
Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Hiring A Professional Remodeler

Find a Professional

When you hire a remodeler, you are buying a service rather than a product. The quality of the service the remodeler provides will determine the quality of the finished product and your satisfaction.

Get a List: The first step to hiring a professional is to build a list of candidates, and flipping through the Yellow Pages is not the ideal method. Learn the best way to begin your search.

The Inside Scoop: Once you have your list of remodelers, how do you properly evaluate their credentials? Get the inside information on what to ask for and look for in home contractors.

Evaluate References: You don't want to just question the remodeler, but also learn first hand from the remodeler's current and former customers. Learn what to ask references.

Make a Decision: Now you've done your homework and it's time to choose. Get some final guidelines to evaluate your remodeler.



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www.hhahba.com
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How to Find Professional Home Remodeler Candidates for Your Home

You want to hire a professional home remodeler, but where do you begin? The best place to start is the Directory of Professional Remodelers maintained by the Hilton Head Area Home Builders Association's Remodelers Council. These home remodelers uphold the highest professional and ethical standards in the local industry. In addition, seek referrals from:

- Friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and others who have had remodeling work done.
- Independent trade contractors, building materials suppliers, architects, engineers, home inspectors, local lenders, and insurance professionals.

Once you have developed a list of potential home remodelers for your project:

- Check with your local or state office of consumer protection and the local Better Business Bureau. Ask if they have had any complaints about the home remodeler? If so, were those complaints resolved satisfactorily?
- Check with your state's licensing agency and the state and local building inspectors to see if they have received any complaints about the home remodeler and to verify that the remodeler has the appropriate licenses and registrations.

After you have created your list, learn what to ask and look for in your candidates to best evaluate them.



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The Inside Scoop on How to Evaluate Professional Home Remodelers

The hardest part in evaluating a remodeler is knowing exactly what to look for and ask. This detailed list will help you decide with confidence who is the best home remodeling professional for your home.

Business Experience and Management

Does the home 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?
 - Ask for a copy of the home remodeler's insurance certificates so you can be sure you will not be liable in these situations for property damage or jobsite-related injuries.
 - Ask the home remodeler how much the project will add to your home's value and obtain the necessary additional insurance.
- Have an established presence in the community?
 - How long has the company been in business under this name? Longevity suggests financial stability.
 - Does the home remodeler maintain solid relationships with experienced independent trade contractors such as plumbers and electricians and work with them as a team to keep your job running smoothly?
- Possess a trustworthy reputation among customers, peers, local officials, and people involved in all aspects of the industry?
 - Does the home remodeler have a track record of successful projects similar to one you are planning?
 - Ask for a list of building materials suppliers and call them to see if the home remodeler has an account or pays for materials on delivery. Most suppliers are willing to extend credit to financially sound companies.
 - Actively participate in a trade organization such as NAHB Remodelers? This and similar organizations help to keep their members informed about new products, construction techniques, business practices, and industry issues. Participation demonstrates a remodeler's commitment to professionalism and the remodeling industry.
 - Has the home remodeler earned any professional designations? Through certification programs, these organizations confer designations such as Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), Certified



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Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS), Certified Bath Designer (SBD), or Certified Kitchen Designer (CKD) to those who meet the requirements.

- How long has the home remodeler you are considering been a member of these associations?

Construction and Technical Expertise

Does the home remodeler:

- 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.
 - What products and materials would the home remodeler be likely to use for your project?
 - Does the home remodeler offer an array of options and thus demonstrate knowledge of and experience with a variety of products, materials, and techniques?
- 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?
 - What is covered under the warranty and what is not?
- Agree to begin and complete your job within a reasonable timetable?

Customer Service and Communication

Does the home remodeler:

- 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?
 - When discussing your written priorities, does the home remodeler show enthusiasm for your ideas and suggest ways to make them work within your budget?
 - Ask the home remodeler for examples of how the company has solved similar space problems for other customers.
- Facilitate communication among all parties involved in the project?
 - Will the home remodeler provide you with schedule updates so you can make appropriate decisions and prepare for any unavoidable inconveniences?
 - Ask how the company handles communications during the construction phase of the job such as a message center in the house for communication between you and the remodeling team, including the designers, architect, and independent trade contractors.

How to Evaluate a Home Remodeler's References

Before you sign a contract, ask the home remodeler to share names, phone numbers, and/or e-mail addresses of some customers and take the time to see the home remodeler's work.

Ask to see jobs similar to yours. Does the quality of the work meet your standards?

Ask the homeowners:

- Would you hire this company again?
- Did the home remodeler maintain a neat jobsite, provide regular broom clean-up, and haul away debris including personal trash?
- Did the home 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 home remodeler easy to work with? Did the home remodeler keep you informed as the job progressed?
- Did the home remodeler supply you with paperwork in a timely fashion?
- How well did the home remodeler deal with the problems that arose?

Before you make your hiring decision, review some final evaluation guidelines.



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Final Guidelines Before Hiring a Home Remodeler

You're almost there, but there are a few final steps before taking the plunge.

Ask yourself if you feel comfortable with the home remodeler and confident that this company will do the work according to your plans, budget, and specifications.

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. If the estimated cost of the project is more than you can afford, see if you can trim something from the project or postpone part of it so you can still work with a professional home remodeler.

Ask the home remodeler to explain the plans and specifications and company procedures to you. For instance, once construction begins, how does the company handle changes to the initial design, choice of materials, or schedule. If you compare your estimate with another, be sure each one is based upon the same set of plans, specifications, and scope of work. If your home remodeler suggests any deviations, ask the home remodeler to present them as options separate from the main proposal.

Find out whether the home remodeler uses a detailed, written contract that protects both of you and that complies with local, state, and federal laws. The contract must spell out the work that will and will not be performed and provide a fair payment schedule.

Select the home 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.

If you have completed all the steps on how to evaluate a home remodeler, congratulations! You can now choose with confidence the best professional home remodeler for your home.



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