



The Quantum Quote

Issue 10, September 2012

Anyone who's known me for more than 30 seconds knows that I'm constantly trying to find ways to make things better (big things, little things, and things I'm not really even involved in and probably shouldn't be). That, of course, extends to the Quantum Quote. So, as I was working on Issue 10, I naturally did what any Millennial Gen-er does when posed with a question, challenge or random thought: I Googled it.

Based on this research, I'm pretty sure that to improve my newsletter, I need to come up with a snappy, attention-getting subject line (*Free puppies! Only at the Quantum Quote!*), a distinct call to action (*What are you waiting for? Contact us today to make all your building dreams come true!*), a giveaway (*Did I mention the puppies? First 5,000 people to respond only*), and a loyalty program (*Build 9 commercial buildings, get the 10th of lessor or equal value for 15% off! Terms and numerous conditions most certainly will apply*).

Or, I can do what someone else suggested (via my Google search) and simply ask what you, as a reader (yes {FIRST_NAME|reader}, you!), would like to see. After all, it's as easy for you to give feedback as simply clicking the little reply button at the top of your email. *And I'd love to heard back from you!* **So what would you like to see in the Quantum Quote?** Send me good ideas, bad ones, funny ones, and impractical ones. Here are a few ideas to get your thoughts flowing:

- **Guest columns** from community leaders much smarter than me
- **Product Updates**, like the metal roofing panel I just saw that comes with a flexible thin film PV solar panel attached for a two in one installation (so cool!)
- **Updates** on projects we're working on. Yes, [Bob's Chowder Bar](#) is almost done with the remodel! Soon you'll have more indoor seating!
- Non-construction related, such **Hikes, Recipes** or **Restaurant Reviews** (I've always wanted to be a food critic!)

Looking forward to hearing from you! After I finish improving the Quantum Quote, my goal is to make Quantum in to a verb. "Oh, you don't <fill in the blank>? Just Quantum it!"

Disclaimer: No puppies were harmed in the writing of this article. Unfortunately, no puppies are being given away either, though I do know someone who breeds beautiful German Shepherds.

However, **I do have a gift certificate for a massage or facial** for Salon Rouge in La Conner for the first person to respond with feedback! Thanks to Karin Baldwin, owner of Salon Rouge and Quantum for donating the certificate!

Enjoy the last few weeks of summer!

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Playhouse 2013

The 4th Annual SICBA Playhouse Challenge is still seven months away, but preparation is already under way. Talks with a charity recipient are under way and we've begun exploring ideas for a playhouse design. Since People's Choice is the metric for the winning playhouse, [we'd like to hear your favorite ideas!](#) Our last two playhouses have been designed to maximize the fun factor and we'd like to continue that theme this year. If we choose your idea, we'll send you **\$40 in raffle tickets** for the finished playhouse.



Safety Corner

Safety Incentives

As you've most likely gathered from our newsletter, safety happens to be a big deal at Quantum. It probably is for your company as well, whether you're a boat builder concerned about general construction injuries, a restaurant owner trying to avoid cuts and burns, or an insurance agent investing in ergonomic gear.

One way to minimize injuries is to create a culture of safety in your business, with buy-in from the newest, greenest employee to the most experienced veterans. A culture of safety is an important step in preventing injuries and encouraging safety protocol. When setting up a program, take care if you intend to offer rewards for remaining accident-free.

Remaining accident-free is not the issue; after all, that's the whole intent of a culture of safety. Providing incentives, such as monetary bonuses, for zero accidents promotes this, *but* it can also increase peer pressure to not report accidents, near misses ([definition of a near miss here](#)) and other issues. Said another way, it can stifle workers from reporting potential accidents or small accidents, hiding true problems until something too serious to hide occurs.

The best way to encourage true safety is to set up a company culture that focuses on safe and correct behavior, such as wearing PPE, fall protection plans, safety meetings and discussing near miss incidents. By encouraging and monitoring the correct behaviors among workers, you're preventing accidents from happening, and you're also seeing the early warning signs of potential gaps in your policies. And that's something both workers and management can buy into.

Sustainable and Efficient

Maintenance & Sustainability

Sustainability often focuses on the new and exciting parts of green building (solar panels, geothermal heat pumps, exciting interior finishes, green roofs, electric vehicle charging...), but the truth is that often the smallest factors are the most important. Maintenance is one of the least exciting green practices (after who wants to clean off the refrigerator coils when the alternative is an exciting new stainless steel Energy Star refrigerator?), but is one of the easiest ways to live sustainably and efficiently. Below are a few suggestions for the average home or business owner to save energy or extend the life of your building.

1. As boring as it may sound, **read instruction manuals for appliances and specialty building products**, like new roofs. You don't need to memorize them, but you should know the recommended maintenance and cleaning instructions.
2. Sun, water and temperature fluctuations can wreak havoc on the outside of your building. **Visually inspect the exterior** at least once a year, examining siding, paint, gutters, caulking, window seals, and roofing for obvious problems. It's much easier to fix a seal than it is to rip the wall apart after water leaks in. Don't forget to keep an eye on your landscaping; out of control shrubs can affect the building too!
3. **Deep cleaning** throughout the building can identify problems from the inside, such as water leaks that might not be visible from the outside. Plus, keeping dust, mold and allergens at bay is a positive move for indoor air quality.
4. **Fix problems early on**. A minor leak can go from requiring a quick fix in the flashing to a rotted structural wall if left unchecked. Identifying and repairing maintenance issues immediately is a good way to save money, in addition to being more sustainable.

