

## ***The 'Inside Track' on Purchasing Home Replacement Windows***

If you are looking to breathe new life into your home, replacement windows are the ideal solution. Whether you are renovating an older home or simply want to change your existing windows, there certainly is a lot to consider. First, you'll need to decide on what brand of window to choose. This will include deciding on the type of window you prefer, the materials they are made from, and the cost of the windows themselves. And of course, unless you are proficient in window installation, you will need to hire a reputable company with experienced contractors who will get the job done right....*the first time*.

Undeniably, there will be other considerations you will have to keep in mind when you are ready to buy replacement windows for your home or business. The best advice is here is...*do your homework*. You should always become familiar with the manufacturer's warranty for the windows you chose. You should also inquire about payment plans, the timing of delivery and the contractor's scheduling. These, and a few other important factors will ensure the process of purchasing and installing your replacement windows is a stress-free and enjoyable one.

\* ***Determine which type of windows you want***. Are you looking for a particular material? Are you interested in a specific brand or open to other possibilities? Equally important, your decision should also be based on the value of your home, how long you plan to reside there, as well as the climate you live in. Your budget will also be a major consideration in the replacement windows you choose. When you know how much you want to spend, along with the type of window you are interested in, you'll be less likely to get talked into something you don't want by an overly enthusiastic salesperson.

\* ***Take advantage of free in-home estimates***. Many companies that specialize in replacement windows will offer free in-home estimates where you are under no obligation to make a purchase or pay for the estimate itself. During the estimate a representative will come to your home for a consultation. This will include speaking with you about your plans for new windows and inspecting your existing windows. A good rule of thumb is to contact multiple companies that offer free in-home estimates so you can make the best possible decision based on the information you gather.

\* ***Finding the right installation contractor***. This will be crucial if you want to have the job done correctly. Word of mouth is sometimes the best way to find an insured and bonded contractor for your replacement window project. Talking to friends and neighbors will be a good place to start; searching the internet for contractors in your area (with excellent reviews) can also lead you to the right installer. As with the window companies you contact, it will also be important to ask the contractor for an estimate. Often times, contractors will work directly with window companies, so you might be able to get a discount on the work that needs to be done. If you find a contractor whose opinion you trust, they can also provide you with 'insider' tips –which will help narrow down your options.

\* ***Explore all your replacement window options***. Although it might seem overwhelming because of the selection of windows you have to choose from, it will be important to ask about all window models available for your project. Because many of the salespeople who come to your home or you speak with in the store will be working on commission- they are more apt to 'hard sell' their higher end products. Knowing your budget (and sticking to it), as well as having a clear idea of what type of window you want will help you avoid being pushed into buying a higher price model.

\* ***Narrow down your options***. There really are so many choices when it comes to making a decision about which replacement windows suit both your needs and budget. For instance, are you leaning

more toward a company that mass produces windows to keep your cost down? Or are you considering a window because of the company's brand name? Is a triple pane necessary when a double paned window will suit your needs? With all the options available, you'll want to take the time to consider what's really important to you when making your final decision.

\* ***Stick to your budget.*** Staying within your budget from the 'get go' will save you a lot of time, energy and money. Knowing what type of window you want and what you can afford will help you stand your ground when the salesperson is trying to sell you models above your price range. Of course, you should always allow for some flexibility in your budget, but that doesn't mean extending yourself with an amount you are uncomfortable with.

\* ***Understanding the cost.*** Asking for a cost breakdown will eliminate any problems regarding the purchase and installation of your replacement windows. When you have a clear idea of what the windows themselves will cost, as well as the installation price you can make a more informed decision on whether you should have the company you are buying the windows from do the installation or if it is more feasible to hire an outside contractor for the work. Knowing the entire cost might also give you an opportunity to negotiate with other companies while comparing estimates.

\* ***The importance of warranties.*** Be certain to ask about the replacement window warranties. You should be aware of the length of the warranty and if it covers only the product itself or the installation too. Often, when the same company sells and installs your replacement window they will provide coverage for both. However, independently hired contractors generally do not offer a warranty on their installation. It will also be beneficial to inquire if the warranty is transferrable. If you decide to sell your home - this can be a valuable selling point when/if you decide to put your house on the market.

\* ***Ask about the timetable of the windows' arrival.*** There are replacement window companies that will tell you it could take a long time to receive the windows you are interested in to hurry a sale; subsequently, encouraging you to make a decision more quickly. Yet, the fact of the matter is that most companies can usually have the windows within two to three weeks after you place your order. Only when there are special circumstances should your replacement windows take longer than usual to arrive. For instance, difficulty with backorders or custom sizes would delay the company from receiving your order in a timely manner.

\* ***Always inquire about payment plans.*** Purchasing replacement windows can be a substantial investment. When you order your windows from a company that is also doing the installation, they generally will offer a 3 payment plan. This is when you would pay about a third of the total when you place your order, a third when the windows arrive and the balance after the installation is completed. Different companies should provide you with their payment options; but be certain the terms of the payment schedule are clear and know if any additional fees and interest will be tacked on *before* you agree to any payment plan.

\* ***It's your decision, take your time.*** We all know that salespeople are trained in the 'art of the sale.' They are experts in persuasion and can at times, even be pushy just so they can close on a deal. Some might also 'sweeten the deal' by telling you the special price they are offering you is only valid for that day. Best advice here is *never let anyone pressure you into a decision*. Take all the time you need to review your options and compare prices, quality, models etc. Sometimes the deals companies offer seem too good to be true; on the other hand, a company who genuinely wants your business will wait for your decision.

***\*Compare, compare, compare!*** Undoubtedly when you start shopping around for replacement windows you'll receive a lot of information from the different companies you talk to. It can certainly be overwhelming at times; yet, comparing estimates based on pricing, quality, installation and other options will make the decision process much easier. When you have all the information to review in front of you, you'll be able to make an informed (and comfortable) decision on which is the best option for your needs and budget.