



# 9 REMODEL SECRETS

**THE BOOK CONTRACTORS  
HOPE YOU NEVER READ!**

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# **The Design/Build Solution**

## Success is a Planned Experience

Success is nothing more than the progressive realization of a worthy ideal.  
~Earl Nightingale

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# Table of Contents

DEDICATION .....	02
INTRODUCTION .....	04
A QUICK OVERVIEW .....	08
<b>SECRET 1: HOW MUCH?</b> .....	11
<b>SECRET 2: ESTIMATES</b> .....	13
<b>SECRET 3: ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS</b> .....	15
<b>SECRET 4: BLUEPRINTS</b> .....	18
<b>SECRET 5: MATERIALS</b> .....	21
<b>SECRET 6: CONTRACTS</b> .....	24
<b>SECRET 7: SAVING TIME AND MONEY</b> .....	27
<b>SECRET 8: SAFETY 1<sup>st</sup></b> .....	30
<b>SECRET 9: HAPPINESS</b> .....	33
Conclusion .....	35
FAQ .....	36
About The Author .....	39
Glossary .....	40

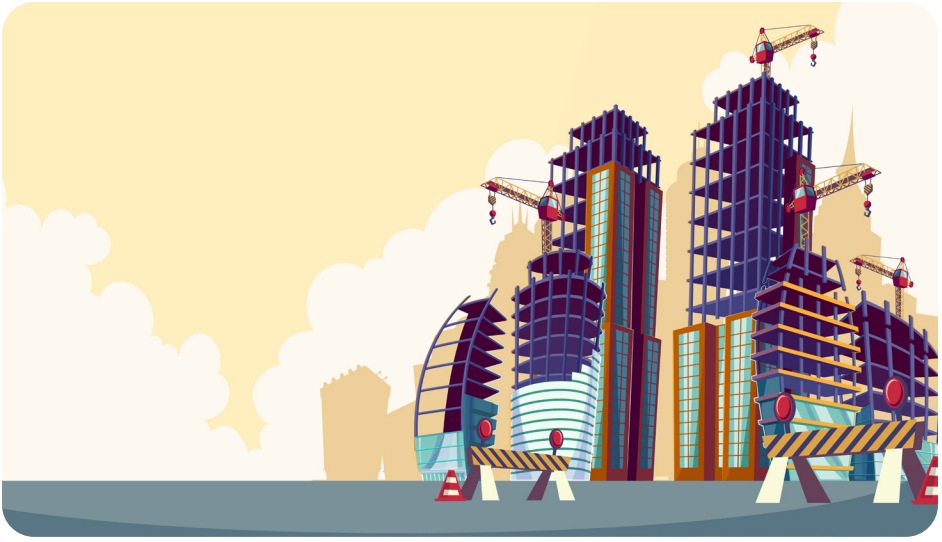
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# DEDICATION

To mention every person I have ever met that has impacted my life and played a role in helping to shape and mold the man I am today would require another book entirely. People always have a way of surprising me with their resilience and determination. It would be an understatement to thank you all. Especially those who have only sought to knock me down, (you know who you are). A very special thank you to all my enemies for your excellent lessons in patience, determination, and persistence.

To the love of my life, and best friend Brenda for believing in me, and always pushing me to be a better man. Thank you so much for the life we share together and being my “why” when all I could see was “how”.

To my Dear Mother, for raising me right. When you look down upon me from heaven may you smile with pride and know that I love you with all my heart. Thank you so much for all you sacrificed to give me life.

To Aunt Barbara & Uncle Jim, for being there for me and showing me the tough love I needed. I am eternally grateful to you for never giving up on me. If not for you I would likely not be alive today to write these words.

To Brian Sidorsky, for the most uncomfortable ride I've ever had in a Rolls-Royce! Our conversation in Palm Springs will stick with me for the rest of my days. Thank you.

To Brian Adams "The Contractor's Contractor", my good friend and mentor for showing me what is possible if I walk the path you have blazed so many extra miles before me. Thank you for always asking the right questions to push me forward when all I wanted to do was give up, and never pulling your punches when I needed to hear the Truth. For all The Great Work you do to help contractors master their businesses like they've mastered their trades and your contribution to bringing integrity back to our industry!

To Rob Baugher of "Baugher Inc." & "Remodel It", for your tireless contribution to the construction industry and unwavering consistency. Thank you for sharing all your secrets with me freely and inspiring me to build a better business. You are the true Design/Build Guru!

To Victor Broski, for crossing my "Ts" dotting my i's and minding my "Ps" and "Qs". These words cannot express my gratitude to you for helping me, to express myself with these words, Thank You!

To my team, none of this would be possible without you and words could never express how honored I am to work alongside of you all. Truly I stand on the shoulders of giants!

To all the wonderful people the construction industry has afforded me the opportunity to serve. Thank you!



