

7 Little Known Secrets

to Successfully and Beautifully
Remodel Your Home

If you are like most people, you have seen the horror stories on Dateline, 20/20, consumer protection shows, and in the local newspaper. You know about the scams and other deceptions used by independents and contractors.

Anybody can ask for the price, but do you know the right questions to ask regardless of the price?

Haven't we all heard the "nightmare stories" of the high pressure sales people, botched jobs, scam artists, fly-by-nighters, unfinished jobs and a general lack of professionalism? Let's face it: the bad apples of the industry have really made it hard for the consumer to figure out the "good guys" from the "bad guys."

You can't pick up a paper or watch TV without seeing another story about someone who had a terrible experience with his or her remodeling project.

Secret #1 – Avoid the Two Biggest Misconceptions About Remodeling

1. **Misconception Number One:** Don't just believe what the contractor tells you, make him show you! This is a common and costly mistake. Many contractors tell you they are member of an organization, but they have no proof of it. If they have no proof, you need to investigate the company further. Don't ever make a decision just based on the contractor's here say.
2. **Misconception Number Two:** Going with the lowest price saves you money. No, not necessarily! Everyone tends to look for the lowest price. On a low estimate, you must ask yourself "what is being left out" or what shortcut is being taken. Everyone wants three things whenever they are making a purchase: Low Prices, the Best Quality and the Best Service. It's impossible to get all three, hence the old adage "you get what you pay for." You must ask yourself "which of the three am I willing to give up?" Let me explain...

Secret #2 – Don't Fall For the Common Scams

The most common ploy disreputable contractors use to pressure folks into signing a contract is the model home discount. This is an old "tin man" (aluminum siding) sales story that promises you a steep discount for signing a contract right then.

The scam centers in the need to use your home as a model to advertise their services in the neighborhood to get more jobs. If you allow them to use your home as a "show home" for advertising purposes, they'll rebate several thousands of dollars to you. The only catch is that you must sign now! This trick is as old as they come, yet it still nets hundreds and hundreds of people!

If a contractor is offering some "special" deal, ask them to legitimize what they are offering. For example, if it is an advertising promotion they are offering, ask them for documentation of samples of flyers or literature that they are intending to mail or hand deliver.

Secret #3 – Beware of the "Door to Door" Handyman

7 Little Known Secrets

to Successfully and Beautifully
Remodel Your Home

These people many not be contractors at all. Never allow them into your home until you have checked them out thoroughly! This can't be stressed enough! You have seen or heard the stories many times on the nightly news and news shows about two men claiming to be contractors entering homes. One took the homeowner on a pretend sales call or inspection while the other guy was going through purses and other belongings

If they happen to be a real company, often times these companies will do a sloppy job (if they even do the job at all.) Some start the job and never finish. Others are just looking to get a sizable down payment and run off with your hard-earned money. It can be so frustrating trying to chase after these guys, getting them to come back and finish the job or clean up a messy work site.

What's worse? Often their work is so inferior, you may need to hire someone else, at an *additional expense to you*, to come and fix up all the screw-ups!

Remember that you can't get something for nothing! If someone gives you a "honey of a price" that seems too good to be true, it probably is!

Secret #4 - How to Choose the Right Contractor

Questions to ask a contractor BEFORE you invite them into your home.

1. Are you licensed? Contractors who do not want to go that extra step to get the licenses may not go that extra step in doing your job either.
2. Do you carry general liability insurance? This type of insurance protects your property in case of damage caused by the contractor and/or repairing any damage that occurs.
3. Do you carry workman's compensation insurance? Be aware that if your contractor doesn't carry the coverage, you may be liable for any injuries suffered by any of the contractor's employees on your property. Some contractors will tell you that your homeowner insurance will cover them against injury. Do not believe that lie.
4. Are you a member of the Home Builders Better Business Bureau or any other building group? In most cases these associations attract only conscientious contractors interested in improving the industry and weeding out unprofessional builders and remodelers. Secondly, in order to become a member, these associations investigate a contractor's background and references. Third, all members must sign a written code of ethics and pledge to professionalism. Most members take this pledge very seriously.
5. Will you pull the required permits? When a contractor pulls the require permits, you know things will be done to "code." Many prefer not to pull. This could be a warning sign that they aren't able to pull the permits because they are unlicensed, or the work is outside their license. A reputable contractor will pull a permit on every job where a permit is required.

7 Little Known Secrets

to Successfully and Beautifully
Remodel Your Home

6. Do you guarantee your work? Your contractor should guarantee their work.
7. Who will be in charge of the job? Make sure the contractor or his job supervisor is on the job whenever work is being performed.
8. What percentage of your business is repeat or referral business?
9. How many projects like mine have you completed in the last year?
10. How do you handle your clean up?

Secret #5 – The Biggest Mistake Homeowners Make and How YOU can Avoid It

Far and away the number one mistake most homeowners make costing them a fortune is, they do NOT choose a professional contractor to work on their home. How do you know if you REALLY are dealing with a professional?

You can never learn too much about the person who you are considering accepting. Take a few minutes to inspect their jobs. It will be worth it. Ask for information on the time needed to complete these jobs and if the jobs were completed on budget.

Secret #6 – How to Tell if your Remodeling Project Will Run Smooth, BEFORE You sign the Contract!

1. **Good Communication** – If you can talk with each other, you can work out any details that come up.
 - When you call can you get a hold of someone?
 - Does he return a call promptly?
 - Does he listen to you?
 - Does he answer all your questions and concerns thoroughly?
2. **Comfort** – If you feel comfortable with your contractor, the chances are good your project will run smoothly, Think about it. You've just invited a stranger in your house. Do you find this person nice? Considerate? Personable? A Listener?
3. **Trustworthy** – If you feel your contractor is trustworthy, the likelihood of a successful project is good. Check his references. Keep in mind that if your project will entail entrance into your home and you won't be home during the day, the keys of your castle will be given to your contractor. Can you trust him or her? Listen to your conscience.
4. **Completion** – Will your contractor give you a reasonable estimate for how long the project will take to complete? A good contractor will do this. Remember that you want to hire a good

7 Little Known Secrets

to Successfully and Beautifully
Remodel Your Home

contractor, not a roommate! Nothing is more frustrating and irritating than a remodeling job that drags on and on.

5. **Details** – Work out the little details before work begins. Talk about things like:
 - When the dumpster goes, or where the debris pile will be created?
 - When will the project begin?
 - Who can you contact at the office with questions?

Secret #7 – Get a Written Contract

I can't tell you how many contractors I have seen look at rather complex jobs, pick a price out of thin air, scribble the figure only on the back of their business card and give the card to the homeowner. Show contractors who do this the door!