

## Different Types of Remodeling Professionals

So you've decided to do a remodeling project and you want to consult with somebody about how to renovate your home and what it will cost. But who do you consult with? Do you want a general contractor, architect, designer, or someone else? How do you know which remodeling professional is best for your project? Below is a description of the different professions and what they do. Choosing the right professional depends on the needs of your particular project.

**Architects:** Architects have received formal education in building design; they have completed an internship and are licensed by your state. Architects can create detailed, structurally sound designs for your renovation project. They will produce blueprints and elevations and will list material specifications. Some architects will provide project oversight and can refer you to contractors and other professionals they have worked with. It's best to select an architect who specializes in remodeling.

**Designers:** Designers have no formal education requirements, but many of them are certified by professional organizations which require formal study and passing examinations. Designers can draft plans and elevations for your remodeling project. They will work to understand a customer's lifestyle and develop ways to use space more efficiently, improving the traffic flow in your house and to create an aesthetically appealing design. Many designers specialize in home interiors or focus specifically on kitchens and baths.

**General Contractors:** General contractors are construction professionals who will take the plans created by a designer or architect and make them a reality. They oversee the entire remodeling project – including supervising and coordinating the sub-contractors such as plumbers and electricians. Some smaller jobs may not require a designer, but can be handled by a qualified general contractor. General contractors must be licensed in most states and many of them specialize in home remodeling.

**Design/Build Contractor:** A design/build contractor or company can provide both design services and contractors to construct your renovation. The advantage to homeowners is that one company sees your project through from start to finish, keeping aesthetics, functionality, structural integrity, and budget in mind. Because the firm handles the project from start to finish, it can save you money and prevents problems with coordinating contractors. Some design/build firms have architects, designers, or structural engineers on staff.

**Home Decorators:** Also called interior decorators, these professionals are sometimes confused with home or interior designers. However, designers usually focus on altering the space in your home, while decorators help you plan the way it looks. They can create plans for wall coverings, colors, furniture, carpeting, etc. that will be stylistically cohesive and aesthetically pleasing. They will make suggestions based on their understanding of your lifestyle and personal style. Home decorators also offer professional discounts with vendors, so they can obtain furniture, wall coverings, rugs, etc. at a discount.