

## *“Experience the Difference”*

### BUILDING SUCCESS 101

Q: *What is R-value?*

A: R-value is a measure of energy efficiency. The higher the R-value of the insulation, windows, and even a home's structure, the better the house is able to block the transfer of unwanted hot or cold air through walls and ceiling. Residents of homes with high R-values experience far less variation in temperature—and enjoy lower energy bills—by not having to run a furnace or air conditioner continuously to keep the house comfortable.



Forward to Friend

## What does a builder actually do?

A lot of people don't understand the sheer complexity of the builder's job and the systems required to build a house from scratch.

Many analogies have been used to describe the professional builder: the conductor of an orchestra, the captain of a ship, even a general executing a military campaign. The point is that the builder is the one who must coordinate the innumerable players and products needed to transform a set of two-dimensional drawings into a finished home. The builder has to make sure that everything happens just when it's supposed to, and that the end result is exactly what the clients envisioned.

Ideally, this responsibility begins well before the first shovel breaks ground. One advantage to choosing a builder early in the design process is that the builder can make sure the home can be built in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. Bringing on a builder at this early stage can yield significant cost savings.

Once the plans are complete, the builder has to work with local zoning and code authorities to secure the proper permits. Professional builders have a thorough understanding of building codes, as well as good working relationships with local authorities. This is another big plus to hiring a pro: the building department is likely to scrutinize more closely a permit application submitted by a homeowner, or even by a small building company, than one submitted by an established professional contractor with a reputation for solid management and quality work.

Professional builders also have close relationships with quality subcontractors. And because the builder is a source of ongoing work for those contractors, prices offered to the builder will likely be less than prices offered to anyone else.

Once the project is under way, the builder's management skills really make a difference. These skills include:

- Keeping the job on schedule by ensuring that all workers and materials show up at exactly the right time. Construction timetables can change quite often, with causes that range from bad weather to late deliveries. The time and organization required for the builder to constantly adjust everyone's schedules is something homeowners seldom see.

- Overseeing the job to guarantee that all trades deliver quality work. The builder knows enough about each specific trade, and has a good enough relationship with each subcontractor, to make sure things get done right. For example, if it's too cold to pour a concrete slab, the builder will have the knowledge and authority to put it on hold even if the concrete contractor is tempted to move ahead.
- Solving and preventing problems. A new custom home is an extremely complex undertaking with a million things that can go wrong. Having a professional builder in charge of solving problems takes a lot of stress off the homeowners.
- Completing the punch list at the end of the project. Everyone has heard stories of unprofessional contractors who left a job with a list of small things undone. The professional builder has the resources to make sure that everything is complete before the key is turned over.

Finally, from start to finish the builder protects the homeowner by carrying the needed licenses and insurance policies and confirming that everyone else on the job is similarly covered.

Building a home is not a seat-of-the pants endeavor. Good builders have well-honed management systems for making it all happen. These systems are an important part of the professional builder's value.

Warm Regards,

*Todd*

Todd Gaul  
President and Owner  
**Designer Builders, Inc.**  
935 Dougherty Road  
Aiken, SC 29803

**(803) 642-8340 - Phone**  
[email@designerbuilders.com](mailto:email@designerbuilders.com)



[www.designerbuilders.com](http://www.designerbuilders.com)

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