

On Time, Guaranteed

Remodeler and client working together to make the completion date means fewer delays.

Customers are notoriously quick to complain if a project isn't completed on time. But what if they took some responsibility for the process? A new on-time guarantee offered by BOWA Builders in McLean, Va., uses exactly that tactic: The remodeler promises substantial completion by the agreed-on date and offers the client airfare and up to a week's stay at a luxury resort if it misses that deadline. Key to the guarantee is that clients sign a contract addendum, committing themselves to an explicit scope of work. They promise to make their selections by specific dates, and a limit is set on changes during the job. Any project with a definable scope of work is eligible for the guarantee.

"It's essentially a partnership," says BOWA president Josh Baker. "We and our clients work together as a team to ensure that selections are made in a timely fashion and that the scope of work is clearly defined."



The guarantee functions as a good communication tool, Baker explains. "It's something that people want. You get buy-in on critical aspects."

Sometimes, in talking about the guarantee, BOWA learns that clients value flexibility over a timely completion. They envision a looser scope of work and actually plan on making changes during the production process.

The guarantee also works as an educational tool, Baker says. For example, a client might say something like, "I don't understand why I need to select the plumbing fixtures before the project starts." Then the contractor explains why the choice has to be made now, talking about water pressure requirements and the size of the rough-in. From that discussion, clients learn that their decisions have effects that they wouldn't have anticipated.

The program has been in place for about six months, and the response so far has been good, Baker says. "People are excited about it." Meanwhile, BOWA takes on less risk, the project is profitable faster, and the product is better.

Although the contractor hasn't had to give away any vacations yet, Baker says he wishes he could. "I would love to miss by a day and honor our promise."

Diane Kiftower is a freelance writer in Rockville, Md.

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—Josh Baker, president, BOWA Builders