

# QR

QUALIFIED REMODELER

## Marketing your wins

*From employees to competitors*  
*Changing demographics*  
*Outdoor living trends*





## COVER STORY

# Maximize your wins

Gain credibility through national design competitions



customer service? Yes. National and regional design awards? Yes.

Feig-Sandoval can attribute his company's success to all of the above. SCAL has gained a reputation as one of the best in the area with stacks of awards to back this up.

### Marketing your business

Driving down the streets of Inman Park, a small neighborhood in Atlanta, yard signs that promote SCAL are apparent in front of many houses that dot the streets.

"Our yard signs are one way we market our business," says Feig-Sandoval, owner of SCAL. The signs are easily recognizable within the neighborhood, especially because Feig-Sandoval and crew concentrate their business within five to seven miles of the company office.

"Keeping the projects close to home allows me to visit all the projects, and it gives our clients a personal relationship with the crew," explains Feig-Sandoval. "It's not surprising to see me riding around from site to site on my bicycle checking to see the progress of all of our projects."

This close personal relationship with their clients allows SCAL to tailor designs and specifications in making each project unique.

"We take a team approach to everything we do from the design of a project to completion," says Feig-Sandoval. "This includes engaging our customers as partners on our team."

(Top) Danny Feig-Sandoval has been entering competitions for the last six years. (Bottom Left) The crew of eight from Small Carpenters At Large include an in-house designer, estimator, office staff, two project leads and a construction coordinator. (Right) SCAL yard signs are an important marketing tool for the company.

IN 1980, DANNY FEIG-SANDOVAL REFERRED to himself as the "small carpenter at large." With a pick-up truck and a set of tools, he had no idea that 24 years later, this small carpenter would be one of the premier design/build remodeling firms in Atlanta.

With a staff of eight employees, including an in-house designer, Small Carpenters At Large (SCAL) is committed to its two principles - excellent craftsmanship and superior customer service.

Spanning two decades, his quality work and customer service kept his business prosperous; however, Sandoval sought a unique way to set his company apart from competition.

With so many remodelers in the business, Feig-Sandoval contemplated on how his company could stand out amongst its competition. Quality work? Yes. Outstanding

### SMALL CARPENTERS AT LARGE

Headquarters: Atlanta

Established: 1980

Employees: 8

2003 gross sales: \$1.75 million

Number of jobs in 2003: 50

Average job size: \$35,000

Projected 2004 gross sales: \$1.85 million

[www.smallcarpenters.com](http://www.smallcarpenters.com)

## And the award goes to ...

### 2004

Contractor of the Year – Residential bath under \$30,000

Contractor of the Year – Whole house \$200,000-500,000

Chrysalis Awards – Best kitchen under \$40,000

Chrysalis Awards – Best whole house \$200,000-500,000

### 2003

QR Master Design Awards – Whole house \$200,000-500,000

QR Master Design Awards – Bathroom under \$50,000

Chrysalis Awards – Whole house \$200,000-500,000

Chrysalis Awards – Bathroom under \$50,000

Contractor of the Year – Residential bath \$30,000-50,000

Contractor of the Year – Residential bath under \$30,000

Contractor of the Year – Entire house

Contractor of the Year – Best commercial project

QR Top 500



(Top right) This master bedroom addition also included a master bath (top left), a large sitting area, a large closet and the new stairs. (Bottom) The Binglebar residence won a 2002 NARI Gold award and a 2003 Chrysalis award in the whole house category.

### Competitive designs

There's nothing better than getting recognized for all of your hard work. With the amount of passion and craftsmanship that goes into every project at SCAL, no wonder their office is filled with a plethora of trophies and plaques congratulating the staff for their extraordinary designs. For the past five years, SCAL has been making a name for themselves amongst their peers in both regional and national design competitions.

"Entering and winning these competitions have given the SCAL name a great amount of credibility," says Theresa Same, office manager at SCAL. "When clients visit the office or our Web site, they can instantaneously see the dedication we put into all of our projects, and the recognition from our associations and peers support that."

