

Remodeling Tips

Courtesy of **HUB Remodeling** Custom Design - Professional Remodeling ❄️ WINTER 2002



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Planning Your Home Office

Home offices are becoming a "must have" in today's homes. Space for a computer and printer is already a standard necessity for many students. It is a rare family that does not desire a computer work station to pay bills, send and receive email, and shop over the internet. Then there are the small business owners who work out of their homes. They often require entire rooms to be designed specifically for their business needs.

Regardless of your home office needs, that "perfect" solution does exist! However, it takes careful planning up front to make sure the final design ends up functioning well for you.

As you are thinking about your home office, consider the following:

(continued on page 2) Attention to detail resulted in a pleasant, yet highly functional, office for a home business.



Photo: Courtesy of Aristocraft (www.aristocraft.com)

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An Outstanding Client

Ella is gifted. She began attending meetings at the tender age of 10 days, and she was just seven weeks old when work on her home commenced. She has learned to maintain a routine (?) through all kinds of noise and activity. Nothing was stopped or slowed on her account, although we could depend on her to voice an opinion when necessary. Ella was so cooperative and accommodating that her parents felt pre-



pared to suggest a work schedule that was more aggressive than usual. While it meant some extra inconvenience to the family, the sixteen week project was completed in thirteen weeks.

This extensive renovation involved replacing an existing sunroom with a family room, opening the kitchen to that family room, removing the existing master bath to open the foyer to two-stories, reconfiguring two existing bedrooms into a master suite, and building an addition which houses a garage bay and a laundry room. There was hardly a corner of the house untouched in some manner.

If you would like your own "outstanding client" featured in our newsletter, please call HUB Remodeling at (610) 688-7475 and we will design and build a project equally outstanding.

Home Office

(continued from page 1)

- 1) For what purpose will you primarily be using this space—filing, bills, computer work, large projects, writing?
- 2) What are your energy needs—electricity, lighting, temperature, ventilation, telecommunications?
- 3) Will you need privacy—sound, visual, security?
- 4) Should you include an area for—meetings, conferences, presentations?
- 5) In addition to your computer, do you need space for—telephone, answering machine, scanner, postage meter, task lighting, radio, CD player, under-counter refrigerator?
- 6) Should you plan space for computer tools—monitor, keyboard, mouse, wrist/arm rests, copy easel, printer?
- 7) What are your filing/storage needs—bookkeeping, records, directories, books, computer software, CDs and DVDs, printer paper, stationery and other office supplies?
- 8) Have you thought about space for desk tools—pencils, pens, stapler, paper clips, tape, wastebasket?

Photo: Courtesy of Aristocraft (www.aristocraft.com)



This attractive home office tucked under a stairway illustrates creative use of space.

- 9) Do you want to personalize your office with—plants, pictures, art, collectibles?
 - 10) Where is the best place to establish your home office—near the kitchen, in a bedroom, in an upstairs bonus room, in a downstairs room with separate entrance?
- After you have considered these questions, it is time to consult with your builder/designer about the design and layout of your home office. There are many options to choose from in terms of cabi-

netry, work surfaces, and their configuration. Whether you prefer a contemporary or traditional look is a matter of personal taste. However, it is best to coordinate the design and color choices for your home office with the interior design of the rest of your home, especially if the office is in an open area, visible from another room. You will need to decide if you prefer an uncluttered look, where everything hides neatly behind closed doors, or open shelving where you can more easily see and immediately grasp what you need.

Wood cabinets lend a warm feeling to the space, but laminates or solid surface are more functional for the work surfaces.

Do not forget to consider the comfort and ergonomics of the space. Having your work surfaces at an uncomfortable height, or selecting a desk chair that does not offer good back support can create backaches and other irritations.

By carefully combining your home office needs with an attractive, functional design, the final result is an enjoyable as well as convenient work space.

Countertops: Butcher Block

Photo: Courtesy of John Boos & Co. (www.johnboos.com)



Natural wood butcher block has been a mainstay in kitchens for years. It is preferred by chefs for slicing, dicing and chopping purposes. Bakers choose it for preparing and rolling dough. No other surface offers the same functional advantages of butcher block.

Recently it has been gaining in popularity as a kitchen countertop surface, fueled by the current trend of using a wide variety of natural materials in the kitchen. Butcher block is seen juxtaposed on countertops with granite, solid surface, concrete or stainless steel in an exciting blend of texture and pattern. The warm beauty of wood complements the cool elegance of the contrasting surfaces.

Northern Hard Rock Maple, which is most often used for kitchen countertops, is one of the hardest woods known and provides

a durable work surface. If the butcher block will be used as a cutting surface, it is usually given a penetrating oil finish, which can be quickly wiped clean with a damp cloth. If scars or stains do appear, they can be easily removed by sanding the damaged area. An application of mineral oil brings the area back to a like-new condition. It is always important to clean the surface with a mild detergent and hot water after you have been using it for preparing meat, poultry, or fish. Immediately dry it thoroughly with an absorbent towel. This process is effective in removing bacteria that might otherwise form on the surface. Eating counters and kitchen island bars normally are given a beautiful semi-gloss finish that is virtually maintenance free. If the finish is accidentally cut, it should be resealed immediately.

