

The Dynamics of Construction and Remodeling Projects

Based on experience every project has different dynamics based upon the needs of the owner. In spite of the differences in homes sizes, types and styles a few similarities that home owners experience are evident on all construction ventures. First, there will be interruptions to your normal life style. Second, it will usually cost you more than you planned. Finally, it will usually take longer than you expected. Some contractors oversell and under produce what they promise. As experienced builders we would rather undersell our results to you and over produce what we promise. Some people only want to talk about the easy or good parts of the project we want to talk about all aspects of the project so you are fully informed. These types of questions and answer are not readily available on the internet. We have realized that discussing planning issues and contributing factors in advance smoothes the road to a better construction experience for our clients.

These factors can really influence the outcome of any construction project so buyers beware. The best way for any consumer to educate themselves is to look at the experiences of others. Whether it be studying the J.D. Power and Associates recommendations, or Googling your favorite search engine to compare prices or checking out the Blog about a product or service you are really looking for “what other people, companies or organizations are reporting about their buying experiences.” Some of the topics we deal with will not be found in most research sources. Our history in business tells us these matters should be discussed and present in a professional manner.

We are going to explore these factors in an attempt to educate you as our consumer so that you can better plan your upcoming project. The reason we picked additions and remodeling is that these projects typically take longer and in most cases the client continues to reside in the home while the work is being done. That being said a little repair project can create a lot of dirt and inconvenience but for a much shorter time frame. As a professional builder and remodeler it is our obligation to give all the information we can prior to starting work to our clients undertaking a construction project of this magnitude.

Let’s talk about the interruptions that clients’ experience. This topic has many factors and may take several paragraphs to address some of the issues that arise during a project that cause these interruptions to your life that you might not have thought about. If you are used to your privacy, routine, quiet, organization, and cleanliness this construction process will be disruptive at some level. This is true on several planes because we as contractors we will be invading your personal space.

When we come to your home we are guests and we want to treat you and your property like it is our own. But it is best to understand that some level of disruption will occur. It is our job to take measures to protect your home from dust and debris by cleaning up, changing HVAC filters, and using plastic barriers and other measures to keep things as neat as possible but there will be times that your home will get dusty. We will work the agreed to and designated window of work hours but we are sure that our saws will make your phone call hard to hear which may frustrate you while you are trying to have a conversation. We may start work and make noise while you are trying to watch the morning show and eat breakfast.

It is pertinent to discuss these issues now because you will most likely feel like you can't get any peace and quiet while this project is underway. We understand that you may feel these disruptions and that you may feel inconvenienced; there is a good chance it will happen. We want you to know up front some of the inconveniences that you may face while your home is remodeled or added on to are normal. We want you to discuss these concerns as they come up so we can address any problems and make any corrections to our process in an attempt to make your life a little better during the work.

One of the things that you should be prepared for is cost overruns. They happen on jobs for several justifiable reasons. Reason number one for cost over runs is not sticking to the budget that has been set. Because you are in the middle of a project you are aware of TV programs, remodeling shows, magazines, items on display at the store and your friend's ideas. Everyone knows your doing this project and they are all too ready to assist with your selections and tell you how to spend your money. It is Ok to go over the budget if you can afford it and are prepared to deal with the cost over runs. It is not Ok if the extra money is just not available and can end the job with bad feelings. A properly planned project requires a properly constituted budget. Strict adherence to the budget will almost guarantee that the project come in where it has been estimated. However changes, up grades and constant delays will usually affected the budget in a negative manner.

Reason number two for cost overruns is that hidden damage or unknown conditions are discovered in the work process this could be in the form of termite damage that is exposed when structure is opened up and revealed. Maybe when the wiring is tied in it is discovered that an inspection will not be able to be passed because of code violations in the existing breaker panel is wired wrong; a decision must be made to call the inspector and risk getting a possible red tag (shut down of the job until the sub-standard work has been fixed) on the pre-existing wiring or roll the dice hoping he will pass it because the new work is acceptable and to code. Maybe you forgot to tell us where the septic was and that it was 20 ft closer to the house than we were told and when we dug for the new foundation we destroyed the lateral lines and the leech bed. For these very reasons it is so important to have a pre-job walk through and discuss all the issues that might arise as well as continue with ongoing scheduled weekly update meetings to discuss things such as changes, revisions, extras and credits.

Reason number three is because you just can't live without better Italian marble or high end brand name faucet or even change from tile to a wood floor. If you must change or upgrade that is Ok. It is either handled as an extra for which you pay extra or you might compromise something else of value for the credit to avoid the overrun costs on the budget. Either way if you have to have it a few niceties will usually not kill the job but continual upgrades will most likely cost you more than you were prepared to pay. The best advice to control costs is to stick to the budget as much as possible.

It is a shock when a remodeling job was budgeted for \$ 40,000.00 and when the final tally is summarized the job cost is now \$ 74, 0000.00 our experience with constant clients changes and upgrades is that the jobs can end up costing twice as much in the end. Changes or extra charges come in differed forms not just higher priced products which require return and re-stocking of already purchased items, some items require different labor rates and skill sets to install different type products resulting in installation cost increases, some items require different underlayment, preparation and even structural changes to support such new and different items. The most often overlooked factor in changes is the extra time and effort required to make these changes which may result in not only cost overruns but extension of the time it takes to complete the entire job. A good rule of thumb is changes require time and material to change out, purchase, acquire and replace work in place.

One of the final considerations is time. Time is money and delays can adversely affect a project the same as cost over runs. This is affected by rain days, foul weather, selection changes and material problems. These delays can be minimized with advanced planning for poor weather, completed finish selections and timely ordering of specialty subcontractors and materials. The problem is what ever can go wrong will. Sometimes Murphy's law comes into effect and whether by coincidence or outside forces things happen, selections items are not available and alternates must be selected, lot number don't match and can't be used or utilities interruptions occur in the middle of the work day, rainy season doesn't let up or the cement truck didn't show up as scheduled. These matters are all beyond our control and lengthen the schedule increasing the amount of work days we actually work on the project. Sometimes self performing owners do part of the protect and can't complete their aspect. We advise against owners performing work for this exact reason. Delays in scheduling can be affected by many things.

It is important for both the contractor and client to be aware of these factors prior to committing to take on a project and it is pertinent to discuss solutions in advance of the project as well as when questions arise during the construction phase..