

## This week's "10 Questions With" TOM KRAEUTLER



**NAME:** Tom Kraeutler

**TITLE:** Radio Host and How-To Guru

**STATION:** Syndicated

**MARKET:** The World. OK, it's technically just the North American continent

**COMPANY:** The Money Pit Home Improvement Radio Show

**BORN:** New Jersey **RAISED:** New Jersey

**ATTITUDE:** New Jersey. You gotta a problem wit dat?

**BRIEF CAREER SYNOPSIS:** I started in radio in the mid 90's and became syndicated in 1999.

Besides radio, I work with CNN and many network affiliates as a home improvement expert. I also am the remodeling columnist for House Beautiful and freelance for bunch of other major titles. In my free time I work as a spokesperson for some great companies that need a how-to media pro to talk shop to other media pros about their products and services.



### 1. You're a former home inspector who's become a multimedia expert in the field- how did you add radio to that mix? What got you into radio?

Actually I didn't add radio to the mix, I started in radio. In the late 90's, I had a small home inspection company in NJ. To promote it, I decided to start writing home improvement columns and press releases to promote my business. While not many releases got picked up by the papers, I got lots of requests from guest-starved radio and TV shows.

Eventually I decided I wanted to do a radio show of my own and a friend of mine who had tons of radio experience had just gotten laid off from her job. So we teamed up and went around to all the stations in our area to try and convince them to put us on. We told them they'd make money if they did. Not a single one believed us. So, we said "How much?" They gave us me a price to buy an hour. We said we'd only do it if we could re-sell our spots. They refused. We said forget it. They capitulated, figuring we'd never be able to do it anyway. They were wrong. We sold all the spots, made twice the money back and got our own show.

### 2. What are you passionate about?

My kids. I don't spend enough time with them. It's always a struggle between show deadlines and Boy Scout trips, bake sales and basketball games.

### 3. What home improvement project is most likely to enhance the value of a home? Are there simple, easy-to-do-by-yourself repairs and projects homeowners would be well-advised to do?

Kitchen and bath upgrades give you the highest return on investment when it comes time to sell the home. Decks are

also a big one. One of the cheapest and easiest things you can do is to landscape your home before selling it. A few hundred dollars in landscaping can add a few thousand dollars to the perceived value of the home.

### 4. Where do homebuilders most commonly cut corners? When you inspect homes built in recent decades, what seems to be the most common area of the house where builders cheap out?

Workmanship isn't what it used to be. Years ago when labor was cheap and materials were expensive, you had beautifully constructed homes with extraordinary workmanship and detail. Today, labor is expensive and the faster the job gets done, the better off the builder is. So, workmanship has suffered. In my active home inspection years, I'd typically find 25 or more defects in a "new" home, even after the city inspector had passed the house. While homes are more energy efficient today, the workmanship isn't what it used to be. It's a trade off.

The best thing you can do is to always insist that a home inspection be done before you close on the house. While a builder can pull a fast one on the Average Joe and Jane Homebuyer, a professional home inspector is not likely to be so gullible.

### 5. Say someone's not all that handy around the house but wants to be prepared for emergencies or small repairs- what tools should that person have around? What are the essential tools and supplies a home repair klutz should keep in the garage or basement just in case?

Caulk, [WD-40](#) and duct tape. If you can't fix it with one of these, you should probably just give up before you hurt yourself.

## 6. What's the most common question you get on the radio show (and the answer)?

We have a 24/7 call center for our listeners and we track every single call and email to the program and know that the number one topic area is floors. We're asked how to fix them, clean them, install them or replace them.

So you want one tip? OK...Here's how to fix a squeaky floor that is under a carpet.

Squeaks are caused by loose sub-floors. To fix a squeak, get a stud finder and locate the floor joist under the carpet in the area of the squeak. Then take a 10d or bigger galvanized finish nail and nail right through the carpet into the floor joist below in two or three places. Then grab the carpet by the pile and pull it up through the head of the nail. This tightens the loose sub-floor that caused the squeak without requiring you to remove the carpet.

*Hint: if you do this, don't let your spouse watch. They'll probably freak out and say you are ruining the carpet. Better to try this one when you're alone. When they get home and you show them that the squeak is gone, they'll be very impressed. Just don't mention the part about the nails.*

## 7. Of what are you most proud?

Team Money Pit. I'm privileged to work with a great group of friends that has helped me build the show from its inception. I started with an idea and was too dumb to quit. Fortunately, I found a few equally resilient folks along the way. Now we're on 123 stations and two satellite radio networks, and are helping radio stations around the nation make piles of money with the best home improvement program available today. With my new co-host [Leslie Segrete](#) from the TV show "While You Were Out", we're the only show that gives both a male and female perspective to home improvement programming.

## 8. What do you do for fun?

Build stuff. I'm working on a garage shop/studio now to film some of my TV projects. I find home improvement to be very therapeutic, especially useful since as all radio people know by now psychoanalysis is not covered by medical insurance.

## 9. Fill in the blank: I can't make it through the day without \_\_\_\_\_.

...my [Blackberry](#). I suffer extreme-yuppie-stress if I don't know what's going on at Money Pit Headquarters in our quest for total world domination of home improvement radio.

## 10. What's the best advice you ever got? The worst?

The best advice came from my college advisor, Dr. John Hutchinson. I was in college and getting ready to graduate but not quite ready to decide what I wanted to do for a career. Hutch told me that you never have to decide what you want to do for the rest of your life. You only have to decide what you want to do next. He was right and I have been deciding what I wanted to do next ever since.

The worst advice was from my high school guidance counselor, an older woman who apparently was promoted to the position of guidance counselor to keep her from teaching impressionable children. She told me that since I was handy, I should to skip college and go to a trade school to learn how to become a model maker. Now I do a national radio show, appear on major market television programs and write for some great publications. The only models I make are with my kids. Say – have you seen those new motorized "[Zoids](#)" models? Damn, they are cool! ■

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Tom Kraeutler  
Host

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