Bathing Luxuries

Bathing used to be thought of as a necessary chore. With today's active lifestyle, however, people welcome the idea of slipping away to a serenely beautiful bathroom where they can relax and indulge themselves in luxurious surroundings.

Innovative products, designed to enhance the luxury bathing experience, are continually introduced. Multiple-head "super showers" may include such amenities as adjustable overhead showerheads, ultra-low-flow body sprays, vertical jets for body massages, and personal hand-held showerheads. Super showers can be equipped for steam as well, and may even provide an aromatherapy attachment.

Elaborate whirlpool baths have become the norm, some even offering a built-in television/VCR monitor. The whirlpool action, as well as underwater lighting and temperature, can be easily operated through digital control panels. Certain whirlpools are designed to provide the sensory pleasure of a rolling river with a cascading waterfall flowing over the shoulders as one reclines the head against a built-in bath pillow.

Thermo-massage airjet bathtubs are another hot product. These systems use a multitude of air jets (34-70) located all around the tub wall to create a therapeutic turbulence in the water. Since no water is being circulated through a pump, these systems allow bathers to use products, such as essential oils, to optimize relaxation.



Photo: Courtesy of Ultra Baths Inc. (www.ultrabaths.com)

Ultra Baths' Thermo-masseur® airjet bath combines the curative powers of hydrotherapy, thermotherapy, massage therapy, and phytotherapy with the added benefit of various natural therapeutic products such as sea salts, muds and essential oils. A unique LED lighting system even provides the benefits of chromotherapy.

The bathing experience does not stop with the bath, however. Bathers can step out of the bath and have immediately at hand a cozy, pre-warmed towel with which to dry off. Available in a variety of finishes and designs—even custom designs—towel warmers add style as well as comfort to a bathroom.



Myson towel warmers are available in two types. Electric units feature a heating element inside which heats up a fluid such as oil or a gel. With the other type, the towel bar is heated through the hot water system of the shower.

Photo: Courtesy of Myson Inc. (www.mysoninc.com)



Photo: Courtesy of Jacuzzi Inc. (www.jacuzzi.com)

J-Allure™ by Jacuzzi is a whirlpool bath, shower system and steam bath built for two. It features four body jets and two lumbar jets. Luxury features include two multifunction showerheads, eight vertical body sprays and a built-in stereo/CD system complete with four speakers. A television/VCR monitor is also available.



Photo: Courtesy of Kohler Co. (www.kohlerco.com)

Kohler's RiverBath Quadrangle™ whirlpool offers various hydro-massage experiences for two adults. At one end, four jets create a constant flow of surface water, similar to whitewater. A shoulder-wide waterfall, which flows from beneath a comfortable headrest, is positioned above the jets and integrates the fill spouts. At the other end jets create lower water movements similar to a whirlpool effect at the bottom of a river.

Give HUB a Challenge

Over the course of our eleven years on the Main Line, HUB Remodeling has been presented with the opportunity to solve many design challenges. Pictured here are but two undertaken this past year.

1. This is a family room added to a home originally built in the 1920's. The clients wanted a large multi-purpose room—note the piano, bookshelves and dining/ activity area.

What's the challenge to adding a spacious room? There are trees in the side lot of the property with which the owners could not part, so the rear of the house had to be extended. Hence the challenges—a bump-out containing the kitchen already existed, a narrow passage to the proposed room from the house, vaulting the ceiling, and keeping the second story window in a study/ dressing area.

To disguise the existing kitchen extension we boxed it in, added a wall of bookshelves. By angling the wall to the left of the bookcases we incorporated a closet which contains a stackable washer and dryer.



We were able to enlarge the entrance to the room by adding a small foyer at the bottom of the stairs and partially opening the stairway. The window in the second floor study was replaced with a new

hinged window which was frosted to allow light into the dressing area but maintain privacy. The operational window allows access to the plant ledge.



2. In this master suite renovation the typical design challenges exist: incorporating a deep soaking tub or whirlpool, a large shower, a double bowl vanity, and secluded toilet—all within a limited space.

However, this particular master bath provided yet another challenge. While on a trip to Hawaii the clients had used a walk-in shower with no glass door and wanted this included in their remodel. A shower of this type has to be properly engineered and large enough to retain the water. With a wood floor in particular there can be zero tolerance for water escaping; therefore this shower was framed with a stub wall and had two drains installed.

May we help you solve a design challenge? Call us at HUB Remodeling (610) 688-7475 and let our design team create a distinctive and unique solution for you.