



National Association of Home Builder's Remodeler Qualifying Questionnaire

Name: _____
Years in Business: _____
Licensed, certified, bonded or registered: _____
Proof of Insurance: _____
Permanent Business Location: _____

Has company website:

- Yes
- No

Has a written contract?

- Yes
- No

References, Letters of Recommendation, Past Reviews

- Yes
- No

Educational Designations

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR) | <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Green Professional (CGP) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Remodeler (CR) | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate Master Builder (CMB) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Graduate Builder (CGB) |

Professional Affiliations

- National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)
- Local Business and/or Civic Organizations
- National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA)
- National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI)

Reputation among suppliers, subcontractors, and lenders

Readily Accessible by Phone

- Yes
- No

Rapport

What to Look For When Hiring a Remodeler:

When you hire a remodeler, you are buying a service rather than a product. The quality of the remodeler's service will show the quality of the finished product and your satisfaction with it.

If you are interviewing more than one remodeler, make a decision based on professionalism, not price.

A professional remodeler will.

- ◆ Save you money by doing your job right the first time.
- ◆ Ensure that your dreams are accurately translated into reality by offering design services in-house or through an arrangement with a professional architect or designer.
- ◆ Understand that your comfort during the project and its successful completion depend on effective communication with your remodeler.
- ◆ Maintain a safe and reasonably neat jobsite to prevent damage to your home or injury to household members and pets.
- ◆ Provide the best possible materials within your budget.
- ◆ Ensure your job meets or exceeds applicable building codes and regulation
- ◆ Guarantee the quality of the work with a warranty.
- ◆ Respond to service calls and inquiries.

Does the remodeler:

- ◆ Maintain a permanent mailing address, an e-mail address, a phone number, and a cell phone, pager, or phone-answering system? (You will want to be able to reach the remodeler quickly and easily—especially at critical times.) A permanent business location is a good indicator of stability, but plenty of fine remodelers operate out of offices in their homes. Avoid a contractor who uses only a post office box and is reluctant to give you an actual address.
- ◆ Maintain the necessary legal documents? State laws differ. Be sure you know the requirements of your jurisdiction. Contact your state's department of business regulations or licensing for more information. In states with no license or registration requirements, check with the department of consumer protection.
- ◆ Carry insurance that protects you from claims arising from property damage or jobsite injuries? You want to hire only a remodeler who carries workers' compensation insurance as required by law and general liability insurance. This coverage protects you if a worker is injured on your job. Ask the remodeler for a current certificate of insurance.
- ◆ Ask for a copy of the remodeler's insurance certificates so you can be sure you will not be liable in these situations for property damage or jobsite-related injuries. You can always contact the insurance company yourself, and the company will send you a copy of the document.
- ◆ Ask the remodeler how much the project will add to your home's value and obtain the necessary additional insurance.
- ◆ Have an established presence in the community? How long has the company been in business? (Longevity suggests financial stability) Establishing a financially sound business usually takes 3 to 5 years. You shouldn't overlook a remodeler who looks young - his or her business experience and professional qualifications may be impeccable.
- ◆ Does the remodeler maintain solid relationships with experienced independent trade contractors (such as plumbers and electricians) and work with them as a team to keep your job running smoothly? If your job will involve coordination of many trades, look for a remodeler who has a network of trade contractor affiliates.
- ◆ Possess a trustworthy reputation among customers, peers, and people in all aspects of the industry? When obtaining references from former customers, be sure the scope of work involved closely matches work you have in mind. Your reference check should also include contacts with the local home builders association or Remodelers Council, other organizations he or she belongs to, and major suppliers.
- ◆ Ask the individuals providing references if they would hire the same remodeler again.
- ◆ Were problems resolved promptly and satisfactorily? Did the project come in on time and within budget? If not, did the homeowner's change orders cause the overrun, or did the remodeler make estimating errors?

- ◆ Ask for a list of building materials suppliers and call them to see if the remodeler has an account or pays for materials on delivery. (Most suppliers are willing to extend credit to financially sound companies.)
- ◆ Does the remodeler have a track record of successful projects similar to yours?
- ◆ Actively participate in a trade organization? These organizations help to keep their members informed about new products, construction techniques, business practices, and industry issues. Participation demonstrates a remodeler's commitment to professionalism and the remodeling industry. Through certification programs, the Remodelers Council of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NAR) and the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) confer designations such as Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), Certified Bath Designer (CB), or Certified Kitchen Designer (CKD) to those who meet the requirements.

An extremely low bid may indicate lack of experience and an inability to later cover the actual costs involved in the job.

CONSTRUCTION AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Does the remodeler:

- ◆ Have a working knowledge of the many types and ages of homes in the area?
- ◆ Does the remodeler offer an array of options and thus demonstrate knowledge of and experience with a variety of products, materials, and techniques?
- ◆ Specialize in particular types of projects?
- ◆ Arrange for the building permit? (The person who obtains the permit is the contractor of record and therefore liable for the work.)
- ◆ Offer a warranty? If so, what kind and for how long? What is covered under
 - the warranty and what is not?
- ◆ Agree to begin and complete your job within your timetable?

