

5 Essential Steps To A Headache Free Renovation



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Introduction

If you are looking for a challenge, why not plan to remodel your kitchen? It is one way to give your home that new home feeling. It also gives you a chance to entirely - or moderately, change the look or style of this special room in your home. In the process, you will easily accomplish two important goals. You will increase the investment in your house, while adapting it to today's life styles.

Today's kitchens are among the most versatile. Kitchens are no longer uni-purpose rooms. They exist for more than simply cooking and serving a meal. Today's kitchens are gathering places. They are favorite hangouts for the family and their friends and guests. As the song goes, "You can always find me in the kitchen at parties."

Kitchens are where you and your family can cook and eat. It is also where your tribe can work and even play. The kitchen is where the family often comes together. From here, many parents and individuals organize their daily activities. The kitchen table, corner nook or counter top becomes the place where people sit with a cold or hot drink in hand. Leaning over one of the kitchen's many surfaces, pen in hand or computer at their finger tips, they sit and pay their bills or plan a vacation. The kitchen is also the scene of many a heart-to-heart talk over a cup or two of coffee.

The kitchen is the heart of the house. It is also one of the first rooms many home buyers check out when they come to view a home. This is the so-called "hot ticket" among real estate agents. It is one of several reasons why people decide to remodel their kitchen. It increases the speed and likelihood of the house being sold.

There are other reasons to remodel your home. They vary from family to family and person to person. Among the most popular is growth; the family has increased in size. Therefore, the use of the kitchen increases. As a result, the family requires more space in the kitchen. Rather than move, they decide to remodel the kitchen so it will be more functional.

Another top-of-the-list motivating factor is modernization. The kitchen you have may date from an earlier time, needing desperately to move into the current century. Perhaps, you want to bring in new gadgetry. There are not enough

receptacles to handle all your current small appliances. So every day food preparation is a weighty chore. As a result, you need to modernize the kitchen and increase its ability to handle the new equipment. The same rationale applies to making the kitchen a "greener" environment. New green technology may require remodeling.

There is another popular reason why people alter their kitchen. They are simply tired of how it looks. Deciding to renovate an eyesore is a great way to inexpensively increasing your satisfaction with your house. You may want a new home, but economic times or circumstances may force you to opt for remodeling.

Remodeling a kitchen is a challenging job. The reason is simple. The kitchen is one of the most complex rooms in the house. A complete remodeling job will involve a wide variety of tasks and trades people. There is carpentry work to be done and electric systems to be addressed. You may require a plumber, a cabinet maker, an electrician, a carpenter and even someone skilled in tile work. This is because a kitchen is a complex entity containing all the elements from earth (wood) to fire (stove) to water (plumbing) to air (vents). In no other room is there such a complex intersection of the various systems that make living comfortable.

Yet, remodeling does not have to be a major headache. There are steps to take and certain tips to heed, if you want to make the job easier. Kitchen remodeling is an involved undertaking. It will involve the consulting and even hiring of many different people. The following chapters are a guide to lighten the load - to help make the undertaking a little easier. They want to help you survive this kitchen remodeling. The first thing you have to do is to take a deep breath and identify your goal.

Everyone has a dream home. This fantasy differs for each individual. Certain home-focused and many general purpose magazines contain hundreds of pictures annually of the “ideal” home. Decorating magazines and design gurus tell and show you how to create the perfect kitchen for your home. Every month or two, various different types of magazines will devote page-after-page to the “perfect” home.

Among these many pictures, you will probably find your dream kitchen. You may cut out the pictures or download the image from the net. You have imbedded in your head, the ideal. Now, it is up to you to plan this dream kitchen. The best way to start is to sit down with a pen or pencil and paper or at the computer. Once comfortable, you can take that first step toward remodeling. You set down your goals.

IDENTIFY YOUR GOAL

It is a wise person who sits down and takes stock of what they have before they change it. This applies to many things, including kitchen remodeling. You should never start a job of any scale without ascertaining what is already there. Only when you understand what you have, should you compare it with what you need. Then, you can consider the room in terms of what you want. For example, you may have too few storage spaces. You need more. You want a certain model that demands more room than you have. Ask yourself, “Is there a solution?”

What becomes crucial is for you to organize. You need to compile a list of what already exists. You have to see the kitchen for what it is. Remove the rose-colored glasses. You need to look at the existing kitchen from every angle. In doing so, you will see what you have to work with. Look at the following:

The goal does not have to be a complex one. For many it is simple. Your goal could be:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| » more counter space | » more room to manoeuver |
| » improved lighting | » more receptacles |
| » more storage space | » an updated look |
| » modern appliances | » a new style |

You may just be tired of the way the kitchen looks. Alternatively, you could have moved into this particular house with the very intention of changing the kitchen to reflect your lifestyle.

When you have identified your goal, you then need to consider what you plan to do. This is where fantasy and reality may collide. While you may want to tear down the kitchen to its bare walls, you need to consider other inherent or pre-existing factors. As a result, before you can actually discuss the new kitchen plans, you need to look at the old or existing kitchen reality. You have to look at what you have before you can fully analyze how you can realize your goal.

ASSESSING THE KITCHEN YOU HAVE

It is crucial for you to know what your goal is in remodeling your kitchen. It will help you define what you need to do. It will also set you on the path toward the right decisions you will need to make to improve, alter, transform or simply update your kitchen. The process will be long. It can be convoluted. You can simplify it right from the start by being clear in your methods and approach. Right now, you need to define two things: the reason for your make over - the Goal, and what you plan to do.

