

Buyer Beware: Avoid the Disorganized Remodeler

Investing in extensive home improvement can be a daunting task, something that most people usually do once or maybe twice in a lifetime. The last thing you need is a remodeling contractor who doesn't have it together.

Why does that matter? Simply, remodeling is an increasingly complex endeavor. It involves dozens of trade partners and materials suppliers, requiring compliance with building codes and other regulations, demanding financial savvy and tight management, and calling for keen attention to every detail. This demands a highly organized approach to the remodeling process.

A hitch along the way can have a big impact on quality, performance, durability and satisfaction ... or it can be mitigated or avoided altogether to help protect your investment and give you peace of mind through the process and beyond.

But what does an organized remodeler look like, and how do you evaluate a contractor's ability to guide you through this time-consuming and sometimes confusing process?

There are several signs that indicate a professional remodeler's business acumen, organizational skills, and other capabilities that help ensure ultimate satisfaction with your new home.

**Cleanliness.** A clean and organized job site can often reflect a remodeler's overall organizational competency. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, a clean job site is safer for workers and the homeowners (especially if they remain in the house during construction), reducing liability and accidents.

In addition, materials that are properly stacked, staged, and covered reflect a concern for quality construction and respect for the budget and schedule.

**Responsiveness.** The number-one complaint among dissatisfied remodeling clients is that their contractor was slow to respond, or never did. By contrast, an organized remodeler understands the importance of being responsive from the first contact through completion and beyond.

Often, professional remodelers develop a process for responding to call or emails from potential and current clients, usually within 24 hours. They articulate that policy upfront and follow it through to establish and maintain reliable expectations.

**Protection.** Professional contractors don't allow themselves or their clients to be at risk. To mitigate and prepare for hazards, they are fully insured and -- if required by law -- licensed and bonded. And if you ask about those protections, they'll provide the necessary documentation and lead you to the proper agencies and organizations for more information.

In addition, an organized remodeler pays his subcontractors and materials suppliers from your job (and only your job) on time and per his contracts with those partners. He then collects lien releases once the contracts are satisfied (based on mutual satisfaction with the work performed) to protect you from having any liens placed against your property for unpaid services or products.

**Passing the baton.** If you haven't noticed yet, organized remodeling contractors work to make sure their clients know what to expect throughout the home improvement process... including what happens after completion and the expiration of the company's service warranty.

Simply, professional remodelers know how and when to pass the baton for the care and maintenance of the remodeled house to the homeowners. This is an incremental process that logically shifts responsibility over time rather than abandoning clients at the doorstep of their newly remodeled home.