



BEFORE



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Inspired by the Masters

BY FRANCIE HEALY

It seems as though Claudio Falsetto began renovating when he was a child.

When he was a boy, he helped his father and extended family with their rental properties in Ottawa.

Now he is President of the award-winning Revelstoke Developments Corp., one of the top design-build companies in Ottawa.

As a child, he probably didn't realize the invaluable amount of information he was learning, but his interest, knowledge and inspiration began right there.

Those early years sparked a natural in-

terest and curiosity. How could a kitchen, bathroom or basement be modified or re-arranged to make the space more efficient, more attractive and more inviting?

It was a driving force that eventually led Claudio to his remarkably successful company today.

Besides his father, Antonio, Claudio was surrounded by a host of other family "mentors" – old-school tradespeople who did their work with pride, integrity and perfection. Claudio learned the old, tried-and-true way.

"They were phenomenal mentors,"

he says. "They worked diligently and honestly all their lives. They never cut corners and always worried about the next trade's work load, as well as the client, when completing their component of the project."

Claudio adds they provided him with a lifetime of insight on how to treat fellow tradespeople and, ultimately, his clients.

The old-school teachings served him well. Now he combines their original techniques with modern efficiency and

technology. The result is the best of the best.

Born and bred in Ottawa, Claudio studied at Glebe Collegiate and the University of Ottawa. His undergraduate degrees pointed to a different career path – including positive years in banking. Ultimately his true passion led him to real estate, renovations and custom in-fill housing.

A fork in the road of life allowed him to make his passion his full-time endeavor.

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vous. He left banking and went into the property business full time. Initially he was a hands-on contractor, on site to physically do the work and realize the changes to clients' homes.

He needed a name for his new company. He was inspired by the lure of B.C. and its authentic ruggedness, and Revelstoke Developments Corp. was born.

Revelstoke continued to grow, and with it came larger, more complex projects, including commercial projects. In the mid- to late-1990s, the company constructed many of the Great Canadian Bagel and Second Cup franchises.

With the increased work flow, it became apparent that in order to continue growing and serving clients, Revelstoke would need to hire staff. Claudio has always believed that in-house staff provides continuity and professionalism to clients.

As the workload continued to increase over the years, he pondered how to better serve his clients and grow his business.

He met Rocco Giamberardino. Rocco was a graduate of Algonquin College's Architectural Technology program. He also had a degree in Graphic Art. At the time, he was working for a kitchen manufacturing company. Although it was a great learning experience for Rocco, he was under-utilizing his skills. Rocco became Revelstoke's Designer and Vice President.

Claudio says Rocco is superb at everything visual: concepts, colour combinations



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and technical details.

"Clients like him for his ability to really listen to what they're asking for and then take it from concept to completion," he says.

Revelstoke specializes in the established neighbourhoods of Ottawa. The structures are traditionally older and require the special know-how garnered over the past 23 years.

The company's expertise is renovations and alterations. Key architectural elements found in old homes are salvaged or recycled if possible, or they are replicated with new, efficient, easily-maintained products.

Claudio describes how his staff salvaged a beautiful oak handrail,

spindles and intricate newel posts (circa 1913) from a home slated for demolition in Sandy Hill. The salvaged components were installed in a Glebe third storey addition for clients (who did not even know they would be receiving it) in order to maintain continuity throughout the home.

Revelstoke has the experience, knowledge and in-house professionals to undertake larger, complex projects, but that does not preclude them from undertaking smaller projects for their clients. They achieve this balance with a dedicated staff and in-house carpenters.

They also have apprentice carpenters. "We like to invest in their training and education," says Claudio. "It allows for

continuity and excellent client rapport."

The size of the company means the clients get to know everyone on staff. A strong, in-house staff means they can nurture and maintain exceptional personal relationships with their clients.

"Our staff often receive Christmas gifts from our clients," Claudio says. "It is a positive endorsement for us, knowing our clients enjoy having our staff in their homes."

Actually, the vast majority of Revelstoke's clients become friends.

"We get invitations to private dinners and barbecues," says Claudio. "Or we might just drop by and say hello. It's such a nice, rewarding feeling. I don't mean any disrespect to the 'big guys' out there, but we're happy to remain a boutique operation and to have

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that special kind of relationship with our clients.”

Claudio chooses sub-contractors with great care and has developed good relationships over the years with them, too.

“The sign of a truly ethical and responsible person,” says Claudio, “is someone who will come back immediately and honour their work, always. That’s what we have with our sub-contractors.”

Revelstoke’s relationships with clients begin with a master plan, or overall blueprint, of the work that can be done now or in the future. The work happens in phases and is carefully orchestrated, so rarely is anything done again or inter-

fered with once it’s finished.

“One client in particular had us working on different components to the home over an 11-year period,” says Claudio. “We tried to minimize the impact on the completed areas in each new phase of work, including a two-storey rear addition and a third floor retreat – hence, the master-plan approach.”

Claudio lives in Ottawa. He has a “spectacular” nine-year-old son. “I am very blessed with an amazing son, spectacular parents and an extended family that is priceless,” he says.

After-sales service, including the loyalty of sub-contractors, is important

to him, and it’s a big factor in good client relationships.

“People have spent a lot of hard-earned money for their renovation,” he explains. “There are some super-smooth marketers and scammers out there, and people unfortunately get caught with those unsavory types.

“After 23 years,” he adds, “we strive to continually improve client service and deliver excellence. And, we always go back to address any issues for our clients. We have very satisfied clients. We’ve been here for 23 years and intend on remaining here for many, many more to come.” ○

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