



You and Your Contractor – Business Partners

Home builders and remodelers can fill your house with splendid amenities and build the home of your dreams. But first you must establish a business partnership with the right contractor. Make certain you and your contractor can agree on a method for reaching a mutual goal — your ideal house!

Do your homework before hiring a contractor. If you take the following steps, you will be likely to maintain a good working relationship with your contractor for the duration of the building or remodeling process.

When looking to hire a contractor, you should:

Ask for referrals. Call your local home builders association, which can give you lists of its members who do the kind of work you need done. Ask your neighbors and friends for names of contractors with whom they have worked. And for new homes, check out newspaper ads for the types and price ranges of homes being built in your area.

Look for a contractor who has done projects similar to yours.

Ask prospective contractors for a tentative job schedule. Contractors cannot always determine the exact amount of time they will need to complete projects because they cannot control some factors such as whether or back-ordered building materials. But they can usually give you a rough estimate.

Talk about change orders. Sometime during the building or remodeling process you might want to change your order. Ask prospective contractors the procedure they use for placing change orders. Most change orders include a description of the change, cost implications and resulting schedule delays.

Ask for a written estimate of the work to be done based on a set of plans and specifications.

If you compare your estimate with another, be sure each one is based on the same set of plans and specifications. You can't effectively compare estimates from contractors who plan to use different brands of building materials. If a contractor suggests deviations, ask him or her to present those ideas as options.

Let contractors know you are not only interested in the lowest bid.

Trust your instincts. If you take the proper steps and ask the right questions, you will develop a sense of which contractor is best suited to complete your project. Meet with each prospective contractor one-on-one to discuss what you want done. Ask the contractor to explain how the project would progress. Choose a contractor who acts professionally and takes the job seriously.

After you've selected your contractor, you will need to sign a written contract. Most contract agreements include: job specifications; lists of necessary materials (including brand names, colors, sizes etc.); final cost estimates; a payment schedule; a change-order clause; and estimated start and completion dates.

After you select your contractor sit back, relax and watch your dreams into reality.