



## Building Quality Requires Trust

**TORONTO STAR**

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

As much as he might like to, Bryan Baeumler can't be in two places at once. If he could, he'd be able to simultaneously do the things he loves the most; produce popular home improvement shows (*Disaster DIY*, *House of Bryan*, *Leave it to Bryan*) and build custom houses for people who appreciate fine craftsmanship and higher-end, distinctive materials and finishes.

**"It hurts when I get tied up in media stuff for six months and can't do a project," says Baeumler. "I tried it years ago, but if you're not on site and don't have people there who have the same eye for detail and the same mindset, it's very difficult to maintain a brand and a name. You are only as good as the last guy on site."**

But the ever-resourceful builder thinks he's come up with a solution to the problem. Enter builder Stuart Riley, who came to Canada from England in 1996 with first-class, old-school skills in cabinetry and fine furniture crafting. Soon after Riley arrived, the two met and subsequently worked together on several projects.

As Baeumler's profile rose, Riley's reputation for good work also grew — along with a custom cabinetry business that eventually evolved into BRS Group ([brsconstruction.com](http://brsconstruction.com)), which continues to build custom homes.

Now, Riley and Baeumler have teamed up with plans to execute a two-pronged business strategy. Together, they'll begin building single custom homes, houses which will reflect the passion for

craftsmanship, detail and good design they share.

"Bryan is obviously busy with filming, so he'll be spending most of his time on that side of the construction, whereas I will be looking over new custom builds and renovations in the west area. The plan is to also do a bit of development in spec custom building. We'll start with single custom houses, but who knows, we'll possibly do multiples down the road."

**They'll also build a roster of "Baeumler Approved" building and construction businesses and tradespeople; independent contractors who they've vetted for references, liability insurance and regulatory certification.**

**Having already worked with Baeumler on numerous projects, Riley may in fact be the prototypical Baeumler Approved builder. The most recent result of their collaboration resides on a quiet, leafy street in a well-heeled corner of Oakville.**

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Constructing a custom home is a different experience than building in a subdivision, for both the homeowner and the builder, says Baeumler.

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For the custom homeowner, the higher price tag comes with a guarantee of quality workmanship, from the foundation to the finishes. "It's a bigger investment for sure, but it's one that will pay off, too," says Baeumler.

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**"We get hundreds of emails a week. People ask us all the time for recommendations," says Baeumler. But both are very careful about handing out names. "We know the way we work. Stuart and I share a passion for quality. Sometimes when you do a walk through, you notice little things and tell the homeowner you'll fix them. Sometimes they say, well, it's okay with me. Well, it's not okay with me, and it's not okay with Stuart. Not everyone is like that."**

**But the two skeptics believe they've found a trustworthy ally in each other. "We've have been walking down the aisle, very slowly, for a while," says**

Riley. "It's working well now — the trust and reliability is there."

The current geographic range for Baeumler Approved contractors is primarily the GTA, although it does extend as far east as Ottawa. Baeumler and Riley hope to add to the roster, and think the brand could eventually extend across Canada, and possibly beyond. But they're adamant that only highly qualified contractors will make the cut.

"People want you to recommend a quality guy. I have in the past referred people and it's come back, because you do take ownership of the people you refer," says Baeumler.

Baeumler Approved contractors will have gone through an internal selection process that starts with the basics — checking that they have Workers Compensation coverage, liability insurance and licensing, as well as references from homeowners and trades. "We really are looking very closely at the company, and asking if they're someone we would give a blank check to and hand the keys over to," says Riley.

Both men stress the importance of arriving at the right answer each and every time. "Everybody wants to be associated with us," says Baeumler. "But we have to be very careful about who we associate with — because we care about our reputation, and we care about the homeowner."

[www.baeumlerapproved.ca](http://www.baeumlerapproved.ca)