



*Secrets
to
Successful
Remodeling*

**Important Information That Can Save You Thousands
When You Remodel or Build Your Home**

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About Plaskoff Construction

Introduction

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in the "Six Secrets To Successful Remodeling".

Believe me, there are lots of things many contractors would love to keep a mystery to you. I will discuss some of them in a few minutes.

But first, let me ask you two questions:

Has it ever been more frustrating or aggravating trying to decide who in the world you can trust to remodel your home?

How can you be assured that when you spend your hard-earned dollars you'll get exactly what you paid for?

If you are frustrated, you're not alone. Haven't we all heard the "nightmare stories" of the botched jobs, scam artists, fly-by-nighters, unfinished jobs, and general lack of professionalism?

Pretty scary stuff?

Let's face it. The bad apples of the industry have really made it hard for the consumer to figure out the "white hats" from the "black hats". You cannot pick up a paper or watch TV without seeing another story about somebody who had a terrible experience with their remodeling project. Whether it was hiring the wrong contractor, permit battles with the city, or arguments with a neighbor.

Most of us are just too busy these days to take the time to acquire all the information that is necessary when deciding

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on a major expenditure, like how to go about a remodel of your home.

Is it any wonder why most homeowners make costly mistakes when they're considering a remodeling project?

Imagine this:

Dianne and Jerry run a very successful real-estate investment business. They own a magnificent home in Brentwood Park, a prestigious part of the Los Angeles Westside. They lead a very busy life, and have no time for dealing with a remodeling project on their own.

Two years back they had spent \$100,000 to remodel and add on to the rear of their home. They added 15 pairs of French doors, which look out over their new patio and remodeled pool area. They installed new hardwood flooring and enlarged the laundry room into a maid's quarters. In addition, they reroofed the home in anticipation of a wet winter. They hired a licensed contractor to perform the work and got what they thought was a "good deal".

The problem was that the contractor took no care in insuring that the project was built properly. The doors leaked and damaged the new hardwood flooring. The patio was poured so high that the water could roll right in to the home. The maid's furniture would move when you walked on the new floor, which was so poorly built that it bounced when you entered the room. The roof leaked and since the fascia and gutters had not been properly flashed, water rolled down the walls in the living room, family room and dining room.

Dianne and Jerry attempted to resolve the issue with the

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original contractor who consistently said that he would take care of the problems. After a year of listening to unfulfilled warranty promises, they contacted Matt Plaskoff Construction, Inc.

Dianne and Jerry contracted with Matt Plaskoff Construction, Inc. to remove all the stucco on the rear of the home, install proper flashings, repair the poorly installed roof, install new fascia and gutters, weather-strip the doors properly and rebuild the floor system in the maid's room.

The bill was \$55,000!

Unfortunately for Dianne and Jerry, there was not much they could do. They had to have the work done. It was too late. What happened to Dianne and Jerry happens way too often.

Does Dianne and Jerry's story make you sick to your stomach?

I'll bet it does. And it really aggravates me! They are extremely nice people.

It makes me angry to talk to all of you who have worked so hard, for so many years, to only find yourselves frustrated about your projects and your money.

When you remodel, you should be getting that wonderful peace of mind that comes from being in complete control, working with someone who understands your needs and your goals. This person should be someone who is licensed, carries general liability and workers compensation insurance, is qualified to perform the work, and can take your project from concept to completion. In addition, this person should

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warranty and stand behind his work.

Let's look at a very different scene from that of Dianne and Jerry's:

Tom and Sylvia are both busy professionals. When they have free time at night and on weekends, they spend time with their son James and enjoy a nice dinner which they would prepare in their small non-functional kitchen. They live in the medium-sized traditional style home that had no eat-in kitchen and the master suite left much to be desired. It was lacking a walk-in-closet and sitting room. Tom and Sylvia enjoy a comfortable area to relax and read. The house was perfectly comfortable in every other way, they loved the neighborhood, and they had no intention of moving.

They decided they would like to put an addition onto the back of their home that would provide a sitting room for the master and allow for that walk-in-closet they so desperately needed. In addition, they decided to remove some interior walls and allow the kitchen and breakfast room to flow in to each other, making the entire area more spacious and functional. They wanted to reroof the entire home, refinish the hardwood flooring and paint the home in and out. They called several contractors over to discuss the project after checking each one out with the Better Business Bureau and the California State License Board.

My Architect and I listened to Tom and Sylvia explain the project and asked many open ended questions to learn exactly what their vision of the perfect addition looked like. We took pages of notes and promised to be back in contact with them shortly.