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMMUNICATION

Does the remodeler:

- ◆ Respond promptly to your inquiries?
- ◆ Provide an emergency after-hours phone number to reach the remodeler or a qualified representative?
- ◆ Emphasize service and develop a trusting relationship with you?
- ◆ Listen to and understand your needs and wants and work with you ensure that the plans accurately reflect your expectations?
- ◆ Show examples of how the company has solved similar space problems for other customers?
- ◆ Facilitate communication among all parties involved in the project?
- ◆ Plan to provide you with schedule updates so you can make appropriate decisions and prepare for any unavoidable inconveniences?
- ◆ Have a message center in the house for communication between you and the remodeling team-including the independent trade contractors?

RAPPORT

You and your family will be in close contact with the remodeler and the crew until the project is completed. Are you comfortable with these people? Do you communicate easily? Does the remodeler relate well to all the project's decision makers and show respect and genuine concern for family members?

If a remodeler has the necessary qualifications and a great personality, he or she is probably a fine choice. But be sure your comfort is based on professional criteria and not just charisma.

Once you have selected a professional remodeler, build your relationship on mutual respect and honesty. Communicate your needs and desires clearly in writing.

Bring up concerns promptly. If you don't understand some aspect of the project, ask for clarification. Your remodeler should be able to explain the project patiently in terms you understand. A sensitive remodeler will anticipate your needs and calm your anxieties.

If a misunderstanding should arise, move quickly to resolve it. Some remodelers have been dismayed to learn upon job completion that the homeowner was unhappy about some facet of the project. Speak up and give your remodeler the opportunity to right any wrong.

Check the following sources to make certain your remodeler is the best person for the job;

- ◆ Local Remodelers Council or Home Builders Association
- ◆ Internet
- ◆ Local media
- ◆ Direct mail
- ◆ Seminars
- ◆ Local remodeling talk shows
- ◆ Lenders
- ◆ Architects and designers
- ◆ Building materials suppliers and hardware stores
- ◆ Local building officials and inspectors

INTERVIEW PREVIOUS OR PRESENT CUSTOMERS

Before you sign a contract:

- ◆ Ask the remodeler to share names and phone numbers of some customers with you and take the time to see the remodeler's work.
- ◆ Ask to see jobs similar to yours.
- ◆ Does the quality of the work meet your standards?

Ask the homeowners:

- ◆ Would you hire this company again?
- ◆ Did the remodeler maintain a reasonably neat jobsite, provide regular broom clean up, and haul away debris including personal trash such as lunch sacks?
- ◆ Did the remodeler keep labor and materials delays to a minimum so that your job could be started and completed on time and within budget?
- ◆ Did you find the remodeler easy to talk to and did the remodeler keep you informed as the job progressed?

MAKE THE DECISION

- ◆ Ask yourself if you feel comfortable with the remodeler and confident that this company will do the work according to your plans, budget, and specifications.
- ◆ If you are satisfied with the answers to your questions, ask for a written estimate of the work to be done based on a set of plans and specifications. Be prepared to pay for this package. If the estimated cost of the project is more than you can afford, see if you can trim something from the project or postpone part of it.
- ◆ Ask the remodeler to explain the plans and specifications and company procedures to you. (For instance, how does the company handle changes to the initial design, choice of materials, or schedule once construction begins?)
- ◆ If you compare your estimate with another, be sure each one is based upon the same set of plans, specifications, and scope of work. If your remodeler suggests any deviations, ask the remodeler to present them as options.
- ◆ Find out whether the remodeler uses a detailed, written contract that protects both of you and that complies with local state and federal laws. The contract must spell out the work that will and will not be performed.

Select the remodeler with a track record of a variety of excellent projects and plenty of experience with your type of project. Remember, low price alone does not ensure a successful remodeling experience.

SIGNS OF A PROFESSIONAL REMODELER

NAHB Remodelers Council

Founded in 1982, the NAHB Remodelers™ Council is the recognized authority for the remodeling industry. Members of the Council have forged an extensive program of education and information to aid remodelers in all facets of their businesses and to improve professionalism in the remodeling industry.

Membership in the NAHB Remodelers™ Council indicates a remodeler's commitment to professional-quality construction that meets or exceeds industry standards and practices, responsible business management, and reliable customer and warranty service.

NAHB remodelers have access to business and technical information; assistance from staff professionals who are experts in a variety of disciplines from accessibility to zoning; and training and education programs for increasing business, technical, and communication skills.

Certified Graduate Remodeler

The designation, Certified Graduate Remodeler (CGR), indicates that a remodeler has completed the requirements of the CG professional credentials program sponsored by the NAHB Remodelers™ Council. These requirements include educational credits and certain prescribed standards of business experience and practices. If your remodeler's name bears the CG designation, you can be assured that he or she measures up to the best remodelers in the country.

Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist

Developed by the NAHB Remodelers™ Council, in collaboration with the AARP, the NAHB Research Center, and the NAHB Seniors Housing Council, the CAPS Program teaches customer service, marketing and business management skills necessary to effectively service the expanding market for home modifications for aging in place. Remodelers who successfully complete the course work for the CAPS program earn credentials to help promote their services and specialized skills to the consumers who, as they age, want to live in their own homes as long as possible.

Information and Questionnaire from:

National Association of Home Builders. (n.d). Remodeling Your Home, A Guide to Home Remodeling. Washington, DC: BuilderBooks.com.