



KEITH KIMBERLIN

THE
TOP 10 THINGS

**YOUR CONTRACTOR
DON'T WANT YOU
TO KNOW!**

FREE

GUIDE



WHAT THEY ARE NOT TELLING YOU?

What do I need To Know Before Hiring A Contractor?



Keith Kimberlin

I have been in the decorative surfaces and home services industry for over 27 years and I have heard it all when it comes to customer complaints about their contractor. I have surveyed thousands of customers over the years and used their feedback and personal experiences to develop the Surface2Surface business model. This business model is used by every franchise owner throughout the Surface2Surface Franchise Network.

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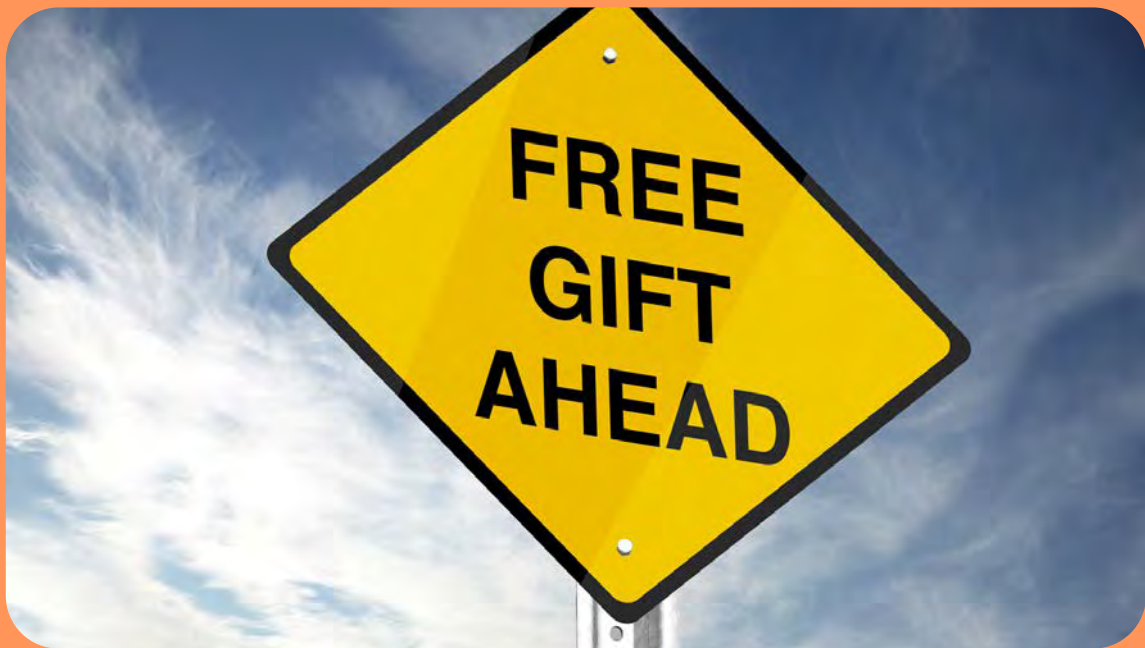
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YOUR FREE GIFT

Hello and thank you again for scheduling your **Free Surface Evaluation**. As promised, here is your FREE guide listing my **“Top 10 Things That Your Contractor Does Not Want You To Know”**

As consumers, we all have many fears when it comes to looking for a contractor to do work around the house. This guide will tell you my Top 10 Things Your Contractor Does Not Want You to Know and questions you may consider

asking before you sign on the dotted line. These questions will give you the information you just might need to flush out a scammer or unscrupulous contractor who may be out to take advantage of you... or worst yet, leave you with a project that is less than you bargained for. Although these questions are geared towards decorative surface contractors, almost all of them can be used when looking for a contractor in any trade.



Let's Dive In!



ASK ABOUT THEIR PRODUCTS

Product knowledge is a really good way to find out whether or not your contractor knows his stuff no matter what the trade. Questions about the brand, warranty, and how it's done are good icebreakers, but more detailed questions can make the unscrupulous contractor uncomfortable and raise the RED FLAG. As it specifically pertains to a decorative surface contractor, many of these contractors only dabble in flooring or high-use surface coatings & overlays. The truth is, there is a lot of science behind the preparation and installation processes involved in the flooring sector of the decorative surfaces industry. Ask about the brand of products being offered. A good contractor should be able to not only describe what he is going to do... but should also know why he is doing it that way. I'm not just talking about just regurgitating the installation instructions from the product labels. Many contractors simply run down to the local supply store and purchase low-cost products off the shelf, and they don't know the details of the makeup of the system. Their goal is to get in and get out for the least amount of money.

