



Behind The Curtain

Exposing the Reasons Why So Many Home Remodeling
Companies Fail to Meet Client Expectations



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Behind the Curtain:

Exposing the Reasons Why So Many Home Remodeling Companies Fail to Meet Client Expectations

It's no secret the home remodeling industry has a bad reputation. Based on the countless project nightmares retold by people you know and postings all over the web, the sorry reputation of many remodeling contractors is well deserved. Tales abound about homeowners getting ripped off – by contractors who go over budget, stretch the schedule, do shoddy work, cut corners to pad their pockets, don't show up as expected – and the list of grievances goes on and on.

The purpose of this white paper is to educate consumers on why remodeling projects fail, and how a good remodeling partner will truly do their best to prevent bad things from happening. No remodeling project will ever be perfect. But how a Remodeling contractor handles issues will make or break your project.



This guide will focus on what should happen behind the scenes on a home remodeling project.

However, this often isn't what does happen. Throughout this document we'll discuss the three key issues leading to client dissatisfaction and project failure, the eight major warning signs that signal your project is in for trouble, and real life horror stories of remodeling projects gone bad.

First Issue of Client Dissatisfaction

- Poor Communication

Bob and Lois decided to completely remodel their outdated kitchen after seeing work done on a neighbor's house. The neighbor gave his contractor rave reviews. So, without checking references, Bob and Lois hired the neighbor's contractor to completely gut and re-design their kitchen space.

When they first met with the contractor, he mentioned he had a full crew to handle the project. He was very personable and kept reassuring Bob and Lois their project would turn out just as nice as their neighbor's remodel.

However, communication issues began to pop-up on day one of the project. Expecting a full crew to begin the demolition work, only the contractor's son showed up. When Bob and Lois questioned whether the rest of the crew was coming, the contractor told them "not to worry." He said everything would go smoothly and just as they expected – and to just "trust him."

So, Bob and Lois did just that. After all, he delivered on their neighbor's project, right?

But the issues never stopped coming. Demolition extended well past the original schedule. Materials were not delivered on time. The work being completed did not match the original plans. The contractor changed the placement of cabinets and appliances. And on and on...



When questioned about all the problems, the contractor always made excuses. He never proactively communicated any issues to the homeowner nor did he provide acceptable answers. Also, he rarely visited the site and had no project manager or point-person available to ensure the project progressed smoothly. Only his son was there doing most of the work. When Bob and Lois questioned the son, he told them repeatedly he'd have to check with his dad.

When Bob and Lois finally were able to pin down the contractor, he brushed off the issues without any serious consideration. He kept telling them he was in charge and had a handle on everything, even if he wasn't on site. He knew what he was doing and any changes were done because of problems discovered with Bob and Lois' home.

Tired of the lack of communication and attention to their project, Bob and Lois finally fired the contractor. They just didn't have the time or energy to make daily phone calls to the contractor to discuss issues and solutions. They also had no confidence their project would be delivered as expected.

Because they had to hire another contractor, the homeowners' budget for the kitchen remodel increased more than 50% and the three-month project was finally finished six months later.

Nothing can sink a remodeling project faster than poor communication. It's the number one reason contractor-homeowner relationships sour. For it to be effective, communication has to be a lot of things. Your contractor must communicate in a way that's detailed, thoughtful, consistent and respectful.

Here's a summary of how your contractor should communicate on your project:

Most accomplished remodeling contractors will assign a project manager as the point person. As the go-to person, your project manager manages communication about every aspect of your project. He or she also communicates with all team members involved in your project.

Proven remodeling contractors will have a formal communication process spearheaded by the project manager on your site. The project manager should communicate with you minimally on a daily basis, usually through e-mail so a written record is retained.

A good format for this daily e-mail includes two separate sections:

SECTION 1



The first section discusses a recap of what happened on the job yesterday, what happened today and what is planned for tomorrow.

Details cover scope, personnel and time, highlighting who is going to be in your home, expected times they will be there, processes to be done and appropriate expectations.

SECTION 2



The second section discusses the project's path. A remodeling project can be divided into three critical phases:

- **Mechanical Inspection Phase (MP&E)** – The key in most projects is to get past this phase. By passing this inspection, the contractor is allowed to proceed to the second phase.
- **Closing Up Phase** – During this second phase, the contractor will typically insulate, drywall, hang windows and doors, install cabinets, and perform other functions as needed. After phase two is completed, the project is deemed “substantially complete” and an initial punch list is created.
- **Finishing Phase** – All the finish work involved in the project is now started, including countertops, tile work, trim, paint, clean up and more. Punch list items are also completed.

