

# DESIGN FYI: Avoiding remodeling woes

---

## By Kris Linder

The world is filled with contractor horror stories. Here are some tips on how to prevent your remodeling job from becoming one of them.

The success of a remodeling project — of both the end result as well as the process — depends in large part on who you hire to execute it. Recall the adage, "What is done is secondary to who does it."

- ◆ You can save a lot of time, trouble and money down the line if you put the effort into selecting the right contractor for the job right at the beginning. If you are using an architect or designer, you will want to find a contractor who will work well as part of that team. It may help to use a contractor who your architect or designer has worked with before; someone whose work they know and respect.

- ◆ Choose a contractor who is suited to the type of job you're doing. If you are working with a large contracting firm, make a point to meet the person who will be supervising the day-to-day aspects of your job. After all, you'll practically be living with this person, so it's essential you feel comfortable with them.

- ◆ Once you've hired a contractor, it's a good idea to keep your design professional (the architect or designer) involved throughout the construction process. This may add to the expense, but will provide essential oversight to the process. Use your architect or designer as a go-between — he or she knows what to expect, and the contractor will want to keep them happy so they can get future work.

- ◆ Once you have your team together, try to stay a step removed. Rely on the architect to set quality control standards, to determine whether the job is being done satisfactorily and to

intervene when it is not. This helps keep your personal relationship with the contractor smooth.

The architect or designer can include regular site visits as part of their fee, or you can ask to be billed hourly for supervision when you need it (which is often more cost effective).

- ◆ If you are not living in your home during the renovation, visit the site regularly. Stop by daily, or every few days, depending on the stage of construction. Be sure to set aside time to go over your concerns with the contractor — the beginning or end of day usually is best. Be sure they have your work or mobile number and make yourself available when decisions need to be made or problems solved.

- ◆ It is in your best interest to maintain a good working relationship with your contractor. If you act like you don't trust him, or nickel and dime him on everything, he is likely to act the same way toward you.

- ◆ Don't forget to keep your crew sweet: buy lunch for everyone once in awhile, provide sodas, let workers use your bathroom or telephone and offer praise (not just complaints). These are simple civilities that can go a long way toward keeping workers happy on the job.

Of course, it's a fine line between staying on top of what's going on and becoming a pest. There's an old contractor joke: "The job will cost 20 percent more if you watch — but 50 percent more if you help!"

Kris Linder is proprietor of Interior Design Source in Los Gatos, which provides a full array of home design consulting and architectural planning services. Contact her online at [www.interior-design-source.com](http://www.interior-design-source.com) or by calling 408.395.4028.