

These guys are masters of the home

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Contributed by: [theeditor](#)

By Adam Shepherd

intern@ntwlive.com

In a state where contractors are only registered and not licensed, and more than a thousand contractors are on the Rhode Island Contractor Registration Board watchlist for invalid, violated or suspended registrations, who can you trust with the construction and maintenance of a million-dollar home? Not everyone may be in the luxury home market, but the truth is Newport is a hot destination for those who use "summer" as a verb rather than a noun, and even those with a lot of money don't deserve to be ripped off by incompetency.

Enter Woodmeister Master Builders, a company based in Worcester, Mass., that recently opened up an office right here in Newport. Woodmeister originally started off doing millwork and building cabinets, libraries, moldings and things of that sort. Seven years ago, Woodmeister expanded and created a construction division, and two years ago the company created what they call their Lifestyle Management Services division. Basically, Woodmeister has turned itself into a one-stop shop for home buyers, builders and owners alike.

"Our main differentiator is that we are the one source that our customer base needs," said Steve Morrissey, chief operating officer of Woodmeister's lifestyle management services division. "Our client doesn't have to go into the yellow pages and make three or four phone calls. We have access to all services that will be aligned to the needs of the customer."

Because Woodmeister can stick around through the construction, maintenance and management of the house, the company has something that might be missing from the typical ABC Contractors, Inc. accountability.

"We are out to really gain a relationship and trust with the clientele," said Morrissey. "We really stand behind our work."

Most of Woodmeister's clients own more than one home, spending the winter in one place and the summer in another. While in their winter home, the client is unable to make sure that everything in the summer home is functional for when they return, and Woodmeister recognizes this, thus providing a continuous care service.

"Many of our clients rely on us from a preventative maintenance perspective," said Morrissey. "We do a full evaluation of the mechanical systems. We will go through the house and correct damages from the winter and make the house aesthetically and functionally ready for operation when the clients arrive."

In addition, home owners can enlist the assistance of the caretaker services offered by the Lifestyle Management Services division. Morrissey describes this as basically a concierge type service that recognizes that a house is also a home and is more than just alarm systems and structural elements.

"We move into the caretaker role to make sure that the kitchen is fully stocked, that the car is registered and filled with gas, or that the liquor cabinet is stocked with the best wine," said Morrissey.

When asked about the price of services, Morrissey said that it really is case-dependent but it seems that Woodmeister clients are able to afford the price to pay for piece of mind.

What you should know about contractors in Rhode Island



- Every contractor, remodeler, and most subcontractors who are in the business of building or repairing single-family homes, duplexes, or any residential structure with 4 dwelling units or less must register. Anyone who demolishes or moves a residential structure must also register.
- Registration is not the same as licensing. Registration of contractors occurs so that claims filed against them can be heard and settled. Licensing usually involves pre-qualification and testing before a license can be issued. There are no tests of pre-qualification required by the Contractors' Registration Law.
- Contractors, remodelers, and subcontractors who do not have a valid registration certificate will not be able to bid on work or obtain a building permit in any of Rhode Island's 39 cities or towns. Before obtaining a building permit, contractors and remodelers will be required to submit their registration number which will be noted on the permit. Info courtesy of www.crb.ri.gov/ricrb_qa.htm