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Soon thereafter, I called and made an appointment to stop by to explain the proposal I had prepared. At the dining room table I went over the six-page proposal, line by line, which specified everything that was included as well as not included in the price. It specified the brands of windows and doors, showed allowances for the tile and lighting fixtures, and indicated a completion timetable.

Tom and Sylvia were impressed with the details specified in the proposal, my professionalism, and most importantly, they felt extremely comfortable with me. I asked for their business, but Tom and Sylvia weren't ready to make a decision yet. They asked me to explain why some of my line item prices were higher than what they had expected. I explained the value they would receive for the dollars I was charging and exactly what the process would entail. They were satisfied with my explanation and explained that a close friend of theirs had recently worked with us and was thrilled with their project. They told them the job started when promised and ended on schedule. Debris was put in its place promptly and the set was cleaned up at the end of every day. They raved about the quality workmanship and my professionalism, as well as that of my sub-contractors. They invited Tom and Sylvia over to see the work because they were so proud of the finished project. They were very impressed, and excited!

I sent over a contract and we were on our way.

Once the permits were ready, work began immediately. I even put a portable toilet on the site so the workmen wouldn't need to bother Tom and Sylvia when nature called. Hardly a day passed when something wasn't happening on the addition and remodel. The exact brands of windows and

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doors specified were installed. The stucco matched the existing house exactly. The drywall work was terrific, and Tom and Sylvia were both ecstatic over the paint job.

When the inspector arrived for final inspection, he walked around the outside and the inside looking at everything, but didn't say a word for about five minutes. Then he turned to us and said, "This place looks terrific, you did a great job! I'll sign you off". We finished the project on time!

That week I picked up my final check. I gave Tom and Sylvia a Final Waiver of Lien for the job, and had them file a Notice of Completion, which was then filed at the County Recorder. This document closed down the job and prevented anyone from making false lien claims against them in the future in reference to the job.

Now that's a much better story than Dianne and Jerry's, isn't it?

But what was the difference? What did Tom and Sylvia do that Dianne and Jerry didn't?

What did Tom and Sylvia learn?

What are these secrets you may ask?

Lets get right down to it.

Avoid Common Misconceptions



1. *If the Better Business Bureau doesn't have any complaints against the contractor, he must be qualified.*

NO, NO, NO! The Better Business Bureau (BBB) often does a lousy job of reporting offending companies. Especially if they are dues paying “members”.

The October 1995 issue of Money Magazine exposed the BBB for what it really is. Many consumers believe that the BBB is a non-profit organization or even a government agency. In fact, the BBB is really a franchised for-profit business that often fails to give unsatisfactory ratings to member companies plagued by a history of serious complaints.

The BBB is in the business of selling “memberships” not “ratting on” dues paying members. Just because a contractor doesn't have any complaints with the BBB doesn't mean you're working with someone who is a reputable professional.

2. *Going with the lowest price saves you money.*

No, not necessarily! Everyone tends to look for the lowest price. On a low estimate, you must ask yourself what is being left out or what shortcut is being taken.

One roofer had his re-roof job \$300 cheaper than anyone else. The homeowner wanted to save money and accepted his proposal. After the job was completed, all the old shingles and nails were still lying around the yard and shrubs and the homeowner was having a fit. The contractor told them that he had not figured the cleanup in his proposal and that was how he could do the job so much cheaper.

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One of the most common signs of trouble ahead is someone offering to do work for much less money than others. Like anything else, you can't get something for nothing. Be careful of choosing your remodeler based upon the lowest price.

3. Doing it yourself saves money.

No! Sometimes the "weekend warrior" can undertake small projects like painting, hanging wallpaper, routine repairs, etc. But beware of undertaking larger, more complicated projects. What starts out as an attempt to save money can turn into a costly folly. All too often the job is botched and it costs more to have a professional come in and fix what's been done. According to an article in the Baltimore Sun, less than 20% of these do-it-yourself jobs work out. This is mostly due to lack of experience on the part of the homeowner. If you want to be assured your project will turn out the way you want it, call a qualified professional.

4. If a person claims to have many years of experience, they must do quality work.

NO! I can't tell you how many people receive bad workmanship from contractors who've claimed to be in business or the trade for twenty years. Take experience claims with a grain of salt. Don't believe just because a person has twenty years experience, he will do a good job. He could have done a poor job for twenty years. Investigate further to ensure you're dealing with a qualified professional.

