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Sabo Wants to Remodel the Building Process

Sabo Custom Builders | Houston, Texas



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By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Not content just to build or remodel homes, Ed Sabo wants to remodel the building process.

Sabo, owner of Sabo Custom Builders in Houston, thinks the modern model for building or remodeling a home is broken.

The common standard for building a home is based on competition and lack of trust, according to Sabo. “This is the way it works. An architect designs what the client thinks they want, but not necessarily what the client can afford.”

Once architects finish their designs, they put the projects out to bid to three “qualified” contractors. The client frequently is not willing to pay for enough detail in the drawings to make them biddable. This method results in the architect giving three un-biddable sets of plans out for contractors to bid, Ed said.

The contractors are asked to make their best guess at what the project will cost when they know that the client will

probably choose the lowest bid. This practice encourages the contractors to be over-optimistic in their pricing. The clients then generally choose the lowest priced, most optimistic and unrealistic general contractor to build their project.

Sabo noted that some builders give unrealistic pricing and then “change-order the client to death.”

Other times the project price comes back higher than the clients expected. This increase forces the clients to give up part of their dream to build something they can afford.

Sabo wants to flip that concept and base his building projects on a foundation of collaboration and trust. He said the collaborative process is used by many small design-build firms and home builders, such as himself. He has been using this process effectively for the last few years, he said, and he thinks it is now time to make this process the industry standard.

Sabo’s collaboration team includes the architectural



designer, builder, engineer, decorator and clients. Some members of the team may fulfill more than one role, he noted.

In this approach, the clients decide how much they want to spend on the project. Then the budget drives the design process. The contractor's role includes keeping a cost line budget so that the architect will not design something the clients cannot afford.

The architect completes his/her design with every detail and real prices for all of the materials, labor, supervision, profit and overhead. In other words, the project is finished before it starts, Sabo explained.

In this process, the team is committed to using its creativity so the client can get the best product for the lowest cost. Projects built in this collaborative process almost always come in on budget and on time while all members of the team maintain great relationships, Sabo noted.

Ed is already using the collaborative process for several of his current building projects along with the 5 Simple Steps™, a trademarked collaborative approach giving his clients a five-star experience.

Step 1: *Let's Talk*™

This step is an idea session to identify the scope and estimated budget range of the project as well as the client's design priorities.





Step 2: *The Story Board Process™*

The design team is selected, and ideas are transformed into the preliminary schematic floor plan.

Step 3: *Rendering to Scale™*

Design selections, specifications, full construction plans and bids are submitted for final pricing.

Step 4: *The Big Event™*

The Sabo Custom Builders construction team transforms the plans into reality.

Sabo also provides all of his clients with access to a secure website portal that details the work on their projects. This industry-leading platform is easy to use and web-based, and Sabo Custom Builders puts documents, photos and more at its clients' fingertips. The simple online system makes it possible for clients to access their project from any computer, tablet or smartphone from anywhere in the world. His team takes daily photos of each project's progress so the clients can see the project unfold in real time.

Step 5: *Happily Ever After™*

The project is completed, on time, on budget, and Sabo Custom Builders has earned another five-star review from its clients

"It is our goal to make certain that everyone who has contact with our brand shares in the predictable excellence of a Sabo Custom Builders' five-star experience," Ed said.





Sabo Custom Builders is known for building custom homes and garage apartments as well as remodeling in the Houston area over the past decade. With a bachelor's degree in construction management and a master's in business administration, Sabo worked in commercial construction and then "Corporate America" in supply chain management for seven years before becoming a self-employed builder.

With the help of a business coach and part of a group of builders across the country that talks regularly, he finds value in collaboration. He finds he can get a solution to almost any problem by talking with others who have different perspectives. Sabo is a founding member – and the only one in Houston – of the Certified Luxury Builders Network. The group has developed a Code of Ethics and Standards to be the best of the best, Sabo said.

If there's one thing Ed Sabo strives for, it is to be the best of the best. But, no matter what the circumstances, he will continue to provide high-quality work with the clients' needs first and foremost. And his clients thank him for it.

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