

## STEVAN BOWKER EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATION

BY ANNEMARIE SCHULTZ

All too often what is lacking today is the personal touch from professionals who are more intent on growing their businesses than servicing the clients they already have. Usually, once a client has been won over by the head of a firm, the account is assigned to someone else and that's the last communication between client and principal. As our worlds become more automated and impersonal, the 'take a number and a service representative will be with you' mentality drains our individuality and creativity. That's why Stevan Bowker, president of Omega Architectural Group, Inc. of Benicia has taken an entirely different approach to the business side of architecture. Believing that bigger does not mean better, the long-term relationships he develops with his clients are the result of personal service, quality communication and a team approach toward the success of every project.

Steve prides himself on the fact that he is not only the one who 'sells the company' to the client, he is also the one who does the principal design and is actively involved in customer service. "I think our clients really appreciate the fact that when they call in, more often than not, I'm easily and immediately accessible. It helps

to establish a kind of rapport that just wouldn't be there otherwise." And that rapport is as important to Steve as it is to his residential builder and developer clientele. Really getting to know his clients helps him to be more sensitive to their needs. It enables him to understand their



Stevan Bowker.

individual comfort zones, sensing when to 'stretch the envelope' by employing more innovative solutions and when straying too far into new territory would be counterproductive. That personal approach, combined with an extraordinary commitment to listening to his clients' needs and desires, is what has made Omega such a leader in design innovation in production housing.

When you blaze a trail others are sure to follow, and when Steve sees design elements that he has pioneered turn up in the work of other architects, he takes it as a compliment. As he says, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," and he is indeed flattered to have had such an impact in designing successful communities all across Northern California. Included among his long list of pioneering accomplishments is the first all steel-framed production home subdivision in Antioch for Pacwest Development Corporation, the first basement homes in California for Cresleigh Development Corporation, and the first all stucco elevations in Danville and Union City's first residential redevelopment project, both for bas Homes. Steve credits excellent communication with his clients--flowing in both directions--as the key to a successful project; and the more

unique and innovative the design, the greater the necessity for solid communication among all members of the builder's team. According to Bowker, it is this type of solid communication and personal service that has resulted in a very loyal and consistent client base even throughout the recession. This sense of loyalty and consistency extends to Omega's office personnel as well. The other two members of

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his production team, Peter Thayer and Nancy Nelson, have been with the firm for over nine years. "After working so closely with Peter and Nancy, it would be an understatement to say that we enjoy a real team approach to our work. They feel more like family, and that kind of bond makes a real difference in the way we communicate and the way the office works."

It was because of his family, albeit indirectly, that Steve decided to go into architecture in the first place. His parents, it seemed, were always remodeling their house and their contractor, who was from Switzerland, had a profound affect on him. The contractor was always willing

to take him aside and explain what was going on and how everything went together. As a result, the bright nine-year-old became convinced that when he grew up he wanted to have a future that involved building, and his mom was also instrumental in his decision to make architecture his career. At least part of his creativity, he says, was inherited from her. A strong family bond is what Steve and his wife of ten years, Maggie, hope to create with their own children, Katie and Chris. Actively involved in Little League, the PTA and other community causes that involve his family, Steve says, "I pride myself on being flexible and adapting to the needs of my clients, but there aren't very many things that could keep me

from tucking my children into bed at night!" That devotion also extends to Maggie. "The communication between us is very open and very honest. I think that's the secret to a really good marriage. And of course teamwork doesn't hurt either!"

Bowker's insistence upon strong lines of communication doesn't just apply to clients, his staff and his family life. He believes that excellence in communication is equally as important out at the job site. Crediting his experience as an onsite construction superintendent as some of his most valuable, Steve reports that by asking questions and listening to his subs, he was able to develop a real understanding of their needs, as well as an attitude of mutual trust and teamwork. According to Pacwest Superintendent Gary Porter, a nineteen-year veteran of residential construction, who has worked with Steve since 1987, Bowker's field experience really shows in Omega's construction documents. "Their plans really work from a construction standpoint. They care as much about our supplier and subcontractor interfacing as they do about providing me with immediate response time in the field," he says. "They ask my opinion, and then they really listen to my input as to how I think it should go together. I guess you could say that Omega is everything a service-oriented company ought to be."

And according to Debra Lee, Steve Bowker's commitment to his advisory board post for **BUILDER DIGEST** of Northern California demonstrates the same consistent approach to quality communication. "He's conscientious about reading every article as soon as each issue is published," she reports, "and then he calls to communicate his comments and advice in the most genuine, forthright manner. He's an excellent communicator, and that's why he's an excellent architect." After all, isn't architecture another form of communication?

For more information about Omega Architectural Group, Inc., or to speak with Steve Bowker directly, call (707) 746-6586. ☉

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