

The leading business, design and product resource for the kitchen & bath trade

8/12

# kitchen & bath DESIGN NEWS

CYGNUS BUSINESS MEDIA

CELEBRATING OUR 30TH YEAR OF PUBLISHING EXCELLENCE

**45 | COUNTERTOPS**  
CREATE EYE-CATCHING  
FOCAL POINTS

Design Update

**29 | SURVEY REVEALS GEN X & Y**  
DESIGN PREFERENCES

**40** Cover Story

# SUCCESSFUL SHOWROOMS DEFY THE ECONOMY

By Kim Berndtson

# SUCCESSFUL SHOWROOMS DEFY THE ECONOMY

Despite the challenging economic conditions of the past few years, four kitchen and bath firms defied the odds by launching successful and notable new showrooms.

While some showrooms are downsizing or closing down altogether, others have recently opened their doors to extraordinary new spaces that showcase top-notch creativity, a diversity of product and a try-it-before-you-buy mentality. The four showrooms profiled here show that, while the economic recovery has been slower than most would have liked, some kitchen and bath professionals are ready to expand and make a bold statement in the process.

## ONE-OF-A-KIND CREATIVITY

For Peter Salerno, CMKBD, Peter Salerno, Inc., the new 10,000-square-foot showroom he recently opened in Wyckoff, NJ, to replace his previous 2,000-square-foot showroom has a two-fold benefit for clients. First, the partnerships he created with an appliance showroom and a tile showroom give home-

owners a one-stop shopping experience. Second, with 14 displays – including those for kitchens, baths and specialty rooms such as wet bars, several of which are live – he has plenty of opportunity to show creative ways to personalize a space.

The seed for this unique partnership approach was planted in Salerno's mind seven years ago, when the economy was flourishing. However, a few short years later, everything crashed. "But I was already deep into the process," he says, indicating the groundwork had already been laid. "I was basically at the point of no return."

So Salerno charged forward, opening the doors just three months ago.

"It was a long process, because we needed to set it up so it would work comfortably for all [three] of us," he says. "We each have our own showroom, but clients can walk down the sidewalk to each of the businesses. It's

like being under one roof."

Salerno designed his showroom to address some of his clients' most common complaints: lack of time and not being able to find what they're looking for.

"It takes time to track down products and materials," he says. "But it doesn't have to be agonizing. The first thing I tell my clients is that their projects will be fun."

That philosophy shows through in the new space. "I am an artist," he says. "I wanted to create an art museum and within that art museum, I wanted to incorporate cabinetry, which is different from many showrooms where cabinetry is accented with art. I basically turned the industry upside down with this showroom."

That is evident in several of the displays, including a kitchen display that uses reclaimed tin from a 1920's filling station to sheath a ventilation hood as well as the refrigerator.

An atypical powder room highlights the work of a graffiti artist who painted the New York City skyline on its walls. The concrete floor resembles an asphalt road, complete with a manhole cover.

A 1959 Corvette that Salerno salvaged from a junkyard and turned into a bar also garners a lot of attention. Synchronized with lights and 1950's music, the display is a perfect example of Salerno's creativity.

"When many people visit the showroom, they tell me

**Peter Salerno's creativity is evident in his new showroom. One of his kitchen displays (left) highlights reclaimed tin that sheaths the ventilation hood, while a salvaged Corvette serves as the focal point of a wet bar display (below).**



they've never seen anything like this before," Salerno says. And that's good for business, he indicates. "A showroom is a tool, an instrument to show people what you can do," he says. "If you can give people something that is one of a kind, they will want to work with you. I often hear people say, 'if this is what he can do with a showroom, I'd like to see what he can do with my house.'"

## BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

When Michelle Henderson was hired six years ago to design, build and manage a new 15,000-square-foot, high-end showroom for Banner Plumbing Supply in Buffalo Grove, IL, she was brought onboard at a time when the economy was just beginning its downward spiral. Undeterred, the company forged ahead with an "if we build it they will come" attitude that has proven to be right on target.

With a variety of interactive displays – from hands-free and touch faucets to a working body dryer – the showroom is designed with a try-it-before-you-buy-it policy. Hot water is plumbed to eight tubs and four steam shower systems as well as 38 kitchen and lavatory faucets, 13 toilets and a multitude of showerheads and hand showers.

"Faucets and fixtures are a means of clients expressing their individual taste and personality," says Henderson. "It's almost like great jewelry for an outfit. The task of making these selections can be somewhat daunting to many, and we find that by providing attractive and diverse lifestyle suites, we can help



Photos: Frank Husarek