

Ten Questions to Ask When Hiring a Contractor

If you don't know where to start to hire a contractor, here are some questions to ask before you buy:

Question #1: How long have you been working in this industry?

Answer You WANT to Hear: Long enough to accumulate at least ten to twenty references you can contact.

Why You Want to Hear It: While more experience does not always mean better service, a contractor who has been around the block a time or two is more likely to have a proven track record.

Question #2: Do you carry worker's compensation insurance for your employees?

What You WANT to Hear: Yes, for all employees that will be on your property.

Why You Want to Hear It: If someone is hurt on your property, you could be held responsible if the contractor is uninsured.

Question #3: Do you have insurance in case something at my cabin is broken while you are working?

Answer You WANT to Hear: Yes.

Why you Want to Hear It: Accidents happen; and when they do, you don't want to be held responsible for repairing damage you didn't cause. The company entering your property should ensure if they break something, they will fix it and cover all of the costs to do so.

Question #4: Can you provide a list of references I can contact?

Answer You WANT to Hear: Yes.

Why You Want to Hear It: If the contractor can't or evades the question, keep looking for a contractor. Checking references is one of the only methods for assuring the contractor you choose can get the job done. You should ask previous clients if they were satisfied with the finished product, if the job was on schedule, and if not, why not?

Question #5: What is the projected timeline for this project?

Answer You Want to Hear: Specific regarding when and how long they will be working there

Why You Want to Hear it: Unexpected problems might arise due to weather or unforeseen circumstances. An experienced contractor should be able to give you a projected time for completion of the project, provided there are no surprises or changes to what you want. If a contractor can't tell you this

it probably means he's not organized enough to create one, or he's too busy working at various properties.

Question #7: Will you offer a guarantee on your work, and, if so, what is the guarantee?

Answer You WANT to Hear: Yes, with a specific amount of time (six months, one year, lifetime, etc.).

Why You Want to Hear It: You shouldn't hire a contractor who can't guarantee their work. Remember too, a guarantee is only good as long as the company is in business. Even if it costs you a few dollars more, a well established company could well be worth it.

Question #9: Have you been involved with any legal disputes following a previous job?

Answer You WANT to Hear: An honest one.

Why You Want to Hear It: In a perfect world, the answer to this question would be no. However, we know the world isn't perfect. If the contractor has been involved in a prior legal dispute, you need to know. While the specifics behind the dispute may not be a deal breaker, the fact that a contractor isn't honest when asked this question should be.

Question #10: What is the payment schedule?

Answer You WANT to Hear: You should never pay the entire amount up front.

Why You Want to Hear It: Different contractors may offer different options when it comes to payment and different options may work better for your situation. However, never pay for the work in its entirety prior to the job's completion.

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