

Anthony Manor- Renovation Tips

Questions you should ask the professional:

- How long have you been in business?
- Have you completed similar projects in the past?
- Will you use your own staff for the work or will you subcontract all or part of the job?
- How and when do you clean up, particularly fine dust?
- What work schedule will you follow?
- What kind of warranty do you offer and what does it cover?

You should also watch for certain characteristic traits, such as:

- Is the contractor courteous and professional?
- Are your calls returned promptly or in a timely manner?
- Is the contractor on time for appointments?
- Do you feel that you have a good rapport with the contractor?
- Does the contractor seem knowledgeable and does he offer suggestions and recommendations?

Beware of contractors who:

- Quote prices before seeing the job.
- Knock on the door because they happen to be in your area doing some other work and can give you a "special price."
- Offer discounts if they can "use your home to advertise with".
- Demand unusually large deposits "to buy materials."
- Most reputable contractors maintain charge accounts with their suppliers.
- Will not supply you with a detailed written contract specifying what they say and what they will do.
- Have an address that is a post office box.

What types of professionals should I consider hiring?

Depending on the size and complexity of your project, you may choose a number of different professionals. The following are just a few professional with whom you may consider working:

General contractors manage all aspects of your project, including hiring and supervising subcontractors, arranging for the construction process and scheduling inspections.

Architects design homes, additions and major renovations. If your project includes structural changes, you may want to hire an architect/engineer who specializes in residential renovations.

Designers have the expertise in specific areas of the home, including kitchens and baths, furniture and fixtures, layout and colour schemes.

A Step-by-step Guide to Home Renovations

From the first idea to the finished project, there's a great deal to consider when thinking about renovating your home.

The following are steps that will help you lay the proper project foundation and get you started.

1. Set realistic priorities. If you're planning several projects, you should rank them in order of importance with maintenance items placed as a priority. For example, you will want to take care of a potentially leaky roof before remodeling a room directly beneath it.

2. Know what is right for you. Consider the impact of your intended renovation. Although your renovation may look beautiful on paper, take the time to ensure that your heating, plumbing and electrical systems can withstand it.

Also remember that building codes and local bylaws may also limit what and how you renovate. And there's nothing worse than discovering the project you've painstakingly planned has not been approved. Talk to your municipal building department and find out about zoning and permits.

3. Can you afford to renovate? To answer this question, you will need a clear idea of the costs associated with your renovation.

Therefore, obtain quotes from many reputable contractors, architectural firms or materials suppliers. Explain exactly what you want to do and discuss various options. Once you've made a decision about which professional you will hire, add 10 to 15 per cent for unexpected costs.

Discuss the financial implications of the project with your banker or financial adviser and if you need financing, you may be able to renegotiate your mortgage or apply for a personal loan.

4. Deciding who to work with. Many homeowners decide to do their own renovations, which certainly can be done as long as you obtain the necessary permits, follow local building codes and have the work inspected by the appropriate authorities.

Doing the renovation yourself can sometimes save you money, as long as you factor in the additional costs. For example, do you have the experience to draw up your own plans and schedule inspections? How much time can you spend away from your regular job, your family and other commitments? Can you be as efficient or as skilled as trades people who do this specialized work every day?

Depending on the complexity of your renovation, you may want to hire a professional that specializes in wiring, plumbing or heating systems, which are usually best left to skilled trades people. Renovations are an enormous responsibility and at times they can be very stressful.

5. Who is best for the job? Many small jobs can be done by your local handyman. For larger or more complex projects, however, it is a good idea to consult an architect, a design firm or a full-service contractor. Their involvement can range from taking a simple walk through your home to come up with ideas to taking responsibility for the entire renovation.

In addition to drawing up plans and layouts, these professionals can obtain zoning approvals and building permits, supervise the progress and quality of work and approve payments.

You should also favour local firms that have been in business for a number of years and ask them for client references – satisfied clients are the best recommendation.

6. Obtain a written contract. Always get a written contract describing the work that will be done, the costs associated with the renovation and how payments will be made. Remember that a smile and a handshake are not enough. Protect yourself because without a written contract, there's little you can do about incomplete work or shoddy workmanship

What is also important to note is that no matter how well you plan your project, changes will likely occur and can result in increased costs and delays. Therefore to protect yourself and your contractor, changes should be made only through a written change order detailing what's involved and the associated costs, which will eliminate surprises at the end of your project.

7. Face it – there will be dust. It's no fun living on a construction site. In fact, if the renovations are major, you should consider alternative living arrangements.

Be aware that renovating can be a dirty job, or at least a very dusty one. So if you decide to stay in your home, you should prepare for it and also consider removing some furnishings and personal items from the worksite. If you can't easily move them, cover them up.

8. Inspect, inspect and inspect. Most renovation experiences are happy ones. However, you should not assume that things are going according to plan just because you have a good rapport with your contractor. It is important to stay on top of your project to prevent minor errors from occurring. So throughout your project, make sure that you inspect.

9. Are you satisfied with the workmanship? As the work winds down, make sure that it has been done to your satisfaction and according to your contract. Never make the final payment or sign a certificate of work completion or any other document releasing the contractor from further responsibility until all deficiencies are corrected.