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Fully-integrated refrigeration is a popular product and service offering at Novak & Parker Home Appliance.

## Traditional Retail Welcomes Online-Educated Consumers

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION continues to be a market growth sector and consumer research indicates a favorable forecast trend in home building and renovations through 2020. Today, consumers interested in home renovations are inundated with options for researching product reviews, designs, and trends.

With this vast array of content options, how best can homeowners analyze these streams of information and opinions to successfully arrive at the best products, services, and designs for their unique projects?

### WHERE ONLINE RESEARCH AND ON FOOT VISITS MEET

The most effective way people are shopping their options today is to strike the balance between the value of web-based research with that of consulting experts

in the fields that comprise the renovation project: designers, architects, builders, and appliance retailers. Social media and web forums (like Houzz) play a central role in shaping the well-informed consumer. This does not, however, preclude the value of detailed dialogue with an industry expert and a chance to see your products in person. Having some prepared research and questions ahead of time will enhance your conversation, and ensure that the industry expert can tailor recommendations that suit your unique project.

Here are two examples that illustrate how this balancing act creates value for homeowners.

### SPECIALTY REFRIGERATION FOR ENTERTAINMENT

The shift of consumers retreating into their homes to entertain friends, family, colleagues, and clients is

something that has been noted across many economic sectors. Grocers, restaurateurs, and meal-kit sellers, as well homebuilders and appliance manufacturers, have all taken note to retain and capture market share.

One space of increasing popularity is that of home bars—areas designed to optimize the entertainment experience. Inspiration for these spaces and an orientation to designs, product features, and reviews is an integral part of the research process. Many products offer comparable designs and layouts, but some have distinctive features that resonate with some, but may polarize others. It is because of this that a retail consultation does well for clients in evaluating their decisions and reviewing, firsthand, all the information they have gathered online.

Built-in bar area ice makers, for instance, have cubes that differ in shape and design, which affect melt rate—something important to cocktail connoisseurs and mixologists. Wine and beverage refrigerators have different interior designs, shelving capabilities, installation, design conditions, and usage applications. Seeing these differences firsthand and talking through options will be critical for meeting expectations for design and performance.



PHOTO: AN EYE FOR BUSINESS


Consumers visit the Novak & Parker Home Appliance retail center with information from their online research.

#### COLUMN REFRIGERATION

Another prevalent kitchen trend of the last five years is fully-integrated refrigeration: not simply applying a cabinet panel to refrigerators, but completely integrating these pieces into the adjacent surround as to give it a 'hidden' appearance. Though largely driven by the design and architect cohort, there is an increasing number of consumers viewing the possibilities for integrated refrigeration (like column refrigeration) on the internet when they start project research.

As prospective consumers visit homebuilding firms and appliance retailers, they are doing so with a working image in their mind. Prudent appliance retailers will review peripheral design considerations, spatial workflow of the kitchen, and how integrated refrigeration can enhance everyday experiences in ways only an in-person viewing and dialogue can offer.

The future of astute consumerism will include both the physical retail space and online review and inspiration mediums, yet the two are not opposing but rather, quite complimentary. When online research and questions are taken to industry and product experts, it elevates dialogue and enhances sales experiences and project outcomes.

If you are interested in making an investment within your home, utilize the value of both online research and in-person dialogue and product viewing with industry experts to provide a desirable outcome. 

*Matthew Bentley is a member of the Novak & Parker Home Appliance team. Novak & Parker is a family-owned home appliance retail source that has satisfied homeowners, designers, and builders for more than 100 years. Novak & Parker is located at 1016 E. Northwest Hwy., in Mount Prospect. Learn more at [www.novakandparker.com](http://www.novakandparker.com), or call 847-259-2550. They also have a store in Orland Park.*