Successful Remodeling: Ten Tips for Keeping Your Sanity

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Thousands of homeowners are coping with the housing slump by choosing to remodel their current homes instead of moving. In this article, remodel or move guru Dan Fritschen offers his top ten tips for keeping your sanity during a remodel. Remodeling can make you crazy. But these tips will help you get the results you want.

PR9.NET July 30, 2007 - United States - ORGANIZE! To make the job easier and ensure your percentage of good ideas is as high as possible, you need a strategy to organize your information. Use a three-ring binder or expandable file folder. You must keep copies of all contracts, change orders, invoices, receipts, and permits. These will be invaluable if you have disputes with your contractors and when tax time comes around. Other sections to consider are ideas from magazines, quotes, contractor contact info, and so forth.

Don't be afraid to play designer. Many "amateur" home designers come up with great ideas, and since you are living in your home day after day, you can have better ideas than the "pros." So get out a pencil, make 100 copies of your current floor plan, and sketch out all the alternatives. It doesn't matter how great or bad they are, experiment with alternatives. At this point it's free, so enjoy!

Figure out what you can do yourself. Have contractors itemize their quotes to determine which phases of your project you might be able to do yourself and which ones you want to hire someone to do. Tasks you might consider doing include project management, demolition, rough electrical wiring, installation of cabinets, fixtures, and appliances, and finish work. Tasks you should probably leave to the pros include foundation work, framing, installing sheetrock and breaker boxes, and connecting your home to the electrical service.

Consider "practice" remodeling. If you aren't quite ready to commit to doing part of the work yourself, get some hands-on experience. Find a small project around the house and tackle it yourself, such as putting a floor in the attic or building shelving in the garage. Or offer to help out a neighbor or volunteer for a Habitat for Humanity project. These experiences will give you a firsthand look at the work. Alternately, you might take an education course at Home Depot, Lowe's, or another building material store.

Tips for finding a contractor:
Ask for referrals from friends, neighbors, and co-workers.
Ask other people who have done work for you in the past such as your plumber or gardener.
Search your local and free newspapers for contractors' ads.
Try online referral services such as www.servicemagic.com and www.improvenet.com.
Use the telephone book.
Ask at lumberyards and hardware stores, especially lumberyards that cater to contractors.
Always make sure your contractor is fully licensed with state and local governments. Make sure the license is valid and up to date—do not rely on the contractor's word. You should contact your state, county, and city governments for information on the contractor's license. The website www.contractors-license.org lists licensing requirements for all fifty states. Also make sure the contractor is fully insured and carries worker's compensation, liability, and property damage insurance.

Follow this contract check list: Every contract should include:
Contractor information including name, address, telephone numbers, license number.
A list of what the contractor will and will not do—for example, the tasks you have chosen to do, such as painting or demolition.
All materials, sizes, colors, specifications.
A dated copy of all drawings and diagrams. If changes need to be made during the project, they should be made to these documents and initialed and dated by both you and the contractor.
Start and finish dates.
The times work will start and finish and the days of the week that workers will be at your home.
How change orders will be handled.
A warranty for one year.
A binding arbitration clause.
A statement of how the contract can be canceled.
A statement that the contractor will provide affidavits of final release, final payment, or final lien waivers from all subcontractors and suppliers.

Use the Remodel-or-Move Calculator to estimate your costs. Available at www.remodelormove.com, this calculator will give you an estimate by including information about the rooms that will be remodeled, the level of finish that you want, how you will manage the project, and where your home is located. Because it is fully automated, it allows you to try a number of different combinations of materials and room changes quickly, and it's free.

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About ABCD Publishing, LLC

ABCD Publishing, LLC provides advice and resources (both published books and internet sites) to people who are deciding whether to remodel their homes or move to a new home. The calculator at www.remodelormove.com will compare the cost of moving to the cost of remodeling. The second site, www.remodelestimates.com provides information, money saving ideas, a whole house remodel

calculator or accurate estimates on the cost or remodeling a single room.

Phone:	888-825-4169
FAX:	866-620-9912
Website:	http://www.remodelormove.com
E-Mail:	dfritschen@abcdpublishing.com
Address:	1030 East El Camino Real, Suite 150 Sunnyvale, CA 94087

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