

PRO ADVISER

Best practices and words of wisdom from a leading contractor

Present all options when proposing custom residential

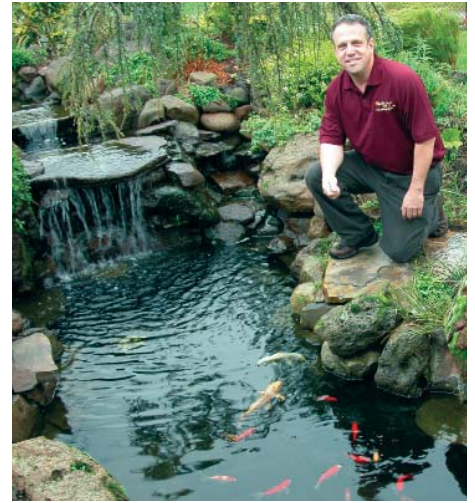
Being in the custom residential design/build arena, Kevin Burns, CLT, of Maximum Service Landscaping in Burlingame, CA, prefers not to “bid” jobs. Rather, he prepares a preliminary cost estimate based on the design that includes everything demonstrated on the plan, plus items he would like to have the client consider.

“We’re not trying to sell the client anything they don’t want or need,” Burns is quick to point out. “But rather than being constrained by a budget from the start, we prefer to present all available and appropriate options, and let the client decide what they ultimately want to include. We encourage shopping while explaining that it doesn’t cost them anything until they sign the check.”

Obviously, this often makes Maximum Service Landscaping the highest “bidder”—placing them at risk of losing an opportunity to secure the job. However, Burns says most clients are generally appreciative of the process.

“It usually saves costly oversights, mistakes and afterthoughts,” Burns explains. “Plus, the customer gets to shop and dream. This process provides the opportunity to consider their options and make informed decisions, rather than just selecting an attractive ‘low’ bid and having to pay for costly changes throughout the project, which usually ends up costing more than if everything had been considered from the start.”

Each project is different, though, Burns reminds. When working with another designer or architect, he’s careful about making suggestions regarding additional items without first talking it over with them. Many times, the items Burns doesn’t see included on the plan have



With more than 20 years experience in the industry, Kevin Burns, CLT, is the owner of Maximum Service Landscaping in Burlingame, CA. For more information, feel free to visit maximumservicelandscaping.com.

already been discussed with the client—and the budget reigns supreme.

Regardless, the most successful projects are the ones where the client is involved in the process. “Residential projects rarely get built precisely as a plan demonstrates,” Burns says. “There are always changes as a garden takes shape. Great design occurs in the mind of the designer. Great landscapes are the result of an evolutionary process. As a contractor, I must always remain willing to change. After all, it’s the client’s prerogative.” **PRO**

If you’re a contractor who has some valuable advice to share or a topic you’d like to read about, send an e-mail to Gregg.Wartgow@cygnuspub.com, or call (920) 563-1614.



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