

# FOREWORD

At a home show for homeowners in 2002 I presented a seminar on how to work with a Design-Build remodeling contractor. Having the experience of working with over 6,000 consumers as a remodeler and home improvement contractor, I know how critical it is that the entire project scope of work is clearly defined and memorialized in a contract. I learned early on that the best way for consumers to prevent a project from becoming a contractor nightmare is to hire a remodeler who utilized the Design/Scope Development/Build approach.

With this approach the homeowner works with one firm who has single source accountability, ensuring the design, scope of work, and build meet the homeowner's needs, wants, and budget. This method greatly reduces the finger pointing that accompanies the traditional architect/designer then bid approach. Unfortunately, the majority of residential remodeling projects, designed by architects or designers, come in way over the homeowners' budget. In fact, many projects are never built or the plans are redone at great expense to meet a lower budget.

In the seminar several homeowners asked me why pricing, product selections, and scope of work from remodelers varies so much. One lady said she had prices for a kitchen that ranged from \$20,000 to \$75,000. Another lady considering a master bath suite project asked how she can get help with design and product selections. She said the remodelers she was speaking with gave prices heavy with allowances for products. When she went on her own to showrooms she discovered that the allowances would only cover low end undesirable products.

According to government statistics, consumer complaints against home improvement and remodeling contractors are at the top or near the top of every consumer protection list! In March of 2014, at a Boston NARI trade group meeting, I invited Kermit Baker, PHD from Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University to speak to a group of professional remodelers. He stated that the home improvement and remodeling industry is the most fragmented industry in the entire United States economy. He went on to say that most home improvement contractors and remodelers have little or no business education, leading to inconsistent performance and rampant business closures. This resource book is filled with numerous guides and checklists to protect homeowners from hiring the wrong remodeler.

I have found that many remodelers are smart at building things, but only a small percentage develop and install a systematic approach to help their clients have a pleasurable remodeling experience. This book will teach you what to look for before you take the remodeling plunge.

In today's world, consumers are faced with endless choices on products. They are barraged by TV shows on HGTV that falsely promise fantastic remodeling projects done in a blink of an eye at unrealistic prices. The HGTV home improvement shows and others like them attempt to commoditize remodeling projects, ultimately misleading consumers. Your next kitchen or bathroom project is not sitting on a store shelf somewhere. It needs to be custom created. To ensure a positive remodeling experience, homeowners can benefit immensely by engaging a remodeling coach to lead the Design/Scope Development/Build creation specific to their project needs, wants, and budget. Kathi Fleck is a homeowner remodeling coach who teaches you how to navigate the choppy waters inherent in the remodeling process.

If you or anyone you know has endured a bathroom, kitchen, addition, or master suite remodeling project you know it never goes that smooth. In real life when you hire a remodeler they come in to your house and rip it apart and put it back together while you live there. If the project, design, or scope of work is not carefully crafted, your project may not come out the way you expected.

If you are a homeowner you will find reading and studying this book extremely valuable before you take the leap and hire a remodeler to improve your home. In most cases, your home is the most valuable investment you own. Carefully planning and considering all the options is very difficult for most homeowners. Therefore, I would recommend that you use this book as a resource and how to guide before you hire your remodeler. The steps are well-defined and presented in a straight forward, easy-to-do manner. Remember the saying from Winston Churchill during World War II: "Failing to plan is planning to fail."

Kathi Fleck has created a great tool to help guide you through the remodeling maze. Enjoy, study, and most of all, implement Kathi's suggestions and your remodeling project will be all that you imagined.

-MARK PASKELL, President of Eastern Mass National Association of the Remodeling Industry