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2014 Home Show was an overwhelming success

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If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I might have thought people were exaggerating. I'm talking about the Rhode Island Builders Association's 2014 Home Show, which took place April 3-6. I spent a great deal of time at the Rhode Island Convention Center over those days, and from the RIBA booth at the show entrance I watched a steady stream of visitors from the beginning of the show to the end. In fact, we had a 43% increase in attendance over last year!

It never let up. Even Thursday afternoon was busy. And I don't think I've ever seen so many happy exhibitors. Every exhibitor I spoke with was very pleased - if not overwhelmed - with the traffic and the quality of the leads they generated.

I don't know where to begin with the "well dones" and "thank yous."

Certainly our Home Show committee, whose members put in countless hours of brainstorming and planning, starting right after the 2013 show, deserve tremendous kudos. Chairman Ron Smith, Cheryl Boyd, Lou Cotoia, RIBA's Elizabeth Carpenter, Carol O'Donnell, Bob Yoffe, Karen Corina, Cynthia Valenti-Smith, Bethany Palagi and Mary Cool of California Closets did a fantastic job!

O'Donnell, of CRM Modular Homes, outdid herself by providing the gorgeous, 2,000 s/f model home that was the centerpiece of the show. Karen, of Corinha Designs, decorated the house so beautifully that you could literally hear "oos" and "ahs" from the steady stream of visitors.

Arnold Lumber Co., and president Bruce Charleson, also went amazingly above and beyond in many capacities in their active logistical support for the Home Show. We especially recognize Lou Cotoia of Arnold Lumber, who was onsite coordinator for the model home building and dismantling.

So many of our member companies contributed to the model home and/or supported the Home Show as sponsors! And the Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association (RINLA) certainly caught the public eye with their stunning "Edible Front Yard" and landscaping at the model home.

The Home Show's overwhelming success also means that the residential construction market has finally turned around. Exhibitors I spoke with couldn't stop talking about the qualified visitors they met and the great leads they generated. Especially after such a tough winter, this is an excellent sign of things to come for all of us during the rest of 2014.

So thanks again to everyone who helped make the 64th Annual Home Show such a hit!

What say we do it again next year, and that you join us an exhibitor if you haven't already?

RIBA's extensive visitor surveys during the show make it clear that people want to interact with builders and remodelers there. So the Home Show has become the best venue in a long time for you as a contractor to find work.

It's the year's best opportunity for you as a member to shine in the public eye!

Felix Carlone is the president of the Rhode Island Builders Assn.