

Home Improvement

Before cooking up new kitchen, give 'design/build' a taste

The design/build process was developed in the late 1970s, but in the past 10 years it has gained a foothold in the remodeling market, as consumers have taken a greater role in designing their homes.

The design/build concept blends the traditional role of architectural drawings and a contractor's estimate into a complete remodeling package provided by one company. This is a service that is of great value to you, the customer, for a variety of reasons.

First, your design is either drawn on a computer or by hand in a three-dimensional view, before the estimation process even begins.

Changes can be made on the computer or on paper before any remodeling occurs in your home. This usually prevents costly mistakes and misunderstandings.

Second, a design/build firm starts the entire remodeling process by determining your goals for your project.

Finally, a preliminary budget range is established, and then plans and specifications are finalized, enabling you to arrive at a final price.

This documentation gives you the solid foundation on which to build your project. It also gives you a firm basis for price comparison and eliminates the guesswork about what is included in an estimate.

Remodeling contractors work with everyone: architects, interior designers, and homeowners. It is the contractor's job to combine the architect's plans, the designer's ideas and, most importantly, the homeowner's requirements into the ideal kitchen, both functionally and aesthetically.

The majority of the final design should come from talking with the homeowner and including him or her in the entire design/build process. Giving the homeowner more control over the remodeling is essential.

By listening to the needs and wants

of the homeowner, and making the homeowner aware of the costs involved up front, a contractor ensures the project will run reasonably smoothly, making for a happy homeowner.

Design/build projects often begin with homeowners bringing in photographs of kitchens they like. This is a great start. The next step is for the contractor or kitchen designer to ask the "right" questions. For example, they should ask:

- Who will be using the kitchen the most?
- How often will the kitchen be used?
- Will it be used mostly just for your family living in the home or for entertaining?
- Are there children or elderly relatives living in the home?
- Do you intend to stay in the home for a long time?
- What style is the rest of your home?
- What is your budget?

The answers to these questions are then all translated into a set of construction drawings with clear specifications.

Three-dimensional construction drawings are really the only way to see exactly what your project will look like before it is complete. These drawings will show everything, from plumbing and outlets to placement and measurements of appliances, cabinets and countertops.

Before investing money and time in such a project, you should know exactly what it will look like.

Clarifying details and concerns before any construction begins is the key to the design/build process.

So, as you can see, the design/build credo allows you to know and understand what you are getting, and provides you with a kitchen that is well-planned and well-designed, and that features all of the things that are most important to you.



Bill Feinberg and his brother Joe own Allied Kitchen and Bath in Fort Lauderdale. They head a team of certified kitchen designers, licensed contractors and interior designers, and belong to the National Kitchen and Bath Association. For more information, log on to www.alliedkitchenandbath.com, or call (800) 925-7660.



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