

My name is John Arnone, owner of Arnone Building & Remodeling Inc. a Ct remodeling company established in 1973 at the age of 19. The last 2 years my company won awards presented by the Ct Better Business Bureau for the best web site toward Educating Consumers.

I am totally dedicated to my craft and proudly can say I've not had any filed consumer complaints from the Better Business Bureau, law suits or general liability claims filed in the past 25 years.

Besides being in business for 40 years I had additional 4 years at Eli Whitney Technical High School of which I was awarded the "Proficiency in math award", selected to the National High Honor Society and was selected "Faculties choice for outstanding senior plus additional 3 years, working for a general contractor prior to becoming self-employed for a grand total of 47 earth years however even more in knowledge and wisdom.

All though proud of my achievements, I only stated these to get your attention with my objective of you listening to my input on the subject of licensing contractors.

Since my web site existed (2009) I've educated the consumer in illustrating the different paths to become licensed (electricians, plumbers, etc.) compared to being registered (home improvement companies). Common sense will prove that if it takes the same effort to be registered as it takes to purchase a lotto ticket then you're exposing the consumers to an accident waiting to happen.

After stating something obvious along with I'm sure hearing reputable contractors expressing they prefer a licensing system due to present system is jeopardizing their livelihood I now want to express what I do well, "Think outside the box" and convey why the job opportunities for self-employed reputable contractors are being drastically reduced and mandating licensing is only a small part of the total scenario.

I would like to name my article "Evolution" illustrating the difference between the past and present circumstances and reasons why the "slice of pie" of opportunities toward reputable self-employed