

WHAT NOW?

ENCOURAGING HOMEOWNERS TO REMODEL

By Lorraine Hart



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF: CARNEMARK SYSTEMS+DESIGN, INC. © MORGAN HOWARTH

It's been going on for too long. And too many of us have postponed our plans to remodel, renovate, or improve our homes. Many of us are now asking what now? How long do we want to put life on hold?

At this point it is time to re-assess our lives, the economy, and the world around us. And it is time to decide if we want to continue to be the effect of the economic climate. In his recent State of the Union address President Barack Obama asked "How long should we wait? How long should we put our future on hold?" For those of us who are optimistic and for those of us who want to be in charge of our lives, it is time to stop waiting, and move forward with our lives and plans. Additionally, the national unemployment rate fell from 10.0 percent to 9.7 percent in January and recent polls taken think it will only get better.

Now that the economy is on the way to recovery, it is important that we don't continue to keep our lives and plans on hold. Now is the perfect time to dust off those plans for your home improvement project and resurrect your dreams and plans for your remodeled home. There are many possibilities to consider ranging from simple cosmetic improvements to major remodeling projects.

According to Jonas Carnemark, CR, CKD, Owner and Founder of CARNEMARK systems+design, inc., in Bethesda, MD, historically their company has completed some of their best work during downturns in the economy. "We have achieved some of our best projects during calmer times. An emphasis on detail is easier to maintain and our subcontract teams are less stretched and eager to present their best pricing," Jonas said.

Additionally, according to Patty Iacone, with Advanced Contracting, Inc., in Round Hill, VA, the year for them has been off to a great start. "2010 has started off with a fantastic start, and we are really excited about that. Also, homeowners that are thinking about starting a project soon should really take advantage of the low-interest rates that are being offered right now. If homeowners need financing for a project, now is definitely the time to look at the rates," she said.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE

If your answer to “what now” is to move forward with your home improvement plans you will not only be taking your life and future off hold, you will be taking steps toward improving the quality of life for yourself and your family. The possibilities are endless. Cosmetic changes to the inside or outside of your home can make a huge difference in its look and feel. Perhaps you would like changes to your space or the functionality of your home. A new kitchen, bath, or family room are only some of the possibilities. If your family needs more space, now would be the time to start planning for an extension. Look around and ask yourself what do you want and what would make your home more enjoyable for you and your family.

Another valid point that Patty with Advanced Contracting mentioned, was that with the snow storms that the D.C. area recently got bombarded with she estimated that there may be significant damage with the huge amount of snow that the area got hit with. “If there was damage to your home or building—such as leaks and so forth—it’s better to get the repair work done right away before it causes bigger problems,” she said.

As you move forward with your plans it is important to seek professional help and find the best contractor for your project. Please keep in mind that the best contractor is most likely not the cheapest. To prepare for your project it will be beneficial for you to clarify your needs, wants, and goals. In addition you should make a list of any concerns you have for your project. A professional National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) home remodeler will assist you in clarifying all issues regarding your project.

“We find that looking for the question behind the question brings us closer to the needs of the homeowner,” Jonas with CARNEMARK said. “It is easy to assume you understand, but going the extra step ensures a deeper understanding of the issues. This leverages the creativity a remodeler can apply to the issues and creates a richer value by focusing the budget on the real priorities.”

Keep in mind that just as there are differences in projects, there are many differences in contractors. Of course you want to make sure that the company or individual you decide to work with is licensed and



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF: CARNEMARK SYSTEMS+DESIGN, INC. © MORGAN HOWARTH

insured, but there are other differences as well. For example, if you want to renovate your kitchen you would want to choose someone who specializes in kitchens. Even beyond that there are many differences. Some contractors have more expertise in different areas of construction. Some specialize in doing simple, straightforward work, while others specialize in designing the project around your needs. It is important for you to determine who will best suit your specific needs. Depending on the size of your project you could be dealing with your contractor for an extended period of time. Therefore it is very important that he is willing to listen and communicate.

Carnemark suggests, “Once you narrow down the type of company that makes sense for you, go with the team that makes you feel most comfortable in your relationship with them. When the relationship is built on integrity and trust, magical things happen and the projects turn out even better than you can imagine.”

Communication is critical to a successful outcome, whether your project is a small enhancement or a major home improvement. It starts with the professional remodeler asking the right questions and listening to your answers. It includes his ability to understand your needs, wants, and goals. It also includes his ability to rapidly assess the project and create a proposal that is understandable without being overly complicated. These abilities encompass a sense of caring and honesty and the willingness to do what it takes to satisfy you. Just as you

want to work with a contractor who is willing to communicate to you, it is equally important that you communicate openly and honestly to him. With good communication you will end up with a successful project, a project that satisfies your hopes and dreams, and a project that your contractor will be proud of.

Congratulations on making the decision to take charge of your life and to create the home of your dreams.

Editor’s Note: Lorraine Hart is the President of Ideal Consulting Services, a consulting firm with offices in NY and Texas. Lorraine is a past president of the NYC, Long Island Chapter of NARI.

Sources for This Article:

Author: Lorraine Hart

President Ideal Consulting Services, Inc.
516-826-6725
www.IdealConsulting.net

Advanced Contracting, Inc.

Contact: Patty Iacone
34301 Williams Gap Road
Round Hill, VA 20141
703-581-1581

CARNEMARK systems+design, inc.

Contact: Jonas Carnemark, CR, CKD
7500 Old Georgetown Road
Plaza Terrace
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-657-5000
www.carnemark.com

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov