



How I Found An Amazing General Contractor: Two Upstate New Yorkers Share Their Approach

What you might want to consider before beginning your own home improvement.

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In the current golden age of HGTV shows about flipping houses and home repairs, an often-heard resource is the General Contractor. Heavily involved in all management aspects of a home improvement or construction site, finding the right General Contractor can make the difference between a great project and an epic home failure.

We spoke with two homeowners in Upstate New York that recently went through their own projects with the aid of a General Contractor to see what makes for a great GC experience and what you might want to consider before beginning your own home improvement.

Steve Maddux, Rochester, NY

Why did you love your general contractor?

From the beginning, he showed up on time, completed the job in a timely manner, and the work was done well and as we discussed and planned.

What kind of work did he or she do?

We had our General Contractor replace old basement windows with updated glass block windows.

What makes him or her different from the rest?

Aside from being qualified and professional, he had a personal and pleasant manner about him. On top of that, he just had good workmanship which is what is most important at the end of the day.

What would you do differently if you had to go through the process of looking for a general contractor again?

We found our guy pretty quickly, but I would probably try to get a few more quotes to make sure I wasn't overpaying.

What kind of advice would you give to anyone looking to hire a general contractor?

Find someone that the contractor has provided services for so you get a firsthand account of their work. Finally, make sure the contractor is insured for the work he or she is doing before you even get started.

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Rob Marsjanik, Victor, NY

Why did you love your general contractor?

All of the work was performed on time, within budget, and in a quality manner. There were no major surprises along the way.

What kind of work did he or she do?

We had a building contractor working on the construction of our new townhouse.

What makes him or her different from the rest?

They had a very good reputation as a quality builder in our region:

1. Use high end, quality products.
2. Hired subcontractors with a good reputation.
3. Adhered to high-quality control standards.
4. Flexibility in planning and designing the building, and employed a design center.
5. Program/product managers assigned to guide the customer through the process.
6. Website to keep the customer up to date on selections and build progress.
7. Used charts to keep the customer updated on progress and critical path items.
8. Warranty on major components including a 30-day review and a one year review of any issues that may have cropped up.
9. Assigned a Quality Assurance person if there were any issues after property close.

What would you do differently if you had to go through the process of looking for a general contractor again?

Not much, we really did our homework.

What kind of advice would you give to anyone looking to hire a general contractor?

1. Don't be afraid to ask as many questions as possible. Ask for references and ask if you can discuss their work with them.
2. Avoid fly-by-night contractors. Have a lawyer review the contract if you are uncomfortable.
3. Request a detailed Statement of Work (SOW) along with detailed product specifications.
4. Know your payment terms.
5. Request a detailed schedule of events or delivery schedule.