

Getting Accurate Countertop Quotes...

by Bob McCann {Hallmark Stone}

Being a stone countertop fabricator, I realize that my quotes are a minor part of most projects, certainly a far smaller part of the overall project than say, drywall, electrical and plumbing. However, bear in mind that on a per sq. ft. installed basis, stone tops are among the most costly items on which you will receive quotes. So what can you do to insure that you are getting accurate quotes and not a "guess"?

1 Insist that your fabricator (here I assume that your fabricator will quote a turn key job) itemize all tops quoted by room number, area ID, area name etc. Also each area should indicate the number of tops, material (granite, quartz, brand name) color, edge, type and number of cutouts required. This will allow you to do accurate quote comparisons as opposed to "all tops for job included" type quotes which almost inevitably lead to change orders, disagreements and lost time. Make sure that the lead time from template to install is specified up front.

2 Provide your fabricator with an accurate material description if possible. Since stone cost varies widely according to material and color (even the fabrication of some stones is more costly than others), the more information you can provide, the better. If a plan detail calls for "Granite Countertop" your fabricator will have no idea whether to price this as a category A, B C, or D color (or could this be an "Exotic" (read very pricey) granite?)

3 Is it stone? Many plans call for solid surface countertops. Depending on whom you ask this can mean an acrylic like Corian or Avonite or a quartz surface like Silestone or Zodiaq. Since the fabrication and installation techniques for these materials are completely different, you may need to go to a different fabricator for each.

4 Special conditions at the jobsite? Please, if you are aware of special conditions at the jobsite, let your fabricator know. Are the lobby elevators going to be avail-

able after the first tenants move in? Do trucks have to park a long way from the building? Are there multiple flights of stairs to be dealt with? All of these add to the manpower necessary to transport heavy tops to the jobsite. Better to let your fabricator know up front rather than argue about it later.

5 Be open to alternate material quotes. Stone colors are not well standardized; Labrador Green and Uba Tuba are the same material. Some plans will specify a stone and supplier from another part of the country while the same stone, under a different name, is available locally at a much reduced cost. Help your fabricator get approval for alternate materials from the architect or designer. The cost savings can be very worthwhile.

6 Since we, as stone fabricators, are coming in toward the end of the project, we are used to receiving the frantic call that tells us that the casework is delayed but that your "turn over" date is fixed. It happens. When it does please work with us to make sure that when we can get in to template or install the tops, the carpet layers and painters are not working in the same area. It really does take time to correctly fabricate stone, and even though you have assumed that we have shut down the rest of our business to wait for you to be ready, we still need a bit of time to cut, polish, detail and install your material.

7 One last point to help get you an accurate quote. When you call for a quote at 10:00 AM and need numbers by 2:00 PM the odds of getting anything accurate are about the same as hitting the lotto. Give your fabricator a break and let him have a little lead time for quoting if possible.

We want to give you as accurate a quote as possible, a little help from you, the general contractor, can go a long way to accomplishing what, in the long run, is beneficial to both of us.