Ten Tips: How to Find the Best Contractor by Ari Weil

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The construction or improvement of your home or office is not a joke. Just as professionals are required to have their core competencies certified, so should you be armed with the skill to find the best contractor for your building or renovation requirements.

When conducting due-diligence work, and to help you make an informed decision on finding â€“ and hiring â€“ the right and the best contractor, remember these ten tips:

Tip #1: Get REFERRALS from people you know.

Who better to provide genuine testimonials than relatives, friends, or business associates? They are valuable sources of information on the kind of commitment their contractors have been given them.

Tip #2: Consider the contractor with A PROVEN TRACK RECORD.

Taking a cue for Tip #1, your recommending persons' residences or establishments would be the perfect â€œlivingâ€• proofs of the quality that their referrals can â€“ or cannot â€“ deliver. Seek permission inspect the building, and take note of details in construction, finishing, and such others.

Tip #3: Get the contractor with UNQUESTIONABLE REPUTATION.

If Tips #1-2 are not applicable, shop around for companies within the area. It's all right to look up candidates online, so long as their firms are able to send their project managers to your home or office where you can discuss plans.

Never trust a good or bad word put in by random persons on the Internet. Be warned that there are builders and renovators who will pay writers to make convincing (but mostly unfounded) reviews about their services. Be warned as well that there are those who engage in unfair competition by paying writers to do demolition jobs on leading rivals.

Tip #4: Get the contractor with a SOLID BASE.

If you have candidates in mind, visit their corporate headquarters to see for yourself whether they have a sense of professionalism or not, and if they really have the capability to undertake your dream project. Of course, you wouldn't want to deal with any one whose office has a leaky ceiling or a jammed door. Now, would you?

Tip #5: Get the contractor with a HUMAN SIDE.

Good manners and right conduct should be part of the selection criteria. See if your candidates are as customer-oriented as their Websites or company profiles or media kits write about then. Call their landline to find out if they have trained their staff to take your call promptly and courteously. Contact them on their mobile phones to know how responsive they are. Exercise sound judgment in gauging if they are honest and scrupulous people.

Tip #6: Get the contractor with State-certified PROFESSIONAL LICENSE/S.

Only hire a duly-registered builder or renovator who is qualified and government-licensed to undertake a project. This is because he or she has invested effort and material resources to earn

training and apprenticeship certificates, and is somebody reliable and trustworthy.

A licensed building design and construction company is one that has obtained the necessary permits to apply codes, principles, and standards of practice in the industry.

Tip #7: Get the contractor that is BONDED.

A bonded building design and construction company is one that has money secured by the state, withdrawn only in case a client files a claim against it then wins the dispute settled before the assigned government agency.

Tip #8: Get the contractor that is INSURED.

An insured building design and construction company is one that has taken out an insurance policy to cover injuries and/or damage directly caused by the service contracted.

For Tips #6-8, check sites of trade and industry associations (eg, Better Business Bureau) that profile and furnish impartial information on state-registered firms.

Tip #9: Get the contractor that provides GUARANTEED SERVICES.

Apart from the ability to provide free consultation, inspection, and estimate services, a reputable builder or renovator has the power to give a 100% Customer Satisfaction Guarantee on certain â€“ if not all â€“ services rendered.

In the event that a company has such a warranty, read the fine print. Be sure to ask questions. Have them clarify points that you think you need to understand better. Have them satisfy your curiosity in all aspects of the project.

Tip #10: (This is no longer a tip but a MUST-DO!)

Before signing a contract, read everything and do not feel pressured to close any deals. Be sure that all your reasonable terms are worked out and included in the agreement. If you are strict about penalizing the contractor for delayed delivery on the project, or for substandard work, be sure that the penalty clause is worded towards that end clearly and expressly.

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