

CHOOSING THE RIGHT REMODELER

MAKE A LIST: Check with local trade associations, independent trade contractors, building materials suppliers, architects, engineers, home inspectors, local lenders, and insurance professionals. Friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and others who have had remodeling work done are also excellent resources.

ASK QUESTIONS:

Does the remodeler:

- Maintain a permanent mailing address, e-mail address, published personal phone number, fax number, and a cell phone, pager, or voice-messaging system? You will want to be able to reach the remodeler quickly and easily, especially at critical times.
- Carry insurance that protects you from claims arising from property damage or jobsite injuries?
- Have a track record of successful projects similar to one you are planning?
- Have a working knowledge of the many types and ages of homes in the area. Knowing what is likely to be behind a wall or under a floor helps the remodeler to provide reliable estimates. An extremely low bid may indicate lack of experience and an inability to later cover the actual costs involved in the job and create unnecessary change orders.
- Specialize in particular types of projects?
- Arrange for the building permit? (The person who obtains the permit is the contractor of record and therefore liable for the work).
- Offer a warranty? If so, what kind and for how long?
- Agree to begin and complete your job within a reasonable timetable?
- Respond promptly to your inquiries?
- Schedule meetings and attend them on time?
- Emphasize service and developing a trusting relationship with you?
- Listen to and understand your needs and wants and work with you to ensure that the plans for your job accurately reflect your expectations?
- How long has the company been in business under this name? Longevity suggests financial stability.
- Ask for a list of building materials suppliers and call them to see if the remodeler has an account or pays for materials on delivery. Most suppliers are willing to extend credit to financially sound companies.

GET REFERENCES:

Ask the homeowners:

- Would you hire this company again?
- Did the remodeler maintain a neat jobsite, provide regular broom clean-up, and haul away debris including personal trash?
- Did the remodeler keep labor and materials delays to a minimum so that your job could be started and completed on time and within budget?
- Did you find the remodeler easy to work with? Did the remodeler keep you informed as the job progressed?
- Did the remodeler supply you with paperwork in a timely fashion?
- How well did the remodeler deal with the problems that arose?

If you are satisfied with the answers to your questions, ask for a written estimate of the work to be done based on a set of plans and specifications. Be prepared to pay for this package. Ask the remodeler to explain the plans and specifications and company procedures to you. Select the remodeler with a track record of a variety of excellent projects and plenty of experience with your type of project. Beware of an exceptionally low price.