



RENOVATIONS . CUSTOM HOMES
HERITAGE RESTORATIONS . COMMERCIAL

SELECTING A RENOVATOR

The first step in hiring a professional renovator is to collect names of companies that seem well suited for your project. Then you can follow these procedures with each of the companies.

Prepare a List of Points and Questions In Advance

Make sure you cover the same ground with every company; otherwise you can't really compare them later. Be prepared to talk about your project in detail. Outline your plans, what you want to achieve and the renovation services you are looking for. If you are uncertain about your needs, ask the renovators to explain the entire process and the services offered by their company.

Meet The Renovators in Your Home, One at A Time

Do this early in your project, when you have a good idea of what you want, but before you have worked out too many details. A renovator's practical knowledge and experience can be a great asset in the planning phase of your project.

Ask for Ideas and Suggestions for Your Project

Experienced renovators often see possibilities that homeowners may overlook. They also know what's possible and necessary from a technical point of view, and they can tell you about the latest products and styles.

Ask About Their Experience and Past Projects

At the first meeting, professional renovators will come prepared with information on themselves, their company and previous projects. Find out about their background; how long they have been in business; special skills and expertise; their on-site crew and subtrades; and business and community affiliations. Ask why they think they are the right company for your project.

Don't Expect a Renovator To Give You A Detailed Price On The Spot

However, experienced renovators may be able to give you a ballpark figure at the first meeting to help set the financial framework for your project.

Check References

Even if your first impression is positive, you should always follow up on the references provided by the renovator. You may not wish to continue discussions with a renovator whose references don't check out. If you found the renovator through a personal recommendation, you should still call a few other homeowners. Ask previous clients about their satisfaction with the company and the results. Would they hire the renovator again or recommend the company to friends? If they offer any negative comments, ask for details.

Make Sure They Have Relevant Experience

Ensure they have the kind of experience and skills that you will need for your particular job. Ask past clients about the specific work performed by the renovator.

Invite Selected Renovators to Submit Cost Proposals

Three companies are usually enough. Make sure that everyone is working with the same detailed information, or you won't be able to compare bids.

Compare Bids Carefully

Most often the bids of experienced renovators fall within the same price range, with five to 10 percent variation. Review each bid carefully to ensure that everything is included. If there is a big difference in price, go through each bid item by item. Make certain the renovators are specifying the same quality materials and are offering to do the same work. Verify that taxes are included in the price. When a job is "low-balled", you may need to look beyond the bid itself. Will your job be covered by a warranty? Does the renovator carry liability insurance and workers' compensation for staff? What kind of a business does this company operate? Are you confident that this company will deliver what you want, on time and on budget?

Never Hire Someone without a Contract

No matter how small the job, you need to have it in writing. Without a contract, you will have no recourse if problems occur later. At a minimum, details should include a description of the work, the materials used, start and finish dates, as well as the price and payment schedule. Professional renovators use either their own contract or a standard industry contract. Ask your lawyer to check it before your sign. For more information on hiring a contractor and the importance of using a contract, visit the Canadian Home Builders' Association's *Get it in writing* program website www.HiringAContractor.com. This program is also supported by the Government of Canada.

Now that you have hired a renovator, you are ready for the next step in your renovation -- getting down to the actual work. When you work with a professional renovator, it will be done right.

Source: Source: Greater Vancouver Home Builders Association