

Choosing a Renovator

Deciding who to hire for your home renovation is an important part of planning for the success of your project. You want to work with a professional contractor, someone who is reputable and in business for the long term. You need to find someone who is right for your particular project, and not least, someone that you can feel comfortable with and can develop a good working relationship with.

Make Sure the Renovator is Legitimate

Not everyone who offers renovation services is in business legitimately. Some are “fly-by-nighters”—here today, gone tomorrow. Some are “moonlighters”—they do renovation on the side but it’s not their “real job”. Others are “low-ballers”, who ask for cash payment and fly “under the radar” by avoiding registration, taxes and other normal costs of doing business properly.

Any home renovation, no matter the size, is an investment in your home and your life. Look for a contractor who:

- Offers proof of being in business: GST/business registration, workers compensation, insurance, and so on
- Works with a written contract
- Offers a warranty on their work
- Provides referrals to previous work and clients
- Is happy to talk about their company, their experience and their plans for the future

The Right Renovator for the Job

The term “renovation” covers a lot. While many companies are capable of taking on a wide range of different projects, they may also specialize in certain types or size of projects or a particular type of client. You want to find someone who has experience with the kind of renovation you are planning and can add value to your project through their expertise. As you search for renovators:

- Ask friends, family and co-workers for recommendations for companies with proven experience. Were their renovations similar to what you are planning? Were they happy with the process and results? What did they like/dislike about the renovator? Would they hire the company again?
- Do a little independent research for companies that may be a good match for your project—call your local Home Builders’ Association or check their website, visit home shows and manufacturers’ showrooms, talk with building products retailers.
- Ask renovators directly about their experience and possible fit with your project—for instance, have you done projects like this before and how did it go? Does your company have the expertise in-house, and how would

you go about doing my project? Ask for references to previous clients, and follow up. If possible, visit one or two completed projects to see if the look and the standards of finishing would meet your expectations.

The Right Renovator for You

Most renovations are more than just nuts and bolts. Unless you are simply repairing or replacing components of your home, then your renovation is likely motivated by a desire to improve your home, to make it more comfortable and enjoyable to live in—in other words, it's a lifestyle decision.

That's why the personal "fit" between you and your renovator matters, not just the renovator's technical and business expertise. You need to feel confident in renovation process, as well as the end result. As you meet with renovators, ask yourself:

- Does the renovator listen and understand what I want? Respond in a way that relates to my concerns?
- Is the renovator personable and professional?
- Do we communicate well and easily?
- Would my family and I feel comfortable working with this company?

If the answer is no, keep on looking until you find someone you "click" with.

Reputable, experienced renovators are often booked well in advance. Start your search early on in your planning process, and be prepared to wait, if possible. When you find the right renovator, a small delay is a reasonable price to pay for a renovation done right.

*This backgrounder has been prepared by the Canadian Renovators' Council
of the Canadian Home Builders' Association.*