

Norbut Construction, Inc.

Successful Business Evolves from Brothers' Childhood Dreams

By Fred Jennings

The New England theme of this four-season home on the lake carries over into the interior with its charming stair system and knotty pine paneling.



At a time in their lives when most children were learning how to ride a bike or build a tree house, the Norbut brothers were learning how to renovate homes. Their mother, Cindi, was widowed when Brad and Dave were 8 and 4, respectively. Not long after that, Cindi began to purchase investment properties that required complete restoration. The boys, born with an innate desire to construct, began to develop their renovation skills by rehabbing dilapidated structures under the tutelage of home improvement books.

By the time the boys reached their teens, they had begun buying homes on their own; many built in the 1800s and all in need of major renovation. Some they would resell and others they would rent. During this period, the brothers engaged the services of a variety of subcontractors, ever striving to complete projects with quality work that was well organized and delivered on schedule. Eventually, instead of employing contractors, they became contractors themselves.

RESPONDING TO INDUSTRY SHORTCOMINGS

According to Chief Communications Officer Mark Potter, "Throughout scores of residential renovation projects, Dave and Brad began to recognize some of the industry's most common flaws: 1) communication, 2) organization and 3) execution. Why, they asked themselves, does the construction process have to be so grueling? Why can't it be enjoyable? Why can't it be one where open communication and thorough planning allow for a stress-free environment where solutions, rather than problems, would prevail? And, finally, how do you construct projects where contractors are always on time, organized and prepared to execute a job in its entirety?"



PHOTO BY CINDY WALKER/SHUTTERSTOCK

Rochester architect Rod Skirment (L) and Norbut Chief Communications Officer Mark Potter discuss plans for a major renovation.

A BUSINESS IS BORN

To successfully address questions such as these, the brothers believed they would require a whole new approach to the industry they were in. So in 2002, Dave and Brad folded their individual businesses into one and, along with a personal friend who is still with the company, created Norbut Construction. At the time of the company's official founding, the brothers were working out of a garage in Gates and have since moved to their present location at 1387 Brighton Henrietta Town Line Road, Rochester. They renovated this facility themselves, which serves as the company's headquarters and quality control center. It is also a workshop for creating custom cabinetry for kitchens and bathrooms and for inspecting and storing building materials.

From the outset, the brothers visualized a company that, in Dave's words, "would focus its efforts exclusively on residential renovations and incorporate our clients' lifestyle and personality into each renovation project through listening."

Continuing, he said, "Our aim was to create a company that would cater its ideas and philosophies to exceed client expectations utilizing in-house employees who are trained in a variety of residential construction areas."

CHANGING WITH CHANGING TIMES

Twenty-three years after the company's founding, Cindi is still rehabbing rental units, but each Monday sits in on company meetings where she uses her knowledge of sign language to communicate with one of Norbut's hearing-impaired employees.

Meanwhile, Brad and Dave have turned their attention toward more dramatic projects and property developments. For the past five years, they have been servicing residential clients who not only value the construction process, but also are looking for an enjoyable renovation experience. Norbut clients are primarily located in the Rochester suburbs of Brighton, Pittsford, Mendon, and on lakefront properties. Projects usually start at around \$50,000, but have exceeded a half-million dollars.

THE NORBUT TEAM

Even before its official founding, Dave and Brad recognized how an in-house crew, rather than subcontractors, would be beneficial to customers and company alike. Today the firm has two full-time crews comprised of trained and skilled craftsmen who, according to Potter, "view themselves as teammates rather than hired guns who are incessantly looking to render their services to the highest bidder."

Expounding on that theme, Dave says, "Our in-house team is supplemented by some of the most ethical and competent vendors whom we trust and recommend to our clients. They are a direct reflection of how we conduct ourselves, recognizing that we are the industry experts and it is our duty to find those who value our core beliefs."

Additionally, Norbut's professional staff offers full-time expertise by two individuals not commonly employed in the construction industry: Mark Potter and full-time interior decorator Dani Polidor.

