

Finding the Right Pro for a Remodel

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By Julie Noble

More owners plan renovations in 2026. Understanding how projects are planned and managed offers insight into upgrades that can influence a home's value.

NEW YORK — A home renovation or new build offers homeowners the chance to create spaces that better support how they live and often represents a significant financial investment. According to the 2026 U.S. Houzz Renovation Plans Report, 91% of homeowners plan to move forward with renovation projects in 2026, particularly to improve their homes or adapt spaces to better fit their lives. Whether you're remodeling a kitchen, considering an addition, or rethinking your living space, choosing the right professional can mean the difference between

a smooth experience and months of frustration. Before you sign a contract, keep these seven best practices in mind to help you hire a construction or design professional with confidence.

1. Do your homework before making calls

Good preparation leads to better conversations. Before reaching out to professionals, gather inspiration photos, outline your priorities and set a realistic budget range. Even rough numbers help pros determine whether your goals align with what's possible. Being clear about your timeline, must-haves, and deal-breakers helps professionals to give more accurate guidance from the start.

2. Look beyond referrals alone

Personal recommendations are valuable, but they shouldn't be the only factor in your decision. Take time to review profiles and portfolios, read client reviews, and confirm credentials such as licenses, insurance and certifications. Online platforms can make it easier to compare multiple professionals, see completed projects similar to yours, and understand how they communicate and manage work all before scheduling a meeting.

3. Interview more than one candidate

It can be tempting to hire the first person who seems knowledgeable and available, especially in a competitive market. But meeting with at least two or three professionals gives you a valuable perspective on style, approach and fit. Use these conversations to understand how each pro works with homeowners, who your day-to-day point of contact will be and

what communication will look like throughout the project. Comparing personalities, responsiveness, and visibility side by side can make it easier to spot the professional you'll feel most comfortable working with over time.

4. Ask detailed questions about process and problem-solving

Once you've narrowed your list, dig deeper into how each professional actually runs a project. Ask how budgets are developed, how subcontractors are selected and managed, and how unexpected issues, such as material delays, scope changes, or cost adjustments, are handled. Find out what software they use to track schedules and share updates. A professional who can clearly explain their process and contingency plans is more likely to keep your project on track when the unexpected arises.

5. Review the contract in detail

Never rely on verbal agreements. Contracts should clearly outline the scope of work, materials, payment schedule, timeline and how changes will be handled. Make sure you understand what's included (and what isn't) before signing. Clarifying these details upfront helps prevent disputes and surprises once construction is underway.

6. Trust expertise, but stay involved

The best outcomes come from collaboration. Respect your professional's experience and judgment, but stay engaged by asking questions, reviewing decisions and keeping communication open. When both sides understand their roles

and expectations, projects tend to run more smoothly and with fewer misunderstandings.

7. Use technology to stay organized

Many professionals now rely on digital tools to share files, track schedules and communicate with their clients – and for good reason. Houzz research found that more than two in five homeowners (41%) say that a clear project timeline would have improved their experience, while 40% wish they had received better communication from the pros they hired. Platforms that centralize plans, contracts, messages and progress photos can reduce confusion and keep everyone on the same page from start to finish.

The bottom line

Hiring the right construction or design professional isn't about finding the lowest bid; it's about finding the right fit. Take time to research, ask thoughtful questions and understand the process before work begins. With clear expectations and the right expertise in place, your home project is far more likely to end with results you'll enjoy for years to come.

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