# INTRODUCTION

**GOT MY START IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY** in 1989 at the age of 13 working for one of my uncles as his gofer over summer breaks from school. He was in the business of purchasing, remodeling, and flipping homes for sale. I can still remember it like yesterday when he would take me into a house that I thought should be demolished, if not burned to the ground and turn it into a place someone could call “Home.” To watch and take part of that transformation is the experience that ultimately sealed the deal for me. That first house we worked on together filled me with a sense of accomplishment and pride that I still bring to every project I work on to this very day.

MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THOSE DAYS AND I HAVE WORKED WITH AND FOR SO MANY DIFERENT PEOPLE. THEY HAVE ALL TAUGHT ME SO MUCH ABOUT CONSTRUCTION. ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO TAUGHT ME HOW NOT TO DO THINGS!



**IN THIS BOOK I AM GOING TO GIVE YOU ALL THE SECRETS** I have learned from my decades in the trenches to help you to succeed with your renovation or custom home build, and choose the right contractor for your project, even if it isn't me.

This will include helping you to understand the process of major renovations and custom builds from start to finish so that you gain some insight on how a construction project is planned, priced, organized, scheduled, overseen, and finally completed.

If I had been more clever when naming our company I would have called it Sunshine Design “Then” Build. It never ceases to amaze me how many people want to build then design. (Including many contractors!) I believe this tendency to rush into a construction project is one of two major factors that either make or break the client experience with major renovations. The other of which I will elaborate on later in this book.

Success is truly a planned experience. While luck can and often does play a factor, championships are never won by accident. You'll never see your favorite sports player on TV post-game talking about how they have no idea how they won. You will never hear them say, "I don't know? I just woke up today and realized I have a Super Bowl ring! I have no idea how this happened?!"

A PGA golfer who has never played a course will prepare for the tournament by walking the entire grounds studying the elevations, type of grass, and which direction the grain of blades will face as they follow the sun's path on turn at the 10th hole tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. He will carefully examine all the slopes of the greens, the positions of bunkers and water hazards. He will survey the fairways to consider the best place from which to hit approach shots from. A 3-wood or driver off the tee?

The point is that no great professional sports player would ever come to game time without a "Game Plan."

Your major renovation or custom build is no different. Your game plan is quite literally a blueprint for success. The more time you can spend planning your project the more efficient and cost-effective the construction phase of your project will be. Saving you stacks of cash and months of frustration!







HERE ARE THE SECRETS THAT WILL HELP YOU MAKE ALL THE RIGHT MOVES WHEN DECIDING TO UNDERTAKE A MAJOR RENOVATION OR CUSTOM BUILD ON YOUR PROPERTY THAT MOST CONTRACTORS DEFINITELY DO NOT WANT YOU TO KNOW!



# A QUICK OVERVIEW

## CONSTRUCTION – 101 “THE PROCESS”

**T**HE FIRST QUESTION EVERYONE ALWAYS ASKS IS: “Can you come out to my house and give me a bid?” Later in this book I will explain why this is a dangerous place to start looking for a contractor. For now, let’s talk about how much work needs to be done long before the work can be done.

Everything begins with just an idea inside your head. It’s my job to extract that idea from your mind’s eye and get it out into the open where I can see it too. Major renovations and custom builds have a lot of moving parts and choices that need to be made. Until you sit down and make all those choices it is impossible to accurately price anything.

JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN SEE IT DOESN’T MEAN I CAN.



I recommend a vision board. Browse the internet and find some images that showcase your style and taste. Download them and put them in a file on your computer. Print them out, make a collage, and place it where you can see it every morning when you wake up and every night before you go to bed. Kickstart your creativity and have some fun with it! Once you get into it, you'll find that your ideas will evolve. This is nothing to be rushed so take some time to get really clear on what you want to accomplish so that you can not only explain it but, also show it to me. When you feel like you have captured your vision with clarity this is the time to start calling a few contractors to get some estimates.

Next is the site visit to map out the property and take measurements. This will have a large impact on what can be built, where, and how much it will cost.

If you are doing anything structural then you will need an accurate blueprint not only for permits, but so the team working on your project can know exactly what they are building. Think of it like a road map or the captain steering a ship. Without a clear destination it will be a miracle if you even make it out of the harbor if not run aground. It's my responsibility to navigate your ship safely to your desired destination.

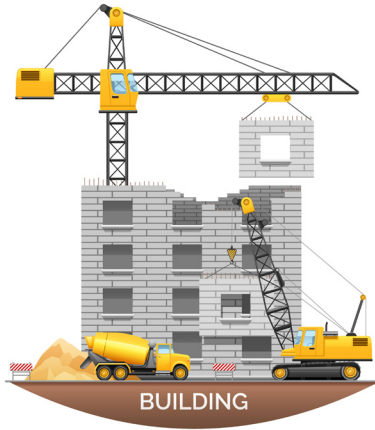
NOW LET'S BUILD IT

# THE 9 SECRETS



# SECRET 1: HOW MUCH?

I'M EXPENSIVE, BUT YOU'RE WORTH IT!



