

Top 5 Most Misunderstood Remodeling Terms

—Remodeling Guide—



More of What You Need to Know to Successfully
Plan for a Home Remodel

Terms that can cause chaos, frustration & disaster

What You Need to Know to Successfully Plan for a Home Remodel

By John Murphy

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Misunderstandings can happen long before the work begins.

Actual phone call, circa 2016:

Murphy Bros: "Murphy Bros. how can I help you today?"

Homeowner: "Hi, I'd like to redo my attic in crystal."

Murphy Bros: "That's going to be pretty expensive, especially for an attic, and I don't even know if you can structural apply crystal to..."

Homeowner: "No, no, *(laughter)* I live in Crystal."

Murphy Bros: "Oh, well, that changes things."

All of us experience some level of frustration during any remodeling project. Most often this is the result of misunderstandings or an UNMET EXPECTATION, whether valid or not, shared or not, realistic or not...

*What
we think we
know that just
isn't so*



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Homeowner: "What gives?! The schedule says your guy would be here at 9:00 am. It's already 9:03!"

Company: "We just heard he was hit by a bus, so he may be a little late."



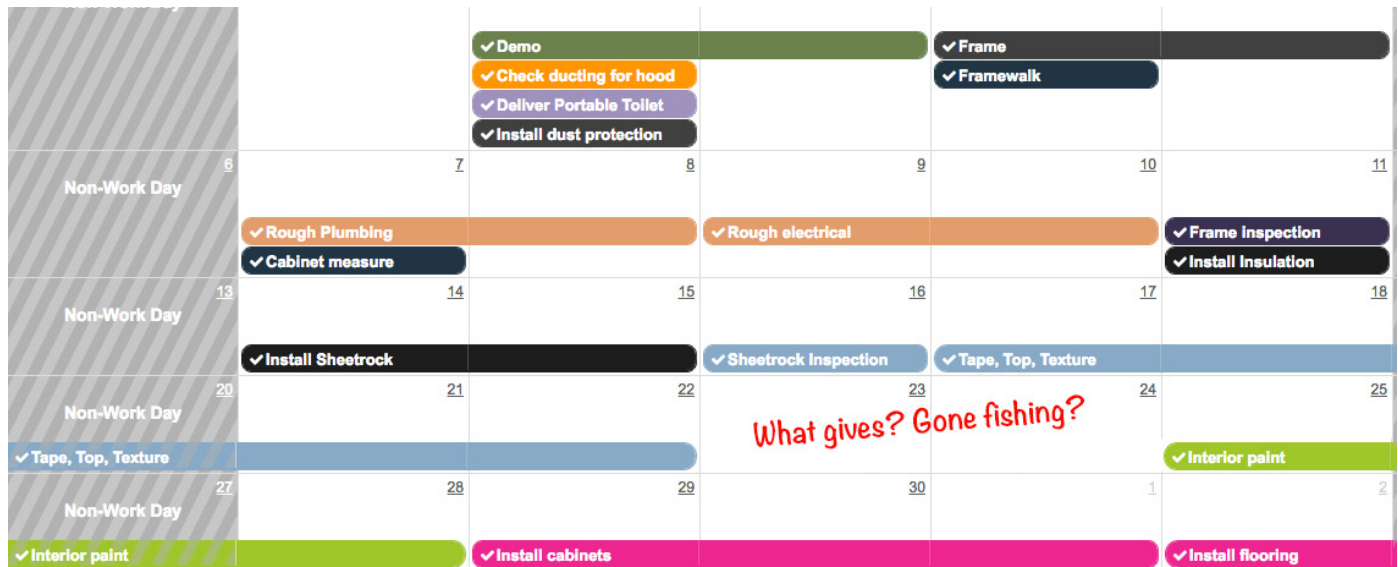
So to clarify those expectations and keep misunderstandings from happening, here's what we really mean when we talk about these top 5 terms...

The Production Schedule is...



- A. The perfect plan on a Monday that will not survive to Friday.
- B. The perfect plan on a Monday that should not change, ever, period.
- C. Not a performance contract.
- D. A managed, fluid plan capable of handling any emergency, change, or delay and still get the job done.

If you answered 'A', you're a moderately jaded project manager who has been doing this for a while. If you answered 'B', we are all going to be disappointed (okay, miserable). Answer 'C', is actually correct, and dispels the common assumption that the schedule is an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Answer 'D' is actual reality, and when trusted, the road to true inner peace.





