

Asking the Right Questions of General Contractors

As important as budgets and timelines are to a project, they should not be the primary focus of an interview when you talk to a GC. Homeowners should also focus on trust and quality.

Start by asking questions about a company's business practices and experience in a similar type project to yours. If you decide you want hire a particular remodeling contractor, then you can discuss when they can start, what time they arrive at your home each day and when you will have your home to yourself again.

HERE ARE A FEW QUESTIONS NARI (NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE REMODELING INDUSTRY) RECOMMENDS YOU ASK.

- How long have you been in business?
- Who will be assigned as project manager / supervisor for the job?
- Who will be working on the project? Are they subs or employees?
- Does your company carry workers comp and liability insurance?
- Will you provide a written contract?
- How many projects like mine have / do you complete?
- Do you have references?

It's also important to realize that sometimes it's not the answers you get that are significant, but what you don't get. Asking the right questions is not enough. You also need to pay attention to your "gut" and to what information is missing.

Unlike your accountant or stockbroker, your remodeler will be a part of your daily life and available for some on-the-job education. They will be privy to your personal life, more so than your doctor or lawyer. Your contractor will know how you look in the morning and how well behaved your pets are. It makes sense that you should take some time to carefully select this person and make sure that it is someone to whom you can ask questions.