

RESTYLE YOUR HOME

Four pillars of a successful reno budget

It's not all about the granite countertops

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The technological revolution is arguably the largest contribution to human intelligence. Websites and social media handles such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube allow us to spread our messages worldwide in an instant. Still, little replaces the impact of face-to-face experiences that provide people with real take-away knowledge.

I was invited by EnerQuality to speak at the Ontario Home Builders' Forum in Collingwood this week. The panel I will be a part of is made up of large and small developers, custom home builders and renovators. We will be sharing with our industry peers field applications for creating energy efficient homes. We will use this opportunity to discuss what works, what doesn't and what details are important to watch out for to ensure optimal performance and ultimately a successful project.

We share like this so the industry as a whole can rise to the challenge of providing the consumer a safe and energy-efficient home. In this case, as it is in most, the sum of the knowledge shared by all will be greater than if we kept the parts we individually know to ourselves.

At my firm, we also believe in sharing our experiences internally with



The "Wow" Factor: The level of finish of your renovation is a very important part of the building budget.

our team and clients daily. It is the breadth the knowledge we have gained in our experiences that is valuable to the homeowner. It helps guide the process of designing and building a new home or renovation.

One of the best examples of this is how stay on a budget. Renowned Ottawa architect Barry J. Hobin shared a list with me some 10 years ago when I was still just cutting my teeth in this business. I remember it fondly and share it with every homeowner I meet.

So here it is:

- **Area:** A 1,000-square-foot home costs less than a 4,000-square-foot home to build, but the smaller home does not benefit from the economy of scale of the larger home. As a result, if both were built identically, the cost per square foot of the smaller home would be larger. Size has a direct relationship with cost.

- **The system:** This is the part of the home you never see, but is integral in the operation, longevity

and health of the structure and its inhabitants. An example of this would be insulation — fiberglass batt, high- or low-density spray foam, wool, straw or other — all carry different costs, pros and cons, but all are a solution to the problem of heat loss/gain. These are not the sexy parts of the house, but are a huge part of the build and performance of the structure.

- **Architectural complexity:** A cathedral ceiling, cantilevered balcony, corbels, are the details that

shape a structure and make it interesting. Keep in mind, however, that a perfect square is cheaper to build than a perfect circle. The more intricate the details, the more costly the build.

- **Level of finish:** This is the sexy stuff. Stone tiles and countertops, double-sided fireplaces, cabreuva hardwood and custom millwork. These are parts you show off to your jealous neighbours. The higher end the finish, the more costly the project. Likewise, the more common or entry level you use, the cheaper the build becomes.

Should you decide to take on a big renovation or custom home project, start with the professionals who are focused on sharing knowledge and learning the best way to design and build your home. A home is your biggest investment and deserves the skill and expertise of the professionals.

RenoMark lists the city's best contractors that all abide by a strict code of ethics, plus carry the proper licences, insurance and experience needed to do the job right. I recommend you start there and remember the Four Pillars of Budgets when planning your project budget — and be sure to share it with your friends when they embark on their own project. It's only fair!

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