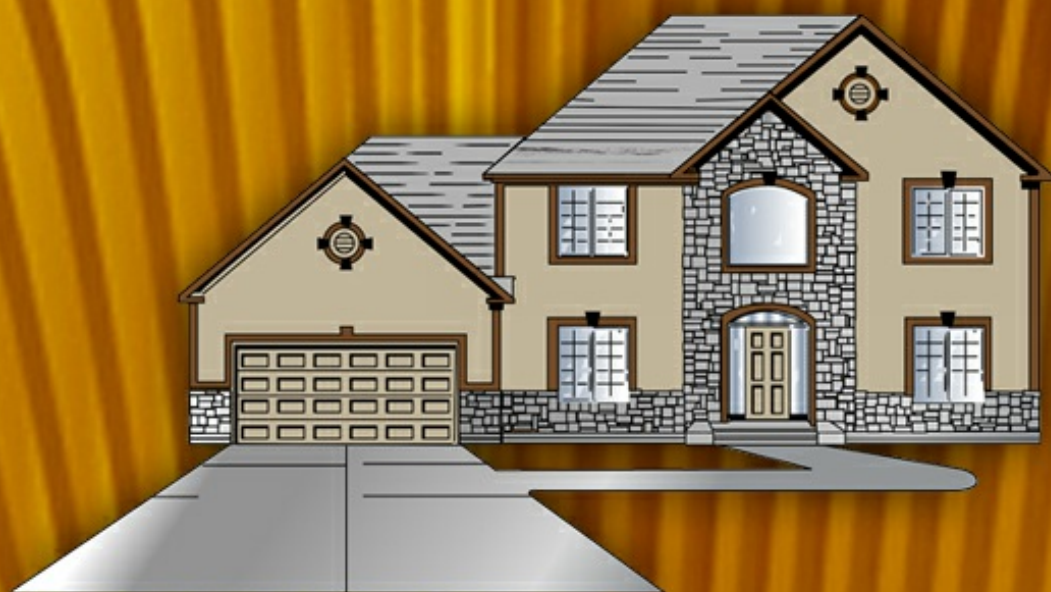


THE SECRETS TO \$AVING

BIG MONEY

**ON YOUR NEXT HOME
IMPROVEMENT
PROJECT!**



STEVEN LLOYD

The Secrets To Saving Big Money On Your Next Home Improvement Project



STERLING & POPE PUBLISHING CORP

NEW YORK ∞ DALLAS ∞ LAS VAGAS ∞ LONDON

The Secrets To Saving Big Money On Your Next Home Improvement Project



The little book that can save you a fortune in home improvement and remodeling costs!

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The Secrets To Saving Big Money On Your Next Home Improvement Project

Forward

I love the Mark Twain quote, “It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so!”

I enjoy anyone, famous or not, that uses his or her sense of humor to make me think, without making me mad. I will attempt to do that in this brief little how-to book. My personal mission in life and in business is, “To teach health and prosperity and to help heal ignorance beginning with my own.” When it comes to home-improvement and remodeling, there is a lot of misconception and misinformation out there.

To that end, I offer you a lifetime of knowledge, rooted in common sense, and polished over three generations. I am a true SOB. That stands for, “Son Of a Builder.”

My father was a builder's builder. He could build or repair anything, and he did all over the world. He learned his craft from his father so, I guess that makes me a, “GSOB,” (GrandSon Of a Builder).

I am very proud of my dad. In the 1950s he was the superintendent of a secret government project in Tule, Greenland. Since its top-secret rating has been removed, and the technology has become obsolete, I can tell you about it. My dad was the first independent contractor to step on the frozen ice known as Greenland, and he was the last one to leave.

My dad thought that he knew nothing about technology and yet he invented the process for pouring concrete in subzero weather. Dad did not know it at the time but he was inventing technology!

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My father and my grandfather were men of integrity. They both went out of their way to make sure that everyone got a square deal and they always took extra steps to make sure that no one got taken advantage of in any building project. Perhaps that is where I got my, "Crusader" attitude from.

