF HIS TEAM MAY BE HOME REMODELERS, BUT THEY ALSO SEE THEMSELVES AS EDUCATORS. Until recently the education has been largely informal, delivered to prospective clients as they make decisions about planned improvements to their homes.

Gehman’s team has since taken the education process to the next level with the first “Kitchen and Bath University” event. Nearly two dozen interested parties—homeowners who may be considering an update, expansion, or complete transformation of their kitchen and/or bathroom(s)—attended the hourlong affair.

“The idea was to give people the basics about what they’re in for when delving into a project like this,” says Gehman, president of Gehman Design Remodeling in Harleysville. “Of the 22 people who came, seven of them made for-sure appointments, and several others said they would give us a call. It’s always great to get new business out of something like this, but we also see it as a public service. We want people know what to expect with a kitchen or bath remodel, whether they go with us or with someone else.”

In the course of discussion, Gehman advised homeowners about multiple aspects of the remodeling process: what to expect in terms how, and how long, the remodel might affect their living arrangements; likes and dislikes, needs and wants, in terms of style, space, and use; and budget.

“We want to have an honest conversation about what they are comfortable with [spending] so we can work to be the guardian of that budget,” he says. “Our mindset is, ‘Let’s work together as a team.’ If we know what they want and what the budget is, we may be able to achieve a similar look as something they really like, but with materials that don’t cost as much.”

In terms of style and materials, Gehman and his team are happy to provide recommendations, but he says it’s best for homeowners to provide feedback upfront. It doesn’t have to be anything precise or formal, just a general sense of a homeowner’s style. For ideas, he suggests online resources such as Houzz, Pinterest, and NARI.org, the website of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. He also recommends perusing the Gehman Design Remodeling website, which has photo galleries featuring dozens

of award-winning projects from over the years.

Such preparation is essential to starting a project on the right foot, according to Gehman.

“The more organized and prepared you are, the better the experience,” he says. “There are some people who will say, ‘Let’s just get started.’ What they don’t always realize is that it takes time to order materials. We commit to people that when we start, we will be there each day until the work is finished. Any delays will only extend the disruption to their lives.

“I had a slide in my presentation with a quote: ‘Proper preparation prevents poor performance,’” he continues. “That’s a favorite quote from Kyle Hunt, a successful business coach for remodelers, and it perfectly describes the approach we take with our business.”

Gehman’s advice: Vet remodeler candidates



Examples of remodels completed by Gehman Design Remodeling

carefully. Ask for references. Ask around, from resources such as local building inspectors, or even knock on the door of a home with a particular builder’s sign in the yard to ask for the homeowner’s feedback. He also suggests asking remodelers directly about the depth of their expertise, including if they have kitchen/bath-specific certifications such as MCKBR, short for Master Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler, the highest level of certification offered by NARI. Incidentally, of the 38 MCKBRs across the country, three of them work for Gehman’s firm.

Finally, before someone undertakes any remodeling project, Gehman says it’s important for homeowners to have an honest conversation about their future plans. The number of years they intend to stay in the house should factor into how, where, and when they invest their money.

“If you’re going to sell in less than five years, it’s not wise to do a major remodel because you’re probably not going to get the money back [in resale],” he says. “If you’re going to be there for the next 20 years, then it’s worth making the investment in terms of quality of life with your family.”

For those interested, Gehman Design Remodeling has more “University” events lined up for the near future. Gehman envisions branching out to other areas of the home, but for now the events will be exclusive to kitchens and baths. ■

Gehman Design Remodeling

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