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Designing a Dock That Upgrades Your Life

Many lakefront homeowners do not realize that upgrading their dock layout can be one of the easiest ways to improve the appearance and value of their property. If it's done right, it can even upgrade your lifestyle.

Designing a new dock can be a daunting task, particularly considering the wide variety of styles and materials available these days. To make it less intimidating, Sales Manager at ShoreStation[®] Lakefront Systems, Kim Zobel, recommends the following three easy steps.

“It really comes down to choosing the right material, choosing the layout you want and picking accessories.” Zobel explains. “Above all, you want a dock that is functional, long lasting and aesthetically pleasing. That may seem like a big job, but by sitting down and carefully going over the following three steps, you can greatly improve your chances for long-term happiness.”

Step One – Choosing the right dock material.

There are three primary materials used to construct most docks today. They are aluminum, wood and polyethylene. According to Zobel, each has its own distinct advantages.

“Aluminum is very low-maintenance and cooler to the touch than wood because it dispels heat better,” Zobel said. “With aluminum docks you are also able to avoid things like splinters and nails.” If you decide to choose aluminum, it is important to get a non-skid, powder-paint finish that resists chipping and scratching over the years.

Wood is the material of choice for some people because of the warm traditional look and feel it offers. It can be stained or left unfinished. Either way, it is important to select a wood like red cedar that can withstand lakeside environments.

Many docks are also available in polyethylene and other types of plastic. In Zobel's opinion, the popularity of these durable, low-maintenance docks may have peaked in recent years. "With the improvements in aluminum docks, we've noticed that polyethylene is becoming a less popular choice by consumers," he said.

Step Two – Designing a dock layout.

It may take a little more time to design your layout than it did to choose the material, but this can be a fun, creative process.

First you need to take into consideration your lakefront's physical limitations. How much space do you have available? How far out into the water do you want your dock to go? Are there any local regulations that must be followed?

Then think about functionality. How you will be using your dock? How many and what type of boat or watercraft do you have? Are you planning to add any more boats or watercraft in the future? Will you be doing a lot of swimming or fishing dockside? Will you be using your dock at night? Will children, seniors or anyone with special needs be using the dock?

After answering these questions, you can begin to design a layout that fits your needs. Many companies offer dock sections in various shapes and sizes, making it easy for you to get creative and come up with something unique. Your local dealer can be very helpful during this process, with useful tips and ideas that you may not have considered. Many dealers have access to electronic dock design systems that allow for drag and drop dock layout functionality. These systems enable you to get a good visual idea of what your system will look like and help provide fast quotes.

Step Three – Accessorize.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part of the dock selection process is picking out accessories that make your dock more functional and aesthetically pleasing.

The assortment of dock accessories will vary from company to company. Start with practical items like stairs, railings and boat bumpers. Then take a look at those accessories that improve the overall use, looks and convenience of your dock area. Items such as benches, tables, lighting fixtures and flagpoles.

Whatever accessories you choose, be sure they are easy to install or remove so you can rearrange them from time to time.

One of the most important things to keep in mind is selecting a dock that makes it easy to add more sections and accessories as your needs change in the future. “Versatility is the key to long term happiness,” said Zobel. “You don’t want to get locked into a system that won’t be able to grow with you.”

A little careful planning is all it takes to design a dock that will meet your needs well into the future. Following these steps will streamline the process and help you upgrade your lakefront life. To learn more about docks and dock accessories, visit www.shorestation.com or call 1-800-859-3028. ShoreStation is a division of Midwest Industries, Inc., located in Ida Grove, Iowa. Midwest Industries also manufactures ShoreLand’r[®] boat and powersports trailers.