

TOTAL REMODELING

The 8+ Keys to
Hiring the Right Contractor



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Keep this list of important questions in mind during your search for the best contractor:

- **How many years have they been doing the type of renovation service you want for your home?**
The most reputable contractors have been around for at least 10 years.
- **How many similar projects have they completed?**
Years of experience in the wrong specialty is no good for your project.
- **Do they have positive customer testimonials; are they a Guild Quality member?**
Talk to them! Often times, people fail to follow up on references.
- **What is their Better Business Bureau rating?**
Ask them to show you their listing on bbb.org
- **Is there a warranty on installation as well as the product warranty?**
Not all states require contractors to provide a warranty.
- **Are their sales representatives attentive and professional?**

#1 Cheapest Is Not Always The Best

Although the cost of any home improvement project is a definite factor, a wise consumer will consider the lifetime cost of any replacement products or home renovations. After the initial costs, lifetime costs will include energy efficiency, maintenance, painting, cleaning, and other expenses associated with new hardware or products in your home. In the case of most home improvements, these costs may greatly exceed the initial price of a low quality product.

To determine the most cost-effective choice when making any improvement to your home, even potential costs matter. For example, it is rare that a replacement window with the lowest lifetime cost is also the one with the lowest initial cost. So, make sure to ask about longevity, energy efficiency, and other potential factors of lifetime cost when you speak with a contractor.

The old adage rings true: *you get what you pay for.*

#2 Always Factor In Maintenance

Maintenance costs, such as painting, cleaning, and routine repairs, all represent a big part of the total cost of a door, window, sunroom, or other home renovation. As mentioned above, these costs can exceed its original cost. Consider the material choice of your replacements. Wood will require painting on a regular basis, steel, less regular, but typically every five to seven years. With fiberglass or vinyl however, all painting costs are eliminated.

Both the time and expense of cleaning should be considered as well. Some window designs are easier to clean than others, and if you are upgrading your siding, keep in mind that *freshly painted* that vinyl maintains for years with very little maintenance.

#3 Don't Just Go With The Lowest Bid

The lowest price is probably the most tempting way to select a contractor, but you should be certain that you are really comparing estimates of the same work, warranty and quality of materials and products. The price of your project should reflect all elements of the job: materials, quality of the products, special circumstances with products and/or installation, and the experience of the company. Make sure you are aware of what products are actually being installed, and ask for clarification from the company representative when there is a price variation.

You do *not* want to simply pick the lowest bidder, and despite the aforementioned factors, there aren't any "standard" prices or "standard" specifications for remodeling projects. You may discover that higher prices are well justified, suiting your needs and the overall objects of your renovation or replacement project. Above all, a thorough contract or proposal that includes all the details will save you from most frustrations.

#4 The Security Of Your Installment

An essential consideration for the safety of your home and family is the security offered by replacement of any entryway, such as doors or windows. This factor that relates specifically to windows and doors is something that you can expect to see reflected in the cost of the product. Operable vs. inoperable sashes, the type of hardware installed, tint and reflectivity of the glazing, whether the type of glass used is easy or difficult to break into, are some of the characteristics of the products available you should discuss when you get a quote, so you can make an informed decision.

The installation of new windows can stir up dust and will of course open that area of the house to the outside elements for a short period of time. You will want to be sure that the company you select will work with a minimal impact on your family during the project.

#5 Replacing Your Model With The Same Style Could Be A Mistake

If you're hiring a contractor to make necessary replacements, your first thought might be to get a newer version of the same style. This could be a serious mistake when considering replacement products as a home investment. Aside from the positive change of a new appearance, in the case of doors for example, you may also be able to save on energy and maintenance costs with a different style. A better-looking alternative can increase the resale value of your home and save you money in the long run. The same logic applies to the hidden parts of a home, too. Replacing old insulation with the same type may not promise any greater energy efficiency; whereas using some of the latest insulation technology can be a real savings in the long run.

#6 Know Your Time Frame

Most contractors will be flexible to some degree, but you should make sure that a given date would work for you and that you have some leeway if weather conditions or other unexpected complications delay the project. In order to best plan for home improvement work, you should ask your contractor about the entire process and what impact each stage might have on your home and family. A good contractor will be able to give you a realistic timeline. Don't be tempted by an overly optimistic completion date. That is likely a promise that can't be delivered.

#7 Hire A Certified Lead Contractor

It is of utmost importance that the company you hire to do work on your home is a Certified Lead Contractor. Renovation and replacement projects can create a harmful amount of lead dust if your home contains paint or other building materials with lead in them – lead can be found in houses constructed before 1978. A certified lead-safe company is specially trained to use work practices that protect people and their homes from lead dust as outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Not hiring a Certified Lead Contractor to properly manage lead dust can lead to serious health problems and potential lawsuits.

Lead-safe certified companies limit the amount of dust created, use plastic sheeting to protect floors and furnishings, enclose any waste, and decontaminate work areas daily.

#8 “Years” of experience doesn’t mean quality

About 95% of contractors go out of business before their fifth year, and of those that don’t, 80% never make it to see their tenth year. If you’ve found a contractor that has survived this long, something must be going well, but don’t assume everything checks out yet. Reputation is the key to finding a good contractor. Beyond years of experience, they should be able to present positive client testimonials and examples of some of their most exemplary work. Do not hesitate to ask about their experience – many homeowners take it for granted.

#8+ Be Prepared To Ask These Questions As A Homeowner

It can be a difficult undertaking to have your home renovated with the wrong contractor for the job. Most people only think to ask how much it will cost, how long it takes, and when the contractor can start. These common questions are too basic and do not address appropriate concerns about the employees, process, subcontractors, etc. Take your time; don't rush into a major home remodeling project. Ask your friends and family for recommendations; vet the company's history and don't be afraid to ask the hard questions.

The warranty and how innovative companies handle service these days is one particular area to ask about. The best contractors out there are using better products, proven installation processes, and back their craftsmanship with much longer warranties, often a lifetime guarantee. Will your contractor go above and beyond? Successful contractors are able to offer more than what is simply required (offering remedial touch-ups, for example) and have been recognized by peers in the industry for superior service. Ask your contractor about their warranty, follow-up services, and endorsements. Quality service doesn't end with the last nail in place.

*For additional information please
visit our website
www.totalremodeling.com
or call us at 1.888.235.4302*