So, welcome to my crusade to help the typical home improvement or remodeling consumer to be treated fairly and to save big money!

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Chapter One

Who Not to Hire and Why

The fastest and most efficient way for me to help you is to teach you who not to hire.

The home-improvement and remodeling industry are notorious for scams and con men. They have existed since the carpetbagger days of the post-Civil War. These were men who traveled with bags filled with needed items throughout the war-torn South. They sold these necessities at outrageous prices, from bags made of carpet. Thusly their infamous name, “The Carpetbaggers.”

Fortunately today we have some new tools at our disposal to mitigate some of our risk of having some unscrupulous contractor take advantage of us. Now all you need to do is follow the list below. Remember that this book is just a guide and should never replace your best judgment or wise gut reaction.

Here is the list of things to look for, things to ask, and the red flags to be avoided.

Does everything match?

Depending on how or where you first contacted the contractor that you are interviewing, or how they contacted you is your starting point. Here is the list of everything that must match.

1) The Logo

Look to see if the logo that they use is professionally designed, or is it a, “cut and paste clip art” of a house. The very first sign that someone is potentially not the full-time professional that you are looking for, is a nonprofessional logo.

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2) Their business card

Does he have a professionally designed business card? Does it look and feel slick like a professionally printed card, or is it thin and looks like something that came off of an inkjet printer? Does the logo and the font match everything else?

Next, take your thumb and wet it and rub the ink on the card. If it “smudges” it’s a self-made card and was probably printed the morning before he called on you.

3) His brochure

The presentation or leave behind material is the next important thing to evaluate, especially today. Take a minute to study the brochure. Look at the back bottom margin. Is there a copyright mark ©, a date and name? If not, he probably printed it along with the business card that morning. Again, try the, “wet thumb and smear” technique on the ink. If it smears, it was printed with an inkjet printer.

4) Vehicle and signage

He may or may not be driving a pickup truck. Some companies that employ a full-time salesperson allow them to drive a car instead of a pickup truck. These can often be some of the best companies to work with. What I want you to notice, is it clean and well kept? Regardless of whether they drive a pickup truck or car, if the person calling on you works full time in this business they should be bright enough to know that they need to be driving a portable “billboard.” Magnetic signs are affordable today and they need to match all of the other parts of this credibility puzzle. Remember, anyone can rent a pickup truck and say that he is a contractor.

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5) Their website

Again, it needs to be professional. These days you can have a website thrown together for free, and in just a few hours. Here are a few, “tricks” to look for to tell the “pros guys” from the, “pretend to be guys.”

- **A) Does the website have a video?**
- **B) How many pages is the website?**
- **C) Look for their, “Locations or Cities” link or tab.**
- **D) Look for the © copyright**

Video production is expensive and only the top agencies and companies are using it. If they do have a video, ask yourself, is it professionally produced? Does the video contain the same professional logo as their business card, brochure, and vehicle signs?

Websites are sold by the number of pages to be built. Take a close look at the website and you will see the difference between a professionally built site that specializes in home improvement and remodeling, and one that has been thrown together so they have a website.

Although it is not required to be working with a company that has multiple locations, if something goes wrong with your project, which is common, if they do have other locations throughout your state, at least you have someone else to contact if you need help. Also, if the person calling on you is part of the larger organization, they had to meet and qualify through some form of vetting process. Every organization works hard to protect their brand name.

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If their website is owned by them personally or corporately, it will have a copyright in their name along with the date to protect the contents of the site. If the site does not have the copyright © next to them, check to see who owns it. You need to know who you are doing business with and this is one of the best ways to find out. Every company invests significant time and capital to create web or print-based assets and they want to protect them with a copyright. This is one of the secrets to discovering who you are actually doing business with or who is promoting to you.

