



*Part II*

# *What to Expect...*

## When you are expecting a new kitchen or bath

In the first installment of this article, we looked at planning as the first key to unlocking the door to a successful remodel project. In this second installment, we will examine how communication represents the second key to success.

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Poor communication is a leading cause of building projects going sour. Remember the old adage, "Communication is a two-way street"? If I had a nickel for every time I have heard "I thought..." "I assumed..." when projects have gone sideways, I would be a wealthy person. Successful design/build projects are similar to happy marriages – for those of us who have been or are married, we know all too well the effect of making assumptions about our spouse's wishes or desires. Hence, the same premise can be applied to designing and building: "Assume nothing."

Needless to say, it is imperative that builders/designers communicate to clients how, what and when (think back to planning the project timeline in the first installment) things will happen during the course of a project, and homeowners need to communicate back to the builder/designer their understanding of the project.





Homeowners, as consumers of professional services (installation) have the right to request their preferred work philosophy from their design/build professionals; however, it is the homeowners' responsibility to make their preference known at the time they are contracting with their build/design professionals — not after a problem arises.

Additional items to address could include: Is smoking allowed on the job site? Can any type of music be played,

and at what volume, on the worker's boom box? Will workers be expected to remove their shoes or wear protective booties on their shoes? What level of cleanup and recycling does the homeowner expect? Where should workers park their vehicles? Can workers share their lunches with the family pet? These are but a few examples of small things that can make a big impact on the success of a project if not discussed upfront. ➤

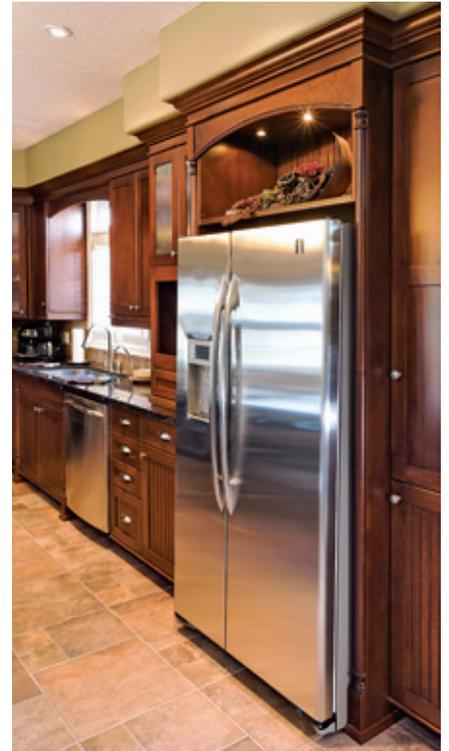
Along with dispensing with assumptions, acknowledge that good communication is based on mutual respect. Hal Homeowner can be the finest fellow in the world, Allen Architect can be tremendously talented and Daisy Designer is cleverly creative but if these individuals don't communicate well through active listening and respect for each other's ideas and desires, you are guaranteed to have a less than stellar outcome to the project.

Next, agree on a project philosophy; this harkens back to planning and goal setting. For example, "It is better to ask permission than forgiveness." Let me explain. A cabinet installer is installing stacked corner wall cabinets (one on top of the other) that are identical in size and shape but one of the cabinets has a lazy susan inside it and the other doesn't. If the order of the cabinets has not been specified on the cabinet plan, the installer has two choices: to ask the designer/homeowner whether the unit with the lazy susan goes on the top or bottom (permission) or to make the decision, and if it is wrong, ask for forgiveness.



Obviously what is communicated is very important but how and when things are communicated is equally important. Set a time or location for communication such as a message board on the job site or a consistent time/day/location for project meetings with the expectation that all relevant parties will attend (reference the project completion schedule for applicable people and dates). Additionally, determine what the best method of communication is between meetings, i.e. phone, text messaging or emails. While you are at it, verify who is willing to take after-hours or weekend calls, who uses text messaging and do all relevant parties use email on a daily basis. Ever done business with someone who checks email only once or twice a week? By establishing these simple conduits of communication upfront, you can minimize a lot of agony on the back end.

So when you embark on your next building project, make sure you and your team is holding the same key to unlock the door of remodeling success.



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