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DO YOU HAVE LIABILITY INSURANCE?

Ask the contractor if they have General Liability Insurance. If they say yes, then ask them to provide you with a COI (Certificate of Insurance). The key here is to check the email where the COI came from. If it is from the contractor's email, this is a RED FLAG. A Certificate of Insurance should be issued by the contractor's insurance company and therefore should be coming from an insurance agent's Email. If you can't figure out if the COI came from an insurance company email, you should ask the contractor for his insurance agent's Phone number. Read his body language... If he seems nervous or combative, you may want to consider another contractor. The bottom line is, as it pertains to a decorative surface contractor, depending on the product type and where the installation is being performed, you may or may not even need an actual COI, but this question will reveal if the contractor has the proper General Liability insurance and is legit.

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ASK ABOUT THEIR REVIEWS

When looking for a contractor in any trade, many people will search for reviews on the contractor they are considering. Ask the contractor about comments made in the reviews (good or Bad). When talking about the reviews, the contractor's demeanor may reveal his true temperament. Use your gut to determine if the details in the contractor's explanation or storyline, match up with the reviewer's comments. A contractor that seems to be making things up as he goes could be a RED FLAG and may just be your cue to keep looking. That said, online reviews are a highly debated topic for so many people. When people instantly think of online reviews, they probably think of restaurants and Yelp. It seems like everyone does a last-second check for reviews before making a purchase, and construction and contracting companies are certainly a part of this. If a company is unreliable, has screwed over countless people in the past, and truly isn't legitimate, online reviews will tell this story. Keep in mind that more often than not, someone will leave a review if a job is done poorly rather than if it's done perfectly.

REVIEWS (CONT.)

The fact is, we as consumers expect a good job and do not feel compelled to take the time to leave a good review. Unless of course the contractor went above and beyond and compelled the consumer to tell everyone about their amazing experience. However, if a person has a horrible experience or the contractor took advantage of them, they will take a week off from work, buy a bull horn and shout from the rooftops about how much they dislike the company that did them wrong. So, what review sites can you look at? For remodeling, there are a bunch of them, so take a look at them all! Why not? I mean, even if you are not able to find your contractor on some of the sites listed below, this short due-diligence process may save you from getting involved with the wrong company.

- Google
- BBB
- Next Door
- Porch
- Facebook
- Yelp



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WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY BUSINESS?

As stated above, many contractors claim to be decorative surface contractors but only dabble in floor coatings and overlays. Just because you know how to run a spray rig, a roller frame and a paintbrush does not mean you are qualified to install a high-use floor system like a garage floor coating, pool deck system, or patio overlay. There are countless painting contractors, landscaping companies, and maintenance workers who convince their customers to allow them to install their garage floor or coat their patios and pool decks. Although they may be good at painting walls and houses, planting trees and bushes, or are great at changing light bulbs & sink fixtures, almost all of them are not trained in the detailed and highly technical processes required to install a high-use floor system or overlay. At the very least, a qualified floor coating and high-use surface professional should be trained in the science of surface preparation and the specific system chemistry related to the system they are selling. These guys know that the consumer is unaware of these requirements and often take advantage of the consumer's lack of knowledge. Well... now YOU know!

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DO THE WORKERS WORK FOR YOU?

Depending on the size and scope of your project, you may decide to hire a general contractor. A general contractor, main contractor, or prime contractor is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of a construction site, hiring & management of vendors and trades, and the communication of information to all involved parties throughout the course of a building project. However, as it pertains to specialty contractors (such as a decorative surface contractor) you should think twice about hiring a company that uses sub-contractors for installations. Ask the contractor this simple question “are you a general contractor?” if he says “No” then the workers performing the installation should be his employees. When a decorative surface contractor uses sub-contractors to perform his installations this may be a RED FLAG as he will have limited or no control over the products being installed. Therefore, he is at the mercy of the installation sub as it pertains to potential repair work, warranty issues, and other installation issues. This could result in the contractor you hired to do the work, not having the ability to directly address issues that may come up.

