

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Madeleine Lamothe owns and manages a Canadian consulting firm. When it comes to service, she's more sensitive to someone who goes the extra mile, not only in business but in her personal life. "To use an organization three times means we're overwhelmingly pleased with the work," she says. "Two times beyond the first time speaks volumes."

Madeleine has hired Barbini Design Build three times over the last 25 years to renovate her two-storey condo in downtown Toronto. She bought the suite in 1986, and decided to do a major renovation nine years later. "It was built in 1974, so it was dated," she says.

Seven companies were interviewed, but after meeting with Amedeo, Barbini moved to the top of the list. "He was the only person who had creative ideas and an understanding of construction."

The work included renovating the kitchen and bathrooms and a general renovation of the suite. Work also included custom window treatments.

A long discussion about the new kitchen's colour scheme ended with a timeless palette of white and beige. She says they wanted a kitchen with a lifespan "greater than a couple of days", rather than something trendy that would be quickly dated.

When the work began, "my husband was on top of the project. He was there every day, watching and supervising as you do with contractors," she says. However it wasn't long before Amedeo earned their trust. "What he said he would do, he did....He knew how to get the job done."

Madeleine got approval for elevator access for renovation materials and introduced Amedeo and his team to security staff and the head of maintenance, who later visited the suite because they are always concerned when renovation work affects services such as plumbing and electrical, she says. "But Amedeo gained their confidence







too. There were no problems with security and maintenance.”

The job was done on budget and on time. In 2004, she decided a suite spruce-up was in order. She bought new living room furniture. She wanted to redo the kitchen cabinetry, but Amedeo didn’t think the work was necessary. Instead, new lighting and crown moulding were added to update the look. “We saved money and got a good result. I don’t have a lot of experience with different contractors, but from what I’ve heard, it’s unique” for a contractor to talk a homeowner out of doing a job.

The three-month project was completed on budget and on time.

The most recent project was to renovate two bathrooms and the staircase. “The bathrooms were quite dated. They had been done more than 20 years before,” Madeleine says. “I wanted to move from ceramic to something more modern in terms of stone.”

One bathroom features acid-washed marble with a matte finish that’s paired with glossy marble to create visual interest. Natural stone was used because it’s a more top-shelf material, Amedeo says.

The first bathroom renovation in the mid-1990s was part of an offer Amedeo made to condo owners in the building. – a contemporary or traditional redesign for \$4,800. He sold about 30 in three weeks and gutted and created bathrooms with new but not high-end materials. However, he says Madeleine does a lot of travelling and had become used to 4 and 5-Star hotel bathrooms and realized her home bathrooms weren’t up to par. The new renovation took care of that.

The concrete staircase had carpet glued to it and picket railings that looked very institutional, Amedeo says.

The carpeting was removed and replaced with prefinished hardwood and custom-made nosings. The challenge was to fasten the nosings so the screws and nails wouldn’t be visible. The engineered nosings were screwed down first, then covered with hardwood. Both were screwed and glued into place.

Tempered glass railings were Madeleine’s choice. “I was intrigued with glass. Getting rid of the old railings opened up the whole condo.”

Amedeo suggested accent vinyl grass cloth wallcovering for a feature wall beside the staircase. Although Madeleine says she “thought wallpaper was passé, Amedeo insisted it’s current.” She’s







happy with the result. The limited use of wallpaper adds to the design and adds texture.

Madeleine wanted to move from green as the primary colour scheme to a more current grey tone. So the suite was repainted.

In the end, the third project was not on time, or on budget, but Madeleine says it was her doing because she kept adding to the job. “Until then it was on budget and on time.”

With all of the projects, Amedeo was great at figuring out the sequence and scheduling for all of the projects so there was no delay waiting for tradespeople. “There’s always a concern whether someone will show up and do their piece,” she says.

Happy with the results of the renovation, Madeleine says she was also pleased with the process. She travels a lot and likes knowing the work will be done even if she’s not around.

Also she says lots of contractors don’t think about

making it easy for clients to live in their homes while work is being done. Not Amedeo. “At the end of the day, there was a clean up period. I wasn’t stepping over tools. They would vacuum and move their equipment out of the way. They were respectful that it was my living space.”

After the job was done, there was a problem with the nozzle in the master shower. “One email to Amedeo” was all it took to get it repaired. “He’s responsive. He fixed the problem. That he can return and update and fix things is a benefit. Most contractors are here today and gone tomorrow.”

Madeleine says she has recommended Amedeo to other homeowners in the building. “He comes in at a higher price, but the value added to his work is far beyond what others offer.”



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