

Ten Simple Rules for Choosing a Home Renovation Contractor

We have all heard horror stories of those who have had to “live through” a home renovation. The mess..the stress.. the “when will this ever end”....

This may be bad enough for the DIY renovator but when you are paying someone else your hard earned money to do it, you just might move into a whole new world of pain. Choosing the right home renovation contractor is essential – but it is something that most of us only ever do once or twice. How can we make sure we make the right choice? Well, although you can never be 100% sure, we have compiled Ten Simple Rules for choosing a contractor which can help guide you to the best decision. We have also prepared a simple and quick download based on these Rules which you can use to compare potential contractors (because we ALWAYS get at least three contractors to give us bids). Read the Rules, download from the link and take the first steps in getting what you want, on time, with minimal hassle and within your budget.

Now, for the Rules:

1. **DEFINE YOUR WORK**

Take the time and be as detailed as you can in writing to define exactly what work you want done. A contractor who has to guess at what you want is at a disadvantage from the start – and – if you are not sure what you want, how can you know in the end if you got what you want.

2. **BE CERTAIN THE CONTRACTOR HAS THE RIGHT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE**

Every contractor has different skills and experience. A plumbing contractor may be great at installing a bathtub but might make the tile floor of the bathroom look like your teenager tried to do it. Find out what the contractor specializes in and how and where he will get the skills for every part of the job. Find out if the contractor has done jobs that are like yours – and ask to see some finished work (or pictures) if possible.

3. **GET REFERENCES – AND CHECK THEM**

Ask for references and when checking them, ask “tough” questions. Believe the responses - never give a contractor the “benefit of the doubt” at this point.

4. **CHECK OUT THE CONTRACTOR’S DEPENDABILITY**

Use services such as the Better Business Bureau, Contractor’s Associations and the like to find out if the Contractor has had a record of complaints. If you know anyone who has used the Contractor, ask specifically whether they arrived on time, seemed to work hard, were neat and responsible while on the job – little things that mean a lot.

- 5. CHECK THE CONTRACTOR LICENSES**
Either the Contractor and his trades do or do not have the licenses required to do the work. Check! A licenses Contractor will never be offended.
- 6. CHECK FOR INSURANCE AND BONDS**
Having work done by un-insured or non-bonded contractors leaves you liable for all injuries and damages which might happen. Why worry – check it out.
- 7. MAKE SURE YOU CAN TALK TO YOUR CONTRACTOR**
Good communications will be vital. Be satisfied right up front that you will be able to talk openly with you Contractor and be understood.
- 8. GET A CLEAR, FORMAL AND DETAILED BID**
If you can't agree right up front on exactly what will be done, how can you be sure you'll get what you want. A good Contractor will always give a good bid – it is for their benefit as well as yours.
- 9. NEGOTIATE FAIR TERMS**
A good contractor will always be willing to discuss terms (down payments, progress payments, hold backs, etc.) which are fair to you both.
- 10. TAKE YOUR TIME**
Never be rushed or pressured. “We’re working just down the street”, “I’ve got a crew with some free time and we’re ready to go”, “If you start now I can give you a deal” – these are words that just don’t come from reputable contractors.

Finally, check web sites such as Canada Mortgage and Housing (www.cmhc.ca), Holmes on Homes (www.holmesonhomes.ca) and HandyCanadian (www.handy canadian.com) which will go into the above topics in much greater detail and also give you ideas for your home renovation. And then, [click here](#) to get your own personal download to help you compare your contractors according to the Ten Simple Rules.

Good luck on a successful and stress free home renovation project.