Some additional notes on communication:

- The project manager must communicate so the homeowner knows exactly where the project is on the path, and what functions are being done in each phase. The goal is to let you know when your project reaches each critical juncture and to provide you with a timeline that demonstrates a clear path to completion. You should be able to get an account of the details, but also see the big picture.

- Most unexpected things happen during the first MP&E phase. Depending on the nature of the issue, the project timeline can be affected. When the project reaches the second phase, the chances of something unexpected happening diminish. Unless an item gets lost in shipping, is backordered or something else beyond the contractor’s control, the project should proceed smoothly through completion. Regular, detailed communication between contractor and homeowner will eliminate surprises and keep the project moving forward.



- Extra care during communication needs to be given to the homeowner during the final phase of a project. At this point, you probably will have become totally exhausted from living in a remodel. Your daily routine has been disrupted for a long period of time. An experienced contractor will understand what you’re going through and be sensitive to your feelings.

This is the first point when you're actually seeing your project come to life. It may be exactly as you imagined. Or, even if it were built exactly to plan, you may decide you want to make some changes now that you're visualizing it for the first time. In any event, your contractor needs to understand and accommodate your feelings.

Second Issue of Client Dissatisfaction

- Lack of Effective Problem Solving

After signing a contract for a room addition, Bill and Sue had nothing but major setbacks from poor work quality and horrible project management. The building plans prepared by the contractor were incomplete and work routinely failed inspection. The remodeling contractor never addressed problems head-on and was constantly in a reactive mode. When an issue surfaced, he either ignored it or made a shoot-from-the-hip decision. He never seemed to be proactive or take a thorough, analytical approach to problem solving.

When work finally started on the room addition, the contractor began with a wall demo. After some of the demolition was completed, Bill and Sue began to feel sick and experienced severe headaches and lethargy. They actually started falling asleep several times during the day.



One day, Sue passed out. She was awakened by a plumbing subcontractor telling her the demolition crew had torn off the vent to the hot water heater and carbon monoxide gas was leaking back into the house. No one had been around to check on the workers or supervise the job, exposing the homeowners to the gas for over a week. A trip to the ER confirmed Sue suffered from carbon monoxide poisoning.

But there's more...the wall demo exposed the home to severe rain storms. The contractor and his construction team did not protect the home and it was fully exposed to the elements for almost six months. As Bill and Sue scrambled to put up tarps, phone calls to the contractor remained unanswered.

Fearing even more trouble from the constant exposure to water, Bill and Sue hired an environment engineering company to test the home for mold. The results confirmed exceedingly high levels of a lethal form of mold. The homeowners were instructed to seal the room and begin class 1 abatement procedures.

Bill and Sue's project was the proverbial nightmare. Because the contractor didn't pay attention to detail and didn't address issues methodically and quickly, the homeowners incurred a huge amount of unbudgeted expenses. However, the serious health issues they suffered because of contractor's inability to anticipate and solve problems could have been deadly.



Lack of Effective Problem Solving

Timely and effective problem solving requires many steps. For any problem to be resolved successfully, all parties must participate in the process and accept the solution. The goal in every problem solving scenario is to reach a win-win outcome.

A bad contractor will tell the homeowner how it is instead of seeking input. They'll look for the most expedient way to reach a solution that's in their best interest. The client becomes powerless in the process and is expected to accept the solution.

By contrast, a good contractor will avoid this situation and bring the homeowner into the fold when any issue arises. A successful problem solving process includes a series of steps:



The first thing your contractor needs to do when a problem arises is make you aware of it immediately and convey a desire to work together on a fair and timely solution. By being proactive and inclusive, your contractor is treating your relationship as a true partnership.



The project manager on your construction team should spear-head the problem solving process. He or she will know how to handle the process in the most expeditious manner.



The project manager will begin to resolve the problem by doing the homework. In other words, he or she will go through a methodical process that includes:

- A.** Peeling back the layers of the issue to determine the root cause. Relying on initial reactions and shooting from the hip to arrive at a quick solution won't be in the project's best interest.
- B.** Determining what caused the problem. You don't want to search out someone to blame, but you do need to know who was responsible for any problem so all parties can learn from what happened.
- C.** Refraining from over-reacting. A remodeling project can be stressful for all involved, especially when something goes wrong. Nobody on the project team should add to this stress. Instead, your project manager should present a calm "I got this" attitude so you feel comfortable the issue will be resolved timely and in your best interest.
- D.** Enlisting appropriate help when needed. When the answer may not be obvious, the contractor should bring in an expert. An outside, impartial voice can help make everyone comfortable with the solution.
- E.** Moving through the process in a timely manner. Decision-making can be tough and some people like to take their time. However, your contractor needs to balance the need to keep the project moving forward with doing a thorough analysis before proposing a solution. If the problem affects the project plan and timeline, the contractor needs to develop and distribute a new one to the entire project team as quickly as possible.

