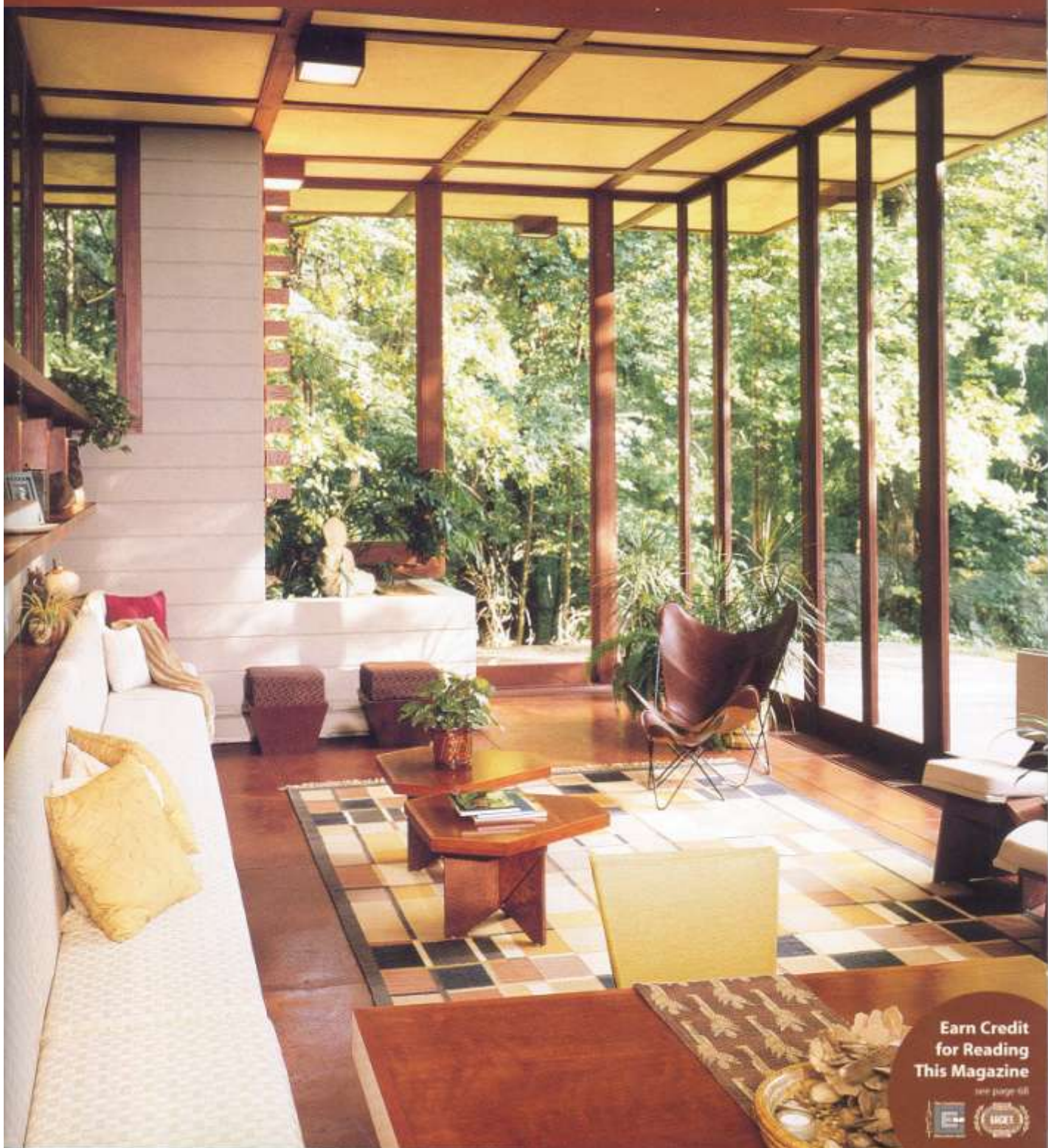


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## The Secret to Business Success: Listen to the Customer

By Susan L. Towers

**T**he many facets of window fashions led Karen and Steve Pyle of Pembroke, Kentucky, to a booming business. Established in 1998, Hang & Shine of Pembroke LLC offers "Complete custom window treatments—sales, service and cleaning," says the business's tagline.

This husband and wife team turned an interior-design business into much more after a customer asked Karen, "You sold me these blinds. So now, how do I clean them?"

Karen began her research, starting with this magazine. "I learned so much from *Window Fashions*," she says. She discovered a story in WF about ultrasonic cleaning, and decided to get more information. She came upon Hang & Shine Ultrasonics, on the Web as [www.dirtyblinds.com](http://www.dirtyblinds.com), a company that offers franchise opportunity.

Steve, a former farmer who at the time was driving a truck, jumped at the chance to get involved. Steve started Hang & Shine of Pembroke in 1998. Karen joined him in the business one year later.

"Ultrasonics is great," says Karen. "It cleans with sound waves and some water and mild detergent. It does most types of blinds and shades except for woods." The couple has a 30-foot trailer that houses the cleaning equipment. Steve drives to the customer's home, takes down the window coverings, cleans them in the trailer, and hangs them back up again, all in the same day.

"Steve's the ring leader," says Karen. "He does the ultrasonic cleaning of all kinds of blinds and shades, as well as all of our installations. I do the sales and design. I can make it look pretty, but he can make it work."

Karen continues to move full speed ahead in her own interior-design efforts—now part of the family business. To boost her career, she has taken several courses in the *Window Fashions* Certified Professional Program.

What's the secret to her success in working with customers? "I really try to listen to people. I try to read them. I don't push my opin-



**Above) Karen and Steve Pyle established Hang & Shine of Pembroke LLC in 1998. "He does the ultrasonic cleaning of all kinds of blinds and shades, as well as all of our installations," says Karen. "I do the sales and design. I can make it look pretty, but he can make it work."**

**Below) Karen collaborated with Jackie Logan on this drapery project. Drapery by Karen Pyle, Hang & Shine. Fabricator: Barbara Haydon, Haydon Draperies, Hopkinsville, KY. Fabric: Robert Allen/Beacon Hill. Faux painting: Jacquelyne Logan Designer Wall Finishes, Hopkinsville, KY.**



**"I really try to listen to people. I try to read them," says Karen. "I don't push my opinions on anyone. If a customer doesn't have any ideas, I ask if I can look inside their closets to see what type of clothes they wear and the colors they like."**

ions on anyone." She says that if a customer doesn't have any ideas, she asks if she can look inside their closets to see the type of clothes they wear and the colors they like.

The couple is amazed at how their business has grown. "A lot of it is word of mouth," says Karen. While the majority of customers come from a handful of small communities in this beautiful area about 70 miles north of Nashville, TN, customers have been known to come from as far as Chicago. They've also seen business increase because of their recently constructed website.

Their customers are businesses as well as homeowners. Growth in the nearby retirement area of Cadiz also has boosted the business as retirees are buying, building, and decorating their new homes. They also work closely with their network of friends and associates in the building trades.

Jackie Logan, a friend and an owner of a European wall-finishing business from neighboring Hopkinsville, confirms that Karen and Steve have earned their success. "I can't say enough about them," she says. "Their service is impeccable and they always do what they say they're going to do." Logan says that she often works on an interior-decorating project with Karen and always enjoys the experience and the results.

By combining interior decorating, installation, and cleaning, the couple is able to provide an advantage over other companies. The results they see are a product of the Pyles' motto: "It's service, service, service," says Karen. "Our goal is to provide the highest quality of products to our customers." WF