





Questions to Ask When Looking for a Contractor

When you're in the market for a home or office renovation or new construction, hiring the right residential/commercial general contractor can make all the difference. Renovating or remodeling can be a stressful investment and one of the best ways to reduce stress and protect your investment is to work with a professional contractor.

Begin with professional credentials. Does the contractor have liability insurance and WCB coverage? Every contractor that performs work on your property should have insurance. Whether they're trimming a tree or building an addition, anyone who does work on your property without insurance is putting your home and finances at risk.

While you may be in the process of comparing estimates from several contractors, **the lowest**

bid may not be the best

if they don't have these essential professional documents and policies in place. Quotes will vary drastically from contractor to contractor. Just make sure you do your due diligence.

Do they have references or letters of referral? A quality, reliable contractor will be willing and able to give you names and some form of contact information of previous customers as a reference. The reason for this is simply because word-of-mouth is the best advertising. You may also want to look into the history of the company and how long they have been around; this speaks volumes a lot of the time.

On the same note, **ask for examples of their finished work.** Simply ask, "Can I see some photos of recent work?" Many contractors keep a portfolio or can point you to their website where pictures are available. This merely gives you an idea of the quality of work at completion, as well as demonstrates the contractor's pride in their work.

You should be **comfortable with the contractor** you hire, and you should have no doubt that the work will be performed professionally and to your exact vision. A good contractor asks many questions, so they can understand and plan out your project. Educate yourself and ask questions...if your Contractor is honest and has integrity the answers you receive will be detailed and will make sense.

Planning Your Renovation (Home or Commercial)

The renovation process requires many steps before any work can progress.

Concept drawings, building permits, and your material selections are a number of the choices you will have to make on various aspects of this project before we can come up with a fairly accurate cost.

The following is a list of somethings that you can do to help speed the process along:

Write down an accurate "wish list" of items you want to accomplish with the renovation. A list of "must have" and "could have" items helps to narrow the choices a bit.

You may want to enlist **the help of an interior designer to help co-ordinate** colour choices, flooring and cabinet styles etc. This can sometimes help to put the visuals of a project together quicker. An interior designer will charge on an hourly basis and can usually accomplish a lot in a fairly short time.

If you want to do this yourself, many clients enjoy this process, you will need to visit a number of stores to make a variety of choices such as Flooring (hardwood, ceramic, carpeting, etc), Cabinets (pick out door styles, colours, configurations), Plumbing (sinks, faucets, tubs, etc), Lighting (accent lights, sconces, pendants etc), Countertops (laminated, granite, quartz etc), Paint colours, and Appliances (if replacing existing), are some of the decisions you need to make.

When it comes to materials, **the more decisions you can make ahead of time**, the better things will go and the less pressured you will feel to make snap decisions. This will ensure you get the look you want. Once the materials are ordered, stick to your choices as best you can.

When setting down a budget, (if you want, talk "range" rather than an exact figure, but do not keep that a secret from your contractor or designer)

make it one that allows the contractor to help you make good decisions before work ever gets started, always keep in mind that extra costs can spring up. A safe bet is to set down a number that is about 80% of what you ultimately want to spend. Then you will be prepared if a product you wanted is no longer available and the next choice is more expensive, or the demolition uncovers problems that must be repaired before work can continue.

The only way **to gain a comprehensive** and easy to understand quotation is by providing as much information as possible and by **asking lots of questions**. This process can be stressful but if you ask the questions before and during the estimating process there will be fewer unpleasant surprises during the construction process.