

# AIM Kitchen & Bath

— NAMED TO —

## *Remodeling's* Big 550

Beaverdale business puts  
Des Moines on the map.

STORY BY TRACY DICKINSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JJ GRINVALDS,  
CREATIVE CONCEPTS PHOTOGRAPHY





Corey Gersdorf, Pete Gersdorf, and Alex Marske.



**R**emodeling magazine's Big 550 list is an annual overview of the most successful remodelers in the country. Several Iowa companies made the list this year. But Beaverdale's AIM Kitchen & Bath ranked highest of the Iowa representatives. That seems only right for a family-owned business that's been pleasing homeowners since 1988.

The Big 550 list, compiled from data provided by the remodelers themselves in an online survey, ranks the top performers overall as well as those in categories such as full-service remodeling and franchises.

"I'd seen the list before," Pete Gersdorf, owner of AIM, says. "And when I looked at it last year, I thought, 'We should be on there.' So this year, we filled out the online survey and entered."

He laughs that the first notice he had regarding AIM's Big 550 standing was a sales call.

"We found out we were on the list when somebody got a copy in advance and called to sell me an unofficial plaque with the award on it."

What did he hope the company would gain as a result of the listing? "I didn't really expect to gain anything particularly. I assumed we'd get some phone calls after it came out, but we just wanted to put Des Moines on the map," Pete says.

That selfless attitude is part of what has made AIM the thriving business it is today. "My original business partner and I had been doing remodeling for a while for another company when we decided to go out on our own," Pete explains. "Early on, we did some room additions and other general contractor projects, but we figured out what we were really good at. We've always been strong at plumbing because we're licensed plumbers as well as remodelers, so we gravitated to those types of projects."





Focusing on what AIM is good at and not trying to be all things to all people have brought steady growth over the years. AIM has been in the same Beaverdale location since it opened, expanding from one small rental space into larger ones. Today the company owns that original building and rents out two of the smaller units to other retailers.

The extensive showroom features a kitchen area and a bath area and products ranging from tile and countertop options to faucets, cabinet hardware, and flooring.

“Our showroom is a real multipurpose showroom,” Pete says. “We want people to see the range of options, depending on their budget or their situation.”

Pete’s son Corey adds, “Not everyone will want—or be able to afford—a custom tile shower or high-end countertops. So we have a range of things so clients can find something they love that still fits their budget.”

Unlike some other companies, AIM likes to start the process with a walk-through of the potential remodel space before homeowners start actually picking out products at the showroom.

“I feel like homeowners can save a lot of time and frustration that way,” Pete says. “If you start out at the showroom, picking out vanities or showers, and we get to the house and find out there’s no room or the space doesn’t lay out right for the products they’ve chosen, everything they just spent an hour picking out is out the window.”

Whether a homeowner ends up working with AIM or not, that initial walk-through at the house is not wasted time, he says. It helps the homeowner understand the options, and that’s time well spent. A little extra time up front in the planning phase can save a lot of problems in the end.



That’s one of the things that make AIM different from most of its competitors. Homeowners who choose AIM for a project know what—and whom—they’re getting. And they get an AIM employee for nearly every step, from drywall to plumbing.

“About the only thing we don’t do ourselves is electrical work,” Corey says.

Pete adds, “Not all our employees are licensed plumbers, but even the plumbers do some of the other work. They’re skilled at everything and understand the whole project, not just one aspect.”

And AIM’s clients appreciate that. “We really try to hire people that we know our clients will be comfortable with,” Pete says. “They’re going to be in and out of somebody’s house, sometimes for several weeks. They end up doing everything from remodeling work to feeding the pets and letting the dog out.”

*“We really try to hire people that we know our clients will be comfortable with”*

—Pete Gersdorf





“For the most part, our employees tend to stick around for the long term,” says Corey, who’s been with AIM since 1998. “Our lead installer has been here 27 years, and we had a plumber who’d been with us 25 years before he moved on to a different career.”

“We hope when we bring someone on that it’s a long relationship, especially because the learning curve is long. You have to wear a lot of hats here: drywall, tile, plumbing, carpentry. When we bring employees on, they might start out really good at one aspect, and we sort of cross-train them so they can do nearly any job a project requires,” he adds.

He speaks from experience. Though he grew up around the business and spent summers running deliveries and picking up debris on job sites, he didn’t plan to follow in his dad’s footsteps. “I started out studying animal ecology,” Corey says. “But when I found out the difficulty of getting a job in that, I reconsidered. So when a full-time apprenticeship position opened up here, I took it.”

Since he came on full-time, Corey has worked his way up through nearly every aspect of the business. “I spent about six and a half years doing installations before moving into the office,” he says. Now he’s often the face of the business, managing the crews and the project schedules.

“The main reason most of us do what we do is because we have the satisfaction of seeing a completed project,” Pete explains. “So many other types of jobs, you do the same thing every day and you never see the end result. There’s just another pile of papers the next day. We get to look back and see a happy customer and a finished project that’s going to stand the test of time.”

It may be sales that earned AIM Kitchen & Bath its place on the Big 550 list. But it’s AIM’s people and skills that have earned the Des Moines company a reputation for excellence. And that’s really the award the Gersdorfs value most. **B**

*“We have a range of things so clients can find something they love that still fits their budget.”*

—Corey Gersdorf



Each year, *Remodeling* magazine names the top 550 remodelers, based on sales. The list includes full-service remodelers as well as those who focus on a specific area of work or expertise.

To be considered for the list, remodelers must complete an online application (the deadline for next year’s list is June 2016).

First-time applicant AIM Kitchen & Bath received the highest placement of the metro’s full-service remodeling firms appearing on the list at 142nd. The other local businesses to make the Full-Service Remodelers list include: Oakwood Builders Group in Des Moines (144th place) and MBG Renovation and Handyman Services in Johnston (310th place).