Choosing a Home Renovation Contractor

Background		The Work
Experience	Licenses	The Bid
References	Insurance and Bonds	Terms
Dependability	Communication	Value

Experience

The Contractor has:

- A) Little or no experience with jobs like mine
- B) Some experience with jobs somewhat like mine
- C) Years of experience with jobs like mine
- D) Has decades of experience and specializes in jobs like mine

References

The Contractor has:

- A) Not provided references
- B) Provided one or two references but I did not check them out
- C) Provided references who told me that his work was satisfactory
- D) Provided references who said they were very satisfied

Dependability

I checked the contractor out with organizations like the BBB and found that:

- A) The Contractor has a very poor record with many complaints
- B) The Contractor has had a number of minor complaints
- C) The Contractor has had - if any - few complaints
- D) The Contractor has an excellent rating

Licenses

The Contractor:

- A) Has not discussed licenses with me and/or I have not asked
- B) Claims that he has licenses but I have not seen them
- C) Has showed me a licence for the major aspect of the work
- D) Has showed me licenses for all aspects of the work

Insurance and Bonds

The Contractor:

- A) Has not discussed this with me and/or I have not asked
- B) Claims that he has coverage but I have not seen evidence
- C) Has showed me insurance for the major aspect of the work
- D) Has showed me full coverages for all aspects of the work

Communication

I found the Contractor:

- A) Very difficult to communicate with
- B) A bit difficult to communicate with
- C) Ready to communicate about most aspects of the work
- D) Very open and easy to talk with about any aspect of the work

The Bid

The Contractor:

- A) Seems reluctant to give me a formal bid or proposal
- B) Has given me a bid without much detail
- C) Has given me a fairly detailed bid which covers most of the work
- D) Has given me a fully detailed bid for all aspects of the work

Terms

The terms the contractor has offered:

- A) Are all in his favor and he is not willing to discuss them
- B) Are in his favor but he seems willing to negotiate a bit
- C) Are largely acceptable and negotiable
- D) Are excellent and fair to both of us

Value

The combination of quality, price and schedule offered by the Contractor:

- A) Is unacceptable
- B) Is marginally acceptable
- C) Is acceptable
- D) Is excellent

Sample Report

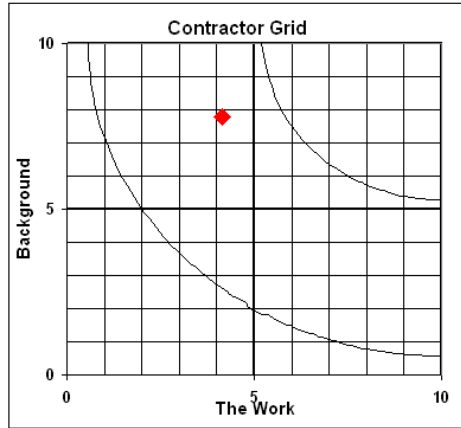


Chart 1 - The Contractor Grid

This chart shows the grid position for the Contractor, in terms of the two overarching criteria - the Background of the contractor and The Work you are likely to get. The closer to the top right of the grid you rate Contractor, the better the chance you will be satisfied with your home renovation.

The location of the Contractor in the Grid is:

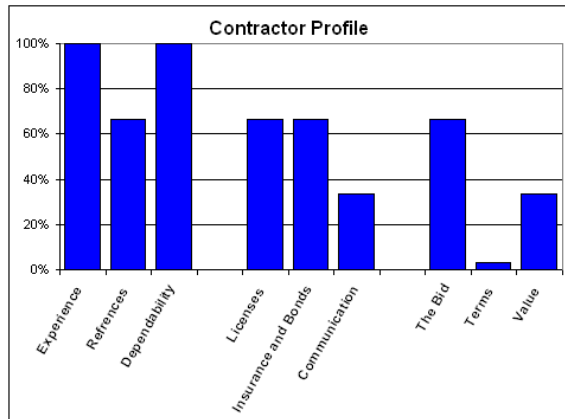
The Work = 4.1
Background = 7.8
Overall Score = 56%

(The overall score represents the distance towards the point x=10 and y=10, with the point 10,10 representing 100% and the point 0,0 representing 0%)

Chart 2 - Contractor Profile

This chart shows your ratings for each of the performance criteria. This chart is very useful in identifying the strengths (tall bars) and weaknesses (short bars) of the potential Contractor.

You can now print a copy of this evaluation and then return to the start to evaluate other contractors for comparison.



For further information on ProGrid®, visit: www.progrid.info