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AWARD WINNER



3030 W. Salt Creek Lane, Suite 201
Arlington Heights, IL 60005-5025
847.391.1000 • Fax: 847.390.0408

STAFF

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Denise Dersin
703.992.7640; ddersin@sgcmail.com

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Amy Albert
818.308.6648; aalbert@sgcmail.com

SENIOR EDITOR

Mike Beirne
847.391.1051; mbeirne@sgcmail.com

CONTENT MANAGER

Ingrid Bush
202.780.9591; ibush@sgcmail.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Sara Elliott
847.954.7965; selliot@sgcmail.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Susan Bady | Bob Schultz | Scott Sedam

DESIGNER

Robin Hicks

GROUP DIRECTOR - PRINCIPAL

Tony Mancini
484.412.8686; tmancini@sgcmail.com

EVENTS MANAGER

Judy Brociek
847.954.7943; jbrociek@sgcmail.com

DIRECTOR OF AUDIENCE

DEVELOPMENT
Doug Riemer

MANAGER OF CREATIVE SERVICES

Lois Hince

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Michael Porcaro
847.954.7925; mporcaro@sgcmail.com

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES

Circulation Department, Professional Builder
3030 W. Salt Creek Lane, Suite 201
Arlington Heights, IL 60005-5025
circulation@sgcmail.com

REPRINTS

John Premetz
219.670.0045; johnapremetz@att.net

CORPORATE

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Local Heroes

Capitalizing on your unique selling proposition is a maxim we hear an awful lot of in the home building business.

But what does USP really mean? Branding guru Bernadette Jiwa, author of *Marketing, A Love Story: How to Matter to Your Customers*, says that the secret to the success of household names such as Starbucks, Google, Instagram, and Oprah isn't that they were especially good at getting their message out and telling people how great they are, even though that may be the case. In a blog post titled "Why Your Brand Doesn't Need a Unique Selling Proposition," Jiwa offers a maxim of her own, which is essentially to think difference—not different. "What makes a brand unique," she writes, "is the difference it makes in people's lives."

As a builder, you're uniquely qualified to deliver on that promise. What place is more important than the one we call home? More than a house or an apartment, it's a street, a neighborhood, and a city or town that we become deeply attached to—and that, in turn, becomes a part of who we are and how we describe ourselves to others.

This month's cover story, "Regionals Rule," (page 36), celebrates local builders who are at the top of their markets by virtue of being deeply entrenched in their home turf. They are experts: on the local architecture, the life of the community, the area's history, and why their particular part of the world is a great place to start out, raise a family, or begin the next chapter of life. In this issue, they share what has kept them on top. Being deeply committed to the area, staying in better tune with the market than the competition, giving back to the community, and delivering the best home-buying experience possible were unifying themes among them all.

Charlie Scott, a contributing editor to *Professional Builder* and an industry consultant, was first a home builder for 20 years. When it was time to grow the company he was then working for, Scott and his colleagues counted on a third-party firm to collect accurate and unvarnished information about homebuyers. "We used the voice of the customer as one of our guiding forces," he says. That market intelligence was every bit as important as financial metrics and land position—so important that he eventually bought that third-party consulting firm because he believed so strongly in its value to home building. "I switched from building homes to building home builders," Scott says.

In an era of mounting mergers and acquisitions, being a local is an impressive accomplishment, if not a Herculean one. It's also your trump card. So here's to the power of being regional: Here's to local heroes.

Amy Albert, Editor-in-Chief

aalbert@sgcmail.com; @amyalbertLA



Leveraging **your position as a local** can be a powerful tool.