- » Storage Space
- » List the items you have to conceal things from sight. Consider the different types of storage space you have. Look at their location. Are they convenient? Are they accessible? Do they reflect your lifestyle? Are they sufficient? Do they suit your decor?
- » Counter Space or counter tops
- » How much do you have? Where is it? Do you like the style or look? Is the surface practical?
- » Traffic Flow or Traffic Jam?
- » Is your kitchen space crowded? Does the traffic flow into your work space - the kitchen triangle? Is there a gridlock at meal and/or snack times? Do you feel nothing is getting done as efficiently or effectively as it could?
- » Lighting
- » What type of lighting do you have? Is it glaring or too dim? Are there sufficient light sources in the kitchen? Do they address the requirements of all the activities taking place?
- » Eating Area
- » Do you eat in the kitchen? Where do you eat? Does dining in the kitchen impede any other activity?
- » Garbage/Recycling Bins
- » Is there space in your kitchen for the different types of garbage? Do you need to sort? If so is there room to do so?
- » Cabinets
- » What type do you have? Are there enough? Where are they located? Are they, practical and functional? Are they decorative?

You need to note any problems you see in the design, the materials, the layout and the style. You should consider all aspects and components of your kitchen. You should look at their functionality. Do they fulfill their purpose? Do they do so without problems? Only after you consider the practical aspects should you consider their look or style.

MAKING INFORMED CHOICES

you go through your kitchen, you will note what you like. Consider retaining these features. You will also see what you want to change. As you list your kitchen's characteristics, both the positives and negatives will become obvious. It will quickly become apparent what works and what does not. Your next step is to consider the overall picture. To do so, you need to ask yourself several questions. Looking at your kitchen's assets, consider:

- » What is the function of the kitchen?
- » What do you do there besides cook?
- » What is the position of the kitchen in your household?
- » What is the current style of the kitchen?
- » What type of cooking and other activities occur in the kitchen?

After you have the answers to these questions, you can go on to list what you want from your fantasy kitchen. This combines both your goals with your desires and dreams. This process will temper your fantasy kitchen. It will add a touch of realism. The next chapter addresses this very issue as it looks at the kitchen scheme.

If you lived in a fantasy world, you could have a kitchen as big as a parking lot. You could spend as much as you want. It would look fabulous and work exactly as it should. In fact, you could have 2 kitchens. One would remain eternally spotless and for show; the other would be functional, practical, useful but still clean.

You may be one of the few who can actually afford to create this dream kitchen. In reality, many cannot. They are not able to take the kitchen they have and remodel it into their ideal. In the real world, you will find yourself hemmed in by two specific aspects of planning: existing size and budget.

BUDGET

The very first question you should ask yourself after you decide to go ahead with remodeling your kitchen is this. "How much can I afford?" You cannot ignore this question. You cannot pretend this is not an issue. Moreover, you have to be brutally honest with yourself. You have to know exactly how much money you can spend on this project. Do not roughly estimate or guesstimate. You need to be precise. You need to ask yourself several things

- » How much can I afford - really?
- » How much do I want to spend?
- » Do I want to borrow money from family and/or friends?
Is this an option?
- » Do I or can I take out a home equity or other type of loan?
Can I extend my line of credit or borrow money?

You can opt for additional financing. You should, however, consider whether this is essential. Will you be able to pay it back? Is the need for a new kitchen that urgent? Can you handle doing the work overtime rather than all at once?

Once you honestly set and accept your budget for this project, you can consider planning on a depth. At the same time, you may look at ways to decrease costs. This will help you stretch your money. It may allow you to extend or increase the size or depth of the project.

Budget-conscious planning is a means of reducing the overall cost without sacrificing the entire project. It is a way of decreasing the amount of money you need to spend while achieving your goal. Look at what really needs to be done. Your assessment list will help.

- » If you have sufficient cupboard space, why replace them? Consider a cosmetic overhaul. You can alter the style by sanding them down, repainting and perhaps updating the details.
- » The same approach applies to things like counter tops and counter space. You may be able to resurface them instead of replacing them.
- » Update the small details of your kitchen. At a minimal cost, you can alter the look of your kitchen subtly. You can replace the door and drawer knobs. You can install new designer-style covers for the receptacles. Perhaps, you can replace the cupboard doors or remove them to open them up. Maybe new light coverings may help or perhaps using different types of bulbs.
- » Purchase some materials from a Habitat for Humanity, salvage yards or gently used stores. These could include doors, door knobs, tables, and other similar items. You may be able to locate uniquely styled items in these outlets.

- » Check for rebates. Often, there will be incentives to upgrade such things as dishwashers and other appliances. These frequently center around green or power wise movements in the industry or at the local, state or national level.
- » Always consider the current location of electrical and plumbing systems. In installing sinks and other water-dependent items, you can keep costs down if you decide to retain them in their same location. In other words, try to keep all the plumbing fixtures on the same wall or in the same spot they currently occupy.
- » Always consider alternative materials. If you want a stone counter top in the kitchen, consider less than the gold standard. Purchase manmade copies. They can be distinctive but cheaper than the more expensive stone. Consider copies of antiques rather than originals.
- » Buy made-to-order cabinetry. You can play with the design and the pattern.
- » Consider storage units that save space but do not cost much. Try hanging cups, restaurant or café style. Opt for utensil bars. These are S-rings swinging from a rack. This stainless steel bar acts as an excellent place to store and display cutlery. It also provides quick and easy access. Great for larger utensils.
- » Use your imagination to come up with cheaper but stylish and practical alternatives. Perhaps, you could consider a shop counter as the basis for your island or counter top space.

