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Faucets and Fixtures

Creating Memories That Bring Customers Back

WRITTEN BY NANCY HAMMOND

Gone are the mismatched days of the silver faucet, wood towel bar and brass lighting. To attract the attention of today's customers, builders are coordinating kitchens and bathrooms with an eye on style.

According to Christy Smith, builder sales at the Burke Agency, Walled Lake, "The trend today is to offer a complete suite of products, from lighting to plumbing. Themes can be carried through to the faucet, accessories, toilet paper holders and lighting. "The goal is to help a builder differentiate themselves," says Smith.

Jeff Andress, trade channel manager at Delta says, "When customers are viewing 15-20 models in one day, builders need to make a lasting impression." Andress says that Delta recommends making this lasting impression "by creating memory points, so that customers remember

one or two key things when they leave the room." To that end, Andress says that builders have used Delta's Michael Graves Collection™ as a starting point and added other items from the Michael Graves line of products available elsewhere.

It must also be noted that coordinated collections are not just for large spaces. "A great way for a builder to make a statement is with a suite collection in a smaller room, such as a powder room," says Shawn Oldenhoff, marketing manager, builder channel at Kohler. "It's important to coordinate the faucet, towel rings, drawer pulls — and even the mirror," says Oldenhoff.

Oftentimes, it's an unexpected feature that attracts the most attention. Oldenhoff says that "custom showers with different types of jets" will not go unnoticed in a model home. Mary Lujan, head designer at Hepplewhite's

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Studio on Main, Rochester, often recommends the not-so-common handheld sprayer in the tub area, which is a convenience that consumers might not think to add themselves. The sprayer is perfect for washing hair while bathing and for rinsing down the tub afterwards. "Little things mean a lot," says Lujan.

Smith agrees with Lujan that a small feature can make a big difference. "In lower-end homes," says Smith, "a small change, such as a lever handle instead of the usual acrylic, will add a different flavor to what the customers are seeing in similar sized homes."

It's about being different, not necessarily spending more. "Although

an expensive fixture may seem to be enough in a higher-end home, it isn't," says Rob Michael, outside sales at Russell Hardware, Bloomfield Hills and Petoskey. "Whatever the feature is," says Michael, "it must stand out. Design is an important element — if the faucet doesn't stand out, no matter the cost, people won't notice it," he says.

Eric J. Richards, president of Kitchens by Richards, Birmingham, echoes Michael's comments on style. "The nicest looking fixture at any given price point or quality level will probably be the chosen fixture," he says.

Whether it's the style, the finish or the feature, to catch the attention of today's



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customers, faucets and fixtures must create a unique memory that will bring them back for another look — a look that just might lead to a sale. ■