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Contractor specializes in trendy retailers

South Florida Business Journal - by [Recky Toosya](#)

General contractor Barry Brodsky wears his hard hat with a style that suits his high-end, international designer clients.

His firm, Brodson Construction, specializes in the interior construction of trendy retailers at high-end shopping centers nationwide, including the exclusive Bal Harbour Shops, Boca Town Center, The Falls and Coral Gables' soon-to-open Village of Merrick Park.

"We want to be at a very high standard," said Brodsky, a third generation contractor.

That standard requires contractors to quickly complete the installation of interiors, and rewards it with fees that can be as double those at more moderate stores.

One of the firm's newest projects is the 2,200-square-foot store for Roberto Cavalli in Bal Harbour, Miami-Dade County's wealthy shopping district. This is the second U.S. store for the new Italian designer.

Juli Brodsky, the firm's director of operations and Brodson's wife, said they had the challenge of making the store "look as beautiful as it is in Italy" while following Florida's strict construction codes.

Brodson is capable of accomplishing that balance based on the firm's experience of building 25 of the 98 stores in Bal Harbour Shops.

"They are the mall's construction company of choice," said Enid Rosenthal, Bal Harbour's marketing director. "Brodson did about 80 percent of the new renovations in the mall and all of the recent work in the common areas."

Gary Karlson, the mall's operation manager, said Brodson worked during Thanksgiving to complete work on the mall's walkways for the day after the holiday.

"They stay on top of things, and they try to anticipate problems and make our jobs a lot easier," he said.

Another example of the firm's efficiency is the 6,500-square-foot Louis Vuitton store in Bal Harbor, completed in less than 14 weeks.

"It opened with a rave just before Christmas," Barry Brodsky said.

LVMH Fashion Group, the Paris-based conglomerate that owns designers Louis Vuitton, Fendi, Givenchy and Emilio Pucci, is now one of Brodson's largest clients. As a result, the firm has overseen the buildout of stores for the company in Boca Raton, Tampa, and the Puerto Rican capital of San Juan.

A high-end retail store can cost \$500 to \$700 a square foot, Brodsky said. Moderate-price stores range from \$100 to \$300 a square foot.

"You walk into the Ives St. Laurent store and you can't help it, you want to touch and feel everything," Brodsky said.

Its wood-finished shelves and furniture, the cube-shaped light fixture, leather walls, and dressing rooms with black-silk walls makes the store look like a museum.

Last year, Brodson constructed the new Victoria's Secret store on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach. The store, housed in the historic Mead building, was a challenge.

"We didn't know what we were getting into," Juli Brodsky said. "We had to add this tower on the roof and match the keystone on the columns from the 1950s, which is not readily available on those sizes."

The Limited rehired the firm to do their Express store in the Village of Merrick Park in Coral Gables, a complex set to open in September.

Construction craftsmanship runs in Brodsky's bloodline. In 1955, Barry Brodsky's grandfather Aaron and his two sons founded Brodson Construction in New York.

Stanley, Barry Brodsky's father and Aaron's son, relocated the company to Miami. As a general contractor, Stanley worked on the construction of North Miami Beach High School, Aventura Mall, Bonaventure Hotel and Spa and Fort Lauderdale's 110 Tower.

Initially, Barry Brodsky wasn't interested in continuing the family practice. But after graduating from Barry University and working two years as an accountant, he came back to the building skills he learned from his father.

In 1989 Barry Brodsky borrowed \$10,000 from his parents to resurrect the company. Initially, he was drawn to work on high-end residential construction because of the details involved.

In 1993, he added a twist to his work by specializing in high-end retailer clients including Dolce & Gabbana, La Perla and Hugo Boss.

It was Steven Shiekman, owner of Surreys Menswear, who led Barry Brodsky into the fast track retail industry.

Barry Brodsky jumped at the opportunity, and in July 1994 his firm finished the Surreys store in Hialeah's Westland Mall. Based on the success, Shiekman then asked the firm to build 14 more stores, Brodsky said.

The word about the growing 36 employee firm is spreading nationwide. The firm also built stores in Massachusetts, New York, Illinois, Georgia, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Texas and Colorado. Brodson also has an office in New York, and it's getting a California general contractor's license, Brodsky said.

Last year, Brodson completed 60 commercial projects and eight high-end homes, reaching \$20 million in sales with a profit margin of 8 percent to 12 percent.

The key is in developing a trusting relationship with clients, Brodsky said.

Kevin Bergin, director of store planning for Calvin Klein in New York, said he heard of Brodson's reputation through "the industry's grapevine."

"They recognized the level of work that we are looking for without me having to describe it," he said.

E-MAIL STAFF Intern Becky Toosya at btoosya@bizjournals.com.

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