

# What Is A Good Installer Worth?

By George Porter

This article is directed to dealers who are not sure they are getting their moneys worth out of their installers. Next time you have a home to install try this. Don't call the regular guys you use, do it yourself as a general contractor. Please don't get the idea that this is some sort of cheap shot at you because it's not. This is truly the only way I can think of that you can actually get a realistic feel for the value you are receiving.

Some years ago I went to Japan for a manufacturer to show the Japanese how to put these homes together and finish them off. Actually the only thing that needed any instruction was the assembly process of mating a multi-section home and properly supporting it. All the rest was not new. Seaming a carpet; spackling and painting a drywall seam; putting up shingles and siding; and all the other tasks are pretty much the same all over the world. The thing that was different over there was the fact that in that country, and in almost every other nation as well, there were no persons that could do it all. In fact there were no people that could do even two of the different trades necessary to get the job done. I certainly don't mean to infer that no one could do a good job, quite to the contrary, these folks were some of the finest craftsmen in the world in their chosen trade. The problem was they had only one trade. The guy that seamed the carpet had no idea and no interest about the plumbing. Why would he? What does plumbing have to do with carpet or shingles or painting? This was and is the culture in most of the world

I really don't get out and around the world very much so for some reason I thought that everybody could do most everything a little bit. The USA is a nation of "do it yourselfers" and the local hardware stores are everywhere. I never saw one hardware store the whole time I was in Japan. There were trade supply stores that sold whatever the various trades needed, but no place at all that even remotely resembled an American hardware store.

All of this background is to serve as an explanation of what had to happen when we first started to install a home. It took 3 to 4 weeks and used about 13 or 14 different people to apply the different trades needed to complete the home. Obviously step one was to cross-train everyone in as many other trades as possible in order to cut down on the time and people. All this did eventually come to pass, but in many cases in the beginning, they needed to import an installer from the states to get the jobs done. This was not inexpensive but it was far less money and time than doing the same with a dozen local tradesmen.

This set me to thinking about what an asset a good installer is and I would encourage everyone in the industry to give it some thought. For instance, how many people in the world can do a fairly good job in 16 different building trades? Only one, the American Manufactured Housing Installer, no one else even comes close.

Here's a typical list:

1. Carpentry
2. Truck Driving
3. Rolling, jacking, and supporting home
4. Anchoring home
5. Plumbing, water and sewer
6. Roofing
7. Siding
8. Floor covering installation and repair
9. Drywall installation and repair
10. Window and door repair
11. Appliance troubleshooting
12. Heating and air conditioning
13. Building adjacent structures, steps awnings etc.
14. Basic electricity
15. Masonry, footings, piers, etc.
16. Some business law and accounting if he runs his own business.

This is a bunch of talent from one guy! If you really want to know how much he contributes to the affordability of these homes, try doing these same trades with individual subcontractors. You will probably have to increase the price of your homes by thousands of dollars and it will take you weeks not days to finish the home.

Installers are every bit as important to this industry as manufacturers, dealers, and salespeople and yet many people think of them as some sort of overhead expense or worse yet, basic labor.

There is an old saying that goes like this, "If you don't play the game then you shouldn't be making up the rules". Installation is the biggest problem in the industry today and installers are the most under appreciated and under represented people in this business and almost nobody is asking them how to fix it. Could it be that there is a connection here?