

Here is what an architect gets paid for



Traditionally, architects provided full services, which I consider "cradle to grave" involvement. These services are divided into five phases: schematic design, design development, construction documents, bidding and negotiation, and construction administration.

- Design development is the continued refinement of the first phase with initial material selections and more refined sizing of the design elements.
- Construction documents are the blueprints and specifications for the project - which includes the lighting fixtures, finish plumbing fixtures and window data.
- Bidding and negotiation actually begins during the design development phase when the work of two or three builders is reviewed. The architect will talk with past clients to determine whether the builder can provide the right kind of product at the right price. The architect also helps in the contract negotiations between owner and general contractor by making substitutions that allow the contract price to more closely match the client's intended budget.
- Administration (not supervision) of the construction contract makes the project run smoothly.

There are literally thousands of issues that wind up getting resolved during construction. In addition, liability issues may necessitate the architect's involvement during construction. Clients frequently believe they can do this work themselves. If a client has an extensive background in residential construction, the ability to negotiate without threatening non-payment, the freedom to visit the job site during the hours of construction twice or more per week and take an unlimited number of phone calls, I might agree: Something will get built... sometime. But, when it comes to quality, architects can help decide what is acceptable. They also have the ability to move the construction process along and protect the homeowner from undue discomfort from the construction process.

Fees for such residential full services range from 7-15 percent of the cost of construction. The fee is based upon two factors: overhead and degree of competency - some offices are more expensive to run than others, and Michael Jordan gets paid more than most other basketball players for a good reason. Not all architects sell full services. Such firms will have lower fees than the full-service firms, but they are aware the service being provided is not complete. As a consumer, you must find out what services are included in a proposal for work before selecting an architect.

Those who shop at Neiman Marcus do not shop at The Gap for the same clothes, and it would be unfair to make price comparisons between the two retailers. Fee shopping for an architect is as dangerous as fee shopping for a doctor, and the few percentage point difference between the right and the wrong architect will be a mistake that you will never forgive yourself for. If the fee difference is a deal maker or breaker, you are playing with fire in undertaking the project in the first place.

It's more significant whether you as a client like the work of a potential architect, not whether your neighbor liked the firm or that the architect belongs to the same church. You must like the architect because of creative reasons - because you like how he solved problems and uses materials.

When all is said and done and the last bit of dust has settled, the only thing that is constantly present is the design and the quality of the construction. The old adage goes something like "Long after price is forgotten quality remains."

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Fight winter's dry air syndrome with home humidifier

Your favorite skin moisturizer this winter could come in a large box from your heating contractor rather than in an expensive jar from the cosmetics counter.

"Skin care experts often recommend humidity as an important part of a strategy to keep your skin looking and feeling smooth and young," said Sean McCarthy, a spokesperson for Research Products Corporation, the maker of Aprilaire humidifiers.

"Several medical studies have emphasized the importance of indoor humidity to prevent dry skin and to keep skin feeling young."

"During the heating season, your home literally can become drier than Death Valley - down to 13 percent relative humidity," McCarthy explained. "That super-dry air sucks moisture from any available source - including you. That is what causes

dry skin, chapped lips and 'winter itch,' as well as a parched nose and throat and all the other discomforts associated with dry air syndrome."

To minimize damage to skin, medical studies recommend:

- Use moisturizing ointments, especially on your face and hands, immediately after bathing to lock moisture in.
- Take warm showers rather than hot baths. Hot water robs

the skin of protective natural oils.

- Keep the relative humidity between 30-50 percent.

The best way to get the right humidity all the time is to use a whole house humidifier equipped with an automatic humidistat, McCarthy said. Consumer Reports magazine recently rated the Aprilaire Temperature Compensating Humidistat the best at maintaining a steady level of relative humidity.

Whole-house humidifiers are convenient because they have no reservoir that needs frequent filling and cleaning. They also have a large-enough evaporative surface to maintain recommended levels of humidity throughout the entire home, rather than just one room.

To learn more about how to maintain a comfortable level of

humidity in your home, call the Consumer Information Department at Research Products Corporation at 1-800-545-2219. Ask for the free brochure, Humidification Facts.

Or see the Research Products page on the Internet at <http://www.aprilaire.com>

Consumers demand cordless tools

Cordless power tools, more than ever before, are in demand by do-it-yourselfers. Nothing is more frustrating than having an electrical cord too short to reach a project. And clumsy extension cords add problems of their own.

Consumers prefer cordless tools because they are convenient and easy-to-use. Battery technology

has come a long way in recent years, allowing batteries to charge faster, run more powerfully and hold their power longer. But usually different batteries are required for different tools, and that can be a hassle.

Black & Decker has come up with a solution for do-it-yourselfers by creating a family of cord-

less power tools that have one thing in common - batteries. The VersaPak Interchangeable Battery System is a new line of power tools and outdoor products that run off the VersaPak battery.

"We developed the VersaPak System based on consumer research," says John Constantine, director of product development.

"Consumers told us that, although they wanted the benefits of a battery system, they wanted each product to stand alone."

Designed to be durable, the VersaPak battery can be recharged more than 300 times. Also, the battery has no memory cells and can be fully recharged before the charge has completely run out.

Institute gives helpful hints on caring for carpet

The right carpet can enhance a design scheme, but the daily treatment your carpet receives can break your heart. What other home furnishing is walked all over?

Regular care on your part helps counter the abuse your carpet suffers and helps it retain its luster and beauty.

Carpet care consists of four kinds of cleaning: daily to weekly maintenance, spill control, emergency spill removal and deep cleaning.

For regular maintenance, it's essential to vacuum often, using a well-functioning vacuum cleaner, with an enclosed, efficient, dust-catching bag to prolong the life of your carpet.

Most carpet available today has been treated for stain resistance and soil retardance, but "stain resistant" does not necessarily mean "stain proof." The longer a spot is

allowed to remain on any carpet, the more difficult it will be to remove.

Take preventative measures to keep your carpet from coming in contact with makeup, pesticides, disinfectants, iodine, mustard, oven cleaner and plant food products because these stains generally cannot be removed.

In other cases, follow these basic procedures for emergency spot removal:

- Act quickly and removed the spot before it dries.
- Blot liquids with a white, absorbent cloth or paper towel. Scoop up semi-solids with a spoon. For solids, break up and vacuum as much as possible.
- Pretest spot removal solutions in an inconspicuous area.
- When using a cleaning solution, apply a small amount, work it in gently from the edges of the spot

to the center. Blot thoroughly. Don't rub.

- Repeat procedure with clean water and blot, absorbing moisture with paper towels, weighted down by a non-staining glass or ceramic object. When dry, vacuum or brush pile to restore texture.
- If the spot is not removed, call a professional carpet cleaner.

At least once every 18 months, consider deep cleaning your carpet or asking an expert to do it.

The Carpet and Rug Institute offers a free brochure with hints on caring for your carpet. The brochure includes a chart showing ways to clean everyday spills with some common household solutions. Contact the Carpet and Rug Institute toll-free at 1-800-882-8846.

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