

South Carolina
BUILDER
JOURNAL

Volume 3 • Issue 5 • 2010

Detour Ahead

Builders and remodelers offer advice and alternate routes for roadblocks and bumps in the road to success.

Protecting Members
Benefits of Lobbying and
Government Relations

Builder Profile
Gus Rubio of Gabriel Builders



THE VOICE OF SOUTH CAROLINA ENGINEERING

Gabriel Builders

Gus Rubio of Gabriel Builders emphasizes the importance of having passion for building in order to be successful.

by Stacey Telloff

When Gus Rubio goes on a vacation, instead of taking time away from work, he studies the architecture and buildings of the area he is in for inspiration for future projects. "I still get excited about walking on-site and envisioning the final product. I've been truly fortunate to do something I truly love," Rubio said. It's this dedication and passion for building that sets Rubio's company, Gabriel Builders, apart from the competition.

Passion and Perseverance

Rubio's passion for building and doing what he loves has helped him overcome one of the most daunting challenges that builders face every day—the failure rate of building companies. "The failure rate for companies in the building industry is very high, second only to the food and restaurant industry," Rubio said. Combined with an inability to predict the economy and a highly cyclical industry, this makes success in the building industry a difficult challenge. According to Rubio, adding in the inability to predict sales volume with the failure rate and other economic factors often means facing difficult times.

Passion and perseverance helped Rubio overcome his own challenges in building a successful business when he was first starting out in the 1980s. Late in that decade, Rubio and his wife, Belinda, did business with a developer who eventually filed



bankruptcy. Gabriel Builders was building several developments with the developer, along with several spec homes, and the Rubios had to sell their home and liquidate their assets in order to keep going. "We had three kids and were living in my parents' basement," Rubio said.

Despite the financial difficulties early on, Rubio knew what he wanted to do and that was to continue on and create a successful business in the building industry. "I have had the opportunity to mentor builders nationwide," Rubio said. "My first question to them is, 'Are you passionate about your business?' If the answer is no, I tell them to get out because the risks are too high and the profits are too low. If the answer is yes, and they love it, I tell them to pursue it."

Tricks of the Trade

Gabriel Builders has built over 30 homes for various business CEOs and presidents, along with homes for sports celebrities, politicians and Wall Street bankers. Having passion and persevering through difficult times are two of the qualities Rubio feels are most important to being successful in the building industry. His own business is built on such qualities, and he incorporates other important components in order to come out on top of the competition.

"Our staff and our trade associates are also very passionate about what they do," Rubio said. The staff and trade associates of Gabriel Builders understand Rubio's emphasis on having

passion, and translate that into creating a total quality culture and fully understanding each individual role in order to exceed customer expectations and provide outstanding quality and value on every project.

In order to accomplish this, Rubio firmly stands by his philosophy to treat others as he would want to be treated, both employees and trade partners. "We highly value their input," he explained, "and we take their suggestions on improvements and changes." At Gabriel Builders, the voices of every partner and employee are an important part of the collaborative process to provide customers with an exceptional final deliverable.

Creating trade partnerships is also of paramount importance to Rubio. "One of our company goals is to be the employer of choice among our trade contractors," Rubio said. By paying partners on time and treating them with respect, Rubio is able to create this type of relationship and ensure that he is working with associates who will live up to his high standards of quality and value.

High Standards

Another key to the success of Gabriel Builders is the standard Rubio has set for providing excellent customer service and a high quality end product. "We have a business plan that takes care of our customers and puts them first," he explained.

While coming up with the foundations for the business plan, Rubio studied various industries, including the travel and hospitality industry. "Successful hotels give guests the best customer experience possible, from check-in to check-out," Rubio noted. He translated this concept into his own business model, insisting that each customer receives top priority from the start of their project through to the end. Gabriel Builders is recognized for its high quality homes and easy approach to custom building.

Give Back

Last year, Gabriel Builders celebrated its 25th year in business. To celebrate, the Rubios contributed to a scholarship program for Young Life, a Christian-based organization that works with adolescents around the world.

Rubio also feels it is important to give back directly to the industry that has given him so much satisfaction and success. He is involved with NAHB's Builder 20 Club, acting as chair in the past. Through the club, Rubio has the opportunity to mentor other people and share advice based on his own experiences. "The Builder 20 Club has been a great experience," Rubio said.

Involvement in the state and local associations is also a priority for Rubio. "The education that is provided and available now through the state and local associations is phenomenal," he said. "It's something we didn't have 26 years ago when we were starting out, and it's a definite plus." The education the home builders associations makes available to its members is one of the ways to stay ahead in a diverse and ever-changing industry.

Love What You Do

The diversity of the building industry is one of the things that still drives Rubio's passion for the business. "There are so many things I love to do," he said. "From the business aspect of it to the creative design to the actual construction, there are so many exciting things about building."

Continued on page 21

Toll Free: 1-800-794-9674
Fax: 888-263-8177
www.carolinacloset.com

Wood Flooring Specialists
Since 1934
www.jordanlumbercompany.com
104 Rutherford Road • Greenville, SC 29609
(864) 232-9686

Gourmet Appliances & Foodie Fun
659 South Main Street • Greenville, SC 29601
864.250.0091
www.TheCooksStation.com

TUCK & HOWELL
INCORPORATED
MECHANICAL CONTRACTORS
HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING
2009 Business of Integrity Award Presented by Better Business Bureau Education Foundation to Tuck & Howell Incorporated for Outstanding Marketplace Ethics and Community Service - Medium Company Category



2010 Legislative Day Conference and BBQ

Wednesday, November 17
Columbia, SC

Hear from South Carolina's newly elected Governor and Congressmen. Help set the HBASC 2011 legislative agenda, and then join us for cocktails, BBQ pork, BBQ chicken and all the fixins at the HBASC office.

FREE to HBA Members!

*RSVP today! Download your RSVP form at
www.hbaofsc.com or email vdaniel@hbaofsc.com.*

SPONSORED BY

Builders Mutual
INSURANCE COMPANY
www.buildersmutual.com

IOA
INSURANCE OFFICE OF AMERICA

THE **POWER** OF PERSUASION.



Pella's beautiful Mahogany, Alder, Douglas Fir and Pine windows and doors have the amazing ability to turn house hunters into homebuyers. That's **The Power Of Yellow.**™



VIEWED TO BE THE BEST

Pella Windows & Doors

481 Garlington Road, Suite C, Greenville, SC 29615 (864) 297-1280

pella.com/pro

© 2007 Pella Corporation



Builder Profile

Continued from page 19

Rubio's family is also passionate about the business. Belinda got involved at the very beginning, helping Rubio build the company and turn it into a successful enterprise. Their first son, Gabriel, for whom the business is named, is now a project manager for the company. "Gabriel graduated from Clemson and opted not to interview with various financial companies. Instead, he wanted to come into the business with us and is doing a phenomenal job!" Rubio explained.

Nick, the Rubios youngest son, is also on the path to following in his father's footsteps. Nick is currently a junior in the architectural and building science program at Clemson, and won an academic scholarship for his outstanding performance. **SCBJ**

"I still get excited about walking on-site and envisioning the final product. I've been truly fortunate to do something I truly love."