

Your Own Homes Improvement Outline

(One for the Ladies)

This report is written for those people who may want to improve or update their own home so along those lines, I would like to give you an overview of the factors that may lead you in creating a more effective and successful home improvement project or plan of your own.

Let me begin by saying what a home improvement plan will *not* do! I have seen this happen more than once, so I will say this now. A home improvement project, addition, upgrade, remodel, or makeover will not make up for a troubled marriage. So for those that think home improvement may save a marriage, I'm telling you now that it will add more stress and it is a poor substitute for proper counseling.

With that said, when you see a home being sold due to a divorce, take a good look at the house because you may see evidence of a great remodel job. However, the marriage still failed. The scenario above leads into other areas of home remodel, acquisition and selling points. Gentlemen, pay attention here! It is generally recognized that women are responsible for 80% of all decisions on whether or not to purchase a particular home.

So what influences the ladies in their decisions concerning home purchases and remodeling? By far the two biggest items are the kitchen and the bath. If I had to choose one or the other, I believe I would look at which area was in need of the remodel more, while at the same time looking at the costs of both options.

As for the men, what do they want? They would be happy with a large garage/workshop plus a secluded den or office to carry on with business or to retreat to the solitude of a "cave." Men, as we can see, really don't spend as much time feathering the nest so as a result we see that contrary to popular belief, men really tend to follow the female's lead.

Generally speaking, you'll find that men don't pay much attention to draperies, window treatments, flower boxes, state of the art appliances, Jacuzzi tubs, well-lit bathrooms, large closets or floral patterns of any kind. They often prefer brown and gray *everything*, with a big garage, a shed, a sprinkler system and a privacy fenced back yard for barbeques and lounging in private. Men also like low maintenance houses so they aren't constantly being asked to fix or repair things. If left up to the men to decide, you would find that faucets, toilets, sinks, baths, floors, mirrors, cabinetry, appliances and furnishings would tend to be favored by their industrial strength qualities as opposed to beauty.

Those are general observations and many times they will not apply. However, by keeping them in mind and using the 80/20 rule, they may help in the decision making process. So now using what we know, it would be wise to slant your remodel towards the light and bright feminine side of life. It seems to make sense that if the women are the decision makers then we should let them decide on what really needs attention first!

Let's look at *the kitchen* first. Can you paint or refinish the cabinetry and change the knobs and handles to get the new look? Would new Formica laminate over the old counter tops with a matching backsplash do the trick? Maybe a white ceramic sink with a new faucet will achieve the desired effect. Quite possibly you may decide to rip it all out. If that is the case, then paint the walls and consider tiling the floor also. Often times, adding some minor electrical and lighting upgrades will help transform and modernize the entire effort. Don't forget the new built in dishwasher and plumbing as well.

Custom cabinets, if designed, built and installed by a local reputable cabinetmaker with references and a picture book of previous work done, are often very attractive in price and quality. I use craftsmen with low overhead who work on one job at a time. Often I will ask them to make, in addition to the kitchen, a base cabinet for the bathroom to match, all for one low price. When working with kitchens I always look to see if a wall can be opened up to create a pass through or bar stool counter top. This lets in more light and allows the person in the kitchen to talk with and see the people in the adjoining room. It also creates the effect of a more spacious kitchen.

The bottom line is that a well-lit, light, bright and spacious kitchen, well equipped with modern appliances, plenty of storage space and decorative tiles, paint and window treatments, will add value and appeal to any home's remodel plan.

Next, lets look at remodeling *the bathroom*. Here again, we look to the feminine side as the women seem to spend more time here then the men. So with the ladies in mind concerning the upgrade, I will often bite the bullet and rip it all out, the tub being the only exception! If I can leave the tub in, the job is easier, faster and cheaper. However, if I am looking at an olive green or yellowed chipped up and rusting ceramic eyesore, than a new fiberglass insert with a sliding glass door is going on my list of items to buy at the local Home Depot.