If you concentrate and gather suggestions from the net, books, your friends and home and design magazines, you will be able to come up with ways of reducing the cost. This will make the remodeling process easier. It will also give you the kitchen you want at a reduced price. It may, if you are creative and versatile, give your kitchen a truly unique, innovative - and talked about, style.

HIDDEN COSTS

When you are examining the figures for your remodeling job, be sure to look at the less obvious costs. If you have gone through the renovation or remodeling process in the past, you are already aware of these covert figures. If not, make sure you know about them. They have a major impact on your budget.

Hidden costs come in a variety of types. Take, for example, plumbing. You have your eye on a certain sink. You know the cost of the make and model. You even know where to get it on sale. You take the figure, adding any other occurring costs -, e.g., taxes, ordering and any shipping and handling costs. You then place the total cost in your budget. Fine, right?

It is fine to an extent. What you need to look at are the less obvious costs associated with the sink. You will have to pay for installation fees. This may mean hiring a plumber. You may also have to pay for disconnecting the water supplying of the old sink. You then have to pay a re-connection fee. The true cost of a sink should, therefore, include purchase cost, disconnection fees, installation and re-connection fees.

Other hidden costs encompass a variety of problems and situations. You may have to install a smoke detector and purchase a fire extinguisher. When you are renovating, you might run across some unanticipated problem. The pipes maybe found to suffer from corrosion. The floor boards may be rotten. There could be mold or asbestos. You may have to update the electrical wiring. There could be problems laying the gas line.

One item many forget is food. Since you are without a kitchen, you will probably be eating out more. If things do not proceed as planned, this may extend beyond the expected date. The longer you are forced to eat out, the more it will cost you. You have to add this hidden or indirect cost into your budget.

No matter what the cost is - open or hidden, always be prepared. Do allow extra time and money in your budget for the purchase of unexpected necessities. Estimate higher rather than lower. Above all, do not simply expect the unexpected but keep a contingency fund as an integral part of the overall budget. This will help prevent you from any unpleasant surprises.

Try to look at your kitchen remodeling from all angles. Remember you have a budget. You need to stick to it. Remodeling any room is stressful. Why increase the stress levels by going over budget?

TIME LINE

A crucial part of realistic planning is figuring out your time frame. Time has something in common with your budget. It is too easy to underestimate. Like your budget, your time line may easily go awry if you do not take care to factor in possible glitches. As with the budget, you need to be honest with yourself.

The first question you need to ask yourself and any other person involved is this: "How long can you go without a functioning kitchen?" In kitchen remodeling, you are usually left without an active cooking facility. What are your plans? Is there a room you can make into a functioning kitchen? Can you eat out during this time? Can you run away on holiday? If it is summer, maybe you can barbeque for this entire remodeling period?

Whatever your preference, make sure you gear toward a time frame that matches your tolerance level. Furthermore, take care that all the tasks conform to a specific deadline. This, of course, will be a flexible deadline. You must take into consideration that anything that could possibly go wrong- just might. Sure, your kitchen remodeling job may proceed without a hitch. Yet again, it will probably not.

What can go wrong with your immaculate schedule? - A host or a veritable hoard of things! Everything can and does take longer in most kitchen remodeling jobs. The problems can and frequently do include the following:

- » Shipping delays - your materials are not arriving to your supplier or contractor or home on the arranged date.
- » Delays with a contractor, a plumber or a friend who is helping out.
- » A strike of delivery agents, suppliers, trades people.
- » A promised part or appliance or other facet is no longer available.
- » Materials arrive the wrong size, shape, colour etc.

SPATIAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the most important factors in planning the real kitchen is its size. While you may dream about a kitchen the size of a football field, you may not be able to build it. Your kitchen is a set size. You may or may not be able to expand it. Your budget may not permit you to knock down walls or build an extension. The structural elements may also not permit expansion. You must realize these facts and work with them.

Knowing the exact size of the current kitchen is essential to planning the new one. Knowing the limitations should not dampen the possibilities. You need to rethink the design formulating in your head. You will have to work with what you've got if you want to get what you need and desire.

There are several ways to do this. Investigate the various options to see what meets your specific requirement. This could involve gutting the interior. It could mean rearranging the pattern of traffic by moving the basis of the kitchen triangle. It could mean discovering new ways of storing items. Bigger cupboards and hide-a-way storage may answer your need. Modern technology may reduce the space taken up by older appliances. Painting and changing the style could also give you the illusion of spatial depth. Be thorough in your research. Check out all possible sources. Look at the recent remodeling jobs of your friends and family members. Go online or visit a library. Visit model homes. The more you discover now, the higher the chance you find the right solution to your spatial needs.

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THE KITCHEN SCHEME: PLANNING WITH REALITY

SIZE MATTERS

Size also matters in another capacity. If you and others want to feel at home in your kitchen, you need to have comfortable dimensions. You - and they, need to be able to reach everything without straining. Comfortable space is unifying space. It is also capable of addressing the needs of all family members.

Size matters in the height of the cupboards, cabinets and counter tops. You need to be able to work with them. They should not impede your purpose in using them. To ensure this, consider these different issues before you pick the location, the style, the size and the height.

- » How tall are the members of your family?
- » Who is going to use the kitchen? Adults? Children? Anyone disabled? Any seniors?
- » Does anyone have a physical limitation? Are they in a wheelchair?
- » Are you or anyone in your household left-handed?

The answers to these basic questions will help you determine the height of the various components in your kitchen. They will also help you decide where certain elements will go.

OTHER FACTORS OF PLANNING WISELY

Remodeling a kitchen takes a lot of planning. Besides size and budget, you must also look at such things as utility and users. The increased concern over the environment has also resulted in changed perceptions of kitchen use. The aging population, as well as, the need to address persons with disabilities has created the desire for (and often required) certain installations.

