

HOME BUYERS GUIDE:

Selecting a Home Builder – 6 Critical Factors



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#1

Use the top-down approach

Some people start at the bottom and work their way up when choosing a home builder. It sounds like a bad idea and it generally is. The funny thing is most people don't even realize they are doing it. What they do is go out to a multitude of builders and ask only about the cost to build a home. Once they have collected their information, they go and meet with the builders presenting the lowest prices and select a builder from there.

Why settle for less? Why not start with the best builder all around and then bring out your yardstick? You're much better off finding the best builders you can and then determining if they're a good match based on your personal needs in regards to location, timing, price and any other factors that are important to you. The top-down approach is the way to go if you want to avoid second-guessing your decision. It's cliché but it's true — you get what you pay for.

#2

Look for proven quality

We hate to break it to you, but **EVERY** home builder says they build top-quality homes. Make sure they're not all talk and no action. Ask them how they prove they build to the highest standards.

Some of the ways you can verify their quality include:

- Ask them to show you what kind of quality controls/checks are in place that go above and beyond just relying on the trades doing a good job.
- Ask the home builder about their new home warranty claims record. Have they had claims against them? What was the ruling on the claims?
- Talk to the trades. If you know anyone in the residential construction industry, ask them about the reputation of the home builder you are researching. Saskatoon is a small city. Often the trades know who the good quality builders are.

#3

What is the love factor?

Ok. “Love” might be a bit strong of a description, but look into how great the builder’s reputation is in the community. Once you have a builder in mind, ask them if they can provide testimonials or let you speak with a previous client. Ask your friends, family, colleagues and neighbours if they have heard a lot of “love” about the builder.

#4

Remember home building is a service

The construction aspect of a new home is obviously important. There is no doubt about it. However, some people fail to realize that they should be looking at their new home project as a package deal – with both a product *and* a service being offered.

Its fine to look at the product (size, finishing, price) only when you are comparing finished homes to one another. It’s not quite that simple when you are looking to build a new home from scratch.

You’re entering - what can be - a long relationship with a home-building company. Don’t stop at pricing, finishes and square footage. Ask about how they deliver top notch service before, during, and after construction is complete. Services to inquire about include: design, finishing selection, construction and warranty services. After all, you’re not just buying a home, you’re buying a package of services that can help simplify and streamline your whole home building experience.

#5

Know what's in your home

Your home builder should be an open book, answering all your questions in regards to costs and what they cover. Make sure you know exactly what's included in the quote and in your new home. **All too often we hear of builders providing little to no details in a quote and homeowners assuming they are getting what they want.** This can result in skyrocketing costs and/or finishing details that are lower quality than expected. Some examples of things to ask about are:

- a. *Allowances*: Are they appropriate for what you want in the home?
- b. *Detailed specifications*: Are you given a full list of the house specifications?
- c. *GST*: Is it included in the price or do you have to pay GST on top of the quote?

#6

What does your gut tell you?

In the end, your decision should just feel “right” for you. We suggest you tour through one or more of the builder's homes to get a feel for the quality, atmosphere, and style. You can also evaluate what your personal experience has been like in your interactions with the builder so far. What does your gut tell you after you piece all of the information together?

A few final words...

There are many fly-by-night home builders in Saskatoon, and conversely, there are companies who may focus on quantity over quality. It's important to be able to identify the dedicated and professional companies that are building homes for all the right reasons.

Your home is a significant investment and choosing a home builder is a big decision — one that deserves your time and attention. The payoff will be finding the perfect fit for you. **Love coming home.**