



## Selecting a Contractor

Besides a good design, the most important aspect of a satisfying remodeling project is selecting the right contractor. You need to select a firm that 1) has the skill to do a quality project in a reasonable amount of time, 2) will provide the best service within your budget, 3) will take care of you and your house. In short, you need to select a firm you are comfortable with, one that gives you a high level of confidence in their ability to get the job done.

### How to select your contractor:

- Get recommendations from friends, family or neighbors who have had similar projects done with satisfactory results.
- Contact local trade associations for contractor members. These associations have ethics guidelines and standards of practice that their members must uphold. These associations also have national certifications that require a committed effort to achieve.
  - National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI), 222-6274.
  - Home Builders Association (HBA), 298-2900.
- Contact the Better Business Bureau (BBB) at 222-5825 before calling a contractor. They can provide information about complaints against a contractor. Just as importantly, they can provide information about how complaints have been resolved.
- Get three estimates. Estimates should be clear and detailed. Be sure that all the contractors' bids cover the same scope and quality of work. Beware of a bid that varies from the plan or is significantly lower than the others. The old adage "you get what you pay for" is true for remodeling. Quality takes time and skill, and that often means more money.
- Ask for references from the contractor. Absolutely call the references. Ask lots of questions, and ask to see as many of their projects as possible. Most homeowners are happy to show off successful projects. Checking references and looking at projects similar to yours is the most important thing you can do prior to selecting a contractor.

### Questions to ask a potential contractor:

- How long have you been in business?
- Are you a NARI or HBA member?
- Is your company a full-service firm? Can you do it all?
- Do you have employees or do you rely on sub-contractors?

- Are any of your employees certified by NARI or HBA?
- Do you carry liability insurance and workers' compensation?
- How many projects like this have you done in the last year?
- When could you start this project?
- Will we need permits for this project?

**What to look for:**

- Company is known in your local area.
- Company has been in business over five years.
- Good standing with BBB.
- Member of NARI or HBA.
- Certifications: Certified Remodeler (NARI), Certified Graduate Remodeler (HBA).
- Proof of workers' compensation and liability insurance.

**What to look *out* for:**

- Acquaintance that is a "handyman".
- Someone who does the work on the side.
- Calling unfamiliar contractors in the phone book.
- Quick estimates.
- A very low estimate.
- Request for money up front.
- A post office box address.
- Telemarketers and door-to-door solicitation.
- A reluctance to get permits.

**When you have made your selection:**

- Make sure you have a clear contract that details the work to be done, the materials to be used, the quality of the work and materials, when the job is to start and when it is to be completed, a payment schedule, and how change orders and discrepancies shall be resolved.
- Get a copy of liability insurance and workers' compensation.
- Ask to see the permit and city-approved drawings before work commences.