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*The
Schedule
will Change
because life is
unpredictable*

No plan survives the unpredictable nature of weather, people and the unknown behind every wall. So when something on the schedule changes or doesn't happen within the exact time frames on the calendar, THAT IS NORMAL.

We use the production schedule to coordinate dozens of people on hundreds of jobs, every day, throughout the year. IT WILL CHANGE. If you approve a change order to alter a paint color, or a material selection, the schedule will change to accommodate.

There may even be a several days (see above) when people or materials aren't available to work on your job. And no we didn't go fishing and our commitment to getting the job done right is still solidly intact.

The production schedule is a flexible plan that will change.

It will change and I'm okay with it. It will change and I'm okay it.
It will change and I'm okay with it. It will change and I'm okay it.
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It will change and I'm okay with it. It will change and I'm okay it.
It will change and I'm okay with it. Is it time for lunch yet?



Allowances are...

- A. The Devil.
- B. Used all too often out of frustration, to temporarily overcome homeowner indecision, in order to get a contract signed and a project moving forward.
- C. An inadequate sum of money set aside to help homeowners temporarily avoid the eventual truth that their budget isn't adequate.
- D. A best guess sum set aside to cover what can't be known at contract signing.
- E. What was never enough when you were a kid.

Answer 'A' is true because of answers 'B' & 'C'. Answer 'D' is the commonly accepted use of the term. Answer 'E' is true for all kids everywhere.

*All
too often
allowances
are overused
as a license
for
indecision*



Most remodels have some allowances, which is basically a sum of money set aside to cover unspecified items. Why? Since remodeling is a fluid enterprise, there will always be some things that can't be known until a wall is torn into, or selections like fixtures and paint that must wait for pricing and availability. However, all too often "allowances" are over used beyond the contract as a license for



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*Allowances
should be the
exception to
the rule*



indecision or self-delusion regarding the actual cost of things—The Devil. There is nothing worse than having your remodel (and your dreams) come to a crashing halt after weeks or months of planning because you finally have to choose between what you can afford, laminate countertops, and what you really want, Cambria.

The take away here? Allowances in the early stages are expected, but should be limited. If they are the rule late in the game you are probably heading for trouble.



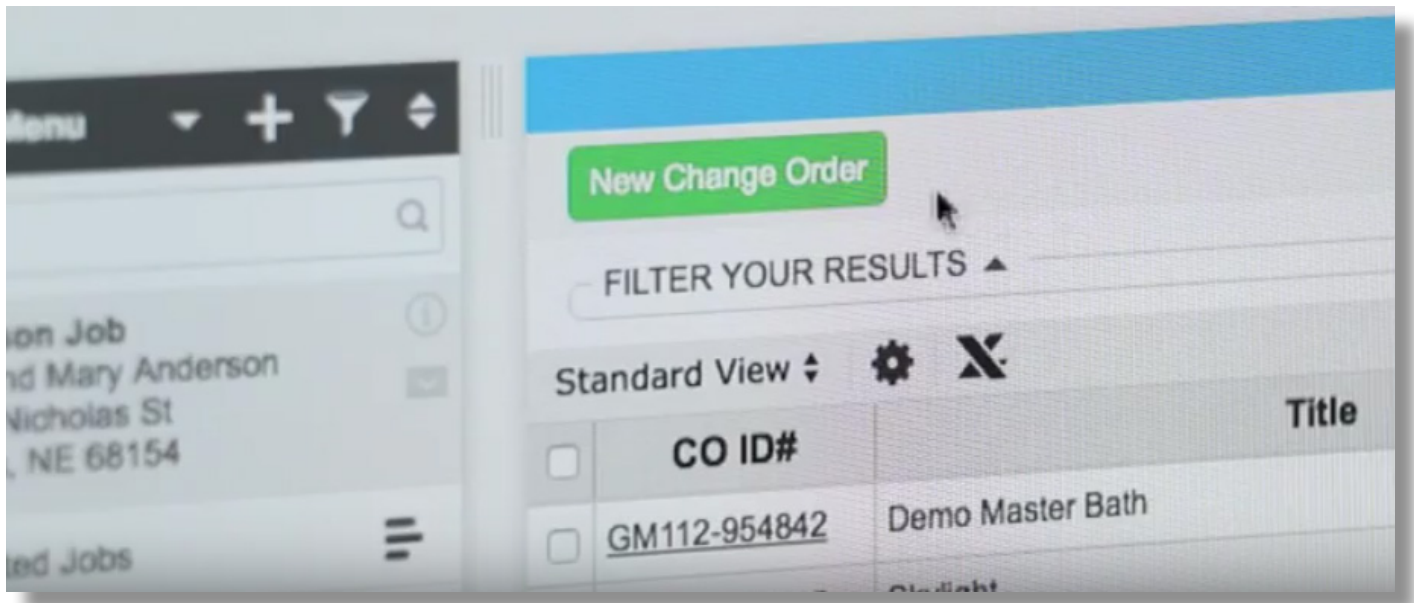
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Change Orders are...

