

Quick Fire Questions!

Builder, Philip Fitzpatrick, Author of The Builder's Companion Books 1 & 2
in conversation with Jack Roberts

Feel free to 'borrow' as much or as little as you like.

All that we ask is that you credit Philip Fitzpatrick and The Builder's Companion.

Why are you qualified to write the 'The Builder's Companion' books?

Well, I am a builder and building surveyor, who better to write about something than someone who actually does it!

Have you been a builder long?

My father was a builder as is my son and I was taken to jobs well before I reached double figures, so I suppose it is in the blood.

Have you built your own home?

I have personally built seven family homes and worked on thousands of homes and buildings of all types.

What are you especially interested in?

The latest green technology and how it can be adapted into the modern home.

What's new?

Low carbon concrete is going to be massive all over the world as will printed buildings.

What are the biggest challenges facing someone building for the first time?

Understanding the process and getting a design you love and feel cannot be improved.

But what about the environment?

Building in a green way will reduce current energy use and bills. Getting to zero net carbon is the goal.

How Green should you be?

Environmental awareness is one of the main drivers which encourages people to build in a sensitive way and harness natural renewable energy.

Is climate change an issue?

Yes. All new homes should seek protection from local risks. Consider possible flood prone or fire prone settings in this changing world. Once in a hundred years weather events happen more regularly than that!

Can you make money going Green?

You should always consider the 'green premium'. What is the payback period for a design improvement or renewable alternative?

Are there dangers in not going ‘Green’.

There is always the looming ‘carrot and stick’ if you ever decide to sell your home.
It’s hard to sell an old android phone in a new smart phone world!

What tip would you give?

If it does not work now, build in the ability to upgrade.

What can someone do straight away to help the planet?

Include a small pond in the design.

Are Modern Methods of Construction(MMC) – Modern?

Modern but not new. Every process has been around for centuries. MMC is how pods or houses are constructed in a factory setting and delivered to your lot.

There is a lot of talk about Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) - what is your take?

Installation is faster but is the project completed speedier? It can reduce site operations and workers. MMC has a real place and every project should consider if they are a suitable candidate to benefit from the movement.

Robots?

They have been tried in on-site trials and can produce a high quality of construction consistency in a factory setting. Definitely one to watch.

What if you are not a skilled builder?

Being able to carry out elements of the work is great for the soul and for reducing costs but the mantra is – if you cannot do it, get someone who can.

What does ‘build’ your own home entail?

It is a lot more than getting the tools out! The home needs planning and design, zone and building approval, scheduling and cash flows, investigations into all sorts of technologies and endless discussions with people you had not previously heard of or considered.

What will you get out of it?

You will personally grow and succeed at all sorts of things you did not expect to be involved with and this is all part of the journey. Who knows, you may save money and try it again.

You say in ‘The Builder’s Companion’ that ‘you must start at the end’ what does this mean?

It is counter intuitive but it means you must clearly set goals for where you wish to arrive and all efforts are made with this in mind. You must decide on the quality of the home you wish to achieve and pick up issues and standards that will impact on this.

What makes your build ‘special’?

Oddly, it is the little decisions not the big decisions. The size of a door or attention to a detail.

What if things are not perfect?

There are defects in every construction project. Recognize them early and put them right at that time and you are improving the quality of the finished home.

Does ‘builders remorse’ exist?

Definitely. Every time you walk past the skimped item or issue you notice it, even if no one else does.

Why do things go wrong?

I actually name the ‘Top 15 Usual Suspects’ who are often around when things go wrong. Everyone’s house is different but common missteps occur. By recognizing these culprits and avoiding them whenever you can, you greatly reduce the opportunity for things to go ‘off the beam’. You must still watch out for Mr Murphy and his law but that is another story!

Why do things go right?

Good question. Things go right because you have planned, communicated and had some understanding of others positions. The three most important sets of documents in order to deliver are drawings, time schedules and budgets.

Are you empathetic?

Empathy does not mean, giving in – it means understanding where you are, where they are (whoever they are) and how you stay on track. You appreciate the big picture and you manage as opposed to react.

How can people find out about building their own home?

You need to be engaged. Keep your eyes open and every time you are in someone’s home or building take note of what works – and what does not. I have brought this all together on my website www.abuilderscompanion.com and of course in my books ‘The Builder’s Companion’ Books 1 & 2. These books bring together information you cannot find in a single place anywhere else.

But say something is not clear?

I do have an ‘Ask Philip a Question’ feature on my website and they can always drop me an e-mail. I like to personally respond and its interesting what people like to comment on or are struggling with. It keeps me on my toes!

How can you get hold of a copy?

There are links to purchase both the books and e-books on the website.

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