

# Santa Fe REAL ESTATE Guide

Artisan/craftsman/**builder**

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## The intangibles in choosing a builder

by Kurt Faust

When choosing a builder, certain elements such as the visual quality and the craftsmanship are easier to judge. Look at the edges where two different materials meet and you will immediately see the skill level of the craftsmen involved. Look at how straight walls line up with grout lines in the floor, or how the floor material joins up with the wall. It is also easy to call on a builder's references to find what past customers have to say, and about his past experience. The intangibles are harder to root out. They are not as obvious as reputation and quality, but they determine the success of the day-to-day operations and a smooth process equals a satisfying experience.

After you have found a builder who does quality work and builds in the price range you are in remember you still have to go through the entire construction process. People often forget to research more important factors in choosing a builder. The organization of the construction process is paramount to making things run smoothly from the beginning of the design through the warranty period, from the first rough sketches of the floor plan to the completed drawings, from deciding on specifications to documenting those choices, from submitting for permits to obtaining the final approvals and from digging the foundation to completing the final punchlist and everything in between.

The schedule, budget, and specifications all need proper systems and controls in place to keep them on track. All of the materials need to be ordered with sufficient lead time. The tradesmen need accurate knowledge of what must be implemented and the time frame. The builder needs to be able to track costs and sustain sufficient cash flow to maintain a healthy company. Any missing information or other impediments to the job must be identified early enough that they don't become a crisis.

The builder must have the ability to listen attentively and be patient. He must be able to solve problems quickly and find creative solutions. You will want a builder with good standing relationships with high-level tradespeople, and one who has the organization to supervise them properly. You want to trust that your builder is honest and fair. Make sure there is clear communication and that everything is followed up in writing. Make sure you see all contracts and specifications.



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Just because one home is less expensive does not mean it is a better value and, by the same token, just because a house is more expensive does not mean it is of higher quality. In all price ranges there are less and more organized builders. Call the builder's past customers, but try to also talk to references who are bankers and suppliers.

The intangibles are not on the surface, but you can find them if you dig and understanding them will increase your likelihood of having a good experience.

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