

50 CloseUp

Big50

Insight and opinion from the **BEST** in the business

Profile: Kevin Wallace

Kevin Wallace, president of Wallace Remodeling in San Francisco, was named Big50 in 1989. Even then, he had a work-description system to rival those in commercial construction. In fact, his work-description document is modeled after the Construction Specifications Institute's system. Over the years, however, Wallace has modified the form to suit his remodeling business better and added language to protect his company, based on what he's learned from past jobs.



The work description includes 14 categories that cover everything from foundations to finish work. Wallace ties those numbers to the company's estimating spreadsheet and to the contract, making sure his staff, the homeowners, and the designer are on the same page from start to finish.

"There are infinite choices on any given job," Wallace says. "This is a way to at least tie down those variables and bring in specificity." He created the form as a template in Microsoft Word so the staff can modify it.

The form offers several advantages. First, because Wallace requires owners to initial each page, they are aware of what the company will and won't do as part of the job. Second, the documented information is an advantage in lawsuits and will stand up to third-party scrutiny. Third, the paper helps

the firm avoid slippage. "Things should be built as they are bid. Any other way, you lose money," Wallace says. His subcontractors receive a copy of the document,

or their relevant portion, with their duties spelled out as well.

The system's one weak point, Wallace says, is that jobs are priced by trade — not by design. "If the customer says they can't afford the powder room, I have to break it out by the 12 trades involved," he says.

Wallace charges per hour for the time it takes to produce the description, and the company's change orders appear in the same format. He considers the description the final word; if a question about a job arises, the form overrules any other sources. As a result, "we take our time and make sure it's accurate," Wallace says. —N.P.

Kevin Wallace uses a thorough work description to ensure accuracy throughout a job. The results protect his company and his profit margin.