Jet tubs are the in thing, so I won't rule them out as a possible upgrade. This decision again is based on the female as most men don't take candlelit bubble baths or require a pulsating massage. Walls are painted with Sherwin Williams semi-gloss paint which creates an excellent moisture barrier to the walls. With regard to walls, by adding tile or laminate half-wall wainscoting to the lower three to four feet of the wall, you'll add a nice touch. Since you have torn out the old

toilet and base cabinet, now is also the perfect time to rip up the old vinyl and put down ceramic floor tile before the new fixtures are installed.

New lighting, mirrored vanity cabinets, G.F.I. electrical outlets, wallpaper borders, towel rings and bars are usually the finishing touch. Even a man can appreciate coming home to a spacious, clean, modern, functional and aesthetically pleasing kitchen and bath. One final note here: Be sure to caulk everything when you're through. You'll want to protect your new investment from rotting, from the inside out. Dampness and wood eating insects are your homes worst enemies.

Now with the kitchen and bath out of the way, what do you feel is next? I myself spend on average about seven hours a day in the bedroom, so I tend to go there next. Once again, the closet is of importance to the ladies so I will look to paint that bright white, upgrade the lighting and install a closet organizing system to maximize the space that is available. A tip for the guys! Put in a shoe rack for the ladies, as most of you wouldn't even think about that little upgrade.

Once the closet is done, I'm back patching and painting the rest of the room. Another smart thing you can do is to let the female decide on what color of Sherwin Williams brand satin super paint they would like to have applied. I always make sure I get enough paint to do the ceiling as well because when you're on your back, you will be looking at it. Once the walls and ceiling are done, the ceiling fan with light kit and dimmer switch go in. Then the baseboards are prepared for installation before the carpet goes down. Usually I paint them a shade darker than the walls and tack them to the wall about one-half inch above the floor.

Now that the paint is put away, it's time to install the plush carpet and a dense quality pad beneath it. In order to really bring the room together you will need to take a paint swatch or chip to the carpet dealer to choose the carpet color that really sets off the walls and base board trim. As for final touches, those include mini blinds, a curtain, and decorative switch plates and receptacle covers. A solid core door represents today's modern standards with a keyed lock set for security, so I will add that factor in too. Just add candles and you're done!

As for the rest of the house, I will choose one-color paint and use it throughout all the remaining areas that are to be lightened and brightened. Earth tone, eggshell or tan sand colors are a neutral favorite of many, so unless you have a floor that is going to clash with it, earth tones are a safe bet. Speaking of floors, I will follow appraisal rules that tell me wood is better than carpet, except in bedrooms. And tile is better than vinyl. With that in mind, I will use tile and Pergo flooring everywhere else. Once the tile and wood are installed, I never have to replace it and maintenance is a breeze. The appraiser also looks upon wood and tile as an upgrade, so at the earliest opportunity, they are getting incorporated in my plans.

There you have it! A general Joe homeowner remodel job, but what about the infamous addition? With this consideration, you'll have many more options to weigh, so let's take a look at some of the pros and cons of adding square footage.

When does it make sense to add square footage?

- #1. Is it physically possible, legally permissible, and financially feasible? Will the new addition serve your intended purpose to the maximum extent?
- #2. Does the current floor plan, layout or design of your home allow for a smooth flowing traffic pattern in, out and through the proposed addition?
- #3. Will your lot size accommodate a larger dwelling and will the neighborhood surrounding your home support the higher value that you expend?
- #4. How long do you intend to stay in the house that this upgrade is planned for? Five years from now, will the addition return, dollar for dollar, the money you have spent to the sales price of the home if you sold it?
- #5. Are you prepared to deal with draftsmen and plans development, contractors, building officials and permits? Will you mind living on a construction site for about 6 months? Are your finances in place with an additional 10% set aside for cost overruns? Has everyone agreed upon what this addition should look like and the purpose it will serve?

Let us say you have considered the above and would like to continue towards the improvement. From here, we should consider the economic principle of what is called *progression*. Example: You have a 2-bedroom, 1-bath home, located in a neighborhood of more expensive 3-bedroom, 2-bath homes. In this case you could, with more certainty, add another bedroom and bath and expect to be able to realize or achieve the value from the addition's expense as the more expensive homes around you will tend to pull the value of your home up along with theirs.

