

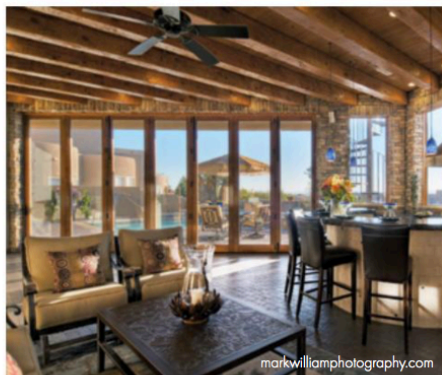
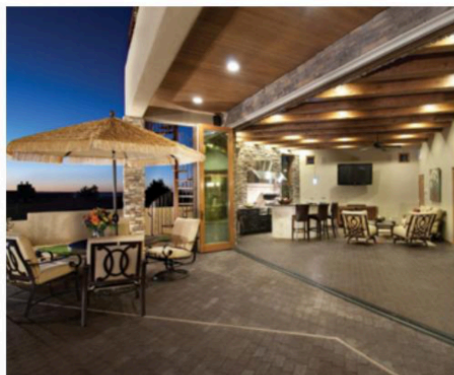
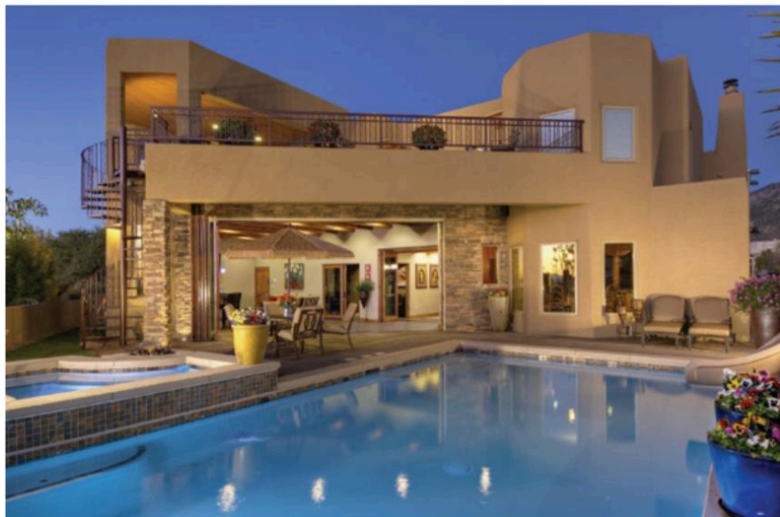
# Excellence in Remodeling *Grand Award Winner*

## KITCHEN REMODELS

### Diego Handcrafted Homes

**Grand Award Winner and  
Additions, \$400,000–\$1 million**

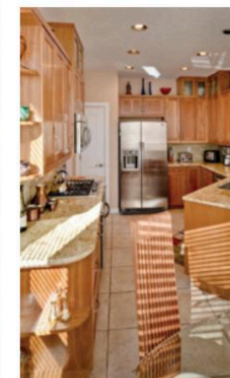
These homeowners wanted a flexible space to grill and entertain year-round. They also wanted a sports pool, a hot tub, a fire pit, and a grass area where the kids could play, but the backyard was too small to accommodate all their needs. By incorporating the 21 x 10' folding glass door in the design of the space, we were able to meet the challenge and double their patio space.



### Harder Custom Builders

**Kitchen Remodel, Under \$50,000**

The objective of this remodel was to modernize the kitchen and increase storage and functionality within a limited budget. The owner wanted a warm contemporary-style kitchen with European-style cabinets, granite counters, stainless appliances, and decorative eye candy in the new kitchen.



### Del Sol Builders and Marc Coan Designs

**Kitchen Remodel, \$50,000–\$70,000**

Capitalizing on the light was just one of the goals for this North Valley kitchen remodel. The kitchen had many east windows, recessed lighting, and a large skylight but the lighting was anything but adequate. The addition of more targeted, recessed can lighting and under-cabinet task lighting contributed to a brighter, charming workspace.





# Choosing a Remodeling Contractor

by Jamie Baxter

Remodeling a home can be exciting and scary at the same time. While anticipating the success of your completed project, you may also have fears about making the right choices. To avoid nightmares, here are some ideas our industry professionals suggest you consider when you choose a remodeling contractor.

First, remember that you are paying for two things: the finished product and quality service. Quality service can mean the difference between heartache and a satisfying experience. Remodelers committed to great service will emphasize open communication, and they will provide—right up front—a written contract, a realistic project timeframe and budget, and complete warranty information.

You may be thinking, "Of course I would expect that kind of service!" But would you change your mind if you found out that contractors who provide it can be more expensive than those who do not? Professional remodelers who are committed to being in business for you and their other clients 10 years from now know that providing superior customer service—which involves buying the right equipment, maintaining strong relationships with trade specialists, and meeting legal and safety codes—is more important than providing the lowest estimate.

Choose your remodeler carefully. Remember, these people will be



spending time in your home, around your family and personal items, for weeks or even months. While project cost is important, if it is your only focus you will likely find yourself faced with headaches and problems in the short run and spending additional money in the long run.

What other elements should you look for when choosing a remodeler?

**Make sure your remodeler is licensed and insured.** Construction in New Mexico is regulated, and remodelers are required to be licensed, carry liability insurance and worker's compensation, and be bonded. Any professional in our industry can provide proof of this information; don't hesitate to ask in order to be sure you're considering someone who cares about abiding by local and federal laws that protect everyone's safety and the integrity of your project.

**Ask for more than one bid.** Talk with several different companies and ask for written estimates from each of them before you make a final choice. To obtain accurate comparisons, present each remodeler with the same list of requirements. Include your top priorities and concerns about the project, and make your list after consulting with other members of your household if appropriate. While some contractors may suggest different structural or finish elements for the project, at least they will have all started with the same project requests.

**Ask for details in writing.** A professional remodeler will provide cost estimates in writing along with any necessary drawings and details about brands and finishes on items like plumbing and electrical fixtures, countertops, cabinets,

flooring, and appliances.

**Carefully evaluate the estimates you receive.** Have the remodelers listened to your needs? Are they presenting you with ideas for staying within your budget? If each company is proposing a similar project, is there a price difference—and if so, why? Is there a contingency for the unknown included in the estimate? Also consider the remodeler's responsiveness and level of communication. If dialogue and access to the remodeler are lacking before the project starts, it is unlikely they will improve—which can lead to a stressful and compromised project.

**Talk to past clients.** Ask your potential remodeler for a list of references and then contact at least a few of them. Discuss specifics about their experience, such as:

- How was the customer service?
- How did the remodeler respond to any problems during the project and to warranty issues?
- Was the remodeling site clean, and did the remodelers demonstrate respect for the space?
- Was there a good relationship among the members of the remodeling team?
- Was the billing what was agreed to in the contract? Were change orders presented before any work was done that was not specified in the contract?
- How satisfied was the client with the overall craftsmanship?

Remember, remodeling can and should be fun! If a professional remodeling project is your goal, do your homework ahead of time to make sure you hire a qualified, professional remodeler who will provide the best finished product and the highest quality service within your budget. ■

Jamie Baxter, CGP, of Bain Cochran Construction, LLC, is vice chair of the Remodelers Council.

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