



3/19

kitchen & bath DESIGN NEWS[®]

The leading business, design and product resource for the kitchen & bath trade

THE SURFACING ISSUE

SPRING BATH REPORT • 62

Tile Takes Over

PRODUCT TREND REPORT • 68

Therapeutic Tubs



SARAH JENKINSON

Defining 'Luxurious' Necessities

A FEW YEARS ago, I wrote about what it meant to be luxurious and discovered it wasn't about the price, but the emotional response to the item. Indeed, how the purchase and product made me *feel* was more important than the actual price of the item. Yes, most luxurious products cost more, but I've discovered they don't always need to. And, more importantly, I discovered that some luxuries truly become necessities once you have them.

Those luxuries are now serving as my necessities.

Familiarizing your sales team and support staff with luxury upgrades adds value to any purchase. Confidence and trust are created with your clients by the added product knowledge you and your staff bring into the discussion.

So, how do you explain to customers that little luxuries can become necessities over time? I looked at my bathroom (in our industry, we all

restricted showerheads, of course) drains the stress away. It is fine standing up, but I've found that sitting down takes the shower to an entirely different class.

Another luxury is my hand spray – it is not just for cleaning the shower. Being able to wash my hair or rinse my legs without having to turn on the showerhead is a luxury I will never be able to do without again.

I have to be honest, though: The greatest thing in my shower is the baskets. A good, heavy brass (plated) basket is worth its weight in brass. I have three baskets in my shower that hold all my shower and beauty products and keep them close at hand. This convenience cannot be matched. There are many manufacturers that make great baskets, and this is another example of a convenience in the form of luxury for a shower that quickly becomes a necessity.

THE TOILET

A good flushing system is a necessity in any toilet, especially with the new water restrictions and federal codes. But to me, having a bidet seat was eye opening (in a good way). Whether it is a bidet toilet or a bidet seat upgrade, this has now become an absolute necessity. I never really felt clean until I got my bidet seat. And yes, sitting on a warm seat in the middle of a cold night is something I definitely miss when I travel. In fact, my husband and I draw straws to see who gets the bidet seat first when we return home.

A working model in your showroom or office is the most effective demonstration of this luxurious necessity. When you put one in your office for clients to use, I can pretty much guarantee that every client that uses it will want it. (Note: travel bidet wands are great when in a pinch. Once considered a luxury, this, too, is now a necessity for us.)

THE SINK AREA

This is the one component where design is as important as function. It is less about the sink and faucet than about what we put on the counter or the wall. A good magnifying mirror, wall or counter mounted, preferably LED lit, is a godsend. While nobody really likes seeing themselves close up as they get older, getting ready to go out is a lot easier when you can see where to apply your make up. The added beauty and function will make people wonder how they managed before without them.

Wall-mounted non-magnifying mirrors are just as important – they can make a small bathroom feel bigger, they can brighten a dark bathroom and they can turn a standard bathroom into one worthy of a magazine spread. Make sure the mirror tilts, and remember that some come with devices to keep the mirror in place when tilted to where you want it to be (a definite must).

ACCESSORIES

This is where luxury vs. necessity can merge beautifully. There are so many luxurious items made for the bathroom that it is impossible to point out only a few. A good toilet brush and holder can take something we need and turn it into something beautiful.

I don't care where you live, a towel warmer/dryer or heated towel rail is something that once you own, you will never want to do without again. They save electricity as the towel is dried between uses without using the dryer, and I'm sorry, but putting a warm towel on once you get out of the shower feels simply blissful.

“Some luxuries truly become necessities once you have them. For that reason, familiarizing your sales team and support staff with luxury upgrades adds value to any purchase.”

mostly start there) and really considered each item in it to discover if it was just luxurious or if, in fact, the item had become a necessity. Would I as a salesperson be able to explain to a customer why each item has become near and dear to my heart, and why I really miss them when I'm traveling?

