



**CERTIFICATION:**

Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler (CKBR)

**NAME:**

Erin Dougherty

**TITLE:**

Lead Designer

**COMPANY:**

Distinctive Design/Build/Remodel

**HEADQUARTERS:**

Charlotte, NC

**Specialty:**

Design & Build

### NARI Certification Boosts Remodeler's Skill Set



Erin Dougherty, CKBR, has had an interesting journey leading her to a career in the remodeling industry. Prior to leaving the workforce twenty years ago to raise her children, Erin had a successful career in television. When the time came to re-enter the workforce after a decade-long hiatus, the demanding schedule of TV production wasn't the best choice for her family. While the television business is fast-paced and exciting, it is "like producing something made out of sand that slips through your fingers the moment it hits the air," says Erin. She wanted to build something more permanent and she dreamed of turning her passion for design into a career for the next phase of her life. Erin decided to follow her husband Vince Busby, who is a General Contractor and Certified Remodeler (CR), and became a remodeler herself. In 2013 the couple joined forces and incorporated their business,

Distinctive Design/Build/Remodel, headquartered in Charlotte, NC. Erin leads the design side of their business and Vince manages construction.

#### Formal Education Needed

When it came to learning about design and remodeling, Erin's skills are self-taught. "I went to the School of Hard Knocks," she jokes. "Although I picked up a lot from building several of my own custom homes, and from Vince, my lack of formal training caused me to doubt if I could charge for my design services." Although they had been members of NARI for years, and had won multiple Contractor of the Year (CoTY) awards at the local level, it was a win at the regional level that finally gave them the push they needed to take advantage of the educational opportunities and certifications offered through NARI.

The regional Contractor of the Year award comes with a scholarship. As busy parents and business owners, Vince and Erin took turns achieving their certifications. Vince was up first and he enrolled in the Certified Remodeler (CR) certification program. They applied the scholarship award money toward the CR certification cost. Vince was impressed with the comprehensive nature of the exam. It required months of study and extensive knowledge to pass. "When he finally took the 4-hour, closed-book exam, he said it was more challenging than the North Carolina General Contractor's exam - which is open book," says Erin.

After winning another regional CoTY, they used that scholarship money for Erin's Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler (CKBR) certification.

The CKBR was a better choice for Erin. "I spend most of my time on kitchen and bath remodels, which are a sweet spot for our company, so the CKBR made the most sense for me," she says. She is proud to finally have validation of her hard-earned remodeling knowledge and she encourages others to get certified.

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[www.nari.org/cert](http://www.nari.org/cert)

or call 847.298.9200

Erin credits the information she learned in preparation for the CKBR certification exam with making her a more qualified and thoughtful designer. “Having a general contractor as a business partner, I didn’t have to think much about the technicalities like framing, electrical and plumbing. I was just focused on making things pretty. Studying for the CKBR exam forced me through a window of learning I wouldn’t have gone through otherwise, because I relied on Vince’s knowledge. The CKBR made me a better designer because what I learned while preparing for the exam forced me to think about the feasibility of the design.” Erin took the certification exam and was officially awarded the CKBR designation in June of 2017.

### Leveraging Certification

As certified business owners they actively promote their credentials to prospective clients. “NARI provides some great promotional material when you earn a certification and we use these items in our sales presentations. We also emphasize that our certifications required a 4-hour, closed-book exam that is much more rigorous than the test required to get a North Carolina General Contractor’s license,” says Erin. “We are not your run-of-the-mill general contracting company – we are remodeling specialists and we have the certifications to prove it.”

Certification has also had the effect of boosting Erin and Vince’s business to premium status. “We can be pickier with projects we take on because our certifications have elevated our image. We charge for initial in-home consultations - which is rare in our industry - but it’s one of the best ways to see if a prospective client is the real deal or just a ‘tire kicker’ who expects you to come to their home and give them free advice. The backing of our NARI certifications helps us position our business as a cut above the rest and it helps us determine whether a homeowner is really interested in working with a professional remodeler.”

### It’s Worth It

“Becoming a NARI Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler (CKBR) has been a game-changer for me both personally and professionally. The months spent studying for the exam helped me realize how much I really know about this business. As a self-taught designer and remodeling company owner, I’ve spent years learning ‘on the job’ - the hard way. The process of certification crystalized that knowledge and experience. It provides objective proof of my expertise,” says Erin.

She offers advice to other remodeling professionals considering certification. “It’s worth carving time out of your busy schedule because it will refresh things you already know. You will also learn new things that make you a better business person and a better remodeler. And, it will help you differentiate yourself from other contractors.” She also notes, “It is important for all of us in remodeling to work together to improve the image of our industry. Certification is one of the best ways to do that.”

## ABOUT NARI CERTIFICATIONS:

As a leader in certification of remodeling professionals, NARI provides recognition to professionals who have met strict criteria for experience and have pledged commitment to professionalism, high standards, and the NARI Code of Ethics.

NARI Certification is a robust and challenging process, reserved only for those remodeling professionals who demonstrate extensive expertise in their field and pass the rigorous screening and testing process.

NARI Certified individuals are recognized as highly experienced remodeling experts capable of planning and managing complex remodeling projects to client satisfaction.