

My Construction Planner

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10 Questions to Ask a Builder

1. How many houses have you built in the last three years, by year?
This question will show you how busy a builder is at this time as well as where the business has been. There's no right answer, but ask follow-up questions based on the builder's answer. Ask about growth, satisfied customers and what type of home the builder is best at.

Comments:

2. How many houses are you expecting to build this year?
Relate this answer to your first question about the past three years. How much growth; types and prices of homes; scattered site or developments?

Comments:

3. How long is it currently taking to deliver a house that is similar to the one you might build for me?
Ask about permits, actual building times, weather factors and other factors. Is the builder realistic and confident?

Comments:

4. Can you show me samples of your work?
You want to see thrquality and execution the builder has done in the past. This will also give you ideas of possibilities and it may even help you to further refine your vision of your dream house. Keep in mind that you'll probably looking at the builder's 'best work', so if it doesn't measure up it's best to move on.

Comments:

5. How long have you been in business?
There's no right answer here, but you do not want to be the guinea pig for a brand-new builder. The builder should be in business long enough to develop a track record for you to evaluate. Less than two years is probably too short unless there is a very good reason to use this builder.

Comments:

6. Can you provide references?
You will want to talk to two to four customers of any builder you are seriously considering. Ask the customers about their experience. Ask about construction time promises, and always ask open-ended questions. Ask how change orders were handled, and if prices for change orders were fair. Key question: Would you build another house with this builder? Any hesitation or qualification to this question needs a lot of explanation. Ask about the relationship with the builder and foremen. How did the builder react when things did not go as planned? How did the builder react to change orders?

Comments:

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7. Who are your bankers, and if I called them, what would they tell me about your financial strength?
This is a good question to watch for the builder's reaction. Hesitation here usually if cause for further research. Most reputable builders have a good relationship with their banks. If you check with the bank, ask the builder for the name of their account officer. Ask the account officer, "Is the builder's relationship with you satisfactory?" and "Would you build a home with this builder?" Listen carefully to what and how it is said.

Comments:

8. How do you handle change orders?
Building a custom home will inevitably result in changes after construction has begun. Realize that changes after you have signed the initial contract will cost much more than if they were negotiated in advance. Some builders count on change orders to improve contract profitability.

Comments:

9. Under what circumstances do you allow site visits?
Must you to have an appointment, or is it okay for you to just "show up"? Either approach is fine, as builders have insurance reasons for asking for prior notice. Consider walking through current projects "after hours" to see the builder's work in progress. Make sure there is a temperament match here.

Comments:

10. How do you handle problems after construction is completed?
No home is ever perfect. Ask about callbacks policy, punch list corrections and warranty service. Ask who is responsible for appliances, heating and air conditioning and other installed options. Get a good feel for an individual builder's procedure for handling issues after the fact. Get a sense for the builder's attention to detail, and the builder's willingness and ability to meet deadlines and commitments for follow up on problems.

Comments:

Additional Comments:
