

The pro's and con's of renovating a house



We are renovating our home at the moment. It was one of those purchases (a house that needs a lot of doing up), which seemed like a good idea at the time (nice area and cheap house), that suddenly did not seem like such a good idea once we actually started on the work and realised how much there is to do and how much it is actually going to cost.

I am project managing the renovations. I will be upfront. I do not know one end of a screwdriver from the other, so I have to do a lot of research before meeting anyone who will be taking our hard earned cash off of us. I have already been ripped off by one aggressive tradesman when my husband was away, so I am ultra-cautious now.

Over the last 3 weeks I have had the dubious pleasure of meeting a dozen double glazing salesmen. I spent 3 days reading up on double glazing options (uPVC, Aluminium or Thermally Broken Aluminium), learning the terminology used, and the differences between filling the

glass with argon gas and air. I also visited a few showrooms to have a look at locking mechanisms. Whilst there I managed to avoid making rude jokes about the length of "extrusions" which left me feeling quite proud of myself!

I had the salespeople round whilst the children were at school. It made it significantly easier to focus on them, rather than have to do riot control as well. I expected a confident sales pitch, a demonstration of the product and a list of reasons why I should give them my business, rather than give it to the company down the road from them.

I was shocked. Every single salesperson was a man, none of them showed up with a demonstration model (usually just a corner to show you what the insides look like) and almost all of them had an issue with dealing with a woman.

One chap asked where my husband was as he said he did not like to do quotes if "the man of the house is not here to make the decision". Another told me that he would send me a quote and if I had any questions, to get my husband to call him. I asked why I could not call him myself and he turned round and said, "I would not want you worrying your pretty little head about difficult things like this." I kid you not. I wonder what he would have said if I turned round and said, "I'm gay. My wife will call you when she gets home"?

The quotes took up to a week to come in. It was surprising how many had ignored what I had asked for and quoted based on what they wanted to sell. One person quoted for tilt and turn windows rather than awnings (doubling the price) and another quoted for aluminium rather than commercial grade thermally broken aluminium. When I phoned and queried it I was told that I did not know what I was talking about and could not possibly want commercial grade thermally broken aluminium.

We finally settled on uPVC. The person who won the business was not the cheapest, but one of only two men who treated me with respect and confidently answered my questions, with no reference to needing to meet or talk to my other half. He also quoted on what I had asked for.

As for me, I have identified a gap in the market and I am considering moving into the double glazing business. It strikes me that all I would have to do to win the business is to have a good product, be willing to show how it works and to treat my potential customers with respect. Sales people take note.

Carolyn