**ONE TIME I WENT TO SPEAK WITH A HOMEOWNER** about his addition and home renovation. After the normal commonplace pleasantries and walking the property, we broached the subject of budget and costs. I told him, “All in? You’re probably looking to be in the \$200k range, but without a clear scope I’m just guessing.” His reply, “I’m the type of guy that if I’m going to pay \$200k, I want it all.”

I simply asked him what he thought would happen if I was wrong and it turned out to be \$300k?

While price is always a valid consideration when trying to figure out if your project even makes economic sense for you, it is rarely the best way to choose your contractor. Without a real plan in place, all you are asking for is a guess and the lowest price isn’t always the best price. After 30 years in construction, I’ve seen a lot, and most of it many times over. I firmly believe that the only thing worse than a contractor who charges you too much, is a contractor that doesn’t charge you enough. On the surface it may appear as though you got a sweet deal on your project. However, there is nothing worse

than a contractor running out of your money halfway through the job. Sure, you can sue but ultimately the contractor, by far, still gets the better end of that deal. All they have to do is pay back some money. You're the one on the hook with your house torn apart and two years of litigation ahead of you before you have any hope of putting the pieces back together again.

IT IS WHAT IT IS.

Would you go to the grocery store with only \$50 and expect to leave with \$100 worth of food?

## THE TRUTH

The price of your project has absolutely nothing to do with the contractor you hire but rather the choices you make with that contractor in the planning phase. An experienced contractor should serve only to help you balance the design with your budget.

# SECRET 2: ESTIMATES



es-ti-mate

*verb*

/ˈestɪˌmɑːt/

1. roughly calculate or judge the value, number, quantity, or extent of.

“the aim is to estimate the effects of macroeconomic policy on the economy”

**Similar**

Approximate, speculate, **guess**

What’s the difference between an estimate and a bid?

One is a guess, and the other is the Truth.

**I'VE HEARD IT ALL TOO MANY TIMES,** “We spoke to a contractor who can do it for half your price!” That’s a great deal! If I may speak with candor, why didn’t you take it? The unfortunate truth is that they often do take that deal. The temptation to save tens of thousands of dollars is usually too strong to resist. Occasionally, I will get a call back from those people expressing their regret. Rarely do I need the call to know.

For most of us, our home is probably the single largest investment we will ever make in our lives. You aren’t considering the purchase of a water heater, an exterior paint job, or deciding on a single or double bacon cheeseburger.

A major renovation or custom build is one big decision made up of thousands of smaller decisions.

If home is truly where the heart is, why would you trade those decisions for guesswork and estimates? Your investment and my integrity are far too important to be gambled on with five, six or even seven-figure bets.

Whether you know it or not, at this stage of your project you aren’t calling to ask me, “How much?”

You’re calling to ask, “How Much Can I Trust You?”

My best advice to you is to exercise patience.

The only thing more expensive than properly planning a large construction project... is not planning one.



# SECRET 3: ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

THE INTERNET IS FLOODED with advice on what you should and should never ask a contractor. Ask for references! Ask for pictures! Ask for experience! Ask them about the quality of their work! The truth is that if you question their quality for even a moment you shouldn't be talking to them in the first place.



Trust me when I say that anyone who starts a sentence with the words "Trust me" is about to lie to you!

Over the many years as a business owner I have fired countless employees and subcontractors. They all told me how great they were. Take note, here is your first clue; they all talked about themselves. The ones who spoke to my problems, and how excited they were to solve them were the ones I knew I could trust to have our best interests in mind.

As a general contractor, the experience of hiring a subcontractor is for all intents and purposes no different than yours as a homeowner hiring a general contractor. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, it's less about "How much?" and more about, "How much can I trust you?" Don't get me wrong, vetting the contractor you are about to hire is important but...

The questions you ask your contractor are far less important than The questions you ask yourself?

When the job is done and the contractor you hired is driving away from your project with all your money in their pocket, how do you know you hired the right company?

What does that experience look like?

How would it make you feel?

Can you describe that to me?

Do you see cigarette butts flicked everywhere with reckless abandonment? Perhaps you envision fast food wrappers wafting upon the summer breeze into your neighbor's yard? Is the entire crew using your master bedroom toilet after getting high at lunch because it's the only working bathroom left in your house and your contractor was too cheap to rent a porta-potty?

Are you smiling right now?

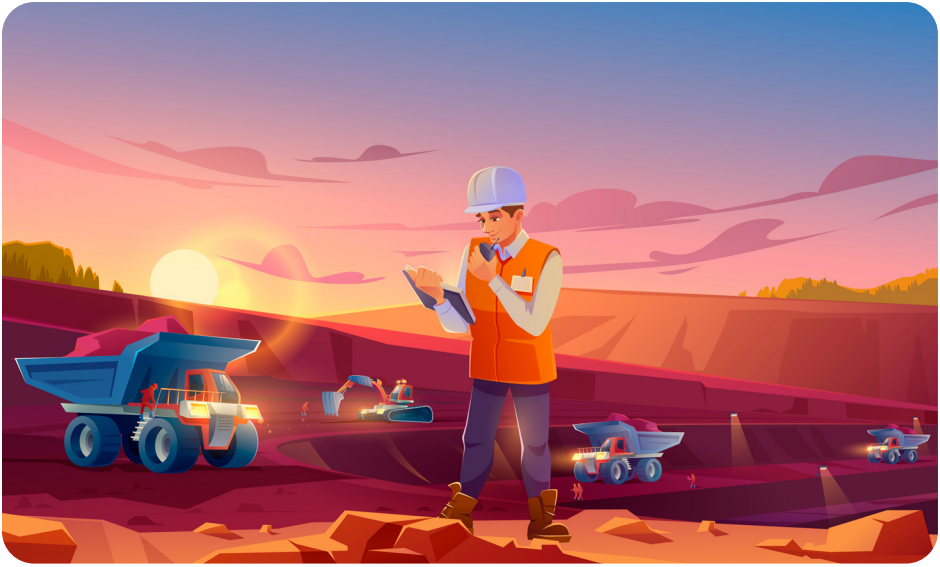
Any contractor worth their salt should be able to perform their work with quality. This should just be a given that goes without saying. However, there is far more to consider here than whether they can install seamless miters on stain-grade crown molding.

## Quality Vs. Value

You are about to drop six figures and spend months of your time with this contractor. Do you like this person? Can you trust them with a key to your home and to be around your family?



# SECRET 4: BLUEPRINTS



**IF YOU JUMP INTO YOUR CAR AND DRIVE** to a faraway destination that you have never been too before without a map it is very likely you will get detoured along the way if not completely lost. Think of your blueprint as the road map to success.

One question I am frequently asked is, “Is this even possible?”

The answer is almost always, “Yes. It’s simply a matter of proper planning, time, and money.”

**NOTE:** Before proceeding any further, this is the time to speak with your H.O.A. about any restrictions and requirements they may have for building in your neighborhood.

## SHOULD YOU HIRE AN ARCHITECT?

Hiring an architect is one way to go about it but consider another approach: architects only draw the plans but do not assist you in design options or gathering all the material requirements and choices. Such as, flooring, trim, stain-grade or paint, cabinet styles, colors, tile, plumbing and lighting fixtures, and the list goes on. All these details need to be ironed out before you build to eliminate the inefficiency of “making it up as you go.”

Architects will not organize and price subcontractors and account for other unforeseen labor costs. They can be very expensive and rarely have decades of actual hands-on building experience. If there is a problem on your project, there is a strong benefit to your contractor having intimate knowledge of your build from concept to print and completion. Imagine the time and money you will save when you do not have to be the mediator between your contractor and the architect if a structural issue doesn't work out in the field quite the way it did on paper in the middle of a 2nd story addition!

You are going to spend money on this phase regardless. You have two choices. You can hire an architect, an engineer, a designer, a contractor and organize the entire job yourself. Or you can just hire my team and I can apply those costs towards construction.

### Step 1

Any structural changes or new builds will require what is known as an “As-Built Site Map.” This is a blueprint of the existing property and/or structures. This will be a requirement for calculating accurate measurements for what is to be built and for acquiring any necessary permits. These will include all easements, setbacks, elevations, and property lines. In most cases there are restrictions as to how close you can build to these areas and how high up you can build

from them. Typically, most municipalities will limit you from building anything within 5' of your property line and about 15' from the street. Multiple variables can come into play here. If you have access to your original blueprints this will help you save a good amount of time as we will not have to draw them for you.

### Step 2

The contractor you hire should serve to work with you and guide you through the best design material selections for your property, needs, and budget. We use 3D rendering and provide virtual tours to let our clients see what is going to be built before we build it. It's here you will build that bond of trust with your contractor. Be honest with them about your budget so they can be your advocate throughout. There's no sense in drawing up a set of blueprints for \$300k worth of work if you only have \$200k.

### Step 3

The final working plan is drawn and forwarded to engineering. Once this is complete, your project can be accurately priced, submitted for permits, and given to my team so they know precisely what they are going to build down to the 1/8".

**You are now ready to build!**

# SECRET 5: MATERIALS



## HOW MUCH \$\$\$ CAN YOU SAVE BY PURCHASING YOUR OWN MATERIALS?

**WHEN I WAS A YOUNG CONTRACTOR** just coming up in the game, I sold my first kitchen remodel to a wonderful lady who I am grateful to say is still willing to talk to me. I was excited and eager to knock this job out of the park for her. I had remodeled tons of kitchens before that but always as an employee working for someone else. When she handed me that deposit check for \$20k I hit the ground wide-eyed and running at top speed!

We sat at her kitchen table that afternoon discussing her project. She showed me a 3D model on her computer that she had produced herself on the website of a company where she had purchased a beautifully sleek set of contemporary style European cabinets. She gleamed with pride from taking all the measurements and producing the 3D rendering herself. She had also hired a local company to

install a brilliant white quartz crystal countertop as the crown jewel of her design. It was really going to POP! I couldn't wait to showcase it on our website.

The following week we gutted that kitchen and went to work straightaway putting it all back together. Everything went like clockwork, and we were ahead of schedule by about a week as my team was waiting for the cabinets to arrive. The client was so pleased. When I arrived the day after Christmas to tend to some details there was a Christmas card taped to the wall singing our praises and stuffed with five crisp \$100.00 bills that I divided amongst the crew. The cabinets were due to arrive via shipping in one week and we were all so excited to see this project ahead of schedule.

One week passed. No cabinets. That following Monday I asked her if she had heard anything from her cabinet company. Wednesday, nothing. Friday, nothing. Again, I called her, and we agreed that it was time she contacted the company. They of course assured her that the cabinets had been shipped, provided her with the tracking info and told her they should be there by Monday. The following Tuesday... nothing. By this time, it was obvious that she was growing frustrated not only with the cabinet company but also by the fact that I was constantly calling her while she was at work where she was often unavailable to deal with the issue. The installation of the countertops that she had ordered a month prior was rapidly approaching.

On Wednesday she gave me their number and said that she needed me to call the cabinet company because it was starting to interfere with her ability to perform at work. After 3 hours of getting the run-around, I was finally patched through to a supervisor's voicemail. I spent the rest of that day calling back trying to get in touch with someone who could give me some answers. Nothing. Thursday afternoon the supervisor finally calls me back only to tell me that he doesn't really know when they will arrive and that there is nothing he can do. With the countertop crew scheduled to arrive first thing in the morning I had no choice but to call my client and ask her for their number so that I could reschedule them for some unknown



time in the future. She was livid, and rightfully so.

Another week goes by. Nothing. And another. Nothing. Finally, I get a call from my client to tell me the cabinets had arrived, but that I needed to get over there ASAP as they had been dropped off, IN THE STREET! Because she was at work, and I had brought my team over to another project, there was nobody there to receive them. So, I left another job (frustrating that client) to go pick them up only to find out that they came in pieces and needed to be assembled!

The following Monday we went back to work. As we unpacked the shipping boxes, we quickly discovered that many of the pieces had been damaged in freight. Then we realized that some of the pieces were incorrect. If that wasn't enough, we found out that she had either been off on her measurements or simply did not order them correctly. That was not a fun phone call to make.

After hours of run-around and days of waiting for a response, I was ready to give up when I was told that the cabinet would only work with my client on the returns because I did not order the cabinets. It's at this point in the story that I am sure you are starting to realize why I am so grateful that she will even talk to me, let alone that I am still alive to tell the tale!

By the time we got all her cabinets sorted out and installed, the countertop company was booked weeks out for rescheduling. When it was all said and done, what should have been a three-week kitchen remodel had my client doing dishes in her bathtub for THREE MONTHS!

Dear reader; please let my experience and lesson in providing a "Professional Service" be your wisdom without incident.

# SECRET 6: CONTRACTS



**A GOOD LAWYER KNOWS THE LAW, A CLEVER ONE TAKES THE JUDGE TO LUNCH.  
~ MARK TWAIN**

A **CONTRACT IS NOT** just a legal and binding document that allows two parties to sue each other when things go wrong. Just like the blueprint, it is the road map of an honest agreement. At any given time, my company can have 5-10 large projects going on at once spanning months and even years to completion. Even if we only did one at a time, these projects have so many moving parts that unless everything is clearly defined in writing it would be impossible for me to remember every detail.

I am a fly on the wall in multiple construction groups on Facebook, and I am often alarmed by the number of contractors posting questions asking about how to solve problems with their clients that should have never happened to begin with had there been a clear contract in place. Thousands of nightmare stories a day that

make me cringe to think about why the construction industry is in such desperate need of reform. It's right there in the title of our job description, "CONTRACTOR!". Make sure the contractor you hire has a contract, and for the love of all that is good, READ IT! I would never let a client sign one of my contracts without first walking them through it to make sure they understand our agreement and to answer any questions they have. The only people who win in a legal dispute are the lawyers and courts.

## CHANGE ORDERS

If there is one thing above and beyond that I've seen be the cause of disputes between clients and contractors, it is the change order. I have a clause in my contract that states it costs you \$50 a word to utter the sentence, "Can we do this instead?" This is before we even define what "it" is. However, this is also why planning is so necessary. If a project is planned properly there is absolutely no reason for change orders to occur. Now, additional work, that's another story entirely. I would never charge you to ask, "Can we do more?"

## **"Change orders are my bread and butter!"**

It's a dirty little secret in our industry that most contractors will never tell you about but gladly boast amongst themselves. What happens is that contractor will swoop in and tell you that they can do it cheaper to undercut all your other bids and get your deposit secured. They will do this for one of two reasons, of which neither ever work out to your benefit.

1. They are simply unaware of all the planning that needs to happen to eliminate change orders. (Inexperience)
2. They are willfully disregarding the proper procedures because they know they can charge you on the backend.

I would much rather tell you that your project is going to cost \$200k and lose your business, than tell you it's going to be \$125k, go weeks or even months over schedule and in the end bury you in surprise change orders that cost \$275k. I won't let you sign a contract with me if all you want to do is gamble on estimates. There are plenty of other contractors out there that are more than happy to waste your time and money.

Make sure your contractor also has a solid contract with their subcontractors in case there is a dispute between them. Otherwise, their subcontractors may have legal recourse though filing a mechanic's lien on your property.



# SECRET 7: SAVING TIME AND MONEY



Years ago, I was contacted by a couple who wanted me to perform a major renovation on a property they had just purchased so they could get it rented out. When I told them how much I thought it would cost, you would have thought I was demanding the soul of their first-born son! “You’re out of your mind! If it’s going to cost that much, we’ll just do it ourselves!”, they exclaimed.

I just smiled, offered them my business card, and told them that if they ever wanted to call, even if it was for advice on how to do something that I would be more than happy to share my experience with them for free over the phone.

One month later my phone rings and it’s the husband. He apologized for his behavior and admitted to me that he and his wife had bitten off more than they could chew. He jokingly told me that he was worried their decision might cause a divorce. I could tell

by the tension in his chuckle that he was only half kidding if not completely frightened! When I arrived on the scene the carnage was too gruesome to describe. It looked as though a nuclear bomb had detonated in demo and the attempt to put some of the pieces back together made it clear that Humpty Dumpty's only hope now was a goulash omelet.

After profusely apologizing to me some more and thanking me for returning, they asked me if I could help them. I looked around one last time and assured them that I could. Then they asked me how much I thought it would cost. I'm still removing pieces of boot from my posterior to this day. They just couldn't understand why it was so much more expensive to fix what they had broken before I could do my job.

The easiest way to save big time money is by not hiring me. What you'll need: take a couple years off work, draw up some blueprints, get them engineered and permitted. Organize, deliver, and quality-control all your materials. Vet, hire, contract, insure, schedule, and manage all your own subcontractors and employees. (Make sure you implement and document an OSHA approved safety program.)

Or you can spread it out over the next 3-5 years and knock it out with ease after work, and on the weekends.

**Pro Tip:** YouTube is your best friend.

Would you hire your hair stylist to perform open heart surgery?  
Ask your accountant to rebuild your transmission?

I'll say it again: The best way for you to save money is to hire an experienced professional to help you devise a **GOOD PLAN!**

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DOCTOR AND A CONTRACTOR?

ONE PERFORMS SURGERY ON YOU WHILE YOU'RE ASLEEP.  
THE OTHER WHILE YOU WHILE YOU'RE AWAKE!



# SECRET 8: SAFETY 1<sup>st</sup>

## A SAFE JOBSITE IS A CLEAN JOBSITE



**YOUR CONTRACTOR** should be able to produce a current General Liability insurance certification that protects your property if anything should happen while they are working. An associate of mine was once working on a project and his crew would leave their batteries for their cordless tools plugged in overnight so they would be charged and ready for work the next morning. Over the weekend one of the chargers malfunctioned causing the battery to overheat which caught fire burning the entire house to the ground. With over \$400k in damages he was very glad to be insured, and so was his client.

If I were you, I would also ask them to show you that they have a Workers Compensation policy in place, even if they do not have any employees. If not, you could be held liable for someone tripping over the plumber's pipe scraps because nobody ever told them that if they don't clean up their mess daily, they will get back-charged according to their contract. The cleaner your jobsite is kept, the safer and more efficient it will be. Yes, I am aware of how ridiculous it sounds to suggest that grown men need to be told to pick up after themselves, but SURPRISE! They do.



## Lead & Asbestos

If your property was built before 1978, it is likely that materials containing lead and/or asbestos were used in its construction. The contractor you hire should be certified by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) in the proper removal and disposal of both. Or at least knowledgeable enough to recognize the possibility that they may need to get someone involved who is.

Exposure to both materials can cause neurological and cognitive disabilities, cancer, and in some extreme cases even death, especially in children and pets. Many do not realize the ecological impacts these materials have on their communities. Lead paint played a key role in the creation of the EPA, and they are a full capacity law enforcement agency with a S.W.A.T. team at their disposal.

Now, the chances of the EPA descending upon your project with a tactical team and automatic rifles because your contractor didn't follow the laws and procedures is highly unlikely. However, the EPA does have a database that monitors and tracks local municipalities and is alerted when permits are pulled on properties built in 1978 or older. They know if a contractor pulling the permit is certified and if they are not, they very well can shut your project down until your contractor acquires the proper training. If this happens it will not matter what your contract says, how much money you have paid them, or if the only thing between you and the elements is a hole in your wall and a sheet of plastic.

## O.S.H.A.

Occupational Health & Safety Association is a federal agency that helps ensure that working environments are safe for workers and clients. They provide safety courses for everything from how to use a ladder properly, to fall protection protocols when working on high

areas, and even hazardous airborne particulates that can cause any multitude of serious health complications for anyone near a working area. It is important that your contractor be knowledgeable in this regard.