Common Scams



1. *Today only discounts.*

If a contractor ever tells you that the price is available for “today only”, it’s time to show him the door.

Quite often they’ll provide you a story that by signing today you’re entitled to a “model home” or “advertising discount”. The story enters around the need to use your home as a model to advertise their services in the neighborhood. They mark their prices up just to give you the false discount. Don’t be fooled. This is an old trick used to pressure homeowners into making a quick decision. This is your money we’re talking about! Quickly show these salesmen the door.

2. *High-pressure salespeople.*

You should never feel pressured into making a decision about choosing your contractor. If you ever feel that a contractor or salesman is pressuring you, ask them to back off. If they persist, it’s time to look for another contractor. High pressure usually leads to a bad decision when remodeling. A qualified professional would never have to pressure anyone into a project.

3. *Beware of “door-to-door” contractors.*

These people may not be contractors at all. Never allow them into your home until you have checked them out thoroughly! This cannot be stressed enough. It has been reported that two men claiming to be contractors have entered into a home, and while one took the homeowner on a pretend inspection, the other guy was going through purses and

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picking up items that could be sold quickly.

Some contractors that are working in your area may put out flyers or come to your door soliciting additional work in the area. These contractors could be honest, reputable people. If you're interested in their services, do not invite them in. Politely ask them for their business card, and the names, addresses and telephone numbers of people they are doing work for in the neighborhood. Then make an appointment with that homeowner to take a look at the quality of their work.

Secret 3

How To Choose The Right Contractor (10 Questions To Ask Before Inviting A Contractor Into Your Home)

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1. *Are you licensed?*

Make sure your contractor is properly licensed. In the State of California, all contractors **MUST** be licensed. Anyone can say they are licensed. Make the contractor prove it by either showing you the license or giving you a copy of it. Remember to check the expiration date. Being licensed is the law. If a contractor cannot provide a valid license, **DON'T HIRE HIM!**

If you live in a townhouse, villa, or high rise condominium building with four or more units, only a Building Contractor or General Contractor is permitted to perform remodeling work. Furthermore, hire a specialty contractor (trim carpentry, drywall, glazing, aluminum, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, roofing, etc.) to do only the type of work the license specifies.

If you have any questions or doubts, call the California State License Board.

2. *Do you carry general liability insurance?*

Make sure your contractor carries general liability insurance. This type of insurance protects your property in case of damage caused by the contractor and/or his employees. The insurance company will pay for the cost of replacing and/or repairing any damage that occurs.

Anyone can say they are insured. Make the contractor prove it by having their insurance company FAX or mail to you a certificate of insurance with you named as the certificate holder.

3. *Do you carry workers compensation insurance?*

Make sure your contractor carries workers compensation insurance. It protects you from liability if a worker is injured while on your property. Be aware that if the contractor doesn't carry workers compensation coverage, you may be liable for any injuries suffered by the contractor or any of his employees on your property.

If the contractor is a one-man operation, he can be exempt from having to carry workers compensation insurance. If he is doing so legally, he can provide you with a copy of his construction industry certificate of exemption from workers compensation. This is very risky for you though. If he shows up with a helper and the helper gets hurt, with no workers compensation insurance, you may have to pay the medical bills. If the uninsured contractor is sloppy about verifying his sub-contractor's workers compensation insurance and the sub-contractor gets hurt, again you may have to pay the medical bills. In short it is much safer to deal with a fully insured contractor.

4. *Will you provide me with a written lien waiver?*

Your contractor should provide you with a written lien waiver at the end of the job. This is a legal document which says you the homeowner have paid the contractor in full for the services rendered and the contractor waives his right to place a mechanics lien on your property. If during the course of construction you receive any preliminary Notice to Owner documents from material suppliers or sub-contractors, it would be prudent to ask the contractor for a final release of lien from each one prior to paying the contractor his final draw. This protects you in case the contractor doesn't pay his

material suppliers or sub-contractors after you have paid him in full.

5. Are you a member of NARI or NAHB?

NARI stands for the National Association of the Remodeling Industry and NAHB stands for the National Association of Homebuilders. It's always a good idea to consider hiring a NARI or NAHB contractor. In most cases, both organizations only attract conscientious contractors interested in bettering the industry and in weeding out unprofessional contractors. In order to become a member, the contractor's background and references are thoroughly investigated.

6. Will you pull all the required building permits?

Make sure your contractor pulls all required permits. This is very important. When a contractor pulls the required building permits, you know things will be done to "code". Also, many homeowners' insurance policies require pulling a permit on any major remodeling to keep your home property covered. Not all contractors will do this. Many prefer not to pull permits because of the time involved and the "hassle" with the inspectors. Some contractors may ask you to get the permits. This could be a warning sign that they are not able to pull the permit because they are unlicensed, or the work is outside of their license. A reputable contractor will permit every job where a permit is required.

7. Do you guarantee your work?

Your contractor should guarantee his work for at least one year from the date of completion. Some contractors guarantee their work for two or even three years.

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8. *Who will be in charge of the job?*

Make sure the contractor or his foreman is on the job daily whenever work is being performed – especially if sub-contractors will be used. The responsible party must be intimately familiar with every aspect of your project. If you won't be home during the construction and must leave the house unlocked, or leave a key with the contractor, you must feel comfortable. You can't be worried about what is going on when you are not there.

9. *Will you provide me with written references?*

A good contractor will be happy to provide you with references. You should look for a well-established contractor who can give you several customer references from the last 6 months to one year. Ask for the name of the contractor's accountant or banker. You want to ensure that the contractor is financially sound and won't be declaring bankruptcy in the middle of your project.

10. *How do you handle "dirty work"?*

Construction is dusty and dirty! It gets everywhere, especially if any sanding is being done. Make sure the contractor will make an honest effort to keep the dust contained, or notify you when the heavy dust generating operations will be taking place.

Secret 4

The Biggest Mistakes Homeowners Make And How To Avoid Them



1. Listening to the wrong people.

It never ceases to amaze me how many people take advice on their construction and remodeling project from people who are totally unqualified to give this critical advice. Quite often, when I see construction messes (which I see virtually every day), and I ask where they got the idea to do this or that, I inevitable hear things like:

My brother-in-law told me to do that. He used to do work like this on the side when he was a student.

I asked the guy in the office next to mine. He did the same thing to his home when he lived in Wisconsin.

I read an article by so-and-so that said we should....

Everyone's got an opinion on what you should do with your remodeling dollars. "Do it yourself", "hire the sub-contractors and run the project yourself", etc. Just because someone is your relative, friend, or thinks they know construction, doesn't mean they know the answers to your remodeling questions or problems.

If you've got an idea or a thought about improving your home, call someone qualified to answer your questions.

2. Not asking for or calling references.

Call at least three of the references you're given. So many people start out on the right track by asking for references

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but then they never call them. You can never learn too much about the company you are considering using. Take a few minutes to talk to these people. It will be worth it! Ask if the job was done on time and at the agreed upon price. Ask if the contractor was easy to reach and easy to deal with.

3. Not visiting the references or seeing examples of work.

Visit their previous clients to see examples of work. You can learn a lot by seeing the finished project. If the contractor is good, many previous clients are extremely proud of their “new” home and will be glad to let you take a look.

See a job in progress. Is the job site clean? Are tools and materials strewn about like a hurricane just blew through? Is everything dusty and dirty, or is it covered or sealed off? Chances are if a contractor keeps his work sites clean and neat, especially at the end of the day when it’s time to go home, you’ve got a conscientious contractor.

Secret 5

How To Tell If Your Remodeling Project Will Run Smoothly Before You Sign The Contract



1. *Good Communication.*

If you can talk with each other, you can work out any details that come up.

When you leave a message, does he return your call?

Does he return a page promptly?

Does he listen to you?

Nothing is more important than feeling like your contractor understands your needs and concerns. If your contractor is so busy that he can't return calls or pages promptly, maybe it's time to look for a new contractor. When you're in a discussion, does the contractor really listen to you? I mean really listen? This is vital.

You should always feel like the both of you are on the same page. This can avoid miscommunication and costly errors. This is a very important "secret" to a successful and enjoyable remodeling experience. Choose someone who will listen to you.

2. *Comfort.*

If you feel comfortable with your contractor, the chances are good your project will run smoothly. Think about it. You've just invited a stranger into your home. Do you find this person nice? Considerate? Personable? A listener? Was he polite and courteous? Or did he make you feel that he wasn't

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interested? You will be working with this person for a matter of days, weeks, or months depending upon the project you need completed. Can you stand to have this person around?

3. *Trustworthy.*

If you feel your contractor is trustworthy, the likelihood of a successful project is good. Check his references. Keep in mind that if your project will entail entrance into your home and you won't be home during the day, the keys to your castle will be given to your contractor. Can you trust him? Listen to your conscience.

