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Certified Graduate Remodelers

What is CGR?

- ❑ Certified Graduate Remodeler is an exclusive professional designation designed to emphasize business management skills as the key to a professional remodeling operation.
- ❑ The CGR designation requires that graduates
 - meet prescribed standards of business practice,
 - show proof of licensing and insurance
 - have completed educational requirements set forth by the National Association of Homebuilders Remodelers Council
 - possess a minimum of five years remodeling industry experience as owner and/or manager of a remodeling business,
 - have a proven track record of successful project management,
 - produce letters of reference,
 - continue a comprehensive education curriculum, and
 - pledge to uphold the program's code of ethics.

CGR Code of Ethics:

- ❑ CONDUCT business affairs with professionalism and skill.
- ❑ PROVIDE the best remodeling value possible.
- ❑ PROTECT the consumer through the use of high quality materials and remodeling.
- ❑ MEET all of their financial obligations in a responsible manner.
- ❑ COMPLY with the spirit and letter of their business contracts, and manage all employees, subcontractors and suppliers with fairness and honor.
- ❑ KEEP informed regarding public policies and other essential information, which affect their business interests and those of the building industry as a whole.
- ❑ COMPLY with the rules and regulations prescribed by law and government agencies for the health, safety and welfare of the community.
- ❑ PROVIDE timely response to items covered under warranty.
- ❑ SEEK to resolve any controversy in which they may become involved through a non-litigation dispute resolution mechanism.
- ❑ REFRAIN from harming, either directly or indirectly, the professional reputation, practice or employment of another remodeler.



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Who should I hire?

- ❑ There are many things to consider when remodeling or adding on; perhaps the most important is selecting the right contractor. Your decision could make the difference between a disaster or a project that is 100% of what was promised, on time, in good condition and with a smile! The CGR program is designed to help assure a quality standard of excellence among remodeling professionals.
- ❑ All certified CGR's are required to subscribe to a strict code of ethics and abide by the "Quality Standards for the Professional Remodeler". The CGR designation helps you to determine which remodeling contractor you can entrust your home to and who will provide professional remodeling services.



Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist

What is a Certified Aging In Place specialist?

The Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) designation is the result of the work of the Remodelers Council -- in conjunction with the NAHB Research Center, 50+ Housing Council and AARP.

The training program equips graduates with the technical, customer service and marketing skills required to effectively service the burgeoning market for aging-in-place home modifications.

Demographic trends indicate that home owners who plan to stay in their homes as they get older instead of making other housing accommodations are one of the fastest growing segments of the residential remodeling market. Many of these households can be expected to call on remodelers to adapt their homes to their changing needs and lifestyles in order to maintain their independence.

What is "aging-in-place"?

In plain English, aging-in-place means living in one's home safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level. It means the pleasure of remaining in a familiar environment throughout one's maturing years, and the ability to enjoy the familiar daily rituals and the special events that enrich all our lives. It means the reassurance of being able to call a house a home for a lifetime.

Projects for the aging-in-place remodeling segment range from installation of bath and shower grab bars and adjustment of countertop heights to the creation of multi-functional first-floor master suites and the installation of private elevators. CAPS training participants learn the mechanics and nuances of effective assessment of clients' needs and integrating myriad considerations into unified, aesthetically pleasing, functional solutions.

Why was CAPS developed?

The AARP's landmark study "Fixing to Stay" was a wake-up call to the residential remodeling industry. The results of the study sent two messages loud and clear:

- Americans prefer to remain in their homes as they mature, rather than seek assisted living and other arrangements



- Older consumers want a reliable means of identifying the professionals they can trust to remodel their homes

Approximately 3.2 million members of the Baby Boom generation will turn 55 years old this year and represent the first wave of baby boomers that will cross this significant threshold in the next 15 years. About 80% of all Americans 55 years or older currently own their own homes, making it the highest rate of homeownership of any age group in the country. Members of this population group also tend to be healthier and wealthier than previous generations of similar age, and expect their homes to reflect their active, independent, and upscale lifestyles.

