

How Do You 'Finish' Before You Have Started?

Start at where you want to end up!

Visualise how things should look and work towards that goal. The only way to avoid having lots of defects and imperfections on completion is to pick them up as works proceed. It is unreasonable to imagine defects will never occur. It's how you deal with them that makes the difference. Be aware of the common mistake of thinking something is not important enough to get right. The small details do matter.

The time to raise issues over quality is while the supplier or contractor is on site, including issues about how two different contractors' works are seen when side by side. Poor work can simply be something not installed properly, either because of lack of skill or lack of pride in the quality of the finished product.

To combat this, there are codes of practice and specifications to ensure minimum standards are met. Sometimes, things just do not look right, even if technically they meet the codes.

Your Responsibility

The character of construction is unique, with all operations occurring in a temporary workplace, populated by workers engaged by several different businesses mixed in with self-employed contractors. Materials are manufactured by innumerable companies around the globe and sold to you through agents, who all deliver separately. The whole process is fraught with weather concerns as you are building a structure in open air conditions across the seasons.

As well as getting works ready to meet the site schedule, you need the next team of operatives arranged to be on site, with the correct materials sitting in planned positions. These materials must be in the right quantities, to the right quality and to the right price. If you are responsible for providing plant or access equipment, this too needs to be in place.

Quality Control

To keep on top of all the issues over work standards, you need to institute your own quality control procedures. This is more of an informal process because it first requires you to keep up with progress on all fronts and be aware of what is occurring. As part of your role, discuss the finish offered and if this causes issues for follow-on trades. If you are instinctively not happy, but you cannot be sure *how* or *if* it should be tackled, then phone a friend to get a second opinion. This may be one of your consultants or a friend with expertise in the area of concern. A trouble shared often assists in allowing you to marshal your thoughts and work towards a solution.

Raising Concerns

First raise issues with the operatives on site who undertook the actual work. After this, it is a matter of escalation through the management structure and onwards. Almost always, matters are easily resolved on-site through positive discussion.

Encourage the contractors to finish off defects to one specific area at a time, as opposed to going all over the place. The best way to finish a house is one room at a time. Having a methodology creates a sense of achievement.

What Does Finished Mean?

An important component of finishing is evidence of completion by certificates. These may be self-certified by the contractors or you may need independent verification. Whatever the situation, this is part of the completion process. Missing certificates are placed on the punch list with all other unfinished items.

When it comes to the whole project, the definition of ‘finished’ can be important. The best way of proving your build is indeed finished is to have the building deemed habitable by the building inspector. Although, as you may find, even a certificate issued at this point can allow some items to remain unfinished.

So, find out what constitutes habitable and decide what you consider as finished.

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