

Choosing A Remodelor

Before you Meet a Remodeler

Develop a basic idea of what you want/need. Then, create a prioritized list. Divide your needs and wants into three categories. Category 1 items must be part of the project at all costs. Category 2 items should be included if the final design and/or budget permits. Category 3 items would be nice, but are not necessary. If your list is not very large, chances are you'll be able to get everything. However, the creation of this list is important if you want to receive accurate bids from remodeling contractors.

Next, visualize your finished remodeling project by looking at lots of pictures in magazines and books. Place the pictures you like in a special file to show remodeling contractors.

Lastly, figure out how much money you have to spend on the remodeling job, the furnishings, the landscaping, etc. If necessary, talk to lenders and find out how much you can borrow.

Begin the Search

Seek contractor referrals from friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers and others you know who have had remodeling work done. Next, talk to independent trade contractors, building material suppliers, architects, engineers, residential inspectors, banks and lenders. This way, you will trim your list to a practical number of remodeling contractors.

Questions to Ask

BUSINESS EXPERIENCE AND MANAGEMENT

Does the remodeling contractor:

- * Maintain a permanent mailing address, phone number and pager/answering system?
- * Carry liability insurance that protects you from claims arising from property damage or job-site injuries? Can he or she provide a copy of the policy to you?
- * Maintain solid relationships with experienced independent trade contractors (such as plumbers and electricians)?
- * Have a track record of successful projects similar to yours?

CONSTRUCTION AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Does the remodeling contractor:

- * Offer an array of products and materials?
- * Specialize in particular types of remodeling projects?
- * Offer a warranty? If so, what kind and for how long? What is covered under warranty and what is not?
- * Agree in writing to begin and complete your job on a specified timetable?

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMMUNICATION

Does the remodeling contractor:

- * Respond promptly to your inquiries?
- * Emphasize service?
- * Want to work with you to ensure that the timetable accurately reflects your expectations?
- * Suggest ways to make your ideas work within your budget?
- * Facilitate communication among all parties involved in the project, including subcontractors?
- * Provide you with schedule updates so you can make appropriate product decisions and prepare for any unavoidable inconveniences?

The Final Check

Before you make your final decision, you should also try to interview previous and/or present customers of your final choice(s). In addition, take the time to see samples of each contractor's work.

Remember, low price alone does not ensure a successful remodeling experience. By doing your homework, you will find an experienced remodeler with a track record of varied, excellent projects.



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