



RENOVATION 101

The Commitments

If the price seems too good to be true, be careful, it may be!

BY BRUCE CROMIE

A commitment in the renovation and building business means 'money.' This is the time when you sign a contract and give a deposit to begin the design phase of the project.

The best way to proceed is to sign a contract for the design phase only. The design process involves an initial design meeting that will basically outline the 'Scope of Work.' A designer will take the proper measurements of the existing house and discuss what modifications and alterations you would like to make.

It is always wise to interview a few different contractors for your project. By doing this, you get some ballpark pricing for the upcoming project and you may even get some design ideas for free along the way.

This is also the perfect opportunity to blend your ideas with the designer's, and come up with a definite direction. The designer will go away and draw the initial plan, either by hand or by using computer-aided design (CAD) software. Another meeting will then be scheduled at either your home or at the designer's office to go over the preliminary drawing. Generally, he or she will leave the design with you so that you can have some time to absorb the information and consider any changes you want.

By the way, this is the best time to make any changes. Changes after the design stage and during construction generally cost more. You are much better off to take a little bit longer at the design stage and really make sure that you are happy.

Once you have come up with the final design, it is time to iron out the construction and finish details. This is the only way that the contractor can come up with an accurate price.

Price should definitely not be the only deciding factor here, however. The most important factor should be your comfort level. This is particularly true for large projects. If you do not feel comfortable that a company is going to do anything but a fantastic job for you, then the smart thing to do is pass.

I was recently helping promote the Greater Toronto Home Builders Association's 'Renomark – Renovators of Excellence' program at the National Home Show. I participated in a forum called 'Interview with a Renovator,' where homeowners could come in with drawings and get some ballpark pricing and design ideas for free.

Within the first hour, a common

theme became obvious. At least five different people came in with horror stories of deposits being taken and jobs not started, having contractors leaving jobs half-finished, and personality conflicts that led to firing contractors.

The reason for most of these nightmares seemed to stem from one thing. These homeowners had selected a contractor whose price seemed too good to be true. Well, guess what? It was! And sadly, situations like this taint the construction industry as well as cost the homeowner a lot more money to get the job done properly.

So take your time, look at several quotes and don't forget to ask for references. 🍁

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