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ASK ABOUT THEIR PICTURES

Contractors will often use images to gain your confidence and convince you that they can deliver what you are looking for. Many times, it is the image you saw online that got you to call them in the first place. However, many contractors will use other companies' pictures or may even purchase images of their trade from a photo website or photographer and represent them as their work. This is way more common than one would think. Ask the contractor if the pictures are of their actual projects. If they say Yes, then pick a few pictures of projects they show you and ask them if they would be willing to take you to see the actual project shown in the images that they provide. That said, some of the pictures that they show you may be of older projects where their original customer does not live there any longer. Now, this may seem a little sneaky but, to keep the contractor honest, ask them for the address of one or more of the projects anyway and tell them you still want to drive by and maybe see it for yourself. If the contractor tries to give you the run-around and continues to make excuses this may be a RED FLAG. Look at the quality of the image. If it looks professionally taken (and you want to see them squirm) ... ask questions about who took the picture. You may go as far as asking for the photographer's name just to see his reaction.

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ASK WHY THEY ARE NOT BUSY

As contractors, we all go through slow periods in business from time to time, but a good contractor will always typically have an extended lead time of at least 2-4 weeks (depending on the trade and type of project of course). Depending on the size, a decorative surface project will typically range from 2-5 days to complete. If a contractor can get to you right away (as in...tomorrow) this could be an indication that he is slow for a reason. To be fair though, there could be many legitimate reasons why he can jump right on it. It could be that he has several crews and runs his business very efficiently, he may be working on a project near you and it just made sense to take care of your project while he is in the area, or it could be that your particular project type is only a one day project and he was able to divide and conquer. Either way, this particular question may or may not be an indication of a potential issue with a contractor but, when coupled with the other questions listed in this guide it may help to reveal a potential issue.

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DO YOU HAVE A SHOWROOM?

Opening a showroom or a physical location is a milestone moment for many remodeling and decorative surface companies. This big step not only results in a greater retail presence, road visibility, office space, and warehouse space but provides a place where the contractor can organize and mobilize their crews. To a customer, this exhibits the stability, organization, and professionalism of a business. Although it is not paramount that a contractor maintains a physical location for his business, the fact that a contractor can maintain a place of business may provide that extra assurance and peace of mind that you are working with a legitimate trustworthy contractor. However, I caution that you do not use this as a primary reason to do business with a company. This should only be considered in conjunction with the other aspects listed in this guide.

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DO YOU HAVE REFERENCES?

There are many reasons to ask a contractor for references. Sure, you can look at online reviews to avoid hiring a contractor that abandons projects halfway through, but online reviews only tell so much. Oftentimes they are only posted by the most disgruntled or overjoyed clients, meaning they can be skewed and less reflective of the average experience. Plus, asking for references for projects similar to your own will be more reflective of what your experience will be like, unlike online reviews that could be referencing a wide variety of projects. References can tell you if the contractor stuck with the timeline if there were any issues with the payment process, and the overall quality of their work, even after the project has wrapped. Checking references can also help you get a sense of if a contractor is trustworthy and plays by the book. What if clients regularly have issues with a contractor not pulling appropriate permits? You can save yourself a headache down the road by checking with references. If the contractor is apprehensive about sharing references, or worst yet, he cannot provide multiple references... you may want to look elsewhere

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WHAT ARE YOUR TERMS AND CONDITIONS

When dealing with contractors in any trade, you should pay special attention to the contractor's terms and conditions section on their contract or invoice. What they don't want you to know is that although many terms and conditions contain boilerplate language, many of the items are created from actual things that went wrong on past projects. It is a good practice to go over each line item and question everything that doesn't pass the smell test. Often an unscrupulous contractor may try to hide coverage deletions, disguise omissions, and add language that may render your warranty worthless all while absolving them from any responsibility. Although many of these tricky types of T&C items may be illegal and unenforceable, you still may find yourself having to explain why you agreed to them.

“

*Remember... You cannot
control the behavior of
others, but you can
always choose how you
respond to it.*

-

Roy T. Bennett

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MY FINAL THOUGHTS

The bottom line is... most contractors mean well but we all must do our part by performing the proper due diligence and research on anyone whom we plan on hiring to perform work on or around our most valuable asset.

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