

12 FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A CONTRACTOR FOR YOUR COMMERCIAL RENOVATION PROJECT

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Hiring a contractor for your commercial renovation project can be tricky, especially with so many to choose from. However, finding the right one ultimately comes down to vetting each prospective candidate based on 12 crucial factors.

1. Personality

Most commercial landlords don't consider a contractor's personality when choosing a project manager. Yet, finding someone with good rapport is one of the best ways to ensure their compatibility. If they're a naturally flexible, problem-solving expert, these traits will shine through their body language and interpersonal skills.

On the other hand, if they're standoffish and dismiss your ideas, they'll likely do so for the entirety of your project. Find someone you enjoy working with to maximize your partnership and improve overall satisfaction with the job.

2. Integrity

Of course, even the friendliest contractors can have a poor moral compass, and you need someone with integrity to complete this job. Therefore, you must rely on their words and deeds to determine whether or not they're morally upstanding.

Do they throw subcontractors under the bus when you express concerns? Maybe they want to argue about a scathing customer review. In this case, they may have a dishonest streak and avoid taking responsibility for their actions. However, if they have a record of helping those in need and showing respect to clients, they might be a viable option.

3. Communication

Great commercial contractors communicate effectively from the very start. Therefore, if you're having trouble reaching one, you should probably look elsewhere. Look for other red flags like emotionally charged comments, inappropriate jokes, and badmouthing other clients or contractors.

While you want them to feel comfortable enough to be themselves around you, all communication should remain professional and concise.

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4. Experience

It's practically impossible to determine how good a contractor is until you assess their experience. How much on-the-job time have they accrued? Have they been in the business for a few years? More importantly, are they familiar with the kind of project you want to complete?

A more experienced firm can better troubleshoot and find cost-effective solutions for your specific renovation, which can save you time, money, and headaches.

5. Portfolio

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a contractor's portfolio will speak volumes. Does their work look professional? Do you notice an overarching theme of cheap materials and shoddy workmanship?

Analyze before-and-after photos to determine their potential to succeed with your project. Too many distant shots may mean they're trying to hide poor quality, while close-up pictures will show their attention to detail.

6. References

Reputable contractors should have no qualms about providing a list of companies they've worked with in the past. These references are your key to finding out just how good a job your candidate did. Call them up and ask a few questions about whether the project was completed on time and within budget. Did the contractor communicate clearly and fulfill their contract?

Consider whether you're satisfied with each business's answers. Take each review with a grain of salt, too, but if multiple business owners send you away with warnings, you'd be wise to look for a different contractor.

7. Licensing

All potential contractors should also be able to provide proof of licensing, regardless of their reputation and experience level. By law, most commercial construction projects require some form of contract licensing so clients understand their skills and how qualified they are to complete a project.

Many licenses are also specific to a certain area, so pay attention to the little details when they present the certificate.

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8. Insurance

Of course, you must also make sure the contractor has insurance. Their policy should protect you from financial liability in the event of injuries or damage.

However, it's up to you to ask for proof of insurance and to determine exactly what their policy will cover. Request verification directly from the insurance company and compare coverages between contractors to choose the best one.

9. Safety Record

Safety should be a contractor's top priority, so don't be shy about asking for a contractor's safety record. Do they provide protective gear to workers and require them to take breaks? If the conversation is awkward or they have trouble providing a record, they may have something to hide.

However, if they can easily answer questions and have evidence to support these claims, they likely have prevention guidelines and safety regulations in place.

10. Price

Naturally, the cost will play an important role in your choosing a commercial contractor. However, you shouldn't let the price tag sway you too much, because you often get what you pay for. The lowest-priced firm might omit important steps in the construction process, while the highest-priced one may go the extra mile to ensure a quality renovation.

11. Timeline

Once you figure out how long your renovation project should take, you can look for a contractor who's willing to work with your timeline. Discuss important deadlines and determine when certain phases of the project will be complete.

While it's best to remain flexible, it's important that you find a firm that budgets their time wisely and generally finishes projects on time.

12. Subcontractors

Often, a contractor will hire subcontractors to complete different aspects of the project for them. In this case, the project manager will only personally complete a small portion of the renovation.

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Therefore, it's crucial that you consider the above factors when vetting subcontractors, as they'll be doing most of the work.

Then, thoroughly read each one's contract before signing the dotted line. Otherwise, they may work on a different timeline and budget than your general contractor.

Go With Your Gut

Once you hire a contractor, you'll inevitably be stuck with them for a few months – or even a few years. Therefore, it's best to go with your gut when choosing this kind of long-term business partner. Besides, after conducting hours' worth of research and asking dozens of questions, the only other thing you can do is trust your intuition to make the best decision.

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