There's more to working safe than just your contractor's crew using their tools in a responsible manner that you should be aware of. Your contractor's #1 priority first and foremost should be to protect you, your family, your investment, and the community. Without knowing the right questions to ask all you're left to hinge your decision on is price, and a promise of quality.



# SECRET 9: HAPPINESS



**HAPPINESS IS NOT SOMETHING READYMADE.  
IT COMES FROM YOUR OWN ACTIONS.  
~ DALAI LAMA**

**ACCORDING TO ONE POLL TAKEN** over 50% of those surveyed reported that a home remodel was the cause of a significant amount of stress in their marriages. Of those people, approximately 12% polled indicated this stress caused them to seriously consider or pursue a divorce or separation. About 1/3 of those people said that differing opinions on style were responsible for the conflict.

Over the years I have come to learn a lot about human behavior by working closely with so many people within the sanctity of their own homes. Remodels and custom builds are expensive, dusty, and time

consuming. Usually there are at least two decision makers involved in any project. It is important that both give their input on the design, amenities, and finishes.

When your job is done, of course you should want to feel like pumping your fist and screaming, “YES!” But it’s all too easy to overlook the journey and focus only on the destination. When you are about to undertake a major construction project you aren’t just going to the store and buying a box with some mud and paint on it. You are signing up for an experience that will last weeks or months. There is no reason your experience shouldn’t be both joyful and rewarding.

They say that the two happiest days in a boat owner’s life are the day they buy the boat, and the day they sell it!

Don’t let your project be the B.O.A.T. that has you Busting Out Another Thousand!

No matter how well you plan a project, problems are going to arise. Just down the road from me here there are about 5000 people who don’t have a single problem in the world. And they are all buried 6’ deep! So, if you think about it this way, problems are a sure sign of life. Make sure the contractor you hire has the specialized knowledge required to help you solve those problems. And remember, the sooner you face those problems, the sooner you can overcome them and move forward stronger and wiser from the experience.

## **Design “THEN” Build**



# CONCLUSION

I HOPE THIS HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN YOUR PURSUIT  
OF EXCELLENCE AND SUCCESS WHEN IT COMES TO  
YOUR CUSTOM BUILD OR RENOVATION.

If I don't build or remodel your house at least you are now armed with the knowledge to work with another contractor and make the right decisions for you, your family and community.

**Success is simple.  
Not easy, but simple.**



## FAQ

### ***Are you licensed and bonded?***

Many states require by law that a contractor be licensed and bonded. Most require a test that must be passed before a person is able to be licensed. Many states require that the contractor also contribute to a fund known as a bond to protect the consumers of that state. Those states that do not will at least require a contractor to be registered as a business with insurance. In those states that do not require bonding, the homeowner may need to consult with their homeowner's insurance and attorney to produce the documentation needed to present the contractor with before that contractor can obtain what is known as a Performance Bond which only covers that project.

### ***How long will it take to complete my project?***

There is no simple answer to this question and no one job is ever the same. Many variables come into play that will affect the duration of time. Ultimately the answer is entirely up to you and your scope of work. I have

had some clients in the planning phase for two weeks before beginning construction, and others up to a year. Once construction begins you should expect anywhere from 3-6 weeks for a bathroom or kitchen remodel. After all the permits are acquired, plan on another 4-8 weeks if you are building an addition. Building a custom home can take anywhere from 1-6 months depending on the size, complexity, and location of the property. Because we handle everything from planning to completion, we can start your project in no less than 10 business days.

### ***Who will I be communicating with while my project is being completed?***

Many contractors are owner/operators; meaning that they work hands-on with the actual labor associated with your project. There is nothing inherently wrong with this but if your contractor intends to perform the actual work on-site, they may tend to get spread a bit thin if they take on more than one or two jobs at a time. I have project managers whose job it is to oversee every aspect of a project and one of them will be appointed as your designated point of contact.

### ***Which project will produce the best return on my investment?***

Any major improvements you make to your property will increase its value but some more than others. By far the biggest ROI will be found in additional square footage, especially if you are adding a bedroom or converting a basement. Kitchens come in at a close 2nd as they are usually the focal point of any house. This is especially true if you have a wall dividing your kitchen from the living room where the floor plan can be opened up. On average I have seen my clients gain a 75% return on their investments once their projects are complete.

