

Commentary **Mark Richardson**

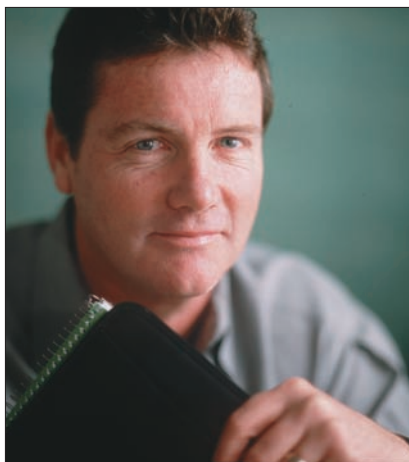
Quotable

Certain sayings can help make sense out of things and improve your ability to lead others.

I have always found that certain sayings or quotes strike some mysterious internal chord that causes light bulbs to go off.

Some spark new ways of thinking about familiar problems; others serve to guide me through really tough decisions in a world that can be very complex and confusing. The following are a few of my favorite quotes that have some relevance for your remodeling business. These may not resonate for you the way they do for me; I'm sure you have your own favorites. The important point, however, is to understand the power of quotes and see how to use them to your advantage.

Fail to plan, plan to fail. Remodelers are generally very proficient at planning projects. They create detailed blueprints, material lists, and flowcharts on even the most basic projects. Why, then, do most not use that same methodology when it comes to planning their day or week?



If you're like most remodelers, you spend more than half your day reacting to people and events. That means your time is controlled by others. With a little planning, you can turn that situation around, become proactive, and deal with issues before they become emergencies. Not only will you accomplish much more, you'll reduce stress.

A professional leaves nothing to chance. I first heard this from Phil Rea, an accomplished salesman and sales trainer with whom I used to work closely. I'm not sure where he first heard it or if he made it up, but it rings true. We've all experienced times when things have not gone the way we predicted with a client, a project, or a team member. In fact, this probably happens more often than we realize, but it doesn't have to be that way. You can increase the odds of things going your way just by asking yourself "What could go wrong?" or "What possible objections might

the prospect have?" The answers will tell you what you need to do to reduce risks and ensure the outcome you want.

Meetings are your job. Many years ago, while traveling with Peter Miller, former publisher of REMODELING magazine, I was expressing my frustration at having to spend so much time in client and staff meetings. I felt like I did not have time to accomplish my real work, but Peter said, "Mark, meetings are your job." His comment didn't sit well at first, but the more I thought about it, the more sense it made, and eventually it changed the way I looked at meetings. As the leader of your organization, you need to make the same change. Stop thinking about meetings as a necessary evil and instead learn how to create meetings that are meaningful and effective for everyone. It's not as hard as it seems, but it requires good preparation and being in the right frame of mind.

We are lost but we are making good time. This is some of Yogi Berra's fractured wisdom, and for me it suggests the pitfalls of attempting to measure success. If we think we're successful, for example, because we have a 12-month backlog, we may be looking at only part of the picture. We can have good systems and processes, but if we employ them on the wrong clients or wrong types of projects, we're not going to make any progress. We need to make good time and make sure we're headed in the right direction.

God is in the details. This is attributed to Bauhaus architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who was speaking about design. But it also applies to other aspects of business and life. You can have a great idea or good intentions, but if you don't focus on the details, the results will be a failure. It can be applied to simple things, as well. Imagine, for example, presenting a project proposal that contains numerous misspelled words, or having your notebook computer die mid-meeting because you left the charger at your office. The big picture is important, but the "little picture" needs equal attention.

Quotes and sayings like these can help you make sense out of things and lead and motivate others. —*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.*