

## Chapter 2

### Home Remodeling

#### Interview with Grant Shanafelt

Creative Home Remodeling  
Portland, OR

*Creative Home Remodeling is a full service design, building and remodeling company. We manufacture our own cabinetry and specialize in space utilization, offering innovative use of cabinet space. Typically, when we do a kitchen remodel, we set up a temporary 'kitchenette' (as we call it), which is three drawers, a beverage refrigerator, a small oven with two burners, a toaster oven, microwave, a set of plastic utensils and paper plates. We will set up this temporary kitchenette near some existing water in the house so that cleaning dishes and using the kitchenette is a cut above camping. We also provide a schedule that explains the weekly events that are planned. Most of our schedules are met within one week of their estimated finish. Our website reflects our passion for design and quality with over 500 pictures of past and current projects.*

**In what ways can a home remodeling contractor help the owner of a home to maintain and maximize the home's market value?**

Curb appeal is essential. First impressions are critical- if a home is uninviting and you can't get them through the front door, then you will have less of a chance against your competition.

**Why should a homeowner hire a qualified renovation contractor as opposed to doing the work themselves or having a friend or family member do it for them?**

It is said, "There is no substitute for experience". Years of knowledge and experience in the field can be shared and used to advise. A knowledgeable remodeling contractor or designer can actually save a homeowner unneeded costs and frustration that using unskilled friends or family may produce.

**What types of licenses and insurance should a home remodeler have?**

State, local city and county contractor and required business licenses, as well as at least minimal liability requirements.

**How do home remodelers usually charge for their services, with regard to deposits and the payment of balances?**

The charges should be based on the scope, size, type and total estimate or cost of the project. Deposits or payments should be tied or linked to a certain project milestones (e.g.: "Beginning work onsite", "Installation of cabinets", etc.). At the end of any project, the contractor should provide lien releases from any suppliers and subs hired before final payment is received.

**What are some things that a person who needs remodeling work done on their home do to help ensure they hire a reputable company?**

Always, always, always obtain references - call them and talk to them about their experiences - the positive and the negative aspects of their project. Was there a schedule/timeline? How were their employees, sub-contractors and suppliers? Take the time to view the

contractor's past projects (usually on their website), look at previous and current projects both in person and on their website.

**What are some of the biggest mistakes that homeowners make when they decide to have any part of their home redone?**

The biggest mistakes made include not educating themselves about the entire approach that their prospective remodeling contractor will use from beginning to end, not making sure they have minimally 10% contingencies in their budget, and not being informed or learning how much they will be displaced and how their daily lives would be disrupted.

**What are some steps that homeowners can take to help ensure that the remodeling of their home goes as smoothly as possible?**

At the very least, insist on a schedule/time framework between steps. Ask, "What steps does your company take to minimize dust and debris?" The company should perform daily clean-up on the site and try to work around the client's daily activities.

**How can a homeowner decide if they should reface their existing cabinets and other woodwork or replace them?**

The basic rule I use is, if you want to replace your cabinets within the existing layout or footprint then that is a candidate for refacing. Why go to the expense of replacing the existing layout unless you can make improvements on it? Refacing can cost a third to two thirds less than all new cabinets. The exception is: if you have the ability to improve the usage of that same space with pullouts, blind corner usage, more storage space, etc., then it becomes worthwhile to replace instead of reface.

**Why are kitchens and bathrooms such important rooms, when it comes to the value of a home? Are there any other rooms that are of particular importance?**

Obviously, the kitchen is the heartbeat of the home - where everything is centered and people tend to gravitate. With most gatherings the kitchen is where everyone ends up. If it is planned well, a kitchen remodel can easily return 100% (or more) of your investment, plus the enjoyment of use between the remodel and a potential sale. If you plan on staying in the home indefinitely, it is important to consider your own use of that area, as opposed to just your return of cost.

All other areas of the home are important, based on the use of a given family's involvement. There are not many areas of equal importance as the kitchen and bathrooms. But, an exterior deck can be an extension of the home, depending on the climate and levels of the home. Relatively, it comes down to how the prospective tenant would live and use the home as to whether any other rooms are of particular importance.

**What if a job is taking much longer than the homeowner was told it would take?**

In this situation, if this is of particular importance, then it should be written into the contract with certain stipulations and timelines, as well as incentives and/or penalties based on achieving certain timeline goals (or exceeding timeline estimates).

**How can a homeowner use their home while it's being remodeled?**

It depends on the type of remodel, what part of the home is being remodeled, and that family's activity. A seasoned or experienced remodeler will discuss the

perspective, homeowner's needs, lifestyle, family size and all other issues and consider the remodeling scope and how to balance all those contingencies. Depending on the size of the remodel, some home owners may choose to vacate, some may live in a portion of the home, some may come and go. Seasoned remodelers will set up certain work areas - zipper doors, plastic walls, etc., to accommodate the homeowner's needs during the remodel.

**What types of guarantees are typical after a remodeling contractor has completed a job?**

The guarantees and warranties will vary with the products purchased. For instance, there may be a different warranty or guarantee for cabinetry as well as counters, as well as workmanship or sub-contractor's stipulations. When this is of importance to the scope, size of project and the customer, it should be discussed up front and stipulated in the contract before signing.

**How can a homeowner be sure that they can trust the home remodeling professional as well as any employees or subcontractors that need to be brought in to the customer's home?**

Here again, this is where the experience of the contractor and his references count. Ask for and talk to their references, ask if the contractor does screening of their employees, ask how long employees have worked for them, ask how long they have had relationships with their subcontractors and vendors. In any business, it usually comes down to management, whether it be service or product oriented. If the management/ownership has high standards and requirements, then it will trickle down through their employees and subs. References are key.

**If a home remodeler charges per hour, how can a homeowner be sure that the contractor isn't purposely working slow, to make more money?**

If a homeowner has agreed to do a job for time and material, then they should ask for a lid or a maximum so they can make an informed decision based on a maximum or worst case scenario. Usually it is not wise to do charges per hour for time and material, unless you have worked with a contractor and developed a trustworthy relationship. Ordinarily, when you enter into an hourly or time and material relationship, there is more anxiety on the homeowner's part because they are counting most minutes, coffee breaks and wasted time periods, whereas when they are on an estimate basis, this becomes irrelevant.

**How are issues of building code compliance typically handled?**

Based on the size of the project, homeowners should educate themselves about what is required based on their project with permits, be it plumbing, electrical, mechanical and building. Ask the contractor this question: "If we have inspections and they fail, how do you handle the failure of those inspections?" The homeowner should understand that inspections can pass or fail over trivial and major items.

In most large projects, there is usually a failure of some sort under one of these categories that that is easily remedied - it could be a minimal thing and should not be met with any kind of alarm on the homeowner's part. Failure doesn't necessarily reflect that the contractor has done less than adequate work.

**Contact Information for Grant Shanafelt**

*Web: [creativehomeremodeling.com](http://creativehomeremodeling.com)*

*Phone: (503) 639-2411*

*Mail: Creative Home Remodeling  
7350 SW Landmark Lane  
Portland, OR 97224*