



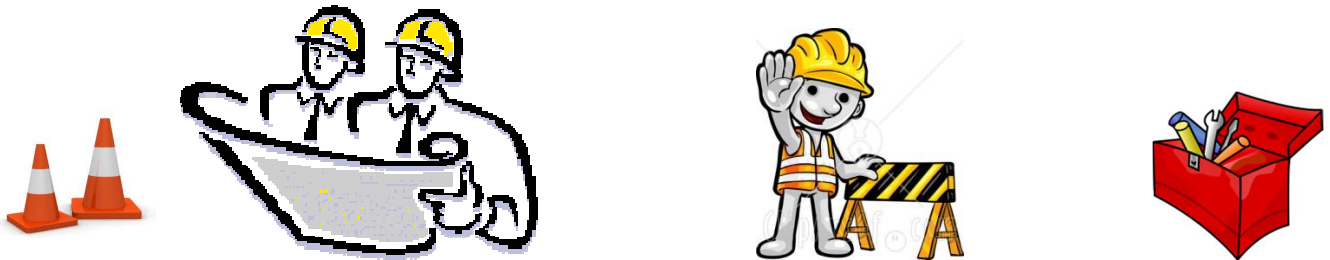
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What to look for in a contractor?

Communication

All homeowners want to know one thing, what this going to cost me? As simple as that question sounds, in construction it's difficult to answer that directly due to ALL the possibilities around your project. Having a bathroom redone with a fiberglass tub, pedestal sink, and linoleum will cost significantly less than a bathroom with a Jacuzzi tub, vanity cabinet, and tile. A good contractor will ask you a budget when doing a bid and will ask the questions of what type of material you are wanting. He will then be able to explain the difference and give suggestions on how to help get you your dream project within your budget.

Detail Oriented

Another sign of a good contractor is a detailed estimate. This estimate will show the breakdown of the costs so you can see exactly where the costs are going. A contractor that isn't willing to show you the breakdown should spark some concern. Invoices should match estimates, however sometimes unforeseeable things happen or change orders are added. If this is the case, a good contractor will sit down with you and explain the additional costs and how it happened. Most contractors will provide contracts that clearly define the responsibilities and timeframe for work and if something should deter from that contract, communication should be provided.

In addition to being thorough on estimates and invoices, a good contractor will obtain the proper permits, licenses, and building inspections before beginning your project to ensure your project is done according to industry standards and follows local building codes. All good contractors pay and are licensed with the state. You can check on your contractor at <http://www2.iwd.state.ia.us/contractor.nsf/MainPage?OpenPage>. In addition to being licensed with the state, all contractors should have General Liability insurance and should pay Workman's Compensation Insurance for their employees. All good contractors will provide proof of this in addition to providing references from previous customers, should you ask for it.

Customer Service

Look for a contractor who has excellent customer service skills. You want your contractor to be friendly and professional and most of all you want to be personable with you contractor so you aren't afraid to ask questions throughout the construction process. Ask your contractor for references and check him/her out. Ask previous customers how they were treated and if they would hire that contractor again. You want a contractor that will help you feel a part of the process and that will welcome you to supervise the activity. If a contractor only shows up to work on your project when you're away at work and never answers phone calls, emails, or any questions that you may have should wave some red flags.

Also, does your contractor treat you and your property with care and respect? Or do they have attitude and does it look a bomb was dropped on your property every day? Most good contractors take pride in their work and a tidy jobsite reflects that pride. If you find you're disgusted with the sight of your own property due to the contractors mess, simple ask them to clean up a bit. A good contractor will act quickly respecting your property and your wishes.

Technical and Business Skills

Make sure you get the right contractor for the right project. Hiring a landscaping company to redo your bathroom may not end so well. If contractors specialize in a certain area of construction that can tell you the contractor is experienced and trained and will ultimately lead to a quality product. With that being said, the longer a contractor has been in business, the more knowledge he/she has about products and materials. Also, the longer the business has been around the more business relationships that contractors has been able to establish ensuring you only have the best sub-contractors working on your job site. With all that being said, good contractors come at a cost and in construction – you pay for what you get. The cheaper the bid, the cheaper the material and less willing the contractor is probably going to work for you.

A good contractor doesn't expect you to pay the full price for a job up front. Depending on the size of the job and the amount of material needed to get started, a good contractor may ask for up to 33% of the total bill up front. From there, mile stones should be discusses and agreed upon as to when the remaining balance will be paid. For example, another percentage should be paid upon completion of concrete while another portion paid upon completion of the sheetrock, etc, etc.

Conclusion

A good contractor is like an open book and in that sense is extremely vulnerable. They spend time, energy, money and patience going through estimates, working with sub-contractors, ordering materials, and ultimately the toughest of all, working to make you happy by building your dream project. A good contractor can juggle all these things on multiple projects at any given time and all the while maintaining a positive and professional attitude. Good contractors are generally booked well in advance so be patient. They should be able to communicate quickly though. At the end of the day, the contractor must be proud of his/her work and proudly say to others "yeah, I worked on their house" while the homeowner likewise must also be proud to say "yeah, they worked on my house and they great job!" Word of mouth referrals are the greatest compliment contractors can receive!

Works Cited

- 1.) <http://www.doityourself.com/stry/good-contractor-bad-contractor>
- 2.) http://www.craftsmanbuilds.com/images/craftsman/PDF/ARTICLE,WHAT_MAKES_A_GOOD_CONTRACTOR_1.pdf