



Remodeling

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Improving Performance

Audits educate clients about energy-efficient upgrades.

by [Nina Patel](#)

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Credit: Kyle T. Webster

One and a half years ago, Sea Pointe Construction, in Irvine, Calif., added a home-performance division. President Andrew Shore invested in an infrared camera and equipment for blower door testing, as well as hiring and training a technician to perform the tests and oversee the green improvements on remodeling jobs. It's part of the company's focus on building greener projects, home health issues, and providing add-on sales to its existing remodeling work. Shore thought that hiring someone in-house would provide growth for the company and help market Sea Pointe Construction as a leader in the green movement.

Shore's company presents an energy audit to clients as part of the development stage for large additions or whole-house remodels, especially for houses that are more than 30 years old and have original HVAC equipment. So far, homeowners have chosen to add a range of energy-related work to their remodels. "We have had situations where it has added \$1,500 on a \$150,000 job," Shore says. "For just a few, it added \$30,000 to \$60,000 to the job — in these cases that was an additional 10% to 20% on the cost of the

project.”

For houses less than 10 years old, or those that pass a visual inspection, Sea Pointe Construction offers the audit as an option for \$699. For energy-efficient upgrades to these newer homes, Shore also performs an audit after making the improvements because he can use it to show the extent to which minor changes have improved the home’s energy efficiency.

Shore says that if he’s able to point out visible signs of energy loss to a client, such as the black line on the carpet at the base of walls where regular air movement has caused dust to accumulate, 50% of owners of newer homes choose to do the audit. If he can’t show obvious energy-loss indicators, he says that just 20% choose the audit.

In the temperate southern California area where Shore works, clients are less concerned about utility bills and more concerned with health issues and indoor air quality. “We don’t have huge swings in energy bills, so it’s hard to justify a \$30,000 upgrade when it takes 30 years for a payoff,” he says.

The technician produces a 20-page report that contains educational information as well as specific readings and infrared images from the customer’s house. The staff sit down with the homeowner to review priorities, cost, and payback on the recommended repairs. “We tell them that a new heating system will save them \$X per month, which will pay off the cost in X months,” he says.

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