- » Do you plan to have a kitchen that is comfortable for the various generations of a family? Will it grow old with you and age well? Will your remodeled kitchen be accessible to all stages of growth and the changes in your lifestyle? Will your new kitchen be barrier free for the disabled as well as operational for the youngest and the oldest members?
- » Does your remodeling job plan to be good for the environment? Beyond the moral obligation-does it legally have to be? How green will your kitchen be? Can you afford it and still achieve any other important and set goals?

As you can see, remodeling your kitchen is a complex job. There are many aspects you have to take into consideration. Most of these you need to look at, analyze thoroughly, research, look for options and budget BEFORE you draw up an actual plan. In fact, the physical plans should not be finalized until after everything else is considered. This means you have to organize everything thoroughly before you can move onto the detailed planning phases.

When you have decided on a budget, you need to lay it all out. You need to organize the various data and information into a workable scheme. This includes keeping exact and orderly records. In preparing this preplan plan, you will have to pay heed to specific design factors. You will need to explore the possibilities, take note of the details of certain aspects of kitchen design before you should incorporate them into your overall master plan.

Many of them will echo what you discovered at the beginning of the remodeling concept. This section will look at both what you want and what you need. It will specifically consider essential design factors. Among them are such basic design elements as layout and traffic patterns, the kitchen triangle, appliances, storage and lighting. This survey will also include the necessary but mundane kitchen systems of waste disposal, heating, cooling and ventilation.

INITIAL DESIGN FACTORS

You know what you want. You also know how your kitchen is laid out. Now you need to consider what will work best. Once again, you need to turn to your computer or put pen to paper. You need to compile a check list. Begin with the initial design factors. This will include the layout.

LAYOUT

The layout should be designed with the cook in mind. It needs to adopt a pattern of traffic flow that does not impede this activity. If you are a single cook and a single usage kitchen, a corridor kitchen design is simple and effective. This pattern may not work, however, if the kitchen is the beehive of activity. Traffic flow can and will interfere with the essential work or preparation and cooking.

If the kitchen is more than a food or work center, you need to look at another layout. Some kitchen experts argue in favor of the L-shaped or U-Shaped or even the G-shaped layout. The L-shaped model provides you with lots of counter space. It works best if you put the various work centers together in a functional pattern. The U-shaped kitchen layout is often considered the most efficient. It places groups into their work centers. It has plenty of counter tops and storage space. Traffic flows freely and does not interfere with the kitchen triangle of food from preparation to delivery. The G-shaped layout is a derivative of the L-shaped model. It adds an extra wall of cabinets. This is ideal for those who require more space for storage.

There are other ways of looking at the kitchen layout. The work-triangle focuses on the various triangles you can draw within the kitchen. It provides each station of work easy access to their materials. It also permits fluid traffic flow.

How people move within your kitchen is important. In fact, it is one of the most significant factors you need to look at in creating your design. You have to seriously take into consideration the circulation or traffic patterns before you can put together the ideal layout. You need to understand how traffic flows through your kitchen. You must know how you want it to flow. You can then work into your plan the layout that works best for you and your family.

Once you think you have a plan for the layout, you need to look at the different physical aspects of this specific layout capable of affecting your plan. These should take into account windows and doors.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

What types do you have? Are they decorative or functional? What do you want them to be? Do you need to replace them or can you simply enhance them?

A complex and more expensive task would be to replace them. You could change the regular door entry way for a patio door. You could replace the inner doorway, if you have one, with folding or French doors. Each would demand a different level of skill. Each would be priced differently. You could also simply add new trim and update the locks and door knobs.

As for windows - you could replace them with new energy-efficient models. You could also simply play with creating a new look. Insulation and double panes or new shades or blinds? Remove the windows or paint the trim and replace the glass? If you opt for new windows and doors, be prepared to add any installation fees to the budget.

STORAGE

Storage is a complex but very flexible arsenal in remodeling your kitchen. It is based on what you use, your lifestyle, your definition of style and how you perceive "storage." If you like gadgets, for example, you need to look at how you display or conceal them. Do you prefer them to hang from hooks or place them concealed in drawers?

If you are a baker, do you want a baking center storage unit or units? Do you want the dry goods on a shelf or tucked away in closed cupboards? What about knick knacks? Do you want to display any? There is also the issue of small kitchen appliances. Do you have a few, many or a surplus? They require space and, of course, outlets.

To counteract the perceived or actual demand for storage, you have many different options. Depending upon your needs, you can opt for pull out units, tilt-out bins, pull-out bins and/or Lazy Susans and other circular devices. There are all types of drawer organizers and cabinets. It depends upon your special restrictions and preferences.

If you are on a tight budget, you can rearrange cabinets and maximize space. Try turning previously unused space into usable space. A Kitchen Designer or neat freak may offer a few suggestions. There are different ways of creating new space. You just have to know your kitchen and discover them. This comes in handy particularly if you need the room for storage but cannot afford to expand.

It is important to know your storage needs. The type of storage you require is almost as important as the amount you must have to meet those needs.

CABINETS

Cabinets are a key component of every kitchen. They help define your own personal style. They can make or break the entire environment of a kitchen. Lest you forget, they are also storage units.

Cabinets need to be of quality construction. This is more important than their actual type or style. They should also be functional and not merely decorative. A sturdy functional cabinet is the best way to go for kitchen remodeling. After all, it defeats the purpose if your elegant and artistic cabinets are incapable of performing their basic function.

Remember. There are several different choices when you come to cabinets. You should be able to locate one that fits your budget, lifestyle, sense of style and use. You can buy stock cabinets. These are quick and easily available. The drawback is that the selection of sizes and colors is quite limited. You might, instead, try to obtain semi-custom cabinets. The price is reasonable. The date of delivery is comparable. Moreover, while availability is similar to that of stock cabinets, semi-custom cabinets are less restricted in terms of style, sizes, finishes and options.

If you have more money, you can consider custom-made or carpenter-built cabinets. Custom-made cabinets are built to the specific measurements of your particular project. They are made from scratch. Delivery dates are longer than those of stock or semi-custom cabinets. Carpenter-built cabinets are built within your home to set specifications. If you are handy with tools, you can save money by building them yourself. If not, you will need to hire a carpenter to construct them.

APPLIANCES

You must look at your need and use of both major and minor appliances. If you have several small appliances, you need to look at storage issues. You also need to ensure the electrical system in your layout will be appropriate. Will you have enough outlets to service your hunger for small shiny objects? Can your electrical system do so without overloading the circuitry?

Larger appliances have specific needs. They also need to serve the needs of your family. Does your family need a large freezer? Should the freezer be on the top or at the bottom? Would a side-by-side unit be functional? Do not let yourself be carried away by the design. Consider the function. Never include appliances for the sake of having the latest and the most stylish. If you do not or cannot use them, these appliances are simply expensive space-hoggers.

Always consider the practicality of the various refrigerators, ranges, cook tops, freestanding cook tops and microwaves before you decide to place them in your kitchen. Do your research. Read consumer reports. Go online and look in various periodicals for information. Shop wisely. Look for energy-efficient appliances. You may be able to upgrade your range and receive a rebate in the process.

Do not forget the need for proper air circulation and lighting in the kitchen. You can update and improve your kitchen by varying the lighting. It is simple to go from one overhead light fixture to several strategically - and usefully, placed lighting elements. This can, if you pardon the pun, light up your kitchen in more ways than one. Also, look at such things as the amount of natural lighting. How much natural light do you get in your kitchen?

You may want to use accent lighting and task lighting to fulfill specific requirements in your kitchen. Generally, you can select from a wide range of lighting options. There are recessed lights, pendant lights and some artistic sculptural lighting. The variety and availability should provide something to suit everybody's taste and needs.

As for ventilation - a range hood will help you in this aspect. There are many different types available. Like larger appliances and lighting fixtures, they range in price and style. If you truly need one (or a new one), you should be able to find something in your price range. If your current stove is in excellent condition, if it still serves its purpose admirably, you can add a new range hood to dress-it-up.

Another complexity in the kitchen is the use of gas. Some people prefer a gas range. If you plan to switch from gas to electricity or vice versa, be sure to look at the pros and cons of each system. There are also the extra costs of running a gas line and/or ripping one out. Installing gas is best left to the experts. This could be another large item in your remodeling budget.

KITCHEN SYSTEMS

What is often forgotten in the remodeling process is consideration of the basic systems. You cannot forget to include them in your plans. They affect so many aspects of your kitchen remodeling. The plumbing, waste and electrical systems are not exciting. They are rather mundane. No one waxes poetically about installing or changing the sewage system. Yet, without them, you do not have a functional kitchen. It is the plumbing, waste and electrical systems that make or break the kitchen. The need to address some, if not all of these, makes remodeling this room a complex task.

When you are remodeling a kitchen, even replacing the refrigerators and ranges, you have to look at the various systems in a clear and comprehensive manner. It is best to keep the major appliances and water systems in the same location. This means less expensive rewiring or rerouting of major systems. When deciding what you are going to do, pay heed to these specific kitchen systems:

» **Electrical**

This means such common things as receptacles. It is easy to forget these small items. When remodeling your kitchen, look at these common kitchen necessities. This should then lead you to consider wiring. You need the correct type of wiring for your appliances, receptacles, switches and circuits and lighting to function. If you move the appliances, you will have to change, move or extend the delivery system. If you want to add more appliances, you will require more receptacles and switches. You may also have to update or increase the carrying capacity of the electrical system. This will increase your budget costs.

» **Plumbing**

It is a tie between the plumbing and electrical systems to see which can cause the most headaches in a remodeling job. If you change the sink, you need to look at the plumbing. If you add small or large appliances to help

with garbage disposal or washing up, you must look at the plumbing system. Is it adequate for the new demands? When you update or renovate your kitchen, you may end up spending more money on the plumbing. You need to consider the cost of such things as supply lines, drain lines, sewage disposal and ventilation. Be careful not to ignore these aspects. It could affect the remodeling budget in an adverse way.

» **Heating and Cooling**

If you have a kitchen, chances are you want it to be warm during the winter and cool during the summer. When remodeling, do not forget the heating and cooling systems. You can choose between air conditioners and fans. The heating system should be pre-existing. If it is electric or gas, you may have to pay for an upgrade. If you decide to switch from one to another system, be sure you do your homework. No matter what you decide to do, be sure to get estimates and quotes.

LEGISLATION

When you are planning your big remodeling job, do not forget the necessary paper work. You need to be aware of the various types of codes for your province, state, county or town. Whether you are a professional or an amateur, you have to work within the bureaucratic system. This system has specific codes governing the construction of structures. These will affect you from the start. Depending upon where you live and the extent of your remodeling job, you may have to get a building permit. There are national building codes as well as local ones. These can vary from place to place. Make sure you know and understand them before you start the remodeling of your kitchen.

Read up on such things as building codes, electrical codes and plumbing codes. Know how they work. Be sure you know when, where and how they apply to your particular kitchen remodeling project. Also know what bodies are responsible for which legislation.

If you have a contractor, this person may be in charge of these aspects. Nevertheless, you need to be aware of the entire legal process. Furthermore, you will need to know what type of inspections your kitchen will require, who does it and who is responsible for arranging them. Know the contact numbers - e-mail and phone, of all the parties involved and keep them on hand.

KEEPING TRACK

By now you understand that remodeling your kitchen is a complex job. It therefore follows that you need to keep extensive and organized records. The key word here is ORGANIZED. If you are not, your project may not materialize, be over budget, be behind or be subject to various misunderstandings. If you are disorganized, the kitchen remodeling project can quickly become a nightmare.

There are many ways of keeping records. The important thing, however, is to maintain a complete and accurate record of all things important and pertinent to the job. From the very start of the project, you should be keeping a file containing your list of what is and what you want. You may even have pictures representing the ideal. Keep them all together.

You should have a separate folder for pertinent numbers. This will include both e-mail and phone numbers. Have this particular information on hand. It must be easily accessed. You will require the contact numbers of the following:

- » All contractors and/or sub contractors
- » All inspectors and license distributors - local and national
- » All work personnel including specialists, e.g., Kitchen Designer
- » All material suppliers and distributors
- » Retail outlets and specialty stores

Initially, it is easy to place the early research in a single file. As the material grows, be sure to sort them according to their classification. Place swatches of color, new trends in design, possible styles and similar items in a design folder. Place estimates, pricing costs and similar information together or in a section dedicated to their topic.

The format or medium you use to keep your records is personal. Some people will keep a physical file folder. They will place everything together in a file box, keep a scrapbook or maintain some other form of paper records. Other individuals prefer electronic means. They rely on electric organizers. This may contain the specific dates - their time line. They may also place all the necessary data in various computer files. Some persons may combine the 2 methods.

Whatever your preferences, be sure you are thorough. Make sure you gather all the necessary data. Keep it in order. Do not lose papers or files. Do not lapse in adding material. Above all, make sure it is organized.

A final note for this section: put together a planning checklist. It should include things similar to the list provided below:

- » Electrical system
- » Storage
- » Plumbing system
- » Counter space - how much exists?
- » Flooring
- » How much is required? How much is feasible?
- » Heating and air ventilation systems.
- » Layout plan with traffic patterns
- » Air conditioner or fan? Gas, oil, electricity or other?
- » Appliances - large and small

You should next consider the following before you take the step into putting your plans down on paper.

- » Practical needs vs. wants
- » Must-have vs. optional
- » Stylistic considerations vs. functionality

Finally NEVER forget. There are two restrictive factors governing all aspects of a kitchen renovation. Spatial restriction, based on the existing architecture, defines the limits of kitchen expansion. The budget, how much money you have and how much you can afford to spend, should and MUST govern the entire project.

You know what you want. You have a basic plan developing further every day. You just know your kitchen will be amazing after this remodeling job. You know how long you can survive without it. You and your family are sure of certain aspects. Materials and colors and appliances are selected. You are really pumped for this project. Sure, you are still working on your budget. You should be. You have now come to a decision that can add substantially to it. How much, if any, of the work do you plan to do on your own?

This is a serious question. The answer to it is not general. It is based upon each individual. It relies on various factors. How much money you have will also affect your choice of going it alone or hiring a professional. Another influential aspect is the extent of the project. If it is a small remodeling job, it may require little to no external involvement.

Time also becomes a factor in your decision to hire a professional or not. If you do not have the time to handle the remodeling project yourself, you will call in others to do it for you. However, this is not the first question you should ask yourself. The most critical question you need to seriously consider is this. “Can you handle the work essential to completing the work required?” “Are you capable of doing all the necessary work involved?”

When you decide to remodel your kitchen, you are undertaking a complex task. The initial question is “What are your skills?” The second question is “How good are you?” You not only need to answer these questions, you must be completely honest. If you are not, you are doing yourself and your kitchen a disfavor. Not only could it produce a disastrous result aesthetically and practically, it could be a financial catastrophe or at least a calamity. You can avoid it by doing the following:

- » Before you decide to work on the kitchen by yourself, sit down.
- » Grab a pencil or use the computer.
- » Take a deep breath.
- » Look at the overall job.
- » List the specific requirements for the various tasks.
- » Detail what you can handle on your own. Be honest. Be very, very honest.
- » Note what you cannot do.
- » Note what you feel uncomfortable doing.
- » List the professionals who can do these specific jobs.
- » Look at your preliminary budget.
- » Factor in the costs and reconfigure it.
- » Repeat the whole process again.

You may have to rework the budget several times until it balances. Keep in mind, however, that you may save money in the long run if you hire a professional. In fact, there are many good reasons why you should hire a pro. You get the job done right. You can sometimes save money. You save time and energy. You will not be spending all your time working on the remodeling project. For some, paying others to work frees them up. They have more time and less stress if they allow someone else to take charge of the actual work.

A kitchen remodeling job can involve a variety of experts. They can be contractors, subcontractors, electricians, plumbers, floorers, cabinet makers, carpenters and other specialists. It all depends upon the job, your skill level and your budget. You may bring in one particular type of professional close to the start of the project. This is the Kitchen Designer.

4

TO HIRE OR NOT TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL OR “HOW GOOD AN ELECTRICIAN, PLUMBER AND JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES ARE YOU?”