If you see a picture with a link at the bottom of the page or on the last page of the website that says the name of someone other than the person that you think you are doing business with, click on it and see where it takes you. GoDaddy has a great little starter website package called, “website tonight.” Its name is exactly what the product does. Within a matter of hours you can select one of their template websites, pick a few pictures of home remodeling, put your name in the header along with a phone number, click publish, and you have a website!

6) Their liability insurance policy

Ask to see the, “Dec Page” of the firm’s liability insurance policy. The Declaration Page is the front page where you will find the name of the insured, their address, the policy number, the policy limits, etc.

Here is where you will most likely find different people’s names and different legal corporate entities. That is perfectly okay. This is very common. We just now need to determine who you are actually doing business with and to make sure that the names and entities matchup on the contract that they want you to sign.

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7) Their contract

Ask to see the contract that they will want you to sign once you are ready to proceed. Do not be surprised if the person calling on you is surprised that you want to see their liability insurance and their contract this early in the process. His or her discomfort is immaterial to your peace of mind. It is a real timesaver to tell the person who is calling on you that you will need to see the company's liability insurance front page and their formal contract, at your very first meeting. You are not required nor do I recommend that you explain why.

Do not be surprised or disappointed if they cancel or do not show up. Just take this as a sign that you avoided a scam or that you would have at least avoided a nonprofessional company or salesperson.

8) Do not reschedule

If that firm cancels or blows you off, do not give them a second chance, you will regret it! On the other hand, if they are not prepared to meet your demands it is perfectly acceptable for them to request to reschedule so that they have time to gather the things that you want to see and to inspect at the first meeting. Please grant them that time as a professional courtesy. Not many people are this prepared but this knowledge will serve you well.

You would not believe the number of contractors that I have had contact me. They are upset that I wrote this consumer protection book. Now, ask me if I care!

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Chapter Two

Good, Better, Best

If you have been buying from professional salespeople for any length of time, then you have seen this trick. In professional sales training circles it is called the, “Good, Better, Best” sales close.

Strategy is to put three different qualities and three different prices, on a page. The theory is that your brain will most likely pick the number in the middle. Normally, the reason is that we as human beings do not want the lowest value and therefore cost, and we do not want to afford or have to pay for the best. So, we have a tendency to settle for what is behind, “door number two.”

Although I respect the professional sales training process, this is not ***Selling from the Heart***, (my very first book title).

What I have taught for many years and I believe with all my heart is what I call, “**Getting Hired Versus Closing the Sale.**” (Which is chapter 12 of *Selling from the Heart*). In my experience this is the ultimate form of relationship selling, where you develop friendships as you do business. After all, as consumers, we all love to buy, we just hate being sold!

By the way, this is not new news to salespeople. Wouldn't you think if you understood this concept that you would have learned how to sell, from the heart, and not from the wallet? What I tried to teach salespeople is that the greatest value in every sale is not the commission that you will make from that sale, but the friendship that you will develop. This friendship will gladly introduce you to the seven other people that they know personally that will need a home improvement job done.

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If you master the following, you will be able to design your home improvement or remodeling project in such a way that both you and your salesperson will both win. After all if you win, he or she will win too, because he or she makes a sale! So, I am going to show you how to avoid the, “Good, Better, Best” sales close by knowing more than they do about what you need.

First, I want you to think about what you want your new home improvement project to accomplish. This step should not consider what it will look like. I want you to think about what this new home improvement project will accomplish for you and your family. Your answer might be, a more usable room. It might be creating the elegance that you have always dreamed of in a bathroom.

Second, ask yourself, “Will these changes help to sell this home someday?” By the way, unless this home improvement project is to “spruce up” your home to help you to sell now, I know that the last thing you are thinking about today is selling your home. However, home-improvement investments should always include a, “market value factor.” Just keep in mind that the market value increase will normally not exceed 50% of what you invested in the remodeling project. Why? Because there was a kitchen or a bathroom in your home before you removed it and put in the new one. Therefore, your future buyer will only pay for one of them. The majority of home improvements should be to increase your personal enjoyment of the home.

