

# Remodeling? Hire A Professional...

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According to a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Homebuilders, remodeling expenditures for 2002 are expected to exceed \$167 billion. "Remodeling activity currently accounts for about 2% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and roughly 60% of total spending on housing," as reported recently in *Design/Build Business*.



## And BREATHE easy!

What does this mean for the average consumer? Simply, that there's a whole lot of remodeling going on. And if you haven't used a remodeling contractor in the past, chances are pretty good that sometime in the near future you will experience the joy of having your home partially deconstructed before your very eyes.

Just imagine – sheetrock dust seeping into your cabinets, covering every dish and cup; strange workmen tramping through your bedroom, eyeballing your belongings; turning on the faucet for a nice hot bath and discovering the plumber forgot to turn the hot water heater back on. And this is on a good day.

Well, it doesn't have to be that way. As in any service industry, there are quality remodelers and then there are the non-professional remodelers. It's your responsibility, as the consumer, to do a little homework before signing a contract with someone whose sole purpose is to tear your house apart and then attempt to put it back together.

Perhaps you have decided to remodel your kitchen, finish your basement or add a major master suite to the rear of your home. The non-professional remodeler would love to get his hands on your project, but you would prefer a more professional type guy.

Where do you find such a person? A good place to start is with the local Home Builders Association. The HBA has a sister organization called the Remodelers Council which was created to provide a code of standards and ethics for professional

remodelers to adhere to. Call your local HBA at (719) 592-1800 for a list of reputable contractors. Chances are the non-professional remodeler will not be found on their list.

You might also consider calling one or two architects who have designed other jobs like the one you are thinking about having done.

Architects like to recommend good contractors whom they have worked

with before and who have executed their plans faithfully. They usually will have worked with a non-professional contractor or two in the past and can steer you away from trouble.

And of course, there is a world of information at your local Better Business Bureau. Check to see if the contractor you are considering has had any complaints. Or more importantly, have the complaints been resolved in a timely and peaceable fashion. All construction jobs have the potential for disagreements and misunderstandings, but a good contractor will have effective systems in place for handling problems and questions as they arise. Many contractors are now including the BBB's Alternate Dispute Resolution clause in their contract.

Find two or three qualified remodelers and interview them thoroughly. Visit their place of business and talk to their staff. Ask for names and phone numbers of previous clients, but also ask for permission to visit current projects. Talk to the owners of those jobs and ask how the contractor has been to work with. Has the remodeler been easy to get a hold of and has he handled problems quickly and honestly? Would the client use the remodeler again – if not, why? But also remember the old adage about two sides to every story – there are non-reputable clients out there too.

“If you can react the same way to winning and losing, that's a big accomplishment. That quality is important because it stays with you the rest of your life.”

--Chris Evert