Potter holds a B.A. degree in communications from Eastern

This Norbut project included an elegant lower-level theater room, an adjoining bathroom and a bar area. It's a popular gathering place for a family of four and their friends.



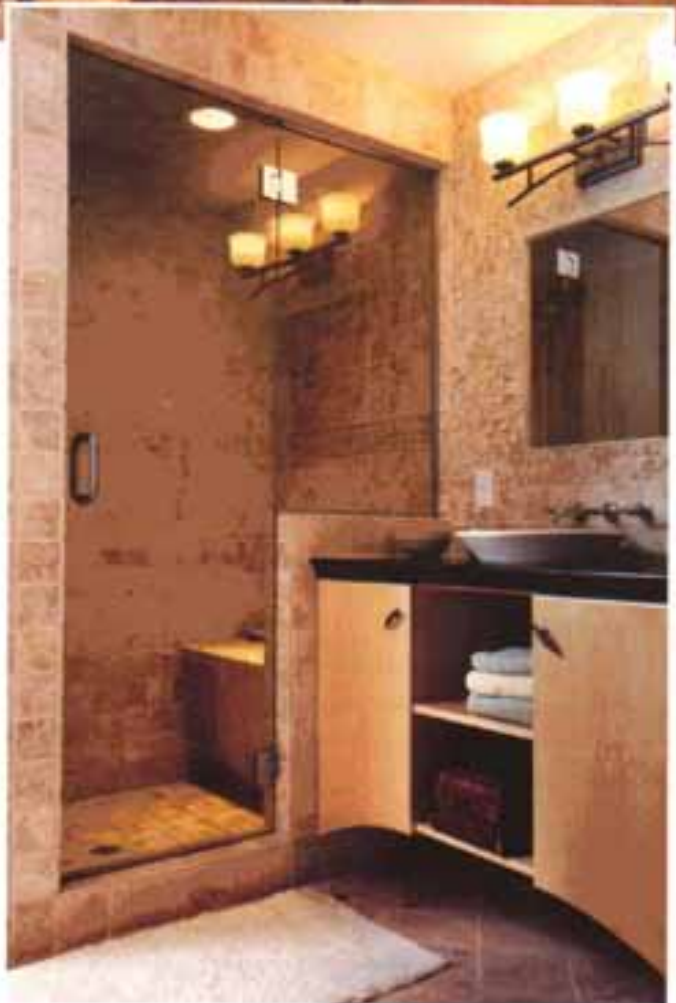
PHOTO COURTESY OF NORBUT CONSTRUCTION



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NORBUT CONSTRUCTION

Above: The dramatic use of lighting in this kitchen located in the Corn Hill section of Rochester includes a combination of can, under-cabinet and pendant lighting. The use of custom-built cherry cabinets along with color-coordinated tile on the floor and walls help give the kitchen its warm and elegant look.

Right: Floor-to-ceiling ceramic tile rules the day in this beautifully designed bath with its contemporary fixtures, tinted-glass shower enclosure and gracefully curved under-counter cabinetry.



University (near Philadelphia) and is an MBA candidate at R.I.T. His position at Norbut entails broad areas of responsibility, including public, media, client and vendor relations, along with some marketing and human relations activities.

The position of interior decorator was established by the firm to provide an additional service to its clientele. Polidor is a 34-year-old German national who found her way to Upstate New York via Toronto, where she received a bachelor's degree from the Ontario College of Art and Design. An active member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and the National Kitchen and Bath Association, Polidor is both a Certified Interior Designer and a Certified Kitchen and Bath Designer. "Norbut's goal," she says, "is to marry the three disciplines of architecture, construction and interior design, and enhance the choices clients have where interior and exterior products are concerned. In the end, we want to facilitate their vision, save them time and money, and deliver a cohesive product that gives clients the look they want."



This cheery sunroom's glass windows and patio door flood the area with natural light while providing a stunning view of the outdoors.

