

INDUSTRY PROFILE

Closeup on successful kitchen and bath professionals

Design Firm Takes Its Time to Ensure Quality Projects

By John Filippelli

PHILADELPHIA, PA — According to Anna Maria Vona, v.p. of Carmana Designs, Ltd., her firm is the embodiment of the phrase, "Good things come to those who wait."

"When a prospective client calls, I qualify them by asking questions before the initial appointment pertaining to quality, taste and budget. If they are more concerned with time than quality, then I try to advise them that, in the long run, quality is more important than time," she explains.

She continues: "I have noticed that many of our clients are wine connoisseurs. They know that a quality product takes time to execute. It's almost as if they've made the connection that it's worth waiting for something if you want it to be fantastic — much like waiting for a fine wine to age properly."

Therefore, catering to a discriminating clientele, such as business owners, CEOs and doctors, the firm — led by Vona and husband Carmen — specializes in designs featuring "elaborate, complex, high-end cabinetry," including cabinetry for the kitchen and bath, libraries, kitchen islands and entertainment centers.

"We are known regionally for executing very complex [cabinetry] curves, both convex and concave," she says, noting that the firm creates a lot of contemporary designs.

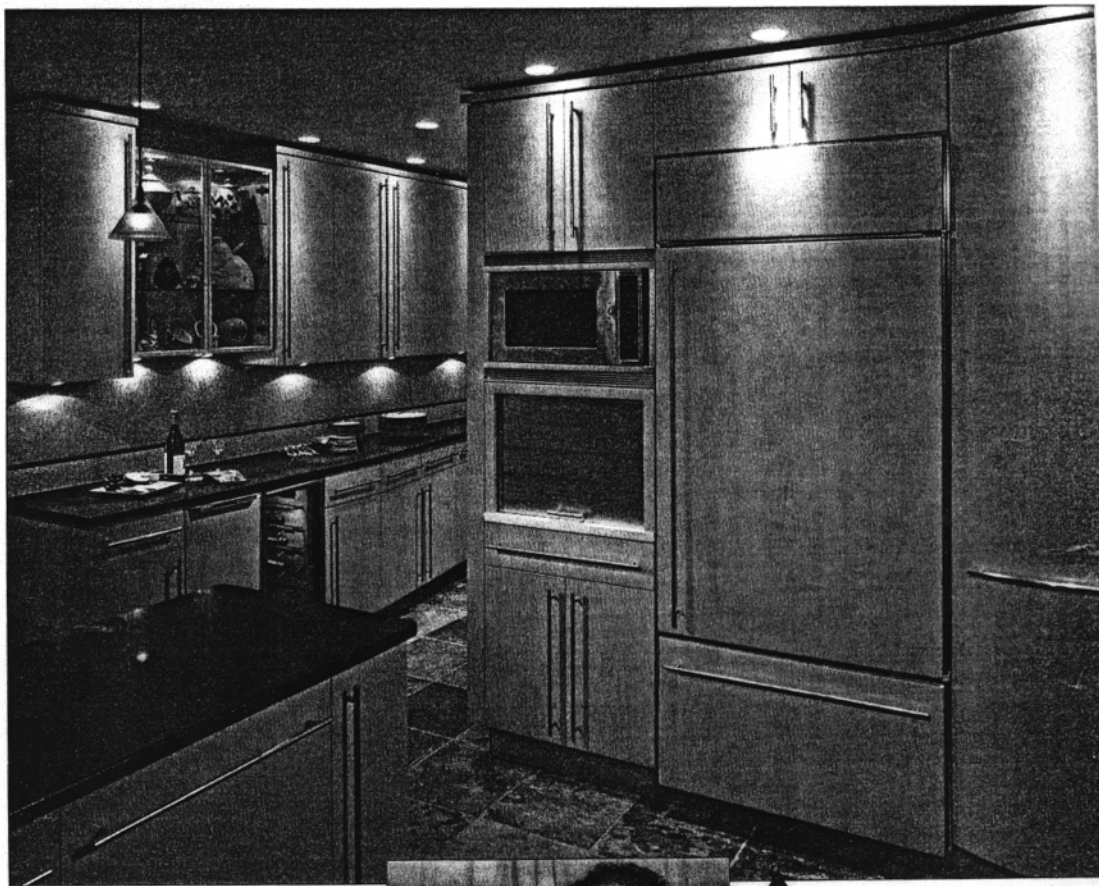
But, it is the concept of spending quality time on projects that enables the firm to simultaneously build its client base and dream projects, she notes.

The firm is the only licensed dealer of Beckermann Kitchens in the Philadelphia tri-state region, she notes, and it will also spec appliances and advise on countertop selections to help clients better understand a particular line.

She also notes that she and her husband are both avid cooks — she has won several cooking awards — and this knowledge gives the firm additional insight into client needs.

"Since we both cook and bake, we are armed with the experience to help our clients select the best appliances and best layout for a gorgeous, yet highly functional kitchen," she explains.

Vona continues: "The most



CARMANA DESIGNS, LTD.

AT A GLANCE

PRINCIPALS:

Carmen and Anna Maria Vona

SHOWROOMS:

None (One 23,000-sq.-ft. facility)

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Mon-Fri: 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

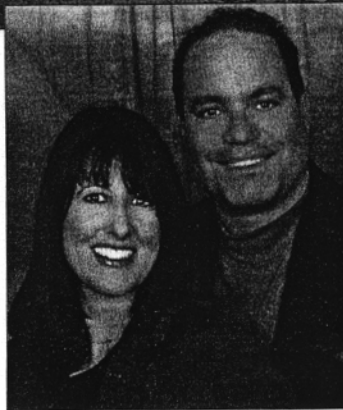
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 5

SPECIALTIES: High-end custom cabinetry including kitchens, bathrooms, libraries, entertainment units, home theaters, yachts and commercial displays.

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY:

Exceed your customer's expectations. Take responsibility for errors or miscommunication. Be proactive by looking ahead to see where things could go wrong. Most importantly, be honest with customers, employees, colleagues, business professionals and your vendors.

important thing is to retain the functionality of the space. A kitchen should have the much-coveted triangular work area, but it should also resemble a chef's



▲ According to Anna Maria Vona, this natural maple kitchen — which has earned a variety of design accolades — is a prime example of the company's design philosophy at work: beautiful kitchens that are also highly functional and cook-friendly.

▶ For Anna Maria Vona and Carmen Vona of Carmana Designs, Ltd., success stems from exceeding clients' expectations.

kitchen in that it allows the cook to pivot easily. The oven, cooktop, microwave and sink should all just be a step or two away.

"We design beautiful, functional kitchens for people who not only love to cook, but also for those who don't cook and want a smashing design," she adds.

Even more unique, Vona points out, is that once a particular layout has been discussed and confirmed with clients, the pair will use its new 23,000-sq.-ft. facility to stage projects for client review before installation.

Although this may seem like more work and time than necessary, Vona stresses that it is this type of dedication that truly makes her firm a "complete, turn-key operation."

"Our design and business philosophy is to always go beyond a client's expectations," she concludes.

SETTING THE STAGE

For Vona, success stems from properly setting the stage for clients. This, she adds, enables the firm to handle projects from design inception to completion.

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