

## ***Choosing the right Remodeler***

Once you have decided to remodel your home, finding the right remodeler for your project can seem challenging. It helps to break the task down to a step by step process. First, prospect for candidates, and then interview them. Once you have a short list, call former customers and ask them to report on their experience. At the end of the process, you should be able to make your decision with confidence.

### **Prospecting**

Start your search by talking with family, friends and neighbors who have had remodeling done in their homes. Personal referrals are the most likely source of qualified service companies. Other possible resources might be your banker, a trade contractor such as a plumber or electrician, or the local Builders Association. You are looking for people who do the kind of work you have in mind and have a reputation for quality and integrity. With a few recommended names in hand you are one step closer to success.

### **Interviewing Contractors**

Being prepared for these meetings with a list of questions to ask will make them much more effective for you. In addition to having technical expertise, you want a remodeler to accept his responsibility for the success of your project.

### **Business Management**

Does the contractor:

- Have a permanent office, routine and emergency telephone numbers?
- Have up to date licensing, liability and workman's compensation insurance?
- Maintain solid relationships with subcontractors such as plumbers and electricians?
- Put all agreements including change orders in writing?

### **Construction Expertise**

Does the contractor:

- Have a track record of successful projects such as yours?
- Employ skilled jobsite carpenters who will actually build your project rather than subcontracting everything out?
- Commit to stay on your job from start until completion?

### **Customer Service and Communication**

Does the contractor:

- Respond promptly to your inquiries?
- Emphasize service before, during, and after the project?
- Have capacity to assist you with selections of materials and products for your project?
- Honestly respond to your design ideas? Everything is not feasible!
- Take responsibility for communication, scheduling and coordination of all parties, including subcontractors?
- And finally, is this a person or company you can work with for what may be many months in your own home?
- Offer a warranty? If so what kind and how long? What is covered and what is not?

### **Interviewing References**

People who have had your candidate do work in their homes are the experts about his capabilities. In addition to repeating some of the same questions you posed to the contractor, you can probe a bit to learn more.

Did the contractor:

- Complete the project on time? Were there any big surprises along the way?
- Was the contract price honored? How were change order requests handled?
- Keep you informed and address any of your concerns?
- Respond to any call backs after completion? How quickly were issues resolved?
- What changes, if any, would you make if you did this project again?

### **Decision Time!**

Now that you have done your homework the selection of your remodeler should seem quite obvious. If not, then maybe you need more candidates. Of course budget and pricing information are critical to your decision to move forward, but your research will give you solid reasoning for your choice.