

How To

Select the right window company

IT'S NO SECRET that one of the most effective ways to increase the resale value of your home is to have thermally efficient double-pane vinyl windows.

The large demand for replacement windows has meant a boost in businesses, but more window companies means it's harder to ensure you choose the right company.

Sales representatives can be very charismatic and often homeowners who decide to replace old drafty windows can end up more confused after two or three bids than they were to begin with.

When it comes to big purchases like replacement windows, it is imperative to make decisions based on verifiable facts, not "what the sales person said."

A sales person working for a good company should have little reason to misrepresent facts.

And don't forget that you get what you pay for. Beware of that ridiculously low bid. The repairs down the road can add up.

Subcontracting is also something to look out for. Though there are plenty of good subcontractors out there, the safer bet is to find a company that uses their own employees. If a company has their own employees, they must have worker's comp. Ask to see copies of current insurance as well. This is important so that you minimize your risk if a worker gets hurt on your property.

Though rare, there are some companies out there who make the windows, sell them and install them. The manufacturing plant, dealer and installation are all one company. This can be a real plus since there can be no finger pointing and there is one place to call for any and all issues.

There are quite a few things consumers can check to minimize their risks:

- ▶ **CSLB** - The California Contractors State License Board. You can easily pull up the contractor's license number or business name and see if the facts make sense. Licenses are issued in sequence so the higher the contractor's license

number is, the newer the business is. The CSLB page tells you what year the license was issued. Beware of companies that claim they have been around for a long time but the facts show something different. Also, look for the name that the license is issued to. Too often companies that lose their license will turn around and pay another contractor for the use of their license. Make sure the contractor's license is under the company name that you are dealing with. You can also see if the company you are dealing with has worker's comp on the same CSLB page.

- ▶ **BBB** - The Better Business Bureau - is a national consumer organization that has been around since 1912. A trustworthy organization with the intent to provide good service will not hesitate to register with the BBB so that customers have access to their track record.

- ▶ **Trade magazines** like "Qualified Remodeler" can help the consumer verify facts regarding company size and how much work that company truly does.

- ▶ **Neighbors and friends** - Ask neighbors, friends and work associates for their experiences with a company. These sources are much better than getting references from the company you are checking since that company is not likely to refer you to someone that is not happy.

- ▶ **Company warranties** - Ask for a copy and read it.

- ▶ **Company Web page** - Visit the company's Web site.

- ▶ **Products** - Ask to see the actual product. Every sales representative should have a small window sample to show customers so that you can see what you are getting. Pictures or little corner cutouts alone can be deceiving.

For more information about selecting the right window company, contact Brothers Home Improvement, Inc. at www.brothershomeimp.com. Or you can call them at (510) 498-5987, (925) 828-5789 or (800) 672-3777.

TIPS

- ▶ **Make decisions based on facts, not on what the salesperson says.**

- ▶ **A salesperson working with a good company will provide the customer with the knowledge they need to make an educated decision about their windows.**

- ▶ **You get what you pay for. If a bid seems too good to be true, it probably is.**

- ▶ **It is better to go with a company that sells and installs the windows than with a subcontractor. That way, there is one company to call if something goes wrong.**

- ▶ **Do background research on the company. Verify the company's license, warranties, insurance and check to see if they are registered with the Better Business Bureau.**

- ▶ **One of the best ways to find a quality window company is by word of mouth. Trust your friends and neighbors and not the company's list of "satisfied customers" who offer testimonials about the quality of the business' work.**

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