

How to make your renovation a successful, positive experience

By Scott McGillivray

(NC) In Canada, renovation spending has more than doubled since the late 1990s to reach nearly \$65 billion last year alone. Often the investment a homeowner makes is substantial both, financially and emotionally. The stakes are high. That's why it's imperative that the job is done well from start to finish. There are a number of steps a homeowner can take to ensure a positive experience and a successful outcome, including:

1. **Know your goal.** Ask the question, "What is this renovation designed to accomplish—more functionality? Storage? Living space?" If a homeowner doesn't know where they're going with the renovation, chances are they'll never get there.
2. **Do your research.** In most things, knowledge is power, and knowing what to expect, in advance, can keep expectations in check. Investigate options, budgets and timelines, and arrange financing in advance.
3. **Hire professionals.** Be sure that they are happy to work with you to meet your budget and achieve your vision. Communicate clearly and often to ensure understanding on both sides.
4. **Opt for a general contractor and trades that are experienced, licensed and insured.** Don't hesitate to check credentials and references. Get recommendations from family, friends and colleagues who have had work done and were satisfied with the results.
5. **Start with quality building materials.** When it comes to home renovation and construction, the adage, 'it's what's on the inside that counts' seems apt. While homeowners tend to get caught up in the esthetics of a project, such as finishings and paint colours, the key to a successful renovation often lies in what you won't see. Investing in quality behind your walls will ensure durability, comfort, and safety for years to come.
6. **Focus on the basics.** This includes quality electrical, plumbing, HVAC, framing and drywall. Don't underestimate the importance of insulation—especially in a basement renovation. Not all insulation is created equal. Opt for insulation that is fire-resistant, sound absorbent, and resistant to mould, mildew, bacterial growth and rot. In my renovations, I like to use products like Roxul's Comfortbatt and Comfortboard IS to help achieve a more energy efficient home, buy you valuable time in the event of a fire and prevent moisture issues that can pose health risks and lead to costly repairs.
7. **Develop a good plan.** This includes preparing for the unexpected. Setting aside a 20 per cent contingency fund will help bring you to the finish line when unanticipated issues creep up.

Lastly, the key to a successful renovation includes patience. Living in a construction zone—or alternately moving out while the work is done—can be stressful and trying. Keep your eye on the prize. There's nothing more rewarding than the end result, which can bring years of enjoyment and ultimately, add to your home's bottom line.

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