F. Respecting your budget. A bad contractor will exploit problems by trying to add more money to the project budget. Although some unexpected things may impact the budget, a good contractor will always try and solve the problem with minimal effect.

G. Getting complete buy-in for the solution. All team members, including the client, the project manager, trade partners and other workers on site, should understand the problem and agree with the solution.

H. Formalizing the solution in writing. To avoid future misunderstandings, the resolution should be written so you know what will be done, who is responsible for doing it, when it will be done and how the rest of the project will be impacted.

The foremost thing in your contractor's mind when a problem arises is how you, the client, will be affected. A good contractor will always recognize it's your project and their role is to support you.



Even in the best circumstances, remodeling can be challenging. It disrupts your daily life, puts a strain on your finances, uncovers uncertainties, and more. When problems arise, emotions can be ratcheted up even further. So, your contractor must be understanding and never dismiss your feelings. The good ones will be aware of your feelings and create a dialogue so successful problem solving can take place.

Third Issue of Client Dissatisfaction

- Letting the Client Go It Alone

John and Sarah signed a contract in June for remodeling their first floor living space. The project was supposed to be completed in December, six months later. After the homeowners put furniture into storage and prepared for construction, the contractor never showed. He kept coming up with excuses for the repeated delays.

To further add to the homeowners' frustration, the contractor couldn't be reached and would never return their calls. The homeowners regularly had to step in to run the job after the contractor screwed up, didn't show up for days or weeks on end, or took another one of his ongoing vacations.

As the project progressed at a snail's pace, the contractor continued to fail on many fronts. In addition to scheduling problems, issues also surfaced with budgeting and work quality. He routinely made promises and never upheld them. Workers showed up sporadically and were never supervised. With the contractor unresponsive, John and Sarah were left to try and answer the workers' questions and keep the work progressing.



On one occasion, a worker had fallen through the roof creating a huge hole. At the end of that day, John and Sarah found an empty six-pack of beer on the ground. With nobody around to supervise them, the workers were careless and had no respect for the homeowners and their property. When the contractor would finally show up on-site, the homeowners learned he was only there to collect his next payment.

After 17 months, the project that was supposed to be completed in six months was only half-way finished. Since no other contractor wanted to step in to finish the mess, John and Sarah had no choice but to try and get the project finished on their own. In addition to their day jobs and personal responsibilities, they now had to assume the contractor role to get their project completed.



Most clients lack the time, desire and required knowledge to run their own projects. Although they want to be kept informed regularly of progress and issues, they want the professionals they hired to actually be in charge of the work.

Bad contractors may disappear for long periods of time and leave their subcontractors working alone. When questions arise, the workers on-site may have nobody else to turn to except you for guidance. No homeowner ever wants to feel like they're going it alone, especially after they've paid someone to handle things for them.

To ensure you never feel like you're running your own project, a good contractor will do the following:



1



Communicate Properly – Keeping a client constantly informed is the foundation of good project management. Every client will have different remodeling knowledge and experience. And, they'll have different desires and expectations as to what they would like communicated on an ongoing basis. It's the contractor's job to figure out how to work with the communication styles and expectations of each homeowner. Also, if more than one person is involved, such as a husband and wife, the contractor must communicate with each client in a tailored and appropriate manner.

2



Educate Accordingly – It's crucial to inform a client on what's happening and why during the process. If the project will experience downtime, the contractor needs to explain the reasons for it.

Here's a good example of when educating the client would be helpful:

During the drywall phase, the contractor has different crews for the hanging procedure and the tape and texture work. The drywall hangers may be on-site for four hours to hang all the drywall and then leave. The texture crew may show up the next day for several hours, leave to allow necessary drying time and then return. If this process is not clear to clients, they could feel like their project is being ignored during the necessary down times.

3



Manage Expectations – Remodeling is a cooperative partnership and is most effective when everyone has similar expectations and understands their role. The contractor's entire project team, including trade partners, needs to be involved in the process and share the vision. Everyone needs to understand respective roles and expectations.

