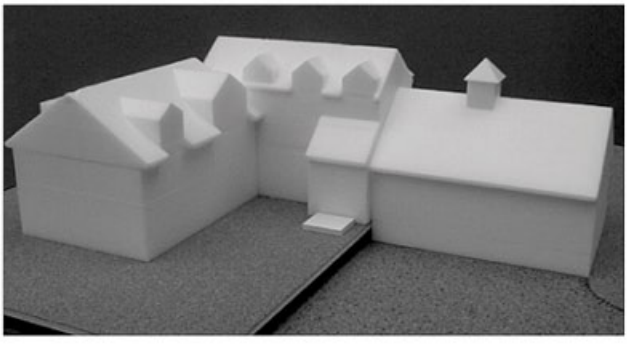
Section Editor: Stacey Freed



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True Model Home

With clients there's sometimes a vast distance between imagination and visualization. Complex rooms, intricate rooflines, and curved walls can be great ideas but difficult for a client to picture and to understand how each piece must relate to the whole. For this reason, both Thomas Buckborough of Concord, Mass., and Doug Walter of Denver use 3-D models, as well as drawings, when working on a particularly difficult remodel.

"People love to feel and rotate," the model says Walter, an architect who has been in the remodeling business for 25 years. His models are usually made out of foam core or cardboard and "they're used to convey ahead of time the 3-D reality of what we're proposing."

Buckborough's design/build firm also makes foam core massing models, basically blocks with no details (like trim or windows) to show how rooflines, walls, and shapes interact. Sometimes he'll cover the blocks with patterns and "textures" downloaded from the computer.

"The 3-D models seems to make a bigger impression than any other kind of presentation," says Buckborough, who uses the models as an initial selling tool to nudge clients toward the next, more detailed contract.

The models take about as long to create as hand renderings or computer perspectives, and neither remodeler does them at a client's request. They're really selling tools.

But they might need to come with a warning label. To help explain a complicated roofline, Walter gave a model made of corrugated cardboard to the roofers. "They ended up framing more to the model than to the scale drawing," he says, and a couple of problems arose. He had to explain that the model was just to give them a general idea. "To add insult to injury," he says, "they left the model in the rain and it melted." —*S.F.*