KITCHEN DESIGNER

A Kitchen Designer is a professional. He or she is certified. The services a Kitchen Designer offers are available through a variety of sources. He or she may be allied with contractors of the various trades, architects, builders and even retailers. You can find one through the usual means:

- » Recommendation of a friend or builder
- » Through checking specialty periodicals. Many provide before and after pictures or feature specific kitchen designs. The name of the designer may be provided in the article. He or she may even be prominent in the article or be the author of the piece.
- » Visit show houses or model homes. Ask them whom they use if you like the style.
- » Ask a local contractor for a referral. If you plan on hiring one, see if he or she has any particular preference.
- » Visit retail or kitchen supply shops. Some of these stores have a Kitchen Designer on staff. They could also recommend one to you.

If you decide to opt for a professional designer, select at least 3 to interview. Set up a meeting. Bring what you have to show. Discuss the project frankly with them. See how well each candidate communicates. Do they understand your goals? Do they see your vision? Can they put it into paper? Moreover, can they indicate what is wrong suggest a work-around.

The perfect candidate will ask the right questions. They will ask about the style of cooking and the purpose of the room. He or she will seek to know the size of the family. They will want to know about who cooks, who uses the room and how busy it gets. The Kitchen Designer will also want to hear about the problems and your intended solutions. If the individuals do not ask you any questions, they may not really be listening to what you have to say. Their responses will help you single out one from the other.

Narrow down the field by checking out their previous projects. Ask them for a portfolio. See if they have anything posted on line. Talk to former customers. Are they versatile? Can you see them turning your dream kitchen into a reality? Remember. Your designer needs to thoroughly understand what you want. The more he or she knows and can relate to, the more conceivable it is you will achieve a good design.

After you have made your final choice, the work begins. Bring your materials to cement this relationship. Do not leave out any detail. Be sure to include these materials:

- » a file containing the information you have so far
- » a picture of your existing kitchen
- » a description - verbal, pictorial, virtual or written, about what you want
- » any preliminary plans
- » your budget. Do not forget your budget - ever.

A Kitchen Designer is a flexible contractor. She or he can do all or part of your design work. A Kitchen Designer can look at your Dream Kitchen and decide whether it is workable. He or she can provide a floor plan or specify materials. A Kitchen Designer can oversee the entire remodeling job or just contribute his or her area of expertise.

There are benefits from going with a Kitchen Designer. This allows you more time to concentrate on the actual construction for the kitchen. If you have little or no designing skills, are weak on creative solutions or lack the ability to work successfully with any of the design software, a Kitchen Designer is for you. She or he will take the edge and stress off the job.

A Kitchen Designer may be helpful in other ways. He or she usually has contacts in the building and supply industries. As a result, you may be able to obtain materials from major manufacturers at a discount rate. A Kitchen Designer is also able to provide you with a high-tech draft of your idea or ideal. In addition, he or she can quickly generate a list of all the materials you will need to complete the job successfully.

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TO HIRE OR NOT TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL OR “HOW GOOD AN ELECTRICIAN, PLUMBER AND JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES ARE YOU?”

You may not wish to hire a Kitchen Designer. The cost will be another addition to your budget. You may have some talent in the area of design. Furthermore, if you are computer savvy, you may be able to create your own design with the help of the various design softwares now available.

CONTRACTORS AND SUBCONTRACTORS

If you are not willing or able to handle the remodeling job on your own, you have a couple of options. You can hire a contractor or several subcontractors. A contractor is a person who generally handles the entire project from start to finish. He or she will hire, fire and schedule all the various trades needed to complete the job. In fact, the contractor will be responsible for a great number of things. These include but are not restricted to:

- » obtaining all supplies and materials
- » scheduling and co-ordinating all the different trades people for the remodeling
- » contracting with all subcontractors
- » obtaining all the necessary permits
- » arranging for the various inspections throughout the renovation project

The specifics will be set down in a contract. This is a binding document tying both parties together. There are legal obligations to be met by both. Both parties must adhere to the letter of the law as placed in the contract. Make sure when you or a lawyer prepare it that it contains the following basic information.

- » The details of the work to be done
- » The responsibilities of the contractor and the employer
- » An approximate date for starting and ending the project
- » A clause for binding arbitration

If you decide to be your own contractor, you may wish to subcontract the rest or parts of the work out. A subcontractor is someone who works for a contractor. These individuals may be plumbers, carpenters, electricians, floor layers or work in other similar occupations. They, too, will require contracts specifying their responsibilities. Do not forget to address such things as site clean-up, material purchase, pick-up and/or delivery. Always try to provide specific dates for beginning and finishing the work.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO WORK WITH

Whether you are picking a contractor or subcontractor, you can follow the same procedure. You check out the possibilities in the white pages, through trade papers and on the net. You can ask neighbors and other people who have had their kitchen recently remodeled. Once you have a list - 3 is the bare minimum, you set up interviews.

Prior to the interview you ask for a bid. Be sure you provide all the necessary information. This will ensure greater accuracy in their quotes. You then set up the meeting. Prior to the meeting, you need to look into such things as their reputation in the trade. Ask at building supply centers about their credit, skill and adherence to dates. See if they have any complaints listed in the Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce.

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TO HIRE OR NOT TO HIRE A PROFESSIONAL OR “HOW GOOD AN ELECTRICIAN, PLUMBER AND JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES ARE YOU?”

During the meeting you will ask about credentials and past remodeling jobs. Question them about their experience. See how well they relate to your design. Are they honest in their opinion? Do they see what you envision? If you feel you can trust them, that he or she is the right person for the job, the project is on its way sooner than you think.

OPTIONS

If you do the entire work on your own, you can set your own pace. Many home remodelers, however, may decide to either hire someone or take on certain aspects of the job. If you decide to combine your efforts with those of the tradespeople, be sure you have a specific time line in mind. You will want to do your portion in such a manner as to not interfere with the work of the trades. You can do so if you keep the deadlines in mind and are organized.