"Remodelers can't afford to ignore the aging-in-place market," said Dan Bawden, CGR, NAHB Remodelers™ Council trustee and a remodeling contractor from Houston, who heads the task force charged with developing the program.

"Learning to work with home owners in this age group will improve remodelers' customer service delivery across the board and will give NAHB members a competitive advantage in reaching this currently under-served market. CAPS is a win-win situation: consumers will finally have an answer to the burning question 'Where can find a skilled contractor I can trust?' This certification will connect homeowners of all ages with contractors trained to do the kinds of home modifications they want and need as they grow older in their homes. As for the contractors, they are discovering a whole new segment of customers to serve as our populations grows older."

"There's been a growing demand for remodeling as a means to enhance Americans' independence as they choose to remain in their homes into their retirement years," explained Leon Harper, who represented AARP on the task force. "While there's a growing need, there's also been a growing fear, as a result of the unfortunate work of a few unscrupulous contractors. This program represents a welcome opportunity for us to help our members identify the good guys, the professionals they can hire with confidence."

For more information about this item, please contact NAHB Remodelers at 800-368-5242 x8216 or via e-mail at remodel@nahb.com.



Before Hiring a Remodeler

(written by the National Association of Home Builders)

Do your homework before you have work done on your home. Use this checklist to select a Remodeler you can trust.

- Does the contractor return your phone calls promptly?
- Does he keep the appointment he makes with you?
- Does the contractor have a permanent business location and a good reputation with local banks and suppliers?
- How long has he been in business? It usually takes three to five years to establish a financially sound business.
- Is the contractor licensed, if required in your jurisdiction?
- Have you called the local Builders Association or Better Business Bureau? They can alert you to any outstanding complaints.
- Does the contractor have proof of workmen's compensation and general liability insurance? If not, you may be liable for any construction-related accidents on your premises.
- Will the contractor provide you with the names of previous customers? Ask if they would hire the same contractor again.
- Have you seen the contractor's work, both completed and in progress? Check for quality of workmanship and materials.
- Are you able to communicate easily with the contractor? Misunderstandings during the course of a project can lead to cost overruns and delays.
- Do you feel comfortable with the contractor? Remember, you will be in close contact with him and will share your house with his crew until the project is completed.
- Will the contractor provide you with a complete and clearly written contract?



The Do's and Don'ts of Remodeling

Erik Listou, CGR, CAPS

Remember the expression, "I wish I knew then what I know now!"? In the remodeling business, not knowing before you start will make a big financial and emotional difference. No one can read into the future, but you can learn from the experiences of those who have remodeled.

Every remodel job is different. Some homeowners have never experienced such a challenge. While remodeling is neither rocket science nor brain surgery, sometimes the homeowner will think the remodeler has no brains and the remodeler will think the homeowner is somewhere out in space. So, is it worth all of the trouble? Yes, as long as you both stay on the ground and use your brains.

As the homeowner, you have the most important role in your remodel project. It's your house, it's your money, the remodeler is working for you. That means that you are responsible for the project. A professional remodeler general contractor has the skills, resources and experience to complete your project just the way you want it. For example, look in any of the remodel magazines. Isn't that the way you want your house to look, just like those wonderful pictures? Can you achieve results like those in the pictures? Yes, as long as you know before you begin some of the do's and don'ts of remodeling.

Do:

- Plan ahead what you want to accomplish overall with your project.
- Look in remodeling magazines for ideas. Cut them out and hold them up to your house. Squint and use your imagination.
- Decide a budget you can afford, including furniture and accessories to complete the space plus a few unexpected upgrades.
- Set aside adequate time during work hours to meet with your remodeling contractor.
- Seek to hire a local, experienced remodeler general contractor, one who has won awards and has had jobs published in those remodeling magazines.
- Communicate often and honestly with your remodeler.
- Trust your remodeler and let your remodeler trust you.

Don't:

- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Don't hesitate to make changes to improve the project.
- Don't use inferior materials, a dollar saved today could cost a fortune later.
- Don't forget to have fun!



Won't I Save Money If I Buy My Own Materials and Hire Subcontractors Directly?

Joseph C. Cracco, CGR, CAPS

The answer to this question depends on the level of experience and the amount of patience and time you have, as well as the complexity of your project. If we break down remodeling into two different categories, minor and major, it will be easier for you to make your decision.

For a minor remodeling project, you will directly hire subcontractors and may buy the materials yourself. Examples of minor projects might include: painting, roofing, flooring & repairs. A minor remodel project will usually involve only one or two different types of workers. The need to make decisions and inspect the work throughout the workday will be your responsibility as the homeowner. You will schedule, direct and inspect the work. If there are conflicts either in the work or materials, you will need to understand, negotiate and resolve the problems.

A major remodel project is quite different. Examples of major projects would include; room and garage additions, creating master suites, basement remodeling, kitchens and bathrooms, new entry foyers, updating structural designs, fixing structural problems, creating vaulted ceiling rooms, etc. You, the homeowner, hire an experienced remodeler/general contractor. Your remodeling contractor will create the project team specifically designed for your home. That team may include different subcontractors, designers, architects, suppliers, engineers, surveyors and inspectors...many of whom they have worked with for years. On your behalf, your remodeler will coordinate these entities and the thousands of details that make up a major project. Because of those thousands of varied components that go into a major project, the opportunity for conflict is constant. A seasoned remodeler will complete the project with minimal interruptions and stress.

Allen Charles Hill , AIA explains, "Unless you have previous building experience, you may not be sure which trades will be needed when, and even if you (do), getting workers to arrive at the job on time may be a challenge. You just won't have the clout of the general contractor working on the other side of town if both of you need, say, the plumber at the same time. After all, the general contractor is a source of repeat business, while you are almost certainly a one-shot proposition. So, yes, you could save money, but you lack of experience also could end up costing money. You'll have to spend time on the project, and your time has value. In more cases than not, paying a contractor to manage the job will be money well spent".



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So, now you have the answer. If your remodel project is minor, you don't mind the responsibility and you have the necessary knowledge and extra time required, hire the workers and buy the materials yourself. If your project is major, hire a remodeler/ general contractor who specializes in major remodeling. Call the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) or look on line for a local Certified Graduate Remodeler or call your local homebuilders association (e.g. the Rhode Island Builders Association and ask for a list of Certified Graduate Remodelers in your area.

Remember, *"If you hire the best, you end up paying less money and stress!"*



How Much Will My Kitchen or Addition Cost?

Originally Written By Erik Listou, CGR, CAPS
Pertinent local information by Joseph Cracco, CGR, CAPS

Estimating a major remodel project such as a kitchen or addition is a very difficult process. Many factors affect the cost. For kitchens, what type of cabinets, appliances, floor coverings will be used? Is there enough light now or are skylights needed? How about under cabinet lighting? When building an addition, a new foundation is needed. Engineering is required to determine what type of foundation before the costs can be determined. Is the addition one story or two? Most professional remodeler contractors can give you a very rough guess of total costs. However, to accurately determine costs, a detailed estimate must be prepared. Paying an hourly fee is appropriate for such an estimate.

A survey was recently reported in Professional Remodeler's e-letter. Estimating remodel projects is not something most customers are able to do with much degree of accuracy. In fact, most homeowners said they would expect a kitchen remodel project to be about \$19,000. The industry average for remodeling a kitchen is currently about \$39,000. As published in Remodeling Magazine's Cost vs. Value report, in Providence, the average mid-level major kitchen remodel cost \$44,500 and the average upscale major kitchen remodel cost \$78,800. Most homeowners are even worse at estimating their new addition costs. The industry average is about \$47,000 and is higher in our communities because of material increases in our part of the country and labor shortages. Most homeowners guessed the average addition was only \$16,000! In our community, another common misconception is the cost of a garage. While you can still probably get a functioning garage package kit installed for under \$20,000, if you want yours to look like part of your house expect to pay \$30-\$40,000 for a basic garage. A complete garage with upgrades will probably cost \$50,000+. Averaging all of these numbers out, the old adage of, "It will cost at least twice what you think." is probably true. Be sure when you talk to your remodeler you tell them what your budget is, so they can design to fit within your budget.