Putting together an entry for a design competition is very important. In one single binder, the design intent and hard work of a project needs to be shown to the judges through words and pictures. At SCAL, the entire crew gives input to the creation of their success.

"Our designer has a lot of say in the presentation and look of the entries," says Same. "Because we are limited in what we can say and show, Amanda points out the importance of each project."

After Johnson and Same add their input, the entire crew gets a chance to read through the binder and make necessary changes.



### Tips from the winners on entering design competition:

1. Proofread
2. Get another set of eyes on the entry binder
3. Invest in professional photography
4. Follow all the rules
5. Include before photos and floor plans
6. Always include floor plans that fit into the binder (reducing the size to fit)

work and a realistic price range to build the project.

One thing that sets this company apart from the others is its integrity. "We pride ourselves on preparing realistic, detailed proposals based on accurate costs," notes Feig-Sandoval. "Consistent referrals and return customers reflect both the accuracy of our proposals and the high level of service that SCAL customers enjoy."

SCAL uses those detailed proposals and initial drawings to keep the momentum going. Feig-Sandoval says that clients get excited to see drawings early on in the process. This encourages the clients to visualize their dream coming true.



The St. Louis Jones project shows a before ranch turned into a historic Colonial Revival (see below for project details).

## A winning design

This 1950s ranch home (above, see before and after), set in the historic Druid Hills neighborhood of Atlanta, Ga., looked small and out of place amongst the large Colonial Revival and English Vernacular Revival homes that surrounded it. Small Carpenters At Large was asked to turn this ranch into a Colonial Revival with enough space to comfortably house their family of five.

The existing formal living room, dining room and kitchen were all spaces that the clients wanted to maintain. However, they wanted to add bedrooms, bathrooms, storage space and a common, informal area for their family to gather. They also wanted the floor plan to be flexible, incorporating a master bedroom upstairs that could serve as a master bedroom until they were ready to sleep on a separate floor from the children.

"There were many details involved in changing a 1950s ranch home into a Colonial Revival, and the historical review board worked with us extensively to be sure our new design would indeed fit in well in the Druid Hills neighborhood," says Amanda Johnson, Designer at SCAL.

The designers at SCAL decided to add a second floor to the center portion of the original footprint. This gave the homeowners additional square footage while creating the traditional look of the one-story wings off the sides of the house as illustrated in many of the neighborhood homes.

"We designed a hip roof over the addition and matched the slope to the existing lower hip roofs," says Johnson. "We decreased the covered entry porch from three bays to one and used a hip roof here as well."

Other details that helped define the Colonial Revival style included a symmetrical front facade, center entry, wood shutters, double hung windows and brick veneer.

The second floor addition included four new bedrooms, two full baths, storage area and a common room, as the client requested.

"The overall result of this renovation is a 1950s ranch home successfully transformed into a Colonial Revival that looks as if it could have been originally built in the neighborhood," adds Johnson. "This project's biggest achievement was being able to drive down the street in historical Druid Hills and not be able to recognize the second floor addition as an addition. It looks as if it was always there."

Choosing which category to enter a project in is important. For example, a whole house category is tougher to win than a bath category in some cases. Also, focusing on the correct budget category will aid in bringing a trophy home.

"One thing that we've learned over the last few years is how important good photography is," says Johnson. "We document every project, from beginning to end, and then decide to professionally photograph a project depending on the potential it has."

With links to the award-winning sites posted on the Internet, SCAL provides access to these links and has found this a tremendous source of credibility.

"Our consumers are going to our site before they even pick up the phone to contact us," says Feig-Sandoval. "They click on a link to an award winning project and think to themselves, 'Wow, I would love for my bathroom to look like that.'"

SCAL not only receives positive recognition from its peers, but from its community as well. The company sponsors numerous community events and festivals such as the Tour of Homes and local charities. Another community-driven focus is on the school system in Atlanta.

"SCAL donates 'design-time' to local school fund raisers," says Same. "We are definitely a huge supporter of giving back to our community." ■

*Reprinted with permission from Qualified Remodeler, May 2004*

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