

# YourBusiness Ways+Means

## Head On

**P**ost-project customer satisfaction surveys don't always find their way back to the office, so Greg Antonioli does face-to-face exit interviews. He also feels that the written responses he had received weren't substantive. "How many times have you tried to write an e-mail, but you feel the point isn't getting across so you call the person?" Antonioli asks. "You can't get real answers on paper. You have to drill deeper and look at body language."

The owner of Out of the Woods Construction, Arlington, Mass., usually meets for the exit interview with clients in their home during the time they had their weekly meeting. But many times he'll meet them out for dinner. He has a list of questions, ranging from "Was the production manager courteous and helpful?" to "Did things meet the expectations set by the salesperson?" Antonioli takes notes and scores answers on a scale. One telling item is a 1-to-10-rated question about working with the company again, with a choice of 1 meaning the client would not work with Out of the Woods again and 10 meaning they would strongly recommend the company to family and friends. Antonioli doesn't do any "scientific analysis" of the numbers but uses the information, he says, for a "more subjective analy-

sis of where we need to focus our efforts for improvement."

At the same time that he's listening, Antonioli is also doing damage control. Often a client will give high praise, he says, but when pressed about whether they would refer his company, they will say, "There was one little thing. It didn't matter to me, but it might matter to other people." He says if he can "assure them that it's a valid concern that can be taken care of, they'll feel more comfortable referring us." —S.F.



## Badge of Honor

**J**ust after Sept. 11, when everyone everywhere seemed to be nervous, one of Iris Harrell's soon-to-be clients was followed by a stranger and it scared her. When Harrell Remodeling, Mountain View, Calif., was about to begin the remodel, the client wanted to know how she would be able to identify the nearly 100 tradespeople and Harrell Remodeling staff who would be coming and going from her house.

"Clients are vulnerable when you have a key to their house," says Harrell, who

admits to having been rattled herself after Sept. 11. So she and her team came up with the idea of ID badges. "They're a hit," Harrell says of the photo identity card hanging from a distinctive purple lanyard, embroidered with the Harrell Remodeling logo.

Mug shots are taken in front of a unique Pennsylvania Dutch quilt to protect against fraud.

Field staff wear the badges to the job and show them to the client, then — for safety reasons — remove them when they start working.

Subcontractors can only get into a home when a site manager is present to open up for them. Office staff, including Harrell, sport the ID badges as well, around the office and to conferences.

Harrell says, "It reminds me that I'm working. And when I take it off, that I'm not working." —S.F.

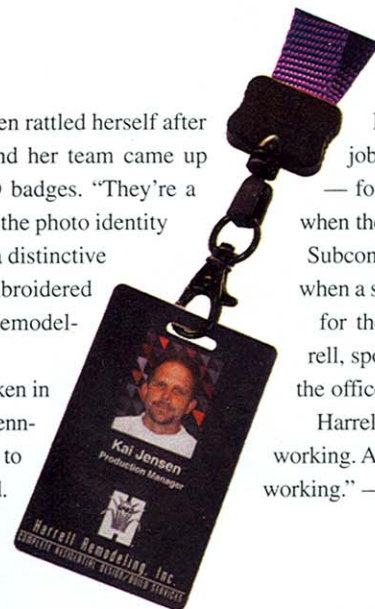


Illustration: Rich Lillash