

Remodeling

January 2008

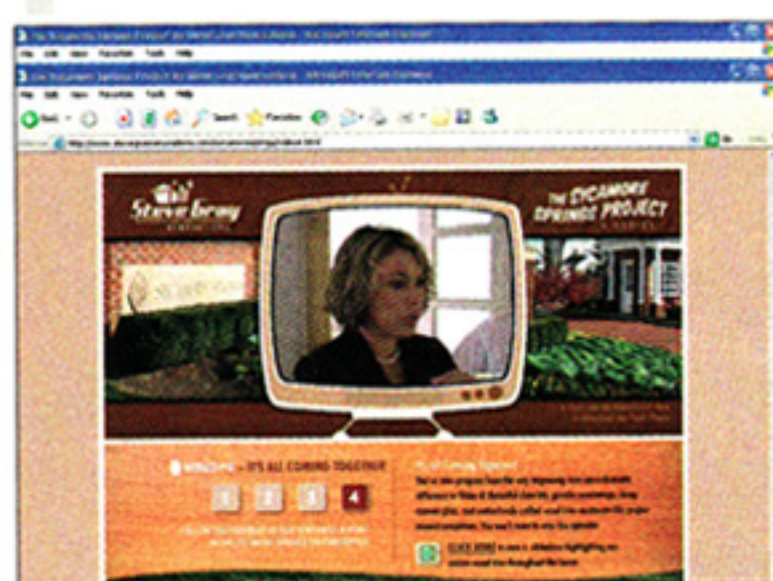


Your Business Tech@Work

When Steve Gray, of Steve Gray Renovations, in Indianapolis, went into business two-and-a-half years ago, he was looking for a way to differentiate his company from the competition. He began by establishing a presence where few remodelers in his area had: the Web.

Gray hired a design firm to create SGR's logo and Web site (www.stevegrayrenovations.com), which features not just the usual array of project photos but streaming video as well. "We started with video testimonials from past clients," Gray says. But soon the remodeler began posting videos of in-progress and completed jobs, too. "We wanted to demonstrate in real time how we approach and complete our high-end jobs," Gray says.

Complete with music and narration, the tightly edited videos introduce site visitors to Gray and his staff (including interior design Nicole McDermid, pictured) as they walk the viewer through various stages of a single remodeling project from inception to completion.



MAKING IT REAL

"What we really wanted to do was to show people our enthusiasm and how much we enjoy what we do," Gray says. "You can talk about how good you are, but we wanted to demonstrate our quality — what we do and how we do it."

The message Gray sends through his videos is centered on quality and professionalism. Thus far, client response has been more than encouraging. SGR's annual volume has grown to \$1.2 million in less than three years, thanks largely to traffic to the company's Web site.

"Forty percent of our business is attributed to the Internet," says Gray, who tracks his lead sources by asking clients where they found out about his company. He uses a monthly newsletter to drive prospects to his company's site. Once there, he's confident they'll stay awhile. "We put up different videos and photos every few months to keep things fresh," Gray says. "I didn't want to pump a bunch of money into the Web site and then just let it be."

While cost is certainly an issue in developing a high-caliber Web site — Gray estimates he spent a bit more than 1% of total revenue on his Web site and newsletter this year — the expense constitutes nearly his entire marketing budget. "Our goal is to get people from the newsletter to the Web site," he says. "We know that if we can get in front of people, it's not a hard sell." —C.K.