

# Receiving an Accurate Bid

The key to receiving accurate bids is giving each of the stone contractors the same information, in other words, bidding “apples to apples”. The following tips may be helpful.

## **Important information each stone contractor will need to know:**

### **Cabinet Measurements:**

A simple drawing of the cabinets needs to include measurements of the length and depth of the cabinet boxes. Bar overhangs, raised bars, cook-tops, and sinks should all be noted on the drawings. The contractor should also be able to identify which sides of the cabinets are adjacent to the wall. \*If you are having new cabinets installed, the cabinet maker can provide you with a copy of the drawings he will use to make your cabinets. These tend to be very accurate and can be copied or faxed as needed. Remember, the drawings are for bid purposes only, the stone contractor you choose will need to field measure and template the installed cabinets before beginning fabrication.

### **Material Selection:**

Give each contractor the same stone selection. As you have most likely realized, there are many colors of granite with even more textures and patterns to choose from. In fact, you may be struggling with your decision and unable to choose. Do not despair even if you haven't yet finalized your decision, you need only to provide each sales person with the same selection. To simplify the bid process, most granite shops have divided the different stones into price groups. Each stone contractor can identify which stones are in which price groups. The price the stone contractor pays for the raw materials (the slab) typically varies from one stone to another and can dramatically impact the bid price.

### **Edge Detail Selection:**

This is the profile of the finished edge of your countertops. Once again, give each stone contractor the same edge detail selection. The price of the edge detail will be determined by its complexity. Simple edges are less labor intensive and thus more cost effective.

### **Backsplash:**

There are a variety of backsplash options. The most common is to have the stone contractor provide a 4” backsplash with the same granite that was used on the counter. Other options include no splash, a full splash, or a variety of ceramic or natural stone tile installations. Most importantly, you may request the backsplash be bid as a separate line item.

### **Sinks:**

Specify whether the sink will be mounted under the stone or on top of the stone. Under mount sinks require the sink hole to be ground and polished. The granite shops will charge a considerable amount more to cut and polish the stone for an under mount sink.

### **Other Important Details:**

Providing information on bar overhangs, radius or clipped corners, slide in ranges vs. cook-tops, or additional faucet holes can all have an impact on the final price of the job. If you are remodeling existing cabinets you may have to consider the cost of removing and disposing of the old countertops as well as having the sink and faucet re-plumbed.

Providing accurate information to the individuals you wish to have bid your project allows you to compare prices on a level playing field. Other factors that may affect pricing may include the volume of work the stone contractor is currently producing, your urgency in needing the job completed, location and or access to the job site, and possibly the characteristics of the stone you desire to have fabricated (fragile stones have a greater risk of breakage during the fabrication process and may require additional material).

## Choosing a Qualified Natural Stone Contractor

Now that you have received bids from a variety of contractors, you are faced with what may be a difficult choice. There are almost as many types of stone contractors as there are types of stone. Descriptions vary from “large” shops to “small” shops, “production” shops, to “custom” shops. Some are “automated” and others use “skilled artisans” to hand craft your granite countertops. Whatever the description, the goal is the same; a positive experience that not only improves the quality of your living space but adds considerable value to your home.

Here are a few helpful ideas to assist you in your decision:

- Referrals from friends can be an invaluable resource. Their experience may be helpful in accessing the qualities of the fabricator.
- Check references and ask questions: Were they helpful and informative in addressing your concerns? Were there any problems and were they handled in an appropriate and timely manner? Did they meet or exceed your expectations?
- It is important to see the Contractor’s work. We all have different ideas on what makes a quality job. Make sure their finished product meets your standards. Take time to see their most current installations.
- As you will have questions regarding the stone, the fabrication process, and maintenance of your new countertops, you will want to feel confident their staff will address your concerns. Any relationships you can develop will be helpful in achieving the quality look you desire.
- Request proof of liability and workers’ compensation insurance.
- Select a contractor you believe is skilled and trustworthy, and with whom you feel comfortable. Follow your instincts. The impressions you receive when you are doing your research generally tend to be your best guide.

Make sure everything you and your contractor agree to is included in your contract. Don’t sign anything until you understand and agree with all the terms.