

Second opinions

AND THE LOWEST PRICE

by WAYNE SAGE

Whether its recent experiences or the fact that summer has rapidly ended for us all, I am feeling frustrated and ask you to please indulge this bit of venting. These two issues cause me more frustration than most any others.

The second opinion

While I begrudge no one the right to a second opinion and often recommend it, why is it that the second opinion is more valid if it delivers better news? Case in point, a while back I met with a potential new client who wanted a quite tricky addition and renovation to a classic Winnipeg heritage home. This is a project we have done a lot and given I have been doing this now for 42 years and hope I've learned a thing or two, I feel it is our responsibility as builders to share and inform clients of what it's going to take to do the project right. They thanked me for my time and knowledge and said they would let me know as they were talking to other builders as well. Fine. In a follow up phone call a couple of weeks later they told me another contractor had said he could do it a different way, save them a lot of money and do it much faster so they decided to go with them instead. I did not feel that was possible, so I inquired on how they were going to achieve

this and was told that they weren't allowed to share that information as it was their contractor's private information. Again, fine, but here's where the venting starts. Last week I received a phone call that started with me having to say, "stop crying, I can't understand you." Said client had now been out of their house for 6 months and nothing had been done except demolition, so there was no going back. The contractor's method of doing things didn't meet code or structural requirements and was going to take a lot more money and time to have plans redone. And by the way, the total budget has now more than doubled and they don't have the money. They asked, "can you help us out of this?" Steam was now coming from my ears.

Low price gets the job

If you are still living in the get five prices and lowest price gets the job world, then you are doing yourself a terrible disservice. First off, in analyzing quotes and finding the differences (what's included and what's not, how are changes handled, what are you actually getting) you need to have a vast amount of knowledge in the construction industry, which many consumers do not have. And secondly, you're setting your project up in an adversarial situation between contractor and



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client where one wants the project completed with the best materials and the other wants to do it as cheaply as possible to maximize profits.

The solution to both problems above? Simple. Don't base your choice of contractor on anything but experience, reputation, knowledge and transparency. Also, make sure you feel you have good communication with them. Teaming up with a contractor who is thinking of nothing but your best interests and doing it right is the only criteria you should have for your renovation goals to succeed.

Thank you... rant over. I feel much better now.



Wayne Sage is the owner and President of Harwood Design Builders, a multi-National and Provincial award-winning Winnipeg Design - Build contracting firm, winning 18 top five placements for best renovations in Canada, including a Best in Canada win.
