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## Renovating success - getting the best for less

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Antonio and Andrea Romeo are that new breed of consumer - time conscious, detail oriented, quality obsessed.

When shopping for their home they seek out items that are durable, aesthetically pleasing, and practical. They appreciate the value in money well-spent.

"We have expensive taste," chuckles Antonio, President and CEO of Oralogic Technologies Inc., an independent consulting business specializing in Business Information Systems.

A dining table with a large exquisitely carved cherry wood pedestal base and a 72-inch glass top exemplifies this fact. It is a focal point in their home; a gathering place that boasts an undeniable richness, adding character and charm.

"When people come here they always ask about the table. You can't find it other places. It is really unique," says Antonio.

It is just one of many items the Romeo's bought using the Direct Buy system of purchasing - both for their 2,800 sq. ft. home in Alta Vista, and for the renovation of two rental properties.

Convinced that they would have access to a cornucopia of products, while saving both money and time, the Romeo's joined Direct Buy in 2005.

"If you are just buying a few small items then Direct Buy is probably not for you," explains Antonio. "But if you are going to buy furniture and make other big ticket purchases, the savings is significant." The Romeos estimate that they have saved between \$80-\$90,000 since making the decision to join the "club." "Two of the renovations were major," notes Antonio. "We updated two kitchens, bathrooms, flooring, and bought furniture for our entire home." Antonio likens Direct Buy to a library. Everything is laid out in catalogues by manufacturers. The orderliness of it appeals to him. And with three renovations under his belt, he says shopping had the potential to be far more expensive and complicated.

DirectBuy is a members-only shopping anomaly. Here the retailer is eliminated from the sales equation. Customers pay a fee to access below-retail price points, and only products from name brand manufactures and their authorized distributors are promoted in their catalogue and showroom.

Most times the Romeo's had done their research before they ever left home. They knew what they wanted. They had been to the manufacturer's websites. They had discussed the options and decided on a budget. Determining the price

through Direct Buy was the final step in the equation.

During the renovation process the Romeo's sought out quotes from traditional suppliers in an effort to ensure that they were getting the quality products they wanted at the best possible price. Still, time and again their quest for value led them back to Direct Buy.

From retailers the uninstalled price for windows and doors, for example, came in at between \$35,000 and \$40,000.

"Through Direct Buy the installed price was approximately \$20,000," recalls Antonio. "Now that is a significant savings." Similarly, they estimate that their choice of top-of-the-line black leather sofas would have cost double had they bought retail. A bedroom suite and two plasma televisions rounded out their major purchases and contributed to their savings total.

Although stories of renovation cost over-runs abound, Antonio and Andrea Romeo lived through their household renovations and tell their success story with pride.

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