

# How to Avoid Common Remodeling Mistakes



Michael Stein  
**the Gentleman Builder**  
Naples' Residential Construction Expert

The Gentleman Builder recommends  
that you follow all of the following  
suggestions when considering  
a remodeling project in your home.

We look to help consumers  
become more educated buyers.

Questions?

Contact us via email at:

**[info@gentlemanbuilder.com](mailto:info@gentlemanbuilder.com)**

## #1 Hire Licensed Professionals

If you use an unlicensed contractor it is likely that they will not maintain adequate insurance and comply with the statutes, procedures and rules relating to the building codes and lien laws.

Moreover, in the event of a problem you will not have any recourse through the agencies that regulate contracting.

Check with your contractor to be sure that you have all the required building permits and approvals before you start construction on your project.



## #2 Permitting

Some people believe they can avoid obtaining the required permits and approvals including municipal, state and possibly federal. In addition homeowners occasionally living in a community governed by a Home Owners Association fail to notify and secure the HOA's consent.

You may find yourself in a situation where non-permitted work may be required to be removed or fines levied. Your contractor should be familiar with these details.



### #3 Define the Scope of the Project

Without a clear description of the project including a well-defined scope of work you can be sure that there will be confusion and disappointment.

The absence of a definitive scope will make comparing bids impossible and you will not know what you are exactly buying. Be certain to get a detailed list of specifications of the project listing product types including manufacturer and models numbers where applicable.



## #4 Design Before Your Build

By skipping the inclusion of qualified designer you can guarantee that things will go wrong.

It is much more efficient and cost effective to work out the design on paper before construction begins.

There is no substitute for good design.



## **#5 Know the Difference Between Cost or Fixed Priced Fee Basis**

Typically consumers are more comfortable working with the contractor for a fixed price. If this works for you, make sure that the contract is clear and that it clearly spells out what is included. Many consumers seek multiple bids for their remodeling project. Unfortunately, often bids do not include the same details. It makes comparing bids quite challenging and negates the effort of comparison and shopping. **(See item #3 for ways to avoid this pitfall)** To save some money, it may be to the consumer's benefit to hire the contractor for a fee that is fixed or a percentage of the total cost of the project. In this scenario, the contractor will obtain bids on behalf of the client and the client will pay the contractor's fee without mark up. The project costs are an open book with no hidden or embedded costs. In return for accepting some uncertainty, the customer usually benefits because no costs need to be added to cover the contractor's contingencies.

## #6 The Length of Your Project

This is one of the biggest concerns for consumers. Make sure you obtain a schedule for your project. A qualified contractor is capable of predicting the duration and flow of a construction project. Have your contractor establish a start and completion date and make this a part of the contract. It is reasonable to allow modifications to the schedule for delays due to permits, inspections, weather, back orders, changes due to unforeseen concealed conditions and change orders. Creating a schedule of periodic payments to the contractor tied to the completion of identified tasks will benefit the contractor and customer.



## #7 Paying Your Contractor

Has your contractor asked for money upfront before starting the project? Make sure to have an executed contract signed by all parties before you make any payments to your contractor. Deposits and progress payments are proper and customary, but it is important that a valid contract exists before any funds are paid.

Failing to follow this simple task could result in spending money with no clear record of what goods and services will be provided.



## #8 Making Changes During The Project

Once your project is underway it is quite likely that there will be some changes involved. This is a normal part of the construction project.

Be sure to have all changes put in writing and agree to the terms before additional work begins.

Working out the details of the scope of work and cost is very important. If you do not follow this procedure you might find yourself with unexpected surprises!



## #9 References

Have you asked for references? Don't let anyone tell you that references are not important. A quality contractor will be able to provide several satisfied customers that describe their experience with the builder.

An important consideration is to understand that construction projects often present challenges and problems. Ask the reference how the contractor addresses these challenges.

A good builder will effectively tackle problems and be clear about the available choices and most cost effective methods to deal with issues that arise.



## #10 Understand the Basics of Florida Lien Law

Florida Statute 713 is intended to provide property owners and contractors' rights and remedies regarding construction improvements to real property.

Failing to properly comply with these statutes can have unpleasant consequences to both the owner and contractor. The law is too complex to describe in this summary, but it is important to use a contractor that follows the statutes and if you have any questions about these application and effect of the law on your property, consult with a qualified attorney.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Stein is the founder, President and Chief Operating Officer of The Gentleman Builder, located in Bonita Springs, Florida. Michael has over twenty-seven years of experience in real estate acquisitions and development, new construction and renovation. Michael is responsible for planning and directing all aspects of the home improvement analysis, remodeling and new home construction.

Michael has the unique perspective of a construction expert who has purchased, developed, built and sold millions of dollars of real estate. As an owner building for his own account, Michael recognizes first the value of buildings as they relate to cost, location, features, and quality. With the ability to put this experience to work for you, Michael aims to provide customers with a superior analysis of their building issues.

Michael began his building career in the field as an assistant superintendent for a national homebuilder. After running a local home building company in Ambler, PA and working for Toll Brothers at their headquarters in Philadelphia, Michael served as president of a national homebuilder.

In 1999 Michael relocated with his family to Naples, Florida where he founded his own real estate development and building company. Michael's firms have received numerous local and national industry awards including the Professional Builder Magazine's Builder of the Year.

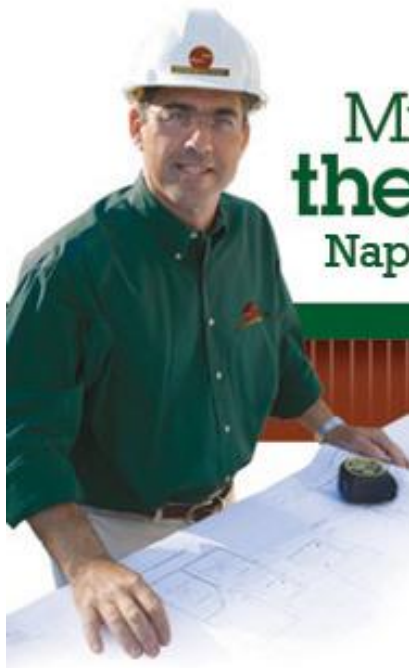


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