

YOUR CLIENTS

Get Real

Educate clients for better budget discussions

CONSTRUCTION COSTS are talked about differently by different people. When prospects begin talking about square footage costs, you have to wonder what's included in those numbers. Appliances? Finishes?

To make sure people are comparing apples in an apples-to-apples fashion, Kevin Eckert, principal and founder of Build, in Seattle, came up with what he calls the "Residential Construction Costs Cheat Sheet." "We were getting misinformed people coming in and wanted to establish a protocol for talking about cost," says Eckert, whose company does mostly whole-house remodels.

COMPARISONS ARE OK

After the initial client contact, before discussing design, Eckert sends an email that includes the cheat sheet as a pricing guideline. It helps clients come with a realistic budget and, he says, "It's a good way to ensure we have a client who realizes that the remodeling project they want to do may be more involved than they originally thought."

Eckert knows that prospects might use this sheet if they talk with other remodelers, and he's fine with that.

"They can have a more informed conversation with anyone they're using for their project," he says. The sheet forces them to think about all the parts of a remodel and get specifics from other remodelers to be able to make a true comparison.

CONVERSATION STARTER

The one-page sheet — available on the Build website for easy downloading — is divided into three parts:

1. **Items that your construction budget should include** such as construction costs, general conditions, debris removal, and final cleaning;
2. **Other typical project costs that you should consider**, such as architectural and permit fees; and
3. **Typical construction costs**, which compares design/build method costs to traditional architect-general contractor costs. (Costs used on Eckert's sheet are for the Pacific Northwest.)

The sheet is not encyclopedic in scope, but it can lead to good questions — and to a discussion about what that pesky square footage price means. "Those numbers are the averages of all the rooms in a home," Eckert will explain to clients. "It costs



Info on Hand

This simple cost cheat sheet helps clients get a better grasp of budget and helps you qualify those prospects ready to take on projects.

more to do a kitchen, which might be \$400 per square foot, than an empty bedroom, which might be only \$50 per square foot."

"The cheat sheet resonates with some clients, Eckert says, but others don't grasp the value of it. "Given any potential client," Eckert says, "it's good to identify [those] folks [who are] more ready to take on a substantial project." —Stacey Freed



Wire Verification

Pre-drywall inspection confirms switches and outlet locations

LEVCO BUILDERS, in Boise, Idaho, meets with clients for a mandatory walk-through of their project after the framing and wiring are done but before insulation and drywall are installed, to make sure that all the

switches, outlets, lights, fans, and telephone connections are located where the client wants them to be.

Company president Joe Levitch asks his electrician to label the wires in each box (see

photo) so that the team can confirm that wiring for all devices is correct. Levitch notes any incorrect items on a rough-in inspection form (see Goodform on page 56) and asks clients to sign the form.