

Testimonial for Steven and Abode and Beyond
May, 2009

The first time Steven did a job for me, (many years ago) he gave me a quote, which I accepted, and a timeline which seemed optimistic. It was to rebuild an existing legal non-conforming structure onto new footings, on a plank by plank basis. He designed the interior layout and suggested some inexpensive but significant and effective improvements that made the shed into a soundproof and privacy protecting environment for a little girl's bedroom. He was on time, on budget, and earned every cent. His worker, a great guy named Matt, was not only an excellent worker, but always on time, personable, and tidy to boot.

After many years of procrastination on my part, (and of growing and repeatedly-applauded construction experience on Steven's), I had an untenable situation with my house that I turned to Steven for help with. Knowing that there was an integral structural weakness in the centre of my house, I had put off doing necessary repairs, hoping for the financial wherewithal to materialize that would allow me to open the house up to remedy it. Well don't ever think that procrastination cannot work. Eventually, everything that was covering over the deficiencies (as I put off fixing it) rotted away. Finally, it had to be addressed. I turned to Steven.

In one day he and his small, skilled, personable, and extremely tidy crew (sound familiar?) had stripped my roof front and back. The next day they re-shingled the front half and started to remove the rot from the back. Quickly appraising the situation as untenable and serious, they called the Bldg Inspector (before the neighbour did) to tell him what the score was. Then they got a draughtsman and an engineer to draw up what Steven was proposing for me. I demurred at his suggestion of installing a bathroom upstairs in an enlarged dormer, only to change my mind in time as a "duh" type of decision. Of COURSE there should be a W/C upstairs, I finally realized! What HAD I been thinking!

Every day that I came home from work I was increasingly looking forward to seeing what changes Steven and his crew had accomplished, because they were doing so much! I listened to their chats sometimes when I didn't think they were aware of my being there and was always struck by how dedicated to efficient, smart and (to my mind) elegant problem solving they all were, what a camaraderie existed between them. I saw Steven as the respected coach of a small, confident, and capable team which had no self-esteem issues.

The job, by its very nature had to be "time and materials" which means that I change my mind or add to their To Do List at MY financial peril. Their hourly rate may not sound like a bargain at first, but it means that they are not looking for someone else to work for, that they are ALWAYS on time and work a full day, and that they know they must produce to justify it. And they DO, too.

The fact is that the one thing everyone knows when one is hiring a renovator, is that it is going to cost a fair bit. What one doesn't know is what one will get for it! With Steven one will get someone who's word means everything, and who is intent on making and keeping you happy, not only while the job is being done, but long into the future.

Steven listens to what you want, and has a rare power of empathy, of putting on your skin, and listening and thinking on how to accomplish the goals he understands you to have. He not only has a rare talent for visualizing spaces and how they will work, he quickly creates 3D computer sketches to help you imagine where you may want to take it your reno from various angles. And, he reports back on bargains he has seen (interesting windows or doors or sinks, “one ofs” that suit what you may have just said about colour or style for instance) that may suit your needs.

He always answers his phone when you call (I call almost every day and never have to leave a message); he shows up in the morning with the crew and tells you what will be done that day and goes over the plans with you for days or week ahead. And the guys who work for him are the best too.

Some have done work for me on their own in the past; all exemplary workmen and artists (without exaggeration) in their own right. And I cannot leave it there. Since having Steven working on this (to me a quite major reconstruction) project, I have had occasion to discuss him with many other neighbours who he has done similar work for. Everyone sings his and his team’s praises to the skies, without kvetching! No kidding!

Without my having really been aware of it happening (I thought he was more my own discovery, kind of) Steven has become the “golden-haired boy” of this neighbourhood where I have lived for 40 years. I cannot recommend him too highly. It’s not possible.

Peter.