

5 KEY THINGS HOMEOWNERS CAN LEARN ABOUT BUILDING FROM THE COMMERCIAL GUYS

The Stately team has worked extensively in both the residential and commercial market. We have found the professionals involved in planning and building commercial projects are precise about what they're doing and make all the important decisions up front before anyone lifts a tool.

The brief and plans are clear, the timeline is specific for each stage of the project, and the budget is cast in concrete.

These same principles can be applied to your residential project.



1. Stick to the brief

Commercial developers are obsessive about setting a clear brief and sticking to it.

One of the most common difficulties with residential building is that a client will often change the brief during the project as new ideas are added to the mix. A larger window here, a minor change to the floor plan there, a tweak to the deck dimensions:

The extra costs, delays and extended timeline can quickly become overwhelming.

Go over your plans over and over again. Be 100% sure about your brief and don't change anything unless it's absolutely essential.

2. Timing is everything

Set a time for regular project management meetings with the builder or project manager (weekly or fortnightly) so you can review progress against the agreed timeline. This will ensure that the project tracks according to plan and everyone fully understands the goals ahead.

And if a problem comes up, you can address it directly and immediately.

3. Who's the boss?

Put someone in charge.

Commercial build projects nearly always run smoothly because there is one person in total control - an experienced project manager who is responsible and accountable for progress and can make decisions on a daily basis when conditions or circumstances change.

4. Lock down the budget

Most commercial jobs have a fixed budget that is agreed at the start and formalized in a written contract.

If there are unknown factors that cannot be precisely quantified, these are discussed in detail and provisional estimates are provided. With renovations in particular, there are always unexpected discoveries as work progresses. Original framing that's unsound, plumbing or wiring that's well past its use-by date.

Be aware of the potential problems you may encounter and make realistic provisions.

5. Be clear about changes

Whether it's a change in the hardware fittings on a single door, or a last-minute change of mind about the colour of all the window joinery, everyone needs to be aware of the downstream effect on the budget and timeline.

Around 85% of all building projects (commercial and residential) are modified in some way from the original plans during the construction process (known in the trade as variations). These changes should be documented so there are no disputes about any cost over-runs in the future.