THE SHOWER

We all understand the benefits of a really good shower. Having a good shower in the morning can set the right tone for the day, just as having a bad shower can do just the opposite. We've all been there – staying at a hotel or being at the gym – when the water gets cold in the middle of the shower or, as recently happened to me, the shower head was so blocked up with minerals that I was practically running around just to get wet. It was almost like being at home in the U.K.

However, what I miss the most when I travel is not just how the shower feels, but the little things. Having a seat in the shower is something that I thought was a luxury, but is now a necessity and something I miss terribly when I travel. After a hard day, sitting on the seat letting the water pour over me (with water

The one thing I wish I had done in my shower was add steam. I recently stayed with a friend who had a steam shower, and it was amazing! They had all the bells and whistles – smart tech, aromatherapy and chromatherapy. I had only used steam units in spas and resorts before, but after that private steam, well, all I can say is that every home should have one (and my next bathroom most certainly will!).

THE BATH

We have a jetted/whirlpool tub – and this is a definite necessity for our household. We do a lot of our own yard work, raking leaves, stacking wood, etc., and this makes a “bubbly” tub a must. It's not just a luxury, but a medical necessity.

But why settle for just the bubbles? Luxurious upgrades to the air system include chromatherapy, music and smart tech, which take bathing to a whole other level. And did you know, you can get a doctor's prescription for jetted/whirlpool tubs? If you have certain medical conditions, a prescription may also allow you to deduct the sales tax on that item when you do your taxes.

Glass shelves above a toilet can add storage space while still being beautiful, and soap dishes/soap dispensers keep counters clean while still being decorative.

Medicine cabinets aren't just for your toothbrush or storing medications. Advancements in design now include electrical outlets and lighting inside and out. Storage drawers and toothbrush and makeup holders are now common. You can even watch your favorite movie or TV show while taking a bath, with the same medicine cabinets (and mirrors) turning into screens. Taking something as necessary as a medicine cabinet and adding the upgrades can turn this standard home product into a true luxury.

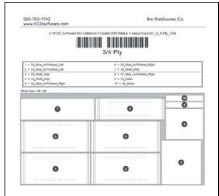
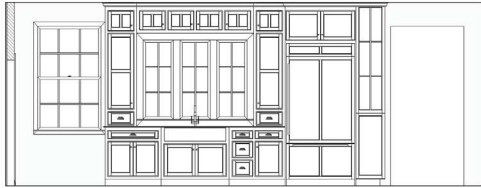
Last, but certainly not least, I initially put one thing in my bathroom as a personal luxury feature that has become the absolute best thing in the room – the heated floor (or radiant heating). I cannot rave enough about this small luxury, which has changed our lives (and the lives of my cats). Cold toes are a distant memory and while I do have to fight the cats for bath mat space, I will never ever remodel or build a bathroom without a heated floor again. If your client can only splurge on one thing for their bathroom remodel, this would be my personal recommendation.

What I learned by doing this is that we need to ask our clients what they want their bathroom to be. If it's just a place to get you wet and clean, how can we make this better for them? That might simply be the better shower valve or showerhead. But, if it's going to be their personal sanctuary (as it seems to be more and more today), then we need to delve more deeply into the customer's mind and personal vision. By doing this, we can show them personalized luxury products that can make their day better – better because we have now introduced the clients to a whole new world of luxurious necessities. ■

Sarah Jenkinson is president of Witter Enterprises, which has

exclusive distribution rights for Barber Wilsons and Sterlingham bath fittings, accessories and towel warmers in North America. Jenkinson is a past president of the Decorative Plumbing & Hardware Association and in 2018 was inducted as a member of the DPHA Council of Fellows.

Read past columns and features and send us your comments about this article and others at KitchenBathDesign.com



SPEED.
ACCURACY.
INTEGRATION.
MOBILITY.

- Free live tech support
- No annual maintenance fees
- Optional upgrades
- No contracts



KCD Software

Software You Can Build On.™
KCDsoftware.com | 508.760.1140

Circle No. 15 on Product Card