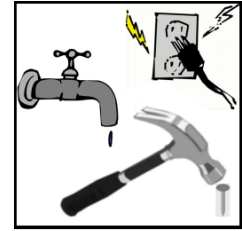


From the free seminar **How to Hire ANY Contractor**  
a.k.a. How to Avoid a Renovation Horror, Part I  
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## The Truth of Why Contractors & Tradespersons Don't Like to Do Small Jobs

This article will teach you a bit about the business side of the home repair industry and give you advice on how to get your small jobs done by good contractors.

The ugly truth is small jobs are unprofitable and full of risk to contractors. On a large job, preparation can be 10% or less of the time spent on behalf of a client. On a small job, preparation is as much as 90%. Few customers realize how much groundwork there is to do, and even fewer want to pay for it.

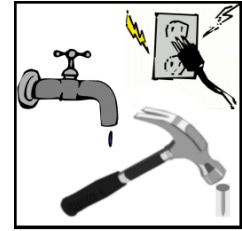
Now what makes up this "preparation" that contractors have to do? It is the sales call, investigating the situation, estimating, product research, buying materials (1 hour minimum), setting up floor protection and dust control (plastic), getting tools and materials out of the truck and into position for work, gasoline and wear & tear on that truck, answering questions for the client, answering more questions for the client, getting tools and materials back into the truck, cleanup and billing... just to name a few. That's half-a-day, at least. And for every sale that a contractor gets, he has to go on at least two other calls, *because* most people want at least three bids. (See my other article titled "What Do You REALLY Get with 3 Bids?") By the way, in Rhode Island, even handymen and painters must be registered and carry liability insurance.

Actually, to say that "there's no profit in small jobs" would be a gross understatement. When you consider everything that goes into an undertaking (large or small), small jobs can pay less per hour than a 16-year-old makes at McDonald's. Because that kid doesn't pay for the several insurances required for that business. And that kid doesn't have to pay an extra 7.5% Social Security tax because he's self-employed. And that kid didn't have to buy the Fryolator. And that kid bears absolutely no responsibility if the Fryolator stops working tomorrow. And so on and so on.

Small jobs also seem to have a higher rate of responsibility attached to them. Let's say a roofing contractor fixes a leak, but then the next time it rains there's a different leak near where that roofer was working on top of a house to fix that first leak. The homeowner is very likely to say that the contractor *caused* the second leak and he should come back and fix it, no charge. The roofer is thinking "That 30-year roof is in its 35<sup>th</sup> year. I did them a favor and now it's actually going to cost me money and another half-day."

9 out of 10 contractors go out of business in the first 5 years, many of them during a project. Businesses close for only two reasons really: (1) The bills outweigh the money coming in, and (2) at the end of the year, an owner looks at his income and says "This ain't worth it." Small jobs lead to both of these situations. In my experience — I have an MBA and I've been analyzing residential construction for almost nine years — those who say "No job too big or too small" can't really handle the big jobs *and* they are going to be out of business soon from all the small jobs — they just don't realize it yet. Business training is almost non-existent in the residential

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contracting world. You might want to read my article titled "How to Find an Honest Contractor"; then you'll be able to find ethical contractors who can handle anything, and they won't go out of business in the middle of it.

You may have read the advice to try someone out with a small job before giving them a big job. This doesn't work most of the time. Someone may do fine with a small job but then totally blow a big job. I reiterate, please read my article titled "How to Find an Honest Contractor".

There's more risk to an established, reputable company. If you can get one to come look at your situation, it is actually dangerous for them to give you a realistic price. The cost will probably be 2 to 5 times what you expected. Simply put, that guy probably won't get the job and he has wasted his time. Some homeowners will go so far as to tell everyone that that company is "a bunch of thieves"... that's what someone actually wrote about a colleague of mine on a web site.

And what happens if the small job ends up taking twice the amount of time as predicted? If the contractor charges the client, the customer will most likely be furious. If the contractor doesn't charge the client, the customer may be annoyed that it's taking so long.

And what if the contractor nicks your antique table or your wood floor with his toolbox?

So basically, from many points of view, the contractor cannot win on a small job.

So how can you get someone to do your small job? It's simple. Make it worth his while, i.e., make it a win/win situation. Either pay him what you would consider to be a high hourly rate or hire him for the whole day. If you choose the latter, make a list of things for him to do, and rank them in order of importance. That way, the crucial things are sure to get done. If you treat someone like a professional, you're more likely to get professionalism and kindness in return. If you think of contractors like commodities, you will get what you pay for.

The good news is that once you have worked with a reputable contractor and compensated him appropriately, most of the time, he will do anything for you after that. Most good contractors will go change a light bulb for clients who were fair and polite.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Sam Brusco is a registered general contractor in RI (#26655) and Massachusetts (#87472). He is a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (developed by NAHB with the AARP), an NAHB Certified Active Adult Housing Specialist, a Certified Green Professional, a lecturer and a columnist for Rhode Island Home & Design Magazine. Brusco is a member of the US Green Building Council – RI chapter, the Rhode Island Builders Association, and is a licensed Lead-Safe Remodeler (RI #LHS-0955). He can be reached at 401-632-0765 and [Sam@BruscoDesign.com](mailto:Sam@BruscoDesign.com)