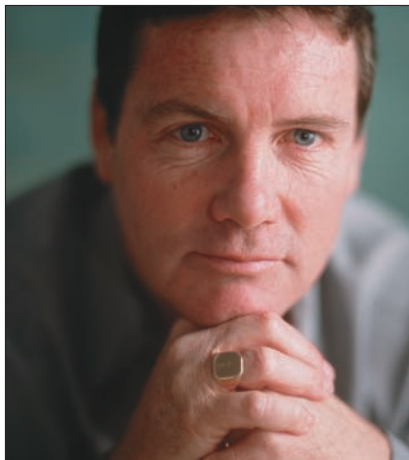


# Commentary **Mark Richardson**

## Is Remodeling Science or Art?

Your ability to grow and improve may depend on how you answer this question.

**R**ecently, I was part of a tag-team of presenters at the national Remodeling Show who took part in a seminar that was described in the program as a “Sales Marathon.” Four speakers took turns over the course of three hours presenting 30-minute talks on various aspects of selling. One of my segments was entitled “The Art of Selling.” The phrase is catchy and was intended to evoke images of selling secrets among the potential audience. But as I prepared my talk, I started to think about it literally, and I realized that it raises a fundamental question, not just about sales but about the remodeling business overall: Is remodeling more of an art or more of a science?



### **FINDING THE BALANCE**

I’ve since delivered that same talk to several remodeling groups around the country, with one difference: Each time I start by asking the audience to answer that question. The answers are all over the map. For some, the remodeling business is a 50/50 split between science and art; others believe it’s 80/20 an art; still others come down

80/20 on the side of science.

How you answer reveals a lot about your current approach to your company’s business, as well as about the kinds of changes you will be able to make easily and those that will be more difficult.

If you believe, for example, that successful remodeling is more of an art than a science, you probably sell by feel, manage by intuition, and have a difficult time committing to processes and structured methods. If, on the other hand, you believe remodeling is more of a science, you most likely sell according to

a system, manage with input from measurement tools, and believe your success depends on developing and mastering systems and processes.

### **THE LAWS OF SUCCESS**

By now it’s no secret that I think success in the remodeling business is more a product of science than anything else, and that a company owner who creates a culture that buys into this idea is in a better position to grow and thrive. That’s not to deny that there are many charismatic leaders in remodeling companies. Often, their skills come so naturally to them that it’s easy to confuse their success with their winning personalities.

But don’t be fooled: Although an “artful” leader is often the public face of a company, working behind the scenes are people who develop, implement, and maintain systems and processes that ensure positive results. The success of these companies comes from creating processes that guarantee a consistent client experience; from making decisions based on numbers and not just emotion; and from growing not by happy accident but according to a deliberate strategy that includes a commitment to training and an overall belief in constant improvement.

### **NURTURE, NOT NATURE**

With few exceptions, successful remodelers are made, not born. That’s good news for those of us who seek to learn from the best practices of others. It means that whatever our natural talents might be, any of us can create a great company if we master the science of the remodeling business. But it’s also a wake-up call for company owners who come down more on the side of remodeling-as-art. Your personality and natural talents will take you only so far. You need to complement your natural skills with team members who can develop and implement the systems and processes that are essential to continuous growth and improvement. —Mark Richardson is president of Case Design/Remodeling and Case Handyman Services, Bethesda, Md., and author of “30-Day Remodeling Fitness Program.” (301) 229-4600; mrichardson@casedesign.com.