- A. The Devil's handmaiden.
- B. How you go from stained to painted cabinets with a swipe of your forefinger.
- C. How you go from a basement floor update to a 10-lane bowling alley.
- D. A document, which modifies the plans and specifications and/or the price of the construction contract, AFTER the contract is signed.

Answer 'A' is true because just as with allowances, change orders can also be abused for the same reasons. Answer 'B' is one of the most common change orders that can be made without significant changes to the project schedule IF MADE BEFORE the stain is applied. Answer 'C' is plain crazy but illustrates how important the design phase is to a low-change order remodel. 'D' of course is the generic industry accepted definition.





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*Change
orders can
impact the
design, the
contract and
the schedule.*



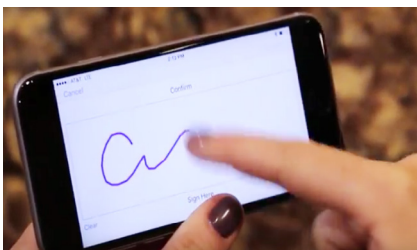
Homeowner: “I found the countertops I want, but on second thought I think the cabinets would look better painted rather than stained.”

Designer: “I see. Well, Stephanie, I can send you a digital change order through our BuilderTrend software, but per our schedule, we just got done staining them, sooo this will come close to doubling the cost and delay the project by several weeks at least.”

Homeowner: “On third thought, I think they’ll look just fine.”

While change orders are there to document agreed changes to the signed contract, they should be carefully considered and limited to changes that are necessary to achieve the desired goal of the remodel that could not be foreseen prior to contract.

The beauty of conducting a change order with today’s technology is you can do it in a few second with your finger and your phone. Ironically, this is also the scariest thing about it because significant change orders can also impact the design, the contract and the schedule.





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Design is...



- A. The process of discovering your new favorite wall color.
- B. The timely, ordered, collaborative efforts with you and our team to program a detailed feasible plan & budget reflecting your desired aesthetics, functionality and lifestyle.
- C. The heroic act of trusting someone you barely know with a lot of money resulting in dramatic changes to your home you will have to live with everyday.
- D. All of the above.

Answer 'D' is correct because all are in play.





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Designer: "Here's the finish on the cabinets I recommend, but do you prefer the lighter or darker shading for the trim?"

Homeowner: "Yes."

*Perfection is
the enemy of
progress.*

*The pursuit
of excellence
is the antidote
for both.*



Design is that 8-12 week period, depending on the scope of the project even longer, where we, as your designer, go from fan, to player, to coach and back again, and again, and again.

We are your fan in that we share and support your dreams for what your remodel can be; and a player in that we collaborate with you in making decisions; and a coach in directing what has to happen for it all to work out. All that takes time. In most cases quite a lot of it to create the plan, nail down the pricing and selection options.

Design is a lot of work, both tedious and creative. It also requires experience. That's why we cannot do it for free and still remain in business. It is also why the design phase cannot go on forever in hopes of reaching perfection. For in the design/build world, perfection is the enemy of progress, while the pursuit of excellence is the antidote for both.





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Free Estimates are...



- A. Same as a free lunch—no such thing.
- B. The approach used by unscrupulous contractors to gain access to your checkbook.
- C. The approach used inexperienced contractors, who will be out of business very soon, along with their warranty.
- D. Something worth what you paid for it.
- E. All of the above.

The answer is 'E' of course.

The truth of the matter is the term “estimate”, which really means “free estimate”, doesn’t really work in the design/build world. It can work for simple, single product installations, like roofs or siding, but the subjective complexity we deal with in a kitchen, bath or addition remodel that must involve design work, cannot adequately be achieved with the same approach used to fix your car.



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Instead, we can offer point to recent ranges based on similar projects and our 41 years of experience, so you can decide if you should take the next step to design. By using our 2-step “design” approach we develop your project scope, required resources and availabilities and actual costs resulting in a budget based on detailed plans and selections. That can take dozen’s if not hundreds of hours, depending on complexity.

Your design delivers much, much more than an estimate of guesses—it is the essential foundation of your remodel and worth every penny.