4. *Completion.*

Will your contractor give you a reasonable estimate for how long the project will take to complete? A good contractor will do this. Remember, you want to hire a good contractor, not get a new roommate! Nothing is more frustrating and irritating than a remodel job that drags on and on.

5. *Written proposal.*

I can't tell you how many contractors I've seen look at rather complex jobs, pick a price out of thin air, scribble the figure only on the back of their business card, and give the card to the homeowner. Show contractors that do this the door! You want a detailed written proposal that shows what is included: exact materials, brand names where applicable, costs, and the payment schedule.

6. *Details.*

Work out the little details before work begins. Talk about

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things like:

Where will the dumpster go or the debris pile be created?

What time will construction begin in the morning?

What time will construction end in the evening?

Will work take place on weekends?

Will workmen refrain from smoking inside the house?

7. Flexibility.

Remodeling is an interruption to your normal lifestyle. If your project involves the kitchen, plan on eating a few extra meals out with the kids (or better yet, send the kids to “mom” and go out alone). Remodeling time may not be the best time to host a slumber party for your eight-year-old daughter.

8. Appearance.

If your contractor has a neat appearance, this is a very good sign of things to come. This may sound silly, but it’s not. He doesn’t have to show up in a coat and tie, but neatness does count. Is he clean? Is his truck presentable or falling apart? Is his truck permanently lettered and does it contain a license number? If his appearance is neat, chances are he will keep your job neat.

9. Down payment.

If the contractor asks for a big chunk on money up front, this could be a tip-off that they are not in good financial shape

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and you could be in for a rocky experience. A fair down payment should not exceed 10%, unless custom ordered items are needed in the beginning stage of construction. As the work progresses, you should expect to pay out additional funds to match the prescribed, completed stages.

10. Change orders.

With remodeling, there is always the chance that you may want or need to change a material or contract item. Ask how these are handled. They should be written on a separate document showing in detail what is being changed and how much it will cost. This should be done before the change is affected and signed by both the contractor and homeowner.

Secret 6

Plan Your Project



This is really the greatest “secret” of all!

Plan your project with a qualified remodeling expert.

Most people spend more time planning a one-week vacation than they do a major remodel of their home. If you’re considering a remodel in the near future, sitting down and talking with a professional remodeling expert who can answer all of your questions is the best advice I can give.

Someone who can help you through the “maze” of planning, not to mention all the bureaucratic “red tape” awaiting you at the building department. Someone who listens to your every concern. Someone who subscribes to the principles and “secrets” discussed above.

As you might have guessed, this is the only way Matt Plaskoff Construction, Inc. works.

Initially, I provide a Free, No Obligation interview to determine your concerns and to see if I may be of service to you and your family.

Hopefully, I can show you, as I have many others, how to make your home absolutely gorgeous, something of which you will be truly proud!

Sounds good, doesn’t it?

You have to understand, I truly love helping my clients remodel their homes. Several people hire me each month as their contractor.

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But because I have a steady volume of business, I never accept clients who aren't really excited and interested in undertaking their project. I have so much fun seeing people's homes (and their lives) change for the better, that I would never work with anyone who wasn't excited and really looking forward to seeing their "dream house" become a reality.

If all this makes sense, and you like my approach to remodeling, please give me a call at (818) 654-2737.

And remember, absolutely NO PRESSURE.

No one is going to try to sell you anything. This is simply a chance for you to meet me, and see if my services can benefit you. If after our meeting, you believe there is no benefit to be derived from working with me, I will simply leave and that is that. If, however, you would like my help, we will discuss how we can proceed.

I can't think of a better way to work. Can you?

If you think my approach is fair and honest, please call my office while this is fresh in your mind to set up an appointment. Again, my phone number is (818) 654-2737.

Either way, I wish you luck with your remodeling plans.

Sincerely,
Matt Plaskoff, President
Matt Plaskoff Construction, Inc.

P.S. Don't be another "nightmare remodeling" story. Plan your remodel with a professional, so that your home will be something of which you will be very proud.

About

Plaskoff Construction



**Builders and Remodelers of Luxury Homes and Estates
Since 1988**

When you contract with Plaskoff Construction you can be certain that your project will be treated with the highest levels of professionalism and service - from concept to completion.

In keeping with our commitment to achieving total client satisfaction, we meticulously approach each project with the quality and care that has earned us our outstanding reputation, and allowed us to lead the industry in construction design and remodeling excellence.

We stand behind our work, warranty every job, and go to great lengths to ensure that our clients are involved in the process and progress, every step of the way.

Featuring...

New Home Construction

Residential Remodeling and Additions

Design Build Construction

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