SEEKING ALLIES

At the same time that Norbut pulled together this extraordinary team of professionals, it has ingratiated itself with a number of local architects and builders. "Such relationships," Dave says, "have proven to be mutually satisfying and we continue to seek out those who share our interest in building long-term relationships. We are anxious to tell them what we do and, more importantly, how we do it. We would like to consider them allies of ours not only to help us continue to grow, but also join in our quest to improve the construction industry in the Greater Rochester area."

NO PROJECTS TOO LARGE OR TOO UNIQUE

Norbut's work spans a gamut of projects, including basements, bathrooms, kitchens, additions, in-law suites, reconstruction and the occasional commercial project.

"Most of our work, about three-quarters of our new projects, comes from referrals," says Dave. "We cater our services to clients who value the construction process. Innovation is the fun part of our job. We are constantly looking for those projects that transcend the traditional ... are truly unique and enhance the beauty of one's home."

No better example of this exists than Norbut's latest project — the picturesque "Lighthouse Home" in Hilton on the shore of Lake Ontario. This involved the complete reconstruction of a family cottage that now incorporates a Cape Cod-style 38-foot-high nonoperational lighthouse. Originally built in the early 1950s, the cottage's

roof was raised to increase headroom on the second floor and a new front porch was added. The rear of the cottage now features a new entryway and deck. Inside, a bath was relocated to adjoin an expanded master bedroom on the second floor. The lighthouse tower consists of a ground-floor porch, second-floor loft space and an unfinished third floor. The fourth-floor "light room" sports a hanging coach light surrounded by a maintenance deck. In all, 52 windows were replaced.

KEEPING CUSTOMERS HAPPY

"Residential renovation may be the most intimate of any home service," says Dave. "After all, we are sharing our clients' homes with them for months at a time. It is imperative to have an environment that fosters tranquility." With scores of renovated homes and hundreds of dealings with subcontractors and vendors behind them, the brothers have found that projects completed on time and within established budgets are a direct result of proper planning and answering all questions a client may have. This is accomplished through a series of preconstruction meetings where clients are encouraged to become more active participants in the process. "Before we construct a project we construct a relationship," says Dave. "Poor communication invariably results in excessive overages and change orders, which virtually assures that a project will fail to meet the budget and schedule originally established. So we do our very best to avoid such circumstances and are usually successful in doing so."



One of the region's leading suppliers of bath, kitchen and lighting projects chose Norbut to create this dream kitchen for its showroom and raved about the outcome.

Praising Norbut's performance are a number of clients who are all too willing to share their satisfying experiences: "I will always be grateful to your team of workers for the kindness and care that they showed to my 86-year-old mother," says Cheryl Dick and Momma.

Partners Dave and Brad Norbut (L and R, respectively, in foreground) are backed by an outstanding team of professionals who are well regarded throughout the Greater Rochester area.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NORBUT CONSTRUCTION

Ashley Mike Yaroschnack, "I have worked with many contractors in the past and your company far surpasses them in every aspect of the job." Echoing those sentiments are Steve and Wendy Silverman, who claim: "The job you did was spectacular! The work has quality written all over it and, more importantly than that, your guys always came on time, were clean and always willing to work with us ... especially with our last-minute changes."

STEADY GROWTH REALIZED

Long-term success is based on quality relationships and doing things right. Having excelled at each has assured the company of exponential growth year after year. Remarkably, Norbut has been able to increase its revenues while at the same time making a conscious effort to decrease the number of clients it serves. It has found that such an approach has resulted in better service and satisfaction as well as profits.

"While our progress has been encouraging and gratifying, we also recognize that we have an obligation to the construction industry and community," concludes Dave. "When opportunities present themselves, such as hosting WeMoCo (Boces II) field trips, or working with other builders in constructing a Habitat for Humanity home, we appreciate the fact that we are also recognized as a quality-oriented contractor that shows compassion toward others." ■