Other factors that could affect costs include the experience of the remodeler. Are they experienced in your type of project? Will they provide you with a detailed written contract (by law they have to provide a written contract, but if it isn't sufficiently detailed it isn't worth the paper it's printed on)? If no to either of these questions, seriously consider finding another remodeler. When talking with your professional remodeler contractor, make sure they are members of the Rhode Island Builders Association and your local chamber of commerce. If you can locate a Certified Graduate Remodeler, they should be your first choice of remodelers. There are only about 5 Certified Graduate Remodelers in Rhode Island, ask the Home Builders Association for a listing.



What Are Overhead Costs?

Erik Listou, CGR, CAPS

Every remodeler contractor buys materials and pays for labor that is used in your home. You pay those costs plus an amount your remodeler calls "overhead." When you look carefully at the list below, you will understand what these overhead costs are. If your remodeler is not collecting and spending money in *all* of these areas, *your* home suffers the most.

Insurance: Worker's compensation insurance; unemployment insurance; general liability insurance; tool insurance; auto and truck insurance; theft insurance.

Taxes: Social Security, unemployment, federal and state withholding, business, sales.

Vehicles: Purchasing or leasing trucks; maintenance; gas and repairs; tires; brakes; windshields.

Office: Space rental; furniture; supplies; cleaning; electric, gas, office and mobile telephone and internet bills; postage; buying computers, fax machines, copiers, printers, telephone systems, cell phones; repair and maintenance of office equipment; buying and upgrading software; creating and printing business forms.

Tools: buying general and specialized tools; training on new equipment; renting tools; maintaining and repairing; warehouse space for storing tools, equipment and supplies.

Education: Craftsmanship and business operation training; seminars; books; certifications; trade magazine periodicals; leadership and management training, Business Networking: Trade association memberships; Chamber of Commerce; trade shows; conventions; committees.

Professional Assistance: Computer consultants; accountants; bookkeepers; lawyers; business planners; office staff; marketing and sales consultants; human resource consultants; tax planners.

Employee Benefits: Vacations; sick leave; personal leave; bonuses; insurances.

Advertising: Yellow pages; newspapers; press releases; truck and yard signs; entering industry competitions; writing articles like this!

Warranty: Warranty programs; repairs.

Community Involvement: Being active in local non-profit organizations; cash, tools, materials and labor donations.

General Management: Developing management and operating systems and programs; supervising employees; managing subcontractors; quality control.



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When your remodeler starts work on your home, most of these costs have already been spent or committed. Saving money by hiring a remodeler who does not have these expenses could be a very costly mistake for you. Ask your remodeler what their overhead costs are. On high cost items like windows, cabinets and appliances, the mark up costs seem quite high, but if you look at low cost items, like a tube of caulk, the mark up is very small. Paying a percentage is the only fair way. How much should mark ups be? Expect to pay 60% and more for a professional remodeler.

Remember, hire only professional remodelers. They know what it costs to run their business. They will be here for many years to provide you with consistent quality and service, with a smile!



How Long Will Our Remodel Project Take?

Erik Listou, CGR, CAPS

This is like asking your husband, "Honey, when are you going to clean out the garage so I can actually put my car in there?" You will probably get a very quick answer, like, "I'll do it this Saturday, after I take the kids to soccer practice and before I go to the game with my friends." He will be all smiles and exuding such a great aura of confidence that you will start getting ready for the big day. His intentions are the best. He really is planning on cleaning out the garage and making you happy. But what happens on Saturday? Is your car really going to be out of the weather and snug in its rightful place in the garage on Saturday night?

Remodeling is very much like cleaning out the garage. Everybody has a plan to do it, but most plans do not take into account all of the things that must happen. There are so many variables it is impossible to guess. You must take the time to realistically plan for what will happen and what might happen. How do you do that? Hire an experienced remodeler, one who communicates well with you.

