



“Experience the Difference”

BUILDING SUCCESS 101

Q: How durable are today's homes?

A: New or newly remodeled homes can be as durable as older ones, but they must be correctly detailed. There is less room for error than in the past, thanks to code-mandated insulation and air sealing for new buildings and remodels. This reduced tolerance is one reason great contractors have clear standards for quality assurance.



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Quality Is No Accident

The best builders approach it systematically

What separates great builders from good ones? A lot of things do, but part of the answer is that great builders are obsessive about small details. And taken together, those small details leave a big impression.

Most builders really want to do good work for their customers. They strive to craft high-quality homes and respond quickly if the customer has a serious problem like a leak after move-in. At the same time, many lack formal systems for finding and correcting small errors during construction and for making sure they don't happen in the future.

Unfortunately, those small errors generate the most complaints. These range from minor comfort issues (such as anemic airflow from a heating register) to annoyances (a stairway tread that squeaks). Issues like these are far from minor to customers, however: they play a big part in how happy customers are with their new home.

Industry research has found that builders who consistently avoid such problems are systematic about quality. One example comes from an August 2017 article in *Professional Builder* magazine. After interviewing builders around the United States, they found that while most lack formal QA (quality assurance) programs, those who had put such a program in place were quickly rewarded with steep reductions in warranty claims. One builder reported 70 percent fewer claims after just two years.

It's no surprise that those builders' customers are also more likely to refer them to friends, family and colleagues.

This begs the question of what a QA program includes. Most people assume it's all about inspecting the work, but while inspections play a big role they're not the whole story. Someone in the company needs to review the data from every inspection and make sure the underlying issues get corrected. In other words, QA is a proactive effort—a forward-looking way to help the builder achieve ongoing quality gains.

There's no "right" way to implement QA—you can buy software written for this purpose, but simple checklists can be just as effective. Ultimately, it comes down to a mindset, and a commitment.

The mindset shows up in a lot of ways. For instance, quality-driven builders have clearly written and communicated expectations for workers and trade contractors, and they are diligent about making sure those expectations get met. They tend to have clutter-free jobsites with neatly stacked materials—signs of an efficient and safety-conscious company that pays attention to detail. They also have a protocol for identifying trends, so if a new crew is having trouble flashing the windows correctly, the site manager will quickly find out and get them up to speed.

The *Professional Builder* article also reported that builders who reap the most rewards from their QA efforts pursue collaborative relationships with trade contractors and seek their advice on how to improve. This helps build a company culture that encourages excellence—a culture that attracts contractors and employees who do the best work.

The end result is more satisfied customers. And since so few builders have systematic QA programs, those who do really stand out. They're the builders you want to work with.

Warm Regards,

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