Building, Start to Finish: Part 6

(Editor's note: I'm sure you've noticed that our column has been leaning more towards residential construction and away from commercial. This column has been included in the Skagit Valley Herald and has focused on residential to be most relevant to readers. I'll finish up our series by bring it full circle to include differences in commercial construction.)

Our house is nearly complete! In the last installment of Building: Start to Finish, we began adding the interior touches that make a home comfortable and habitable. While we won't finish today, by the time we're done you could move in if you needed to vacate a previous residence or save on costly rent. Let's dive right in!

Trim

Interior trim includes base trim, crown molding and wainscot, and can change the entire look of a house. Trim is the "picture frame" for a room; deep hardwoods can create a rich atmosphere, glossy whites set up a bright traditional home, and so much more. Your contractor or supplier can help you navigate the multitude of trim profiles to find the one(s) that work for you. You'll choose whether you want it painted (different colors) or stained (wood tones). Trim is available in bare wood, primed wood and primed MDF.

Tips for Savings

Since trim can be added after the rest of the home is completed, handier homeowners may choose to do this step themselves. If you do, ensure that you have a good saw and miter kit. Because pieces will be cut to length, the trim stock needed can be up to thirty percent more than will actually be installed, so plan accordingly or perform a detailed takeoff of which pieces go where. If you plan to paint the trim, MDF is a cost effective choice.

Tips for Success

If you don't find a trim profile that you love, consider a combination. You can create custom and complex designs by layering two or more styles.

Trim-Out

You may recall that our electrical and mechanical contractors “roughed-in” pipes, wires and ducts after we framed. Once we have our flooring and drywall in place, these contractors will come back and install all of the usable parts of these systems, including sinks, toilets, showers, outlets, light switches, fans, lights, registers and grilles. If you haven’t already picked these out, now is the time to do so.

Tips for Savings

If you’re over budget at this point, trim-out can be a good place to save a little if you planned on high end finishes. Your contractor or trade contractors should be able to work with you to find less expensive alternatives that fit your décor. Something to look for at the beginning of your project: some companies may add a flat fee in addition to any costs if fixtures are changed, especially if fixtures are already purchased.

Tips for Success

Attention to detail is important at this step. You wouldn’t want to install glossy white wainscot and install off-white outlet covers on it. Also, *don’t* install bargain basement fixtures. You’ll pay more in labor for someone to come out and replace a faulty toilet or light fixture than you will to put in the right product first, and save yourself some hassle in the process.

Casework

Casework includes any cabinets, built-ins or other custom woodwork, typically related to storage. Kitchen and bathroom cabinets are the most common. Cabinets are available in a spectrum of price and customization. On the least expensive end are off the shelf solutions such as IKEA and big-box store brands. While there are often lots of options to choose from, what you see is what you get. These may fit awkwardly in certain spaces or require “filler” panels to bridge gaps. In the middle of the spectrum are various shades of customization where you can customize cabinets within different style lines and factory tolerances, often referred to as semi-custom. At the upper end in terms of customization, craftsmanship and price are fully-custom cabinets. Usually built by local craftsman, these can be tailored to include whatever style, material, storage options and design you like. If you have an odd shaped space, custom cabinets are best as they can come in virtually any size or shape.

You’ll also need to select a countertop. Countertop materials include laminate, wood, stainless steel, granite or marble, concrete, recycled glass, quartz and solid surface materials (which are often a type of heat treated plastic). Consider your use and style when selecting a product. Laminate is inexpensive and wears well. Stone products can usually take the heat of a dish straight from the oven, and butcher block wood tops can turn your entire kitchen into a prep surface and cutting board. Each material is available in a wide variety of styles and colors.

Tips for Savings

Both countertops and cabinets have dramatic differences in price from the low to the high end, as much as five or six times the cost. If you’ve had significant cost overruns in the rest of your project, you may be able to save some money by choosing a different countertop or altering your cabinet design. If you’re anxious for stone product, but can’t quite fit it in your budget, consider using a tile product. Quarried from the same stone, the tile is often a cheaper alternative.

Tips for Success

Invest in the things you care about. If you spend all of your time in the kitchen, you may feel unsatisfied with big box cabinets. This probably isn’t the case if your cooking expertise is limited to the flavors of TV dinners. If you’re sorting through cabinet quotes, see if pulls (handles) are included. These can range from a few bucks to over twenty dollars each and are often excluded in pricing.

The interior of the house should now be complete! While the outside needs to be touched up in our next article with some paint and landscaping, we should be able to close out the project in our next article. We’ll also cover items like punch lists and warranties.

[Quantum Construction, Inc.](#) is a family-owned general contractor based in Anacortes, WA. Quantum has been building high quality commercial, custom residential and industrial projects since 1984. For information on how we can give you the best building experience, please contact us by [email](#) or by phone at (360) 293-0656.



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