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As part of your planning process, I want you to visit some local new home builders. I want you to take a look at what's new and what's selling now! Just because you personally happen to love gold handle faucets, please use the features and products that are selling today! By the way, when you arrive at the new home center please do the new home salesperson a favor and let him or her know that you are just there looking for home improvement project ideas. Please remember that he or she makes a living selling new homes. Please do not take up his or her time asking them all kinds of questions that do not pertain to what he or she does for a living. It would also be kind if you did not go to visit the new home models on Saturday or Sunday. That is their busiest time of the week.

Remember to bring a notebook and a tape measure with you. If you, "fall in love" with something, measure it! Some project ideas require a minimum amount of space to be able to use that product or idea.

Even if your mate does not want to do this research with you, sell him or her, (normally him), on the fact that he sees things through a different set of eyes than you do, and that you really need his input. The other reason that I recommend that both of you learn together, is to remove or prevent the explanations or arguments as to why you want to use a new and modern product or technique. We all tend to favor what we are currently comfortable with, regardless of how outdated it might be.

As an example, at the time of the penning of this book, I recently completed a replacement flooring project in my kitchen and two bathrooms. I used an Armstrong synthetic stone material. It looks amazing! I wanted a waterproof solution to replace the builder grade ceramic tile floors that were installed in my home 15 years ago, when it was built. The new Armstrong product is not only waterproof, the grout that goes between each individual tile is mixed with silicone, making each grout line waterproof as well. If you've ever experienced a water leak in a kitchen or bathroom you know why that's important.

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After your field trip to the new home center, it is time to do some online research. New home builders always promote the name brand of what is new, in their model homes. As an example, if they offer the latest and greatest multiple head shower system by Kohler, they are promoting the Kohler name. The technique is called, “associated value selling.” This simply means, that you have a tendency to associate value to the homebuilder who is using a high-value plumbing supplier like Kohler.

Now that you have your ideas, it’s time to make a budget. Never, ever, never, ever, never ask the person who is doing the selling to give you a project price. You should have a very close idea of what it’s going to cost before you ever ask someone who is selling the project to give you a price. The only thing that we want from them is their price. Once you know approximately what materials and labor are going to cost, it’s time to meet with the home-improvement Pro guy or gal, so that you can ask him or her to give you their best price. Here’s how you find your price range:

First, visit both of the big box stores. If you have another big box store that happens to specialize in whatever kind of home-improvement that you are doing, go visit them as well. However, the two big box stores that specialize in home-improvement products also have contractors that they work with. He is where you can get at least a ballpark idea of what you can expect to pay for both materials and labor.

Here is a word of caution, you can almost always get better quality and better service from a full-time contractor than you can from the contractors that are offered by the big box stores. Why? Well, with no disrespect to the people that pickup work at these big box stores, ask yourself this question, “If the contractors that they use are all that good, why are they waiting in line at that store for work?” You already know that the really great contractors are always busy!

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Additionally, if you hire someone through one of the big box stores, you are actually getting a subcontractor. When you have a problem, and we both know that with home remodeling projects there are always problems, you have to go back to that big box store to resolve it. You need to call, and call, or visit and wait in line, and wait and wait and wait until they resolve your problem for you. If you bitch long enough and loud enough they will eventually fix your problem, but it can take a very long time!

Your best solution is to hire a contractor that is part of a nationwide network or franchise so that he has access to the best volume prices for the materials needed for your project. When you combine the best wholesale prices, with world-class skilled labor, and you have a real winner!

Now that you know your, “ballpark prices,” you can tell each contractor that you interview exactly what you are looking for, and you will only ask him for one price, his best price, on exactly what you want and need! You will be amazed and delighted at how well being prepared works for getting the best contractor at the best price!

