



TOP 10 SIGNS OF A GOOD BUYER

Over the years I've built thousands of homes for thousands of people and I've learned one thing for sure; *not everyone should build a new home*. Why? Because buying a new home is a very emotional thing and there are some people that simply cannot go through the building process – and should therefore only buy existing. No matter how good your builder is, if you're not a good buyer there is trouble.

So, here's my two bits on the Top 10 signs of a good buyer. **A good buyer...**

- 1- **... understands the building process.** If you don't then ask your builder to explain it to you. Read a book, check the internet, but you must understand the basics. I once build a home for a couple that made building a bad experience for everyone because they couldn't deal with the building process. Every decision was difficult. They called upset if someone wasn't on their jog every day. Soon, they felt everything was wrong. I personally tried to educate them on the building process and address their concerns, but they soon became ridiculously picky. They drove me crazy and themselves crazy. It finally got so bad that I had to tell them that it wasn't worth it – to either of us. I told them we'd reimburse their money and that they could buy something existing. They agreed. We release them of their contract and their money.

However, a funny thing happened. A few weeks later they called me and explained they couldn't find anything in the existing market they liked, nor of the quality or value of our homes. They asked if they promised to be good buyers, if they could buy their home back. I agreed, and they became great buyers and I think they understood the building process a little better.

- 2- **... asks questions.** They ask, ask, ask. Asking questions opens the lines of communications. Ask about anything unclear. Ask about things you'd like to know more about. Ask if you are unsure. I recently had a buyer call me (after the framing was complete) complaining that their vault in their living room was centered in the family room (as the plans showed) and not peaked to one side as they had envisioned. I explained that we had done it the way the plan had shown and that it was too late now without serious cost. Sadly, it would have cost no more to do it that way and we try to review all these things in the preconstruction meeting. I wished I had known they wanted it another way. I wished they had just asked.
- 3- **... understands costs.** Make sure you know what's included and what's not. I always explain that it's more important to know what isn't included than what is. There should never be those kinds of questions if you have a clear set of plans, plot plans, color specification sheets and addendums. Then there will be no surprises along the way nor in the end.

A good buyer understands that some things do cost extra and is willing to pay for such upgrades and personal preferences. Some buyers wonder why a certain item cost so much, but by asking they can understand the ripple effects of adding things. For example, if you want to add a jetted tub, you've created a ripple effect of additional costs from a larger tub, more tile/solid surface surrounds, pumps, electrical service, breakers, skirting, motor access and deck mount faucets. It's more than just the tub cost.

- 4- **...buys what they can afford.** I'm reminded of my Dad's saying that most buyers buy homes (and other things for that matter) that usually can't afford, that they generally don't need and often times don't even want, just to impress

people they don't like. Remember, even if your lender qualifies you for a mortgage payment you may end up "house poor." You need to take into account your personal life style, your landscaping and utility bills, other obligations, and charitable donations. It's a personal decision that only you can make

- 5- ... **understands change orders.** Change orders can be a tricky thing and have inherent problems. Worse, they can be expensive. For example some buyers think that since their cabinets are not installed they can still change the colors or layout, when in fact, their cabinets have been built for weeks and it's too late to change without real expense. Over the years I've found that when I make a mistake – as perceived by the buyer – that it's usually because I have a buyer that can't make up their mind. A good buyer can make a decision and then understands if they want to changes it may be expensive or too late.
- 6- ... **understands their home warranty.** Contrary to common belief, there is no State Law on how long a builder must warranty his product. So you must have something in writing specifying such. And even though homes today use the term "maintenance free" they still require maintenance – as long as you live there. Patterson Construction's warranty is one of the strongest in the industry and is what sets us apart. That's why I explain to buyers that we've found that if there was any errors on our part with the manufacturing or materials or in the craftsmanship that it will almost always manifest itself during the our warranty period. It becomes every (good) buyer to understand that someday the warranty ends and that they assume responsibility for their home and life and the fact that sometimes things happen.

I recently had a buyer call me on their nearly 5-year-old home asking us to replace their walk that had settled about ½ inch. They're attitude was insistent that it was our fault because none of their neighbors had settled. I explained that over the years things can happen and it's not their fault nor our fault, rather its just life. Yet I explained even though it was clearly long after their warranty period that as a courtesy for them, I'd cover the cost of the concrete and the labor for re-laying the concrete if they'd cover the cost of tearing it out. They were still upset and their tone surprised me and so I asked exactly how long they felt I (and our subcontractors) to warranty it. They replied, ten years, to which I asked, why? They replied, because that's how long they planned on living in their home. These buyers simply did not understand a warranty.

- 7- ... **understands that there's no such thin as a perfect home.** Before starting construction I (or one of our sales representatives) try to have a conversation with the new buyer something like this; "Mr. And Mrs. Jones, do you expect a perfect home?" They look a little startled and say, "What do you mean?" "I mean," I tell them, "that there's no such thing as a perfect house. I' a very good builder, one of the best, and I've never yet built a perfect house. So if you want a perfect house, tell me know, because it's going to cost you a lot more money." At this point, they say, "Oh no, we're not looking for perfection. We just want a quality house."

For nearly 15 years I lived in one of our subdivisions where I had built every home (over 400 homes). I love it. My family loved it. I'll never forget an older gentleman Pete Cook who – every time he'd see me would say, "I still can't find one thing wrong with my home, and I was a builder!" He'd even say it to all his neighbors. One of his neighbors soon believed that his home was inferior. He told me how Pete couldn't find anything wrong with his home, but that he had a number of things wrong with his home. I went over, addressed his concerns and explained that I can't build a perfect home because natural materials will vary, concrete will crack and some things are beyond one's control. I've since learned that you can't build a perfect home but you can build for perfect people.

- 8- ... **understands time lines.** Rome wasn't built in a day and neither will their home be. Good buyers realize that things happen on the construction site that are beyond a builder's control. People get sick, subcontractors may have to work on other houses, the weather will turn bad, and sooner or later you'll be behind schedule at some point in the construction phase. But unless there the builder is excessive, a good buyer understands that these things are inevitable during construction and takes it in stride. Furthermore, I always explain to an anxious buyer that I have a huge incentive to get their home done, because I don't get paid till it's done. However, I quickly add, we want it done right and if it takes a couple of weeks longer to do it right by not rushing, they'll be glad they waited.
- 9- ... **doesn't overreact.** If something doesn't go right or seem right, simply address your concerns. If your build takes care of your concerns, you have no problems. Remember that's the difference between a good builder and a bad builder – one takes care of the problem. Whenever I have a buyer overreact (in a mean way) I explain that I'm on their side as that's what they've hired me to do. And I'll take care of the problem regardless if a buyer's nice or mean – but it sure a lot more fun(for both of us) if they're nice.
- 10- ... **is nice.** That's really the difference between a good buyer and a bad buyer. One is nice and one is not. One's learned to communicate appropriately, the other hasn't. I suppose you'd call it common courtesy. I'm always

impressed with the buyer that say thanks, that drops off donuts or drinks to the workers and sub's and tell them their doing a great job. They say thank you to our office staff, and to their sales persons and gives them referrals for a job well done. I guess you'd say some people just have the attitude of gratitude. It's a joy to work for such people.

There you have it, the top 10 signs of a good buyer. Over the years Patterson Construction has built for some of the best buyers and fortunately for only a few bad buyers. It's been my pleasure to get to know them and to have worked for them. They've made it fun to build their homes and to service them. Building for good buyers makes me love my work and I'm confident that if you'll follow these 10 things you'll be a great buyer – with whomever you choose to build.

Good luck,

James Patterson