An experienced remodeler has most of the basic information already. Based on previous jobs the remodeler will know how long it takes to remodel. However, there are still many variables they will not know. Those variables are in your control and you need to make sure the remodeler is aware of them. Some examples of those variables are: How much remodeling are you planning? Is the work all in one area or is it in several areas? What times and dates can the remodeler work or not work? Can you do with a make shift kitchen while yours is being rebuilt? Is there room for storing all of the materials or do the need to be brought out in partial loads? Is there enough parking room for the work trucks? Is there room for heavy equipment or is smaller equipment needed? When your remodeler has this information they can then prepare a schedule.

What about changes in the work? Do they affect how long a project will take? Changes are either hidden conditions or design changes. Hidden conditions could include finding solid rock in your yard, electrical wiring needing upgrading or finding hazardous materials, such as asbestos. When any hidden condition is found, it is usually after construction starts and may cause the scheduled construction to stop until the condition is corrected. Design changes do not always change the job schedule. If a design change is decided early enough, there may be no delay in the schedule, or the delay and costs will be included in the design change.

Enough reasoning. You just want to know how long your project will take. Generally, the bigger the job the longer it will take. Additions, where foundations are required, take three months or longer. A simple interior remodel will take two months or longer, a major house remodel will take three months or more.

/ suggest you keep your car windows rolled up this Saturday night, plan when and how the garage will really get cleaned out, then relax and have a nice weekend!



The Pre-Construction Meeting

Erik Listou, CGR, CAPS

One way to ensure the success of your project is to plan for and actively participate in a pre-construction meeting. This allows your remodeler to clarify procedures and explain how the job will progress. It also offers both you and your remodeler an opportunity to prepare for those issues that may arise later. You should think of this meeting as a forum for all participants to define their expectations and agree on the anticipated outcome.

Some of the issues you need to discuss at this meeting include:

- Will you allow your remodeler to place a company sign on your property? Remember: in addition to being a marketing tool, signs help inspectors, subcontractors and suppliers locate your home.
- How will workers, materials, equipment, and vehicles get to the job site without damaging outside structures, plants, and flowerbeds?
- What areas of your home will be off limits to workers?
- Do you have a place on site to store building materials for your project?
- Who is responsible for removing your belongings and later returning them to the newly remodeled space? When packing, remember that the workers may need access to the electrical panel, the water shut-off valve, and areas not being remodeled.
- Does your house have an alarm system? Will workers need a key or will someone always be there? How about a key lock box?
- How will you ensure that your children and pets stay safe and out of the work area? Does the space to be remodeled contain any special items that you would like to save from demolition? If so, where should they be stored?
- How will trash removal be handled? Where will the remodeler locate a trash trailer on your property? How often will they remove it?
- Does your remodeler anticipate any interruptions of utilities during the project? If so, when and for how long? At certain stages of construction, the project may affect basic household necessities like water and electricity. Will you need to vacate the house at any time?
- What are your expectations regarding clean up? Will sweeping be sufficient for a daily cleaning, or will you need a more thorough cleaning in the workspace and the rest of your home?

You should also use the pre-construction meeting to establish additional guidelines for the remodeling crew working on the project:

- What times will workers begin and end work at your home? Be sure to consider your neighbors as well as household members. Your remodeler may contact your neighbors and give them a phone number to call if they have any concerns about your project.
- Where can workers park near your job site?
- Will you allow workers to use your phone for local business calls?

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- Will bathroom facilities in your home be available to workers or do you want the contractor to provide a portable toilet?
- What is the remodeler's policy on smoking on the job site?
- What is the remodeler's policy on the use of profanity?
- Will you allow workers to play their radios at a reasonable volume? Are there any stations or programs that you do not want played?



How To Live With Your Remodel Project

Erik Listou, CGR, CAPS

A remodel experience can turn your home and your life upside down. Your home becomes a construction zone. You will have to adjust your daily routines to make way for the work. Here are a few helpful tips from the Remodelers Council of the National Association of Home Builders:

Determine who the remodeler and the homeowner should contact for daily decisions or an after-hours emergency.

Create a place in your home as communications center where the contact persons can leave messages for each other. This is a good place to keep the job schedule posted.

