

Choosing The Right Contractor

It's that time of year again where if you're one of the lucky ones, you will be receiving a tax return. Now the only question is what you will do with the extra money. If you are considering in hiring a company for a home improvement project (landscaping, painting, flooring, kitchen/bathroom remodeling, etc.), there are two basic concepts that you'll want to keep in mind.

First and foremost, you must educate yourself. Gathering information about the potential company is extremely important during the interview phase. One item of importance is to identify if they are licensed contractors? You can easily check the validity of a contractor's license by visiting the Arizona Registrar of Contractor's website at www.azroc.gov. Their website states, "A contractor must be licensed to legally perform jobs that require a building permit or when labor and materials for the project cost \$1,000 or more." If you hire a licensed contractor that completes the work with poor workmanship or simply fails to complete the project, you may recover losses up to \$30,000 through the Residential Contractors Recovery Fund. By not hiring a licensed contractor, you revoke this right to protect your costly investment. You may also utilize this stage to interview the company's representative with regards to industry standards as well as a typical time frame to complete the work. This will allow you to compare knowledge from one contractor to another to identify who may be *inconsistent* with standard practices. Kim States, Public Affairs Director of the Better Business Bureau in Tucson recommends checking the company's records with the BBB if any complaints have been recorded and if they were resolved. Finally, do not hesitate to ask for at least two references from recent clients that have had similar work done.

Once you commit to a company, be sure to get everything in writing. A contract has several purposes. One very important aspect is that it should clearly communicate the expectations of the work to be completed. Besides indicating the total cost, a few other items that are typically included in the contract are payment terms, beginning and completion date, and a detailed description of the work. Be sure to clarify the company's procedures if you request a change in the work once it has already commenced. Keep in mind that if there are any changes to the contract, that you receive another estimate before the additional work has begun. Be sure that the change order clearly documents what will be done. If you feel there is even a slight possibility you may change a portion of the work along the way, do not hesitate to ask that the contract be itemized. If you decide to change a particular aspect, you already know how much should be subtracted from the contract. The written contract is not only intended to prevent a company from taking advantage of you, but to also confirm that your expectations of the scope of work are clearly identified and will be executed. Remember to never be afraid to ask for additional details if there is anything unclear. When in doubt, get it in writing.

Choosing the right contractor for your home improvement project is a major decision. Whether the work totals a few hundred dollars or several thousands of dollars, by applying these concepts, you are more likely to have a successful outcome.

Landscape Tip Of The Month:

Consider applying a pre-emergent in your entire yard as a preventative maintenance for weed control before the spring rains arrive. You can purchase this product at most hardware stores or you may consider hiring a professional to apply a commercial grade product. If you are interested, you may contact us for a free estimate. We offer a three month guarantee that you will not receive a letter regarding weeds from your Home Owner's Association.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this article, including ideas or topics that you would love to hear us discuss in any future articles, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact us at our website below. We will be writing an article as it relates to gardening in Marana the first week of every month in the Marana Weekly News.

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