4



Oversee Quality Workmanship – Mistakes certainly can be made, but it is your contractor's job to watch the work, check the work and communicate appropriately to all necessary parties. Resolving any mistakes or quality issues in a timely fashion with proper communication will ensure the client never feels like they have to oversee the work. With an experienced project manager in control, you can relax and let your vision become a reality.

5



Pay Attention to Detail – Remodeling projects have countless details to manage. Once the project has been through the design phase and all changes have been made during the creative process, everyone on the team needs to understand how the final plan that will be executed. Your contractor should be on top of things from day-one on the job. You should never have to communicate a concern over and over again.

6



Create a Sense of Urgency – Your contractor should not needlessly rush through your project, but they should be respectful of your time and proceed through the project with a sense of urgency. After all, your life is being disrupted! A project follows specific steps in a certain order and within an established time frame. However, issues may surface that affect these steps and timeline. Once the issue is resolved, the contractor's entire team needs to move the project forward in earnest.

7



Respect the Client's Time, Budget and Property – Respect needs to be at the core of everything your contractor does. From the moment your contractor starts to execute the plan, they need to demonstrate a sense of urgency to complete your project within the established budget and schedule parameters. Change orders cannot present an opportunity to “blow up the budget.” When your budget starts to fall apart, you sense the whole project is out of control. Finally, your contractor has to show a respect for cleanliness. Nothing can be more irritating than the contractor's workers leaving a mess in your home. The last thing you want to do is clean up after workers you're paying to do a job!



Adhere to Stringent Safety Protocols – A good contractor will pay special attention to your concerns for safety. You want to feel things are being taken care of so you can relax. Your contractor should put up tools, close doors and gates, turn off power when not in use and anything else that promotes safety in your home.

Good contractors will follow the above practices diligently. They'll present a genuine attitude of caring for you and your property. True caring on the part of the contractor assures the homeowner will never be left on their own to manage the project and resolve issues.



Eight Signs You Have the Wrong Remodeling Contractor

It's not always easy to separate the bad contractors from the good. To make sure you're dealing with a professional company that will deliver on their promises, you need to put a lot of time and effort into the selection process.

A questionable remodeling contractor will:

1. Provide an estimate far below other companies. If the price seems too good to be true, you can expect to experience issues with budget over-runs, shoddy work, expanded schedules, or the contractor may not even finish the project. The contractor may even request more money after the job starts, saying a mistake was made in your estimate.

2. Tell you it's unnecessary to write anything down. Don't get persuaded by a likeable personality. Remember, you're entering into a business relationship and need to stay focused on making sure you get the best deal for your investment. So, put everything in writing.

3. Offer to save you money by using non-standard materials, not building to code or not securing permits.

4. Not follow-through on promises made. If a contractor says anything can be done, make sure that's really the truth.

5. Need to be constantly supervised. Based on performance issues, you have a lack of trust in the contractor's ability to complete work as expected.

6. Request a large amount of the project's total cost in an upfront payment. If you pay more than what's acceptable industry practices, you run the risk of not getting a finished project to your expectations.

7. Rarely show up on the job site. A contractor who's not engaged in your project won't be adequately supervising subcontractors or employees.

8. Move on to other phases of the project before the previous task has been completed properly.

If you encounter any of the following signs while doing your homework or after your project starts, move on to another candidate or take immediate action to rectify the situation.

Republic West Remodeling

– Home of the Dream Assurance Plan™

With Republic West Remodeling, your home remodeling project will be a dream come true throughout the entire process. With almost 20 years in business, we've learned a thing or two about how to efficiently complete projects to every customer's expectation. We've built a time-tested process that prevents a terrible remodeling experience. And our testimonials, references and track record back this up.

Republic West Remodeling has developed the Dream Assurance Plan™, a custom remodeling process that strives to deliver a pleasant experience and a successful outcome for our customers. We're determined to transform the common perception that every remodeling project will be a nightmare.

The Dream Assurance Plan includes:



THE DREAM

In-house designers with over 75 years combined design experience. Through listening and creative dialogue, the creation of a well designed, fine tuned, completely defined, accurate and total scope of work can be created by our design/sales team prior to contract signing and prior to the expenditure of clients first dollar



COMES ALIVE

With an in-house design department comes the creation of personalized visualizations and state of the art 3-D renderings to see the dream come alive. A detailed vision of the projected final outcome, before and during the decision making process.



