

## **Good Remodelers Make Good Neighbors**

We're hearing a lot these days about buying local. And for good reason: It's better for the environment and it's a direct way to support local businesses. In the USA, for example, it takes nearly 1,500 miles to get produce from farms to your local store. Unless, of course, you buy local produce, which is always fresher and usually better.

A similar justification can be applied when it comes time to hire a remodeling contractor. It's often quicker and easier to work with a local professional.

But those aren't the only reasons why you should hire a local remodeler. Engaging in a remodeling project can take a considerable amount of time, money and patience. It can be disruptive, to say the least. Under such conditions, it is important to trust, maybe even like, the remodeling contractor you have selected. After all, you'll be seeing a lot of each other over the course of the project.

The benefits of using a local remodeling contractor work both ways. It can be easier for you to verify a local remodeling contractor's bona fides than to check the qualifications of a more distant company; if the local contractor's been in business for a few years, he'll already have a local reputation.

Similarly, a local remodeler has more vested in your project than just seeing it completed. If the contractor's work meets or exceeds your expectations, you can become a local referral, resulting in even more local business for the contractor. Local home improvement contractors often live in the same community as the homes they remodel and can't afford to disappoint their neighbors. Plus, they pay taxes and have a commercial interest in your community's success.

### **Where to Find a Local Remodeler**

A national poll found the number of people who said they get good ideas and information from television declined from 1977 to 2003, while the number who said the same about word of mouth increased by 25 percentage points. Obviously, we listen to our neighbors and care about what they have to say. More to the point, if they've hired a remodeler, you can watch that remodeler in action, stop by and talk to the remodeler, then make your own judgments.

But what if you don't know of a home improvement contractor in your neighborhood? The Internet has become a virtual word of mouth agent and a valuable source for information on about just about everything, including local remodeling contractors. Specific online contractor referral services, such as [www.reliableremodeler.com](http://www.reliableremodeler.com), are designed to match your project to a list of local, top quality remodeling contractors. These services are free and typically provide you with more than one local remodeling contractor matched to your project.

### **What to Look for in a Local Remodeler**

When choosing a local home remodeler, remember to evaluate multiple contractors before making your decision. It's important to put your request in writing. Make sure each contractor is aware of your project goals and your estimated budget before they submit a bid.

Contractors are bound by their local and state regulations. Check to see if the local contractor is registered with the government and has a current business license. The contractor should be bonded

and carry general liability insurance as well. It is permissible for you to ask for copies of any certificates or licenses, as well as for information on local remodeling projects of a similar nature the contractor has completed.

A legitimate local remodeling contractor will provide credentials and references. They won't try high-pressure sales techniques, such as offering you a special price for today only, or tell you they accept only cash. They should provide a written contract and take care of the necessary building permits.

### **How to Work with Your Local Remodeler**

Once you've selected a local remodeling contractor, you'll need to work closely with the contractor to ensure the project stays true to your budget and your expectations.

*Create a Plan* - Remember to plan your remodeling project carefully. Try to anticipate problems, such as seasonal interruptions, the use of subcontractors or going over budget, and come to an agreement with your remodeling contractor on how to best resolve such problems before starting the project.

*Agree on a Contract* – Ask for a written contract that details everything from type of work to be performed to your payment terms. The written contract should include how to handle change-orders as well as job site cleanup, two common areas of disagreement. Additionally, your remodeling contractor should be willing to list all materials for the project in the contract.

*Communicate Often* – On-going communication can prevent misunderstandings, delays and cost overruns. Do not be afraid to ask questions, after all it's your house and your money. Make frequent inspections and discuss any concerns with the contractor. A local remodeling contractor's business depends on reputation; consequently, the local contractor is more than willing to work closely with a homeowner to ensure satisfaction.

*Be Supportive* – Try to keep out of the way of the contractor and subcontractors. That said, you should still be available and ready to make decisions or to answer questions. You might even want to accompany the remodeling contractor to the store to choose materials, if requested.

Once your project is done, you will have the satisfaction of owning a house made beautiful and more valuable through the talents of a local remodeler. Good neighbors not only make good fences, they make good investments.

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