Now the reverse is also true, so you must consider the opposite case that is called the principle of *regression*. That says that if you over-improve beyond the value of the homes that are surrounding you, then those lower value homes will tend to keep the value of your home in the lower price ranges. So putting it another way, try not to pass the point of *diminishing returns*. In essence, saying that you can only improve so much before you reach a point where, for every dollar you spend, you will receive less of that same dollar back when you sell.

A good rule of thumb to use is to try to get at least two dollars of increased value for every dollar you spend. Once you begin to approach "break-even," then you should consider maintaining what you have as opposed to adding to it. A simple way to say it: Don't over-improve!

Another watchword to know is *super-adequacy*. That would be like putting gold faucets in a mobile home. It's overkill and too high-end for the properties overall value, so the final decision on remodeling and additions comes down to balance and a happy medium being reached. Also, take into consideration the cost, aggravation, the net gain, the need for improvement, the improved quality of life, the suitability to all occupants taste, needs and desires and in the end the ability to receive a higher sales price.

I choose to remodel more often than add-on because it goes much faster and the profits role in quicker too. If I need more space to live in, I simply remodel the house I'm in and rent it out for top dollar, and then get an equity line to buy a bigger house! When remodeling my own home I will attempt to do everything myself, aside from building cabinets or rewiring electrical circuits. As with everything else, if I get in over my head, I will concede defeat and call in an expert to finish what I started while I learn where I went wrong by watching them finish it up.

Here are a few parting shots that you may or may not know:

Painting everything inside and out is the greatest value producing improvement that you can make on a dollar for dollar return basis. When painting, ensure you buy the absolute best paint available, as it is true that the expense of painting lays in the application of the paint not the paint itself. So if you have to apply two coats because of an inferior watered down paint then the cost just doubled in time and the added paint needed to get the job done.

This next tip alone will save you the cost of this entire book and here it is. Without naming any names, whether it be the manufacturer or the distributor of the product, there is a problem out there with what used to be considered top brand, quality paints. It has been said that some manufacturers have thinned out their paint and left their good name on, all in the name of allowing certain retailers the ability to sell hundreds of thousands of gallons a month at what appears to be a bargain price. Unfortunately, the consumer is fooled by the name and ends up coming back for more paint when they find that it takes more of the thinned out product to get complete coverage.

I, for one, as you can well see by now, am a real fan of Sherwin Williams brand, super paint. This blend is so superior in my mind to any other paint available to the little guy, that I refuse to use anything else. I have applied it to exterior walls located in the worst conditions and climates and ten years later its still as good as the day I put it on. The elasticity, color and protection are still in place with absolutely no chalking, cracking or deterioration of any kind, The same goes for interior paint as well. The coverage and wash ability are unmatched!

I also would like to say Sherwin Williams has not paid me to say one word of this. It is for your sole benefit that I harp on it to the degree that I do, as it burns me to no end to see trusting people get ripped off and not even know it!

But wait! It gets even worse. As if to add insult to injury, the retailers don't really even shoot for the highest profit margin on the paint. They make their profit when you start buying all the tape, rollers, trays, brushes, handles, scrapers, sand paper, buckets, screens and new fangled gadgetry along with a host of other products that may be required to finish all phases of the job at hand.

Has anyone ever told you that? If you doubt it, take a viscosity cup and run the super paint through it and then do the same with the other paint. After this test, you will need no further proof of which paint is going to save you time and money in the long run.

Well, enough said. I hope you get the point on paint. Now another thing you can do to improve your home substantially is landscape it. Landscaping, if done right, can add up to 30% to the value of your home. I prefer to plant shrubbery and low maintenance hardy plants and trees of all types. A few flowers to add color and my job is done.

Back to the addition. If you decide to add a room or two, it has also been proven that you can save about 30% here too by being your own contractor. I would encourage you to get a book titled, "How to Be Your Own Contractor," as it will often take an entire book to give you a proper grounding on the subject. Just know this! It is entirely within your realm of ability to tackle the over site and scheduling that you would pay that 30% to the general contractor to do. If you feel up to the task, get a book and be vigilant. In the end, you will have that new addition at a significantly lower price.

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