

'M O B I Z

A Monthly Business Profile
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Sternola-Brown Interiors: Designing a Lifelong Partnership

By Lisa Walls

Partners in life and business, the two-man crew of Sternola-Brown offers a seamless narrative when describing how they work as a pair, even finishing each other's sentences. With Jeff's background in building and Phil's in interior design, forming their business was "a natural thing."

After 10 years as Sternola-Brown Interiors (and 12 years as partners), Phil Sternola and Jeff Brown have grown a long client list, and enough referrals to stay busy. With skills in different arenas, they don't necessarily work together during the day. "I'm the one who designs it and Jeff builds it," said Phil.

"We like to say I'm the perspiration," said Jeff, "and Phil's the inspiration." "Phil has no idea how to use a cordless drill to put a screw in the wall to hang a picture, but he knows where to put the picture."

"That's part of why Jeff and I make such a great team," said Phil.

Clients of Sternola-Brown Interiors will come home and enter surroundings reflective of their personalities. Phil said, "I work closely with them to make sure their home is how they would envision it if they'd been able to do it themselves." Phil accompanies clients for shopping excursions, hunting down the best values around town. Jeff and Phil have focused on building relationships with a variety of vendors rather than opening an office. "Good relationships mean good values for clients," they said. They pull from a cadre of trusted subcontractors for specific labor needs—many of whom are members of the LGBT community.

The two also stage houses for real estate agents. "All houses we've staged have sold on the first showing, for full price or more," said



Jeff Brown (left) and Philip Sternola photographed in their Queen Anne home.

Jeff. In addition, they do weddings, parties, and event planning. For these business owners, events are a natural addition to interior design work. Phil's even done image consulting.

Despite their hectic work lives, they manage to be active community members, too. Phil chaired Providence Senior and Community Services' "O'Christmas Trees" Gala Auction in 2007. Professionally designed Christmas trees (at least one of which is Phil's) are sold to benefit seniors who've outlived their resources. Some trees go for as much as \$60,000. Phil is also on the Board of the Providence Mount St. Vincent Foundation. He'll be chairing their next big fundraiser.

Jeff is on the GSBA Board; each year he and Phil host a table for the annual GSBA scholarship dinner. They're on the procurement team for the Seattle Men's Chorus auction, and attend the black-tie galas for Poncho Theatre, Swedish Hospital, and the American Lung Association. Years ago they held a BBQ fundraiser for Lambert House in their yard, raising \$1500.

Whether they're describing their community work or domestic life, their affection for each other can be heard in their voices. Phil's advice for couples: Take each day as it comes and keep your relationship full of surprises.

Visit Sternola-Brown Interiors on the Web at www.sbinteriors.com, or call 206.352.1952.

For more about the Greater Seattle Business Association and its other proud members, go to www.theGSBA.org.



Mission accomplished. This Sternola-Brown client requested a room that was elegant, but also casual enough for everyday use.