

Plan Your Projects for Spring

Choosing the Right Contractor

by Joanne Palmisano

Here are five tried and true ways to choose the right designer and builder for your project. Comparing apples to apples will make the most of your investment.

1 Ensure that all the contractors on your list are certified, licensed and members of the local industry association. (Keep in mind that there is no recourse when working with an uninsured contractor.) Ask them for a copy of their insurance certificate. Contact the state offices to look up claims and license status of the contractors you are considering.

2 Research contractors in the area; compare websites, quality of their workmanship and materials, attention to details and client testimonials. Contact the contractor and ask for a list of past clients. Talk with at least three clients; compare their experiences, overall satisfaction level, and how accurate the initial bid was compared to the final cost.

3 Ask the contractor about their costs. Do they work with time and materials or on a fixed price budget? Keep in mind that contractors who work on a time plus materials basis tend to fluctuate from their initial bid. Dean Bennett, president of a Design and Construction firm in Colorado, who was recently quoted in a *New York Times* article, recommends that clients take the estimated price and multiple that by 1.5 for a truer figure. If you are not working with a contractor who works with a fixed cost price, check to see if the contractor's price regularly goes higher than the initial bid. Add that to the bid price and then you can make an informed decision.

4 Know what is included in the price. A lower price sometimes means lower quality building materials, craftsmanship, or just a lack of understanding the true cost of construction and materials. Many times, a price is for products and installation only. Bids are difficult to compare to each other since all contractors work differently. Caitlin Kelly, the author of the recent *New York Times* article states, "Don't automatically take the low



Working together with Peregrine Design/Build, the homeowner was able to integrate her own handmade tiles into the backsplash.

bid, because that could be a signal that the contractor is very inexperienced and perhaps not up to the job." Take the time and do the research upfront, ask questions and compare each of the companies "apples to apples" to fully understand what is included in the price.

5 Ask yourself what is important to you. Are you willing to settle for lesser-quality materials and workmanship? Do you take the effort to ensure it is built right the first time or just settle for a quick fix that may prompt future problems down the road? Would a warranty program and guaranteed workmanship make the project worthwhile, knowing the quality of the workmanship and trusting that it will last? Is time important to you? The professionalism of the construction team that is in your home? Decide what is most important to you and choose the contractor that meets those needs.

Joanne Palmisano is a Shelburne resident and a part-time designer for Peregrine Design/Build.



This kitchen remodel provides plenty of clean, open space for the family.



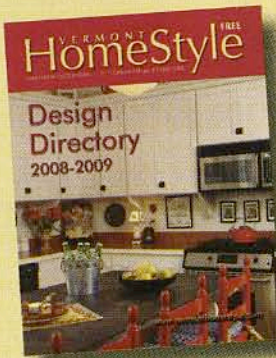
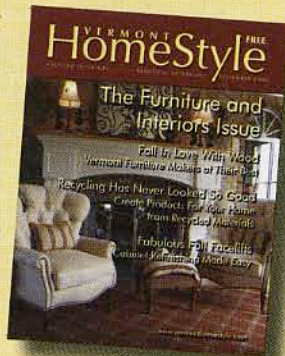
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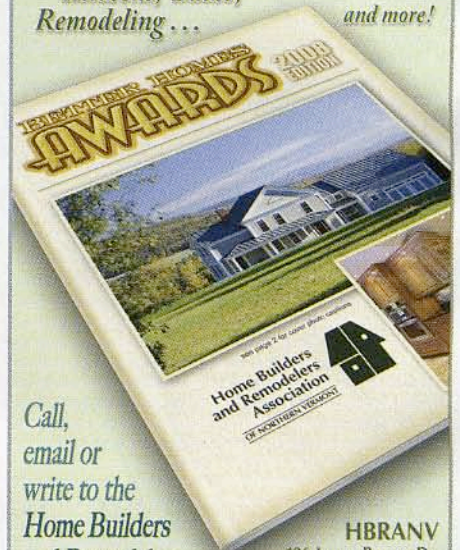
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