If you do participate, consider doing the demolition work before construction begins. Tear out walls, fixtures and ceiling tiles. Remove all appliances. Disconnect the sinks. If you are doing preparatory work, make sure you have the drywall up and ready for the next step. After or between certain types of work, you can finish such things as painting, wallpapering, staining and laying down the new floor.

With all this behind you, you have one more step in your scheme towards creating a better kitchen. This is the last chance to alter and change everything from your budget to your design elements. You are now making the final approach.

This final chapter is all about the details. It concerns finalizing the “blueprint” for your kitchen remodeling project. Its focus is on pulling all the ends together. In a sense, it is a review or a summary of all we have written about in the previous chapters. To pull it all together, you will rely on everything you have learned and prepared from the preceding chapters. If you have decided to choose a Kitchen Designer, you may be able to avoid much of what this chapter contains. All others, however, should pay heed.

FINAL DESIGN

You can now start to prepare your final design. This is the blueprint you will present to your Contractors or subcontractors. This is the basis from which you will create your perfect kitchen. It needs to be comprehensive and complete.

By now, you will know your old kitchen like the back of your hand. You will also have a complete picture of what you want and how it will fit into the overall scheme. You need, now, to mesh the 2 into a complete, visual and feasible plan. It must be one which you and your employees can read and understand.

One of the easiest ways to do so is to use one of the latest design kits. It can help you draw up and combine all kitchen elements. You can also work with your kitchen designer, contractor and/or subcontractors to create it. There are still those who prefer to draw it painstakingly by hand. Choose whatever method is best and works for you.

This final design will require exactitude. Be sure you have measured every window and door. Take a tape measure and check out the size of each appliance as it now is. Fill in the exact size of the new appliances. The same applies for all changes. You need to be sure of the height, width and depth of cabinets and other forms of storage space. You cannot and must not guesstimate. Whoever is doing the job needs exact measurements.

On this final product you must indicate such things as new switch placements, and other aspects of the altered or retained electrical system. The same applies to plumbing, heating and cooling systems. Indicate clearly what you want. Place the new appliances in their changed or remaining location on the diagram. Indicate all exists, entrances, windows and other pertinent elements on the design. Note all pertinent data such as counter top placement, size and height. Do not forget ANY detail. If you do, the result could create problems. It may result in delays and increased expenses.

In creating this design or plan, make sure you use recognizable symbols. Make sure your design is comprehensible to all working on the remodeling job. If you are in doubt, consult them. Ask if this is the right type of design model?

For your own sake, you might also want to supply a mock-up of your finished kitchen. You can have more fun with this version. Draw to scale your kitchen. Draw a plan on your computer. Overlay it with all the necessary schematics if you want. You can also simply cut and paste the various elements you want to see. These can include the exact appliances, windows and doors, and even kitchen gadgetry and storage units. Either utilize your computer or cut them out from advertisements, promotional material or magazines. You can then paste them in the appropriate spots. It will provide you with a comparison as you watch the work progress.

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THE FINAL APPROACH: PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

OTHER PAPER WORK

There are other aspects of remodeling you need to finalize. You need to prepare a progress report. It is the time line of your job. You need to also have a calendar upon which to mark both the scheduling of tasks and the time line in which it is occurring. Make sure these are easily accessed.

In addition to this, prepare or finalize your shopping list. This will include all materials you will require to see the job through. It will have specific model names and numbers. It will list prices and contact numbers. It will note delivery systems and dates.

If you have a contractor, still keep a list relating to materials. It will provide something to compare the work-in progress model with what you have previously agreed upon. If you are working with subcontractors, retain it for the same reason. In some contracts, you will be obligated to provide specific items or materials. This list will ensure you get the right material and do so on time. If you are doing all the work, this list will guide you to making the right choices and, hopefully, keep you on track and on budget.

BUDGET

Be sure you have updated your budget. Keep this vital collection of facts and figures on hand. You may have to revise it during the remodeling. Whether the figures will go up or down will depend upon the individual kitchen remodeling job, the people involved, and the many external factors that you only think you have control over.

FINAL NOTE

This design is the product of everything you have done since the project started. It is the culmination of all your hard work. Make sure it is as accurate as possible. Go over the directions, the design, the materials, indeed all data and pertinent information with a fine-toothed comb. Only then, should you issue it to the pertinent parties. After perhaps a change or 2, and there usually are 1 or 2 alterations at the request of one or other of the involved parties, you are ready to begin the actual kitchen remodeling.

CONCLUSION

Remodeling your kitchen is one of the hardest tasks you may ever undertake in renovating your house. The kitchen presents a variety of challenges. Its integrated heat, light, water and air systems provide a complexity not reached in any other room in your home. However, you can master the monster of all remodeling jobs if you approach it correctly.

To exit triumphantly you need a comprehensive and accurate design plan. You need to approach the tasks at hand logically and in an organized fashion. You need first to establish your goals. Next, you need to know what exists. You can overlay this with what you want and what you really need.

You cannot proceed further without understanding the limitations placed on the job. These include existing conditions, time and, above all, your budget. Never forget money in the equation. You may want a kitchen with all the bells and whistles, but can you really afford it? Always be realistic about the role money will play in remodeling.

There are other aspects you need to focus on as well. Your skill level will influence what trades you need to hire. Always be honest on what you can do, want to do and feel comfortable doing. This will prevent costly and even dangerous mistakes.

If you take care to organize all aspects of the remodeling job, you can feel you are more than a little prepared to survive this kitchen remodeling job.