

All quotes are not the same

I'm going to share something with you that a lot of contractors and business people may not want me to disclose, but I don't care. We have all heard the saying "buyer be ware". When home owners take on a project, most times the project includes work that they may not be familiar with. So we normally will call upon professionals to help us with the project. The first part of this process is to have a trades person come down and provide ideas and guidance on design, materials to be used, methods of installation and cost cutting procedures. Most trades people will gladly provide this information as a free quotation in hopes of developing a relationship with the customer and eventually, if he or she proves to be knowledgeable and professional, the customer may choose them for the project.

The next part of the process is to gather quotations so that a reasonable cost for the project can be determined. This part can be very difficult for people because now the question arises, who do you call. Today, with the internet at our finger tips, most people (according to statistics) will go to the web in the hopes of finding a site that they are comfortable with, to help them choose a contractor. A lot of people find that sites that offer reviews written by customers from a contractor's past jobs are helpful. Others feel that ratings are important or some people just call the listing that's on top of the page.

Here is where the point of my story begins. The quotation, whether it is written or verbal, is the final step before you, the client, must make a decision. Remember, that once you make this decision and commit to a contractor to help with the project, it is very difficult to change your mind. I am finding that some people will say or do anything they can to get you to commit to using their services. The quotation is your only recourse if things go bad on a project. When the "he said, she said" scenario happens, the only thing you can fall back on is the quotation. It's that agreement that contains the scope of work for the agreed price.

Here is my advice. I have seen far too many projects over my 35 years as an electrician, where a customer makes a choice and hires a contractor based on "a nice smile". When you receive a quotation from a contractor, make sure that it is detailed and specific as to the items to be done and the material to be used. It is common that a vague, low cost quote is given in order to get the job, the cheapest quote. What this does is creates a situation where the conflict between the customer and the contractor exists. It ends up being a problem when the customer assumed that what he thought was included is not, and the contractor says it's going to cost more money. This situation can cost you thousands of extra dollars and you would have been better off hiring the guy with the more expensive quotation. The cheapest is not always the best, you may just get what you paid for..... and remember to always get your permits where applicable.