Remember that what’s really important is a blend between the elements of, the best possible quality, the fastest possible turnaround time for the project, and the best price. There is a give-and-take for each one of these elements that make up the best value for your project. I strongly advise you against trying to get all three. I also advise that you look for quality and speed first. The worst possible thing that can happen to you and your remodeling project is that it has to be done over! You really need a blend between the best quality, the fastest possible job, and a fair price. Again, price should always come behind quality workmanship, best practices, and the time it takes to complete the job.

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By the way, if your home was built before the year 2000, always budget an extra 25% more money and time. Also ask your contractor candidates how many homes he has remodeled in your home's age range. If he has extensive experience working with older homes, he should not find any unexpected issues with your home and project.

- **Pro Guy Tools**
- **Warranties and Guarantees**
- **Job Site Prep and Dust Control**
- **E-Verify who is in your home**
- **Lost Job Time Is Money**
- **The Bonus/Penalty Technique**
- **References from Happy Customers**

One of the ways to determine if you are working with a true Pro, is to analyze the tools that he uses to estimate your job. Is he using the latest laser room measuring technology? Or, is he using a tape measure? Does he have a cloud-based software system to do the estimating? Or is he using the best numbers that a high school calculator can provide? I do not mean to be disrespectful in any way, I simply want you to notice if you are working with a true Pro.

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This is where you really need to be careful and please pay attention! Of the hundreds of cases that I have reviewed over the years where there have been complaints made against the builder, this is one of the areas where the misunderstandings almost always take place. Everyone offers a manufacturer's warranty. It is included with the product. But are you also being given at least a one-year labor warranty too? All of the makers of home remodeling products and parts cover the repair or replacement if the product fails, but who is going to take out the broken or defective materials and replace it with the new products? Some of the more expensive and state of the industry manufacturers are so sure that their products will not fail that they will cover labor too. Just be sure to get a written product and labor warranty for at least one year.

Every contractor says that they, "drape and tape" the work area. There are however some very important draping and taping techniques that you want to make sure are utilized on your property.

First of all, the draping process and the plastic used to drape the work area is very important. The real pros drape the entire room with a heavier mill plastic and they overlap the plastic to create a walkway for the workers to move in and out of the room.

Another important thing to remember is to wrap window treatments with plastic and tape them up tight so that no dust can creep into your fabric. Additionally, you should use plastic and tape off any air ducts or air vents in the kitchen on a range top for your stove.

Additionally, remember to remove all window and door screens that are anywhere near the construction site. Screens of any kind do not do well with dust! Remember to label each one with a piece of painting tape so that you know which window is the home for each screen.

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Once again, if a contractor does this full time for a living, he may have some of the latest state-of-the-industry dust control techniques and equipment. There is a relatively new product called, "BuildClean." It is a unique vacuum system designed to filter the air inside a plastic draped area that is experiencing significant dust because of the tearout. I have personally witnessed this unit clear out 1,200 square feet of heavy construction dust in less than 60 seconds. I would not disqualify a contractor because he does not own the system, but I would give extra points to one who does!

Even with the latest prevention and dust removal techniques, the fact is that on a major remodeling job there will be major dust in your home. Look at the budget and see if it is possible for you and your family to stay in a hotel or an extended stay suites property. Ask your contractor if they happen to have a relationship with a local hotel or extended suites property where you can get a discount. Some of the national firms do.

This is a sensitive subject these days but it is an important subject to discuss. I am going to cover the three major reasons why it is important that your home remodeling contract list exactly who will have access to your home.

The first issue is safety and security for you and your family. There is a system to verify the employable status of everyone that is available for employment in the United States. The system is used by small and large businesses alike. It is called E-Verify. You can find out more about E-Verify by going to the website, <https://www.uscis.gov/e-verify/employers> and looking around.

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The second reason to confirm that 100% of everyone working on your property has a legal employment status, is for economic protection of you. First of all, the only people that the liability insurance company will cover on the job are people who have a green card or better status. If illegal workers are on site, they are not covered by your contractor's liability insurance. Why should you care? Well, if an illegal worker gets hurt on your property and he is not covered by your contractor's insurance, guess who his lawyer is likely to sue? That makes sense doesn't it?

