



A Local Presence

Financial security, professional relationships or personal satisfaction – each can personify business success. BY KIM CASSELL

To be successful in business takes a willingness to change with the times, be flexible in one's mode of operations, and innovative when appealing to local customers and their needs. The lure of big-box stores and one-stop shopping may necessitate re-strategizing to take hold of the all-important local buying market.

Satisfaction matters

For more than 35 years, Dennis Pless has worked in the homebuilding and renovation business. As a native of Rowan County, his work took him from Virginia

to Florida, then eventually back to Cabarrus County, where he now resides. For 12 of those years, Pless served as a construction manager for Niblock Homes. However, as the homebuilding market collapsed, his job went with it.

Pless found himself at a crossroads. He didn't know what direction to take, and even thought about opening a restaurant. As fate would have it, however, his customers came up with the solution. The rapport he'd had and the relationships he'd built with his homeowner customers of the past were remembered, and now those homeowners sought him out to

make needed repairs to their homes. Here was a company that came about solely from referrals and repeat business.

DP Contracting & Consulting, established three years ago – at the beginning of the recession – now has four full-time employees, along with an interior designer and an architect. From doing \$300,000 worth of business in its first year and \$600,000 in its second, Pless projects that the company will do \$1.2 million in business this year. His goal by 2013 is to have that number reach \$5 million. He feels that's attainable, partly because of the new design gallery ▶

displays he has in place at The Depot Antique and Designer Mall at Gibson Mill.

Pless' expertise in remodeling and renovations extends from the kitchen, to baths; room additions; sunrooms and screened porches; window or door replacement; exterior siding, masonry and stone; flooring; and landscapes. It does run the gamut, but what does DP Contracting do that makes them stand out from other local contractors? "We do business by time-honored traditions and values: be on time, do what you say

you're going to do, set realistic expectations, provide details so the customer can understand the scope of the work, take responsibility and be accountable. And seal the deal with a handshake."

Satisfying a long-term, local client base has worked for Pless. He also wants new customers to check out DP's work. "We ask each potential customer to meet with and review the same scope of work they are interested in, from two of our previous clients," he said, adding, "When

interviewing the contractor, trust your instincts. Remember to treat the individual as a professional, but watch for warning signs. Evasive answers to questions or a lot of excuses and explanations should set off warning bells in your head."

Pless looks at his industry as a family, with the same expectations and goals. "We work mostly with other Cabarrus County skilled trades and craftsmen," he said, "enabling other local companies to work in a difficult recession. It has allowed us to create our own business network."

But, unlike many, he asks, "What recession? There are always opportunities to grow business. Recognize the resources you have in existing and previous customers. Talk, ask questions, look for alternatives."

DP Contracting & Consulting is a member of the National Association of Homebuilders, Cabarrus County Business Industry Association (CCBIA) and the Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce.

