



EMPLOYING A BUILDER

Ok, so you've finally finished trawling through all the plans, drawings and so on, and are now finally ready to employ the services of a building contractor and get the job done.

Before you do that, however, there are a few last boxes that need to be ticked:

- Have you prepared a detailed schedule of works for the builder to price?
- Do you have an engineer's/surveyor's report?
- Do you have possession of the property?
- Are you sure that you do not require the services of an architect?
- Do any of the works require planning permission or building control?

Right, let's get down to business. With the possible exception of the media and the law, the construction business can be the most ruthless on Earth. However, don't be put off – with our advice and a sensible head on your shoulders you can come up trumps and get the work done that you require. You just need to be careful and employ a builder with a good reputation, who will give you fixed prices, realistic schedules, and, most importantly, will finish the job on time, on budget, and to a high standard. All, of course, without sending you an invoice for the sum of one arm and one leg. Samuel Sheldon Ltd always strive to meet all of these criteria, but some building contractors may not.

So, let's assume that you require about £30,000 worth of work to be done, and that you have selected at least three suitable building contractors.

First of all you need to contact each builder in turn and discuss with them the project you have in mind. You will need to go over the following points with them.

- The size and type of project and the work involved.
- Your timescale. Be realistic with this point; don't expect a builder to be able to produce an accurate price in anything less than two weeks, or to be able to start within a week. It's best to allow at least four to six weeks to get the prices back, agreed, and to start on site.
- An approximate budget.
- Set a time and date to meet with the builder on site, go through the work schedule and discuss the project.

When meeting the builder on site, try to have copies of the plans/specification handy for them to take away and price. This makes things quicker and easier for the builder. However don't worry, as many builders – including ourselves - have plan copying facilities and will be able to take copies and send your originals back to you.

When you meet the builder, go through the work schedule with him and state your intentions for the project. Discuss a realistic timescale, but in today's economic environment don't expect to be able to dictate when you want the work started and completed. We often find we can come up with some good ideas on how to speed up the works that our clients hadn't necessarily thought of.

Assuming you gave your builders some dates to come back with a tender price you will now have to wait until they return through the post.

Once you've received all your prices back through the post it's time to start to analyse them. As we are not dealing with quotations based on fixed bills or quantities, we will need to go through the details of the quotations to make sure that the individual builders have priced what we asked them to. If a price seems unrealistically low, this probably means that something has been left out. We always aim to keep our quotes as accurate as possible - after all, no-one wants to get a nasty surprise half way through the project.

Once you've selected the most attractive tender, and note I use the term 'attractive' rather than 'cheapest', you must decide which one to pick using a few different factors.

- Perceived competence/quality of the builder.
- Date that works can be completed by.
- Price.

Contact your preferred builder and inform him that his quote his acceptable and set up a further meeting to discuss a start on site and payment terms.