WITH BRILLIANT CHOICES

An in-house professional interior designer. Each client receives a personal professional designer support and assistance with choices for finishes, fixtures, appliances, etc. as well as the support needed to make all choices on a Global basis with a clear understanding and vision of the projected final outcome; and with the basis of knowledge and course of construction scheduling. This enables prioritization of purchases to expedite execution.



A DEFINED PLAN

An in-house architect and pre-construction managers with over 30 years of residential remodeling experience have the ability to ensure the dream can be built as planned, with long-term view, in the most cost effective manner. Conduct and support all work with HOA's and municipalities. The creation of a day by day construction plan, from demolition to completion, to absolutely minimize inconvenience to our clients.



AND AN ADVOCATE

In-house senior project management team. Each project is assigned a Trusted Advisor to support and clearly communicate with clients in real time, and to advocate for the client throughout the construction process. One go to person who is there to answer questions clients may have and to address issues and effectively problem solve that which may arise.



WITH INTERNAL SUPPORT

In-house project support / purchasing and expediting staff. Support with the construction process, including a concierge service to assist with all client supplied items, a purchasing and expediting department that is completely integrated with the construction process, project planning, and the project schedule.



AND AN EXPERIENCE REMODELING TEAM

In-house, company trained on staff crews with over 102 years combined experience with Republic West Remodeling. A group of senior carpenters and specialists totally versed in the vision and mission of Republic West Remodeling. Craftsmen who view their work as Art and understand the long term benefit of quality workmanship that is performed at its highest level and the corresponding benefit of real customer satisfaction.



The Home Remodeling Customer's Bill of Rights

Cost Certainty - The right to know, before I agree to any project, what the project cost will be upon contract signing, along with a true and accurate understanding of what my project will cost upon its completion.

Free Speech! - The right to know that my ideas have been heard and integrated into the process and the design. The right to know that at a project's completion, it will very closely resemble the renderings I was presented with when asked to sign a contract.

Time Certainty - The right to have a realistic timeframe of a project's execution from the beginning of construction to the completion of the project-a realistic timeframe that does everything possible to minimize my family's inconvenience during the construction process.

High Standards - The right to know a project will be designed and produced in compliance with city codes and regulations, and that an architect with extensive residential remodeling experience will do the planning for construction and execution.

Top Quality - The right to quality products and craftsmanship.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T - The Right to know that my home will be treated with the utmost care and cleanliness during the construction process. The right to know, each day, who will be in my home and what time will they arrive/depart. The right to know my home, my family, and my pets will be safe and secure during the construction process.

No Interruptions! - The right to know that my remodeling project will be performed without unnecessary interruption from start to finish.

Open Communication - The right to know I can express my thoughts and concerns freely and openly throughout the remodeling process.

Honesty - The right to effective, honest, and economically fair problem solving on behalf of the remodeling contractor.

Excellence - The right to know that the home remodeling company I choose will stand behind their work long after the remodeling project is complete, and provide excellent customer service.

To see the entire Home Remodeling Customer's Bill of Rights,
visit www.RepublicWestRemodeling.com and click on Resources > Bill of Rights to request your free copy.

What are people saying about us?

Let's look at some testimonials:

William H

Republic West built my garage addition better than I had hoped for. As my wife said it looks like it has always been a part of the house, and the price was the same as other builders with lesser design ideas.

Julie Swartz

We love our new kitchen! Thank you Aaron Wiesman and the entire Republic West team for making our dream kitchen a reality!

Jean Eisenach

Republic West staff and contractors were great to work with and resulted in a completed kitchen project on time and on budget! New granite counter tops, rock back splash, lighting, etc. We are so happy with the end result.

Paul Wieser

Republic West remodeled our master bath. Staff was most professional and took a direct personal interest in getting the job completed on time and to the highest of standards.

Dave F

Republic West Remodeling did a great job on my back yard living space - they did a great job, and their professionalism is unmatched! Highly recommended!



RWR on Youtube

Republic West Remodeling on youtube is a great resource to watch all of our Home Tours. Stop by and take a look yourself.

Watch the videos:

www.youtube.com/user/RWRemodeling



Republic West Remodeling assures that you will receive a thoughtful, comprehensive and proven business model in the most caring and respectful manner throughout your remodeling experience.

Republic West has provided excellent service at competitive pricing for over 17,000 clients in the Phoenix Metropolitan area and would like to do the same for you!

For more information on home remodeling, or to request a free, no obligation, design consultation, visit <http://www.republicwestremodeling.com> or call (480) 428-2695.