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The Five J's of Modern Supply



Modern's Millie

Modern Supply's design consultant and remodeling expert.

Hi, I'm Millie. I'm a certified kitchen & bath fashionista for Modern Supply here in Knoxville as well as in Johnson City and Chattanooga. We've got 12,000 square feet of showrooms, chock full of top-of-the-line appliances, fixtures, cabinets and countertops. My team and I have hundreds of years of combined experience working with residential and commercial clients (even though I'm forever young). I personally attend the national Kitchen & Bath Industry Show and the International Builders' Show every year to research trends and find the best products for your home. I'm constantly on job sites, hence the fuchsia hard hat, and I consult with our awesometastic in-house decorators to design jaw-dropping showroom displays. I do a lot of remodeling jobs working closely with Judy, Jennifer, Jacque, Jessica and Janice.

They call them "The Five J's," and whether you meet them individually or all together, they're the public face of Knoxville's Modern Supply.

It's sheer coincidence that the five women who meet and work with customers at the company's headquarters and showroom on Lovell Road all have first names that begin with the letter "J," but it's no coincidence whatsoever that they're the ones selected to serve the company's clientele. They do it well.

When you call or visit the business, the first "J" you meet, and the one with the longest tenure with the company, is the ebullient Judy Pultz. She's been there for 17 years and she's the gatekeeper and the traffic manager. She answers the telephone, makes appointments and greets customers.

She's a natural for her position with the company. "I love my job because I get to talk to people all day," she laughs.

A North Knoxville native and Fulton High graduate, Judy was a banker for 18 years in Halls, where she has lived with her husband, Tom, a retired Knoxville firefighter, for 37 years. She is an avid



The 5 J's of Modern Supply are Janice Allen, Jacque Quarles, Jessica Ducote, Judy Pultz and Jennifer Poston. Photo by Justin Acuff

UT sports fan, cheering on the football team and both the men's and women's basketball teams. "I live, eat and drink UT sports," she says. We believe her. When we met her she was wearing lots of orange, including orange earrings.

Janice Allen is second in seniority among the five women. She has been with Modern Supply for 14 years and specializes in sales and design of kitchens and baths, a job for which she is well trained. She has a degree in interior design from Middle Tennessee State University.

She is also an artist, working in both needle arts and fibre arts. She keeps some of

her work, gives some as gifts and sells others. Her dream is to sell her fibre art through a gallery.

Her years with Modern Supply have given Allen a vantage point from which to observe more than just design trends. As an example, she says that while there has been a decrease in new home construction because of a slowed economy, there has been an increase in the remodeling of kitchens and baths, as homeowners decide to improve their existing homes rather than buying a new home.

Jacque Quarles has been a showroom consultant with

Modern Supply for about nine years. She was previously in advertising sales with the Halls Shopper. She is "a lake person," who can be found boating or skiing on weekends from spring to fall.

Quarles is also a North Knoxville native and a graduate of Fulton. She has a daughter, Traci Cumins, and a son, Kevin Cumins. And she wouldn't want us to leave out her pride and joy – her Giant Schnauzer, Taylor.

Jennifer Poston, also a showroom consultant, is another of "the J's" with a degree in interior design. Hers is from East Tennessee

State University. She has been with Modern Supply for about six years.

She and her husband, Bubba Poston, who was a UT cheerleader, recently celebrated their seventh wedding anniversary with a trip to New Orleans. They are also "outdoor people," who enjoy boating, snow skiing and tailgating at UT games. Their extended family includes pups Scooby and Buddy.

Jessica Ducote, the newest showroom consultant, has been on staff for almost three years. Her specialty is kitchen design. She says cherry finishes remain popular in cabinetry, and white sinks and oil-rubbed bronze fixtures are also best sellers.

Also an ETSU graduate, Ducote and her fiancé, Mark Whitmire, are busy planning an April wedding. In her spare time, Ducote enjoys cake decorating, but she won't be doing her own wedding cake. She says there will be too many other details to take care of.

So stop by Modern Supply if you're building a new kitchen or bath or remodeling an old one. By the time you leave, "J" will be your favorite letter of the alphabet.

– Anne Hart

Modern supply enters 7th decade

Editor's Note: We welcome a new Strategic Partner to Shopper-News. Modern Supply is both a wholesale and retail source of kitchen and bathroom supplies, located on Lovell Road in Farragut. Nick Frantz interviewed owners Pace Robinson and Dottie Ramsey two years ago. Here are excerpts from that story.

"I can still tell you where the displays were at our downtown showroom," says Pace Robinson, CEO of Modern Supply, about the store's location nearly 30 years ago. The Knoxville-based business moved out to its current location, 525 Lovell Road, in 1980 – displaced by the World's Fair.

Over the years, one thing has remained constant. "People are the most important part of what we do," Robinson says. "We can buy things, we can open up stores, but if we don't have great people, the rest doesn't matter."

"We spend most of our time hiring and cultivating relationships. Attitude can't be taught but faucets, baths – that can be taught."

Robinson's father started the business on Magnolia Avenue in a one-room house, selling scrap plumbing to builders and contractors. The legend is he started with \$1,600, according to Dottie Ramsey, the company's president and COO.

Modern Supply quickly outgrew its Magnolia location and moved to Western and Dale avenues in the late-50s; then to Farragut.

"So we came out to Lovell Road. There wasn't anything here except us and a couple of truck stops," Ramsey says of the now-hectic stretch of road near Turkey Creek.

For the first 20 years, Modern Supply only sold one thing – plumbing. The company added HVAC. Then came cabinets and kitchen appliances. The '70s brought expansion with a Morristown location. Modern Supply currently has seven branches in Tennessee and Virginia.

Recently, the company remodeled its 10,000 square foot showroom and redesigned its



Now and then: Dottie Ramsey, president and COO of Modern Supply, shows off the latest kitchen appliances and cabinets.

website to target individual buyers as well as general contractors and builders. One of the best services Modern Supply can offer is its expertise.

Those expert showroom consultants give its customers design, planning and installation consulting services. For free.

"And it's not just AC where we have experience. Our people know it all. At some big box stores, you may have to go

to Aisle 11 to get help there and then another person helps you in Aisle 15. We all do Aisle 1 to Aisle 30," Ramsey said.

But, if you think that experience has led to a stale, stuffy, old-fashioned business, think again. You can take a virtual 360-degree tour of the showroom on the new website. You can find Modern's Millie on Twitter and be a fan on Facebook.

"We aren't the place to go online to find out how much a faucet costs," Robinson says. "That's not what we're about. But you can take a look at what we do have to offer in our showroom and then come in and see what a great thing we've got going on here."

Modern Supply is located at 525 Lovell Road. Info: 966-4567 or www.ModernSupplyShowroom.com/.




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