The third reason to confirm that 100% of everyone working on your property is E-Verified, is to make sure that all of the estimates and or bids that you receive for your project are issued on a, "level playing field." If you have a contractor who is using illegal labor bidding against someone who is using only E-Verified labor, it is not a level playing field on the bid.

Again please remember that you are looking for a fair price that provides you the best possible quality, done within the shortest period of time. Looking for the lowest possible price will always eventually cost you more money.

Home Improvement and Home Remodeling contractors (they are one of the same) are notorious for contracting more work than they can handle. From the contractor's point of view, please understand that business seems to come in a feast/famine pace. So when things are good, and lots of people are calling, they tend to book more jobs than they can handle. The downside to that behavior is it makes everyone angry and that contractor develops a bad reputation. Over the years I have discovered a secret for motivating contractors to finish the job on time or even early. Remember that everyone operates within the parameters of their compensation plan. Home Improvement contractors are no exception. Remember, if you are operating off of a specific completion date, your life, business, and perhaps your off-site living expenses are all affected if that date is missed.

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The first step of using this technique is having your contractor work and rework the time and materials list to the point that he is comfortable putting a completion date in the contract. Then, you suggest that he be paid a bonus for finishing early. Here is how it works: For each week that the contractor finishes earlier than the contracted completion date, you pay a 10% bonus of the entire project price. So, if the project price was \$5,000 you pay a \$500 bonus. If the completion date was finished two weeks early, you pay a \$1,000 bonus. You will rarely pay this bonus but if you do and time is very important to you, it is a very good deal for you. It is important that you present the bonus to him first, before step number two.

Step number two: After your contractor agrees you say, "Now, of course to be fair to me, I want to include the same penalty percentage and time for each week that you are behind schedule. Meaning if you are one week late you owe me an extra \$500 discount, if you are two weeks late you will owe me \$1,000. Does that seem fair?"

What you need to understand is that if your contractor is uncomfortable with paying a penalty for being late, he most likely did not intend to hit the projected completion date. This gives you another time and place to negotiate.

If this contractor has been doing business in your area for any length of time he should be able to provide you with 3 to 5 legitimate customers that are happy with his work. If he hesitates, you most likely have found the wrong person. Here is a secret that will let you know if the list that he gives you are real satisfied customers, or simply friends and relatives that he has prepped for your phone call.

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After he gives you the list of people and their contact information, thank him and set it aside. Then, just before he leaves ask him for the project details and amounts and dates of each of the projects for the people listed on the sheet of paper. If these are real projects, he will have at least a, “ballpark” answer for each one of these for you. He may not be able to recall the exact numbers, or he may feel uncomfortable giving you those numbers, but he will know the details of the project he completed for them, and the approximate date when it was completed. If he can’t recall, or says that he needs to look it up, it is most likely “BS.”

Here is where the secret comes in. The human mind has the tendency to recall things in the order that it both received it and gave it out. As soon as he drives away, pick up the phone and call the list in reverse order. Meaning, I want you to call the last person on the list first. If the list is, “BS” then he is probably on his cell phone in his pickup truck calling the first person on the list. By the time he gets to the 3rd to 5th one on the list you will have already determined whether the list’s information is legitimate. If it is not, do not give him another chance. You will regret it! The more you try the secret, the more you will prove to yourself how legitimate and valuable it is!

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Chapter Three

Controlling the Job Site

The purpose of this book is to help you to hire the right contractor, get it done within a reasonable time, get a fair price, and to avoid problems.

Depending on if you are staying on site, versus moving to a hotel, remember that your home is about to become a professional worksite. This means that construction workers are going to be coming and going, in and out of your doors, all day long! Here are some tips to help keep you and your property safe.

Tip Number One: Ask your contractor to give you the names of each person who will be on-site, and ask him to introduce you to each one of them personally.

