

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, email 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 job site 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 job site 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), Graduate Master Remodeler (GMR), Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS), Certified Green Professional (CGP), 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?
- Follow EPA LeadSafe Certified work practices for work in pre-1978 homes to minimize dust and potential lead paint exposures? If you live in a home built before 1978 and you're contemplating any work that will disturb more than six square feet of painted surfaces inside the home or 20 square feet on the exterior of the home - for example, replacing a window, installing cabinets, or adding on to your home - the contractor you hire is required by law to be trained and certified by the EPA.
- 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?

You'll also need to get references from your candidates. [Go here](#) to find out what to ask.

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