Speak up! If you are uncertain about any aspect of the project, bring your concerns to your remodeler's attention.

Set aside time weekly to meet with your remodeler in your home to discuss every aspect of the work. Your remodeler should take careful notes and give you a copy at each meeting to prevent misunderstandings.

Realize that upgrades, or changes, you make during construction may affect the schedule and budget. All upgrades should be carefully understood and agreed to by everyone. Your remodeler will be hiring specialized tradespersons to work in your home. Some of them may be there for only one day; some may be there for weeks. Because those tradespersons have their own businesses to run, sometimes they have emergencies that can't wait and they will have to leave your project for a few days. Be patient. You may have an emergency on your project and will be grateful when they leave another project to take care of you.

Housekeeping rules should be discussed before work starts. How will workers enter the home and what are the work start and stop times? Are there areas that are off limits to the workers? Where will materials and tools be stored? Who is responsible for moving personal belongings in and out of the work areas? Where will the trash be placed? Is sweeping up daily with a broom good enough or is a more thorough cleaning needed? Where will the portable toilet be placed?

Maintain a sense of humor. You will both need it if the weather refuses to cooperate or a vendor postpones a delivery date.

Make your remodeling experience an adventure. Pretend you are camping out when you set up a temporary kitchen in the garage and sleep in the guest room. Order a pizza when the windows go in. Go to the movies in the middle of the day while your living room is being painted.



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Remember, soon the workers will be gone, the house cleaned up and you will be able to relax and enjoy your remodeled home!



How Expensive is Good Quality?

Written by Joseph C. Cracco, CGR, CAPS

There is always an up-front premium price for quality. If you want a better quality car or dinner, you pay more. But how does this concept apply to remodeling?

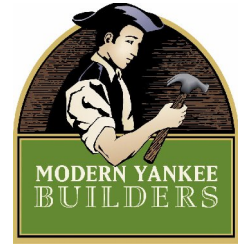
Your better quality car lasts a few years and begins to depreciate as soon as you drive it off the dealer's lot. The better dinner is great, but only lasts a few hours. Your remodeling project, however, should last a lifetime and appreciate to significantly more than the original cost of design and construction. So, making the decision to hire a quality remodeler is a smart investment when you consider the long-term effect of trying to save money by hiring the lower cost company.

It is very true that 'you get what you pay for'. By hiring the bargain contractor, it is much more likely that the final result will not be as good as would be achieved by a truly professional remodeler....and the journey to get there?...we've all heard the horror stories. But even when the contractor completes the last coat of paint, remember that one of the most important aspects of your project is making sure the new work continues to look like new for years to come. If the bargain contractor doesn't care (or know) enough to use appropriate construction detailing *and* the best materials, the work that looks OK now, may be falling apart in a couple of years.

You've probably heard of the mold problems in many new houses. This is a perfect example of less-informed contractors using new materials in an inappropriate manner because they lacked the essential building-science knowledge. If they had spent the time that building and remodeling professionals spend on education, going to trade shows, talking to manufacturer's representatives, and reading technical construction articles, they would have known that the new materials required new details and building techniques to prevent the problems that eventually arose. All of that education is part of the up-front price of quality.

The point is this: if you have pride in your home and are looking for long term quality in your remodeling project, if realizing a positive return on your financial investment of tens or hundreds of thousands of hard-earned dollars is important to you, then be very careful who you hire. It's no longer enough to hire a "good guy with good skills" as your remodeler. You need to seek out skilled tradespeople who are well-educated, organized, professional and accountable. So, how do you find such a person?

One way to identify a professional remodeler is to look for remodelers who have obtained their CGR (Certified Graduate Remodeler) designation. This professional designation was created by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Remodelers™ Council. Their intention was to help consumers identify remodelers who perform professional, quality work. By hiring a CGR, you are getting one of the most qualified remodelers in the nation, thereby insuring that the money you invest in your home is money wisely invested.



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Quality does cost more up front, but it is an investment in value. It's your home and your money, so hire the most professional remodeler you can find.