Tip Number Two: After your contractor introduces you to a worker, explain to the worker that you want to keep track of each person that comes and goes in and out of your home. Next ask permission to take his picture with your cell phone. Unless there is a good reason why this person does not want to have their picture taken, and there are no good reasons, he should readily agree.

Tip Number Three: Print out all of the pictures and add the names to each of the pictures. Keep both a digital file on your cell phone or computer, but make three printed copies showing the names with the photographs of each of the workers. Leave one of the sets in the home for easy reference while you, your spouse, or older children or caregivers are there. Give a second set to your spouse, and keep a set for yourself. Each time you are there on site, check to make sure that everyone working there is on the list of approved workers. You will be amazed and delighted how this will help keep your property safe.

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Tip Number Four: Pack and store all of your portable valuables. I am not talking about chairs, tables, or mirrors, I am talking about smaller television sets, computer screens, CPUs, laptops, expensive decorative items, or antique collectibles. Anything that could be easily picked up and taken off the site. If you have an area of the home that is not being visited by workers, you can store it there. You might have access to a large closet on-site that you can use. It is also a good idea to go down to your local big box store and get a matching doorknob key set to put a lock on that room. Overkill? Not at all! Would you rather be prepared and not need this information then wish you would have done it?

Tip Number Five: You have been told for years that you should buy an engraving kit and engrave a code number on all of your portable valuables. Now is a good time to do that. Also photograph them and mark whatever ID number that you engraved on the electronics or other portable valuable. If they are stolen, and engraved, the ID number makes them almost impossible to be pawned. Any police officer will tell you that this is the best chance that you have of getting your valuables back if they are stolen. Large items are not as vulnerable but let your contractor know that you are concerned and request that all doors be kept closed when not in use.

Tip Number Six: Change your air filters early and often. If you change your air filters before the home improvement project starts, your filters will be ready to capture the majority of airborne dust and particles. Remember, if you let them get too filled up, your furnace will suck them right into the opening, or it will have to work way too hard to try to pull air through really dirty filters. If you will change them midway through the project, you will notice that you are replacing really filthy air filters. Then, change them again when the project is complete, and about every two weeks for the first month or so following the project.

Tip Number Seven: Duct tape is your friend! Seal off every room, door, and window that is not being used during your home remodeling event.

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If you need to use the room, break the seal and then reseal it when you are finished. If you are going in and out of the rooms, use a dampened towel under the door to prevent dust from coming under the door. Use plastic and painters tape to tape off all of the air vents for all of the rooms including those under construction. Your air handling system is no match for the dust that will be in your home. The only thing that you do not cover and tape off is the cold air return system. You want it to filter the air.

Tip Number Eight: Board your pets

Animals have a tough time during major disruption in the home. They are also less resistant to dust, debris, and noise than humans are. So, consider getting your four-legged friends new digs for a short while. It sure beats the extra cost of veterinarian bills due to the stress and the change of their environment!

Tip Number Nine: Move your vehicles

Most home improvement projects utilize the parking space or the garage as a workspace. It's important that you not have your vehicles damaged or in the way during the project. So, make sure you check with your local municipality about parking in the street, or perhaps talk with your neighbors to see if you might be able to park in their driveway during your project. Regardless, make sure that you have a plan for your vehicles every day of the project.

Tip Number Ten: Photograph your entire home as it is now

This tip will prove to be so valuable to you when it comes time to putting everything back in place. You might think that you shall never forget how you had everything set up, but you will be amazed at how quickly you forget. Be glad that you have photographs to refer back to as to exactly the way you had things setting in each room.

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Chapter Four

Document Your Project

Remember to take lots of before and after pictures. Many contractors forget to take project pictures. This gives you an opportunity to either have the beginning of a nice thank you gift for a job well done, or to have the necessary documents in case the job was not to your liking. Pictures are always your best evidence if you need to prove a point. They are also a wonderful way to thank someone for a job well done by sending them a collection of before and after digital pictures.