### ***Do you require a deposit?***

Your contractor is not a lender. Asking them to fund your project for you is asking for trouble. However, be very weary of any contractor that asks for full payment up front. This is a sure sign that they're getting ready to skip town on your dime leaving you to hold the bag. We require a small

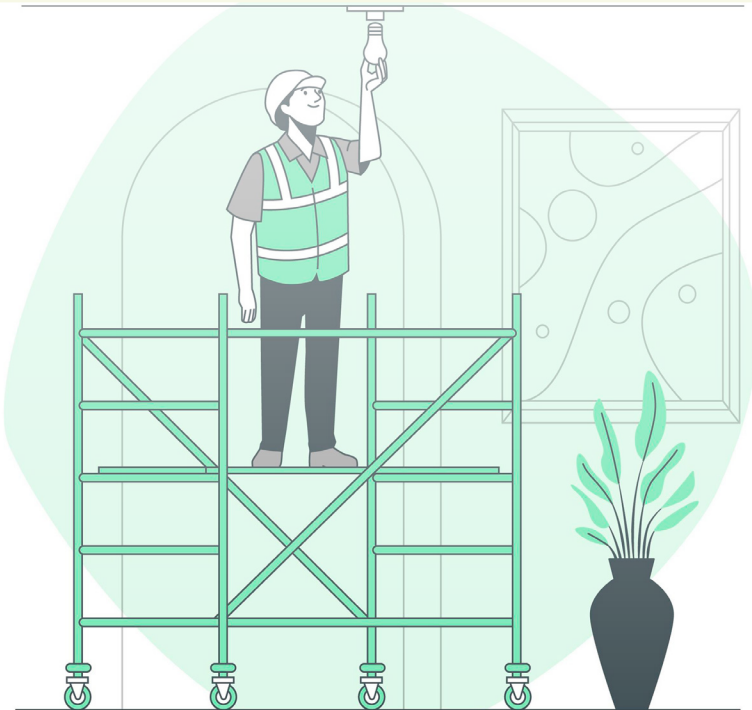
deposit based on “estimated” costs discussed to start the planning phase which is applied towards construction. Once the design is balanced with your budget, we ask for a 40% deposit of final costs to get the ball rolling. Further payments should be outlined at different landmarks throughout the completion.

### ***Will I need permits?***

Anything structurally related will require engineering, permitting and inspection. Plumbing and electrical will always require it as well. (This does not include replacing fixtures.) The costs associated with permits are minimal so thinking that you are going to save a bunch of money by skipping this step is like tripping over dollars to pick up pennies and it will always come back to bite you when the house is appraised.

### ***Is my project even possible?***

**YES!**





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**A**nthony James was born and raised in Kansas City. In 1994 at the age of 18 he landed his first professional position in the construction industry framing custom homes. In 1998 he moved to Phoenix, AZ. to escape the severe winters of the Midwest. It was there he found himself in the fastest growing city in America and in the middle of one of the biggest booms in the construction industry this country has ever seen. It wasn't long before he recognized the pace at which those houses were being built and their soon-to-be need of remodeling. Shortly after he moved into all phases of construction, he found that his passion for building houses translated into building relationships with people. Learning all the aspects of construction over the years he was at last compelled to start his own company, which today is an industry leader in the field of Design/Build.

Anthony and his better-half Brenda have been together since 2009. At the time of the writing of this book they currently reside in Boise, Idaho, with their two dogs, Beauregard, and Chesapeake. He and Brenda share a love for rescuing and fostering dogs, playing golf, music, interior design, antiques, and Pho'. Anthony appreciates the challenge of complex problem solving and the only thing that exceeds his passion for building with his hands, is building and serving his community. He is truly grateful for the amazing life construction has given him to provide for his family, his team, and their families.

# Glossary

**General contractor:** The prime contractor responsible for the main contract with a client, overseeing the construction site, and organizing all labor and materials.

**Subcontractor:** An individual or business that signs a contract to perform all, or part of the obligations to another's contract.

**As-built site map:** A set of drawings that show a property as it exists including all structures and grounds.

**Plat map:** A surveyed map of property lines, values, and ownership.

**Preliminary plans:** A set of prints drawn to scale that show a structure to be built including floor plans, elevations, specifications, and utilities.

**Final working prints:** A set of prints drawn to scale that show any changes made to the preliminary plans that also include engineering and permitting approval stamps. These drawings are used to submit for permits and for reference throughout the build.

**Easement:** Land that is not owned by the landowner that has been given rights to use as access to the real property without possessing it.

**Setback:** The distance by which a building or part of a building is set back from the property line.

**Elevation:** The view of a building, part of a building, or grounds surrounding a building from one side to show the height of its appearance.

**SOW:** The Statement of Work is a list of tasks required to complete a project described in specific terms.

**SOV:** The Schedule of Value is a list of costs associated with the Statement of Work.

**Mechanic's lien:** A judgement made against a property that ensures those who have supplied labor on that property will receive payment at the sale of that property.

**General Liability:** An insurance policy typically held by a contractor that covers their client's interests in the event of accidental damages.

**Bond:** An insurance policy that covers the policy holder in the event of poor workmanship.

# THE 9 SECRETS



- SECRET 1 HOW MUCH?
- SECRET 2 ESTIMATES
- SECRET 3 ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS
- SECRET 4 BLUEPRINTS
- SECRET 5 MATERIALS
- SECRET 6 CONTRACTS
- SECRET 7 SAVING TIME AND MONEY
- SECRET 8 SAFETY 1ST
- SECRET 9 HAPPINESS



## 9 REMODEL SECRETS

THE BOOK CONTRACTORS  
HOPE YOU NEVER READ!

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