

Remodeling Right: DIY or Professional?

It's fun and inspiring to watch TV shows about home design and remodeling - everything from the latest looks in countertops to whole-house remodels. And YouTube and other online video sites are chockfull of helpful how-tos and demos to assist home owners through countless do-it-yourself projects.

There are relatively simple home projects that can be completed by DIYers, such as hanging pictures, interior painting, caulking, and changing door knobs and cabinet pulls. And, home owners with the correct tools and a higher skill level should be able to tackle some aesthetic work such as installing crown molding.

But it's also important to know when to stop and hire a professional.

Remodelers can tell you lots of funny stories about siding installed upside down - and sometimes scary stories involving do-it-yourself electrical wiring gone awry. So before you buy the latest or trendiest gizmo for your home, ask yourself a few questions.

How much do you know? Replacing the exhaust fan over your oven with a built-in microwave looks like a reasonably simple swap. But if you notice your kitchen lights are dimming when you zap your popcorn, you've probably forgotten that the microwave, unlike the exhaust fan, uses a lot more energy and likely needs a dedicated circuit. A remodeling professional knows that.

What if it doesn't work? That YouTube do-it-yourself video may make a tilework project look doable, but will YouTube give you your money back if you don't lay it straight? Professional remodelers may not know everything, but they do take responsibility for everything they do.

Are there any unintended consequences? In today's increasingly efficient and more air-tight homes, it's more and more important to look at the house as a system. Your new windows are keeping out drafts, but how are they affecting your home's air quality once the "natural ventilation" of the leaky old ones are gone? Do you need to look at mechanical ventilation systems? If so, how big? A professional can tell you.

How do you know if it's right for your home? A professional remodeler can advise you on products, finishes and appliances that match your lifestyle, location, house size and budget and help you avoid spending money without a reasonable payback on either resource expense (energy and water, for example) or the sale of your home when you are ready to upsize or downsize.

And how do you find a professional remodeler? There's a question with an easy answer. Contact the Roanoke Regional Home Builders Association (540/389-7135 or rrhba.com) to find a remodeler with the experience, educational qualifications and knowledge to do the job right - the first time.