Remember to take complete before and after pictures. Take pictures of what the room looked like when it was decorated before the work started. And then take pictures during the project, and then after the project has been completed. The before and after pictures are normally stunning, and with today's photographic technology built right into our cell phones, very nice pictures can be rendered easily.

Again, should there be a problem with your job, be sure to take very specific, very detailed photographs. Then move them to a computer's hard drive where you have the ability to take a notation tool and label what it is you are looking at. If you have a huge discrepancy, be sure to have something that is easily recognized as far as size, like a 12 inch ruler, laying behind or beside the issue.

It is also very important for you to photograph the cans of paint, or stain that were used to finish your project. Be sure to keep these photographs and notes in a permanent file for future reference. Most of us will forget exactly what the color of the paint was or the stain used when we need to refresh the color a few years down the road. This information will prove to be invaluable to you I promise!

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Ask your contractor if he has a Facebook and or local Google page. Here is where you can give him a wonderful gift that costs you nothing except a few minutes of your time. Consider posting the before and after pictures on their Facebook page with nice comments saying what a great job they did!

Why would you do this for them? Well forgetting the fact that it is a nice thing to do, they will be grateful for the time and effort that you took to do this. Sometime in the near future you will need them to come back because there is always little minor things that you would like to have them fix once you have time to notice them. If you have done something nice for them, they are normally willing to come back quickly and fix everything for free. So please do this because it is the right thing to do, and do it because it will help serve you!

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Chapter Five

The Final Clean Up

Many people forget that everything, and I mean everything in your home needs to be cleaned following a significant home improvement project. All your windows, your window covers, your appliances, all of your knickknacks and whatnots all need to be cleaned. Your walls and floors need to be vacuumed and washed. You will be amazed at how much dirt and dust that you get up. If your budget allows for it, you might consider a professional cleaning service because they have all of the tools needed to make sure your cleaning project is done right.

By the way, as long as you have everything taken apart, now would be a good time to caulk and reseal the windows, doors, outlets, oh yes the joys of home ownership!

Remember that after your home improvement project is complete, that you change the air filters in your home every two weeks or so. You will have a lot of airborne dust for a long time until everything settles down.

Now is the time to refer back to the photographs that you took in Tip Number 10. You will be so glad that you had these photographs to refer back to as you attempt to reconstruct your life and your things where they belong.

Now is also a good time to do a complete inventory to make sure that nothing got broken or stolen during your home improvement project.

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Conclusion

My hope, wish, and prayer is that this little book has helped you in some small way to prepare for, and manage your home improvement project. I realize that because of the material and the secrets contained, you might actually find it difficult to find a quality contractor that you can count on. If you would like a referral from someone that we believe to be good in your local area, check out this website: www.HomeImprovementProGuys.com and go to the, “**Locations Tab**” at the top of the homepage. On the locations page, you will find a list of **states**. Click on your state and you will find a list of **cities**. Click on your city and you will find a page that is dedicated to your area. Call them. You will get a referral to a good contractor that works in your city or near you.

Home improvement is not a comfortable process, but armed with the right knowledge, it can be safe, affordable, and done right the first time!

So, enjoy your newly remodeled home, and please tell your friends, relatives, and business associates about me and, “***The Secrets to Saving Big Money on Your Next Home Improvement Project!***” They will thank you for it, I promise!

Steven Lloyd

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Lloyd was literally born into a construction family. His father was a “Finish” carpenter who could design, blueprint, and build anything from a birdhouse, to the multibillion dollar project that he was superintendent of in Tule, Greenland.

Steven’s father’s dream was to have a father and son construction company. Because his parents divorced, that dream was not realized. Steven would be the first to tell you that this loss in his life is what has driven him to help others to fulfil their goals and dreams.

Steven Lloyd is an internationally recognized author and speaker, having written 8 books and spoken in 10 countries on 3 continents.