

## **A (Trade) Show of Strength**

How I Met Your Mother is, quite possibly, the funniest show on television – I never miss it. And while I find the whole cast of this new-generation version of “Friends” to be wildly entertaining, Neil Patrick Harris’s character Barney Stinson steals the show every week. Beyond being compelled to “Suit up!” and high-five everyone, Barney is a glass-half-full kind of guy who makes the most of every situation. If an escapade doesn’t turn out to be “legendary,” it’s never less than “awesome.”

I was thinking about Barney during my trip to the International Builder’s Show in Las Vegas last week. Leading up to the show, most attendees’ and exhibitors’ attitudes were gloomy, what with the housing crisis and all. Many people wondered how low attendance numbers might go, and several big-name manufacturers were conspicuously missing from the trade show floor.

But after a day at the show with many exhibitors independently telling me that attendance was better than expected and that they were getting highly qualified leads, a episode of HIMYM popped into my head, in which Barney (who never gets sick) comes down with a terrible cold. Does he let it get him down? No way! He suits up, heads to the bar, hits on every pretty girl within earshot. Supremely congested, and with red, watery eyes, Barney tells friend Lily “Whenever I start feeling sick, I just stop being sick and be AWESOME instead. True story!”

### **Deciding to Be Awesome.**

That’s the attitude I saw at IBS last week. Rather than perpetuating the idea that we all have to feel lousy and talk in whispered tones because the economy is down, attendees decided to seek opportunities, find ways to fine-tune their businesses, and make a decision to not just weather the storm, but plow through it.

From my standpoint as products editor, the building industry's situation is far from dire. Manufacturers who had invested in new technologies didn't let a depressed economy trick them into halting R&D. In fact, dozens of new products were introduced at the show, and I had more invitations for booth appointments this year than at any trade show I've ever visited.

IBS kicked off on Inauguration Day, and many attendees watched coverage of President Obama's address at events in and around the Las Vegas Convention Center. In his speech, the President made the point that, "our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week, or last month, or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished." Whether you agree with the politics or not, I think this point holds true for everyone. Barney Stinson doesn't let a little case of influenza diminish his awesomeness, and neither should we -- remodeler, manufacturer, or products editor -- allow ourselves to be held back because the newspaper says the Dow is down again.

Don't get me wrong -- I have a full understanding of the effects that the credit crisis, foreclosures, and plummeting housing starts have on the building industry as a whole. My point is not that we should ignore these problems, but that we shouldn't turn them into self-fulfilling prophecies. "Homeowners

can't get loans because of the credit crisis, so my business is going to tank," is an attitude that will only validate itself for the worse. Instead, let's look at which homeowners are getting loans, and go after their business with the inventive new products that industry manufacturers have just released, or will be soon. Work is out there. And as Barney Stinson would say, it's time to "suit up" (or at least put on your good work boots) and go get it!

Lauren Hunter

#### Lauren Hunter



Lauren joined Hanley Wood in 2006 with a focus on bringing trends and new products information to the readers of Remodeling, Replacement Contractor, and Upscale Remodeling magazines. When she's not in the office, Lauren travels to industry trade shows nationwide to keep up-to-date on new products and tools available to the building trades. She'll be sure to share details on what she finds on the trade show floor in her posts on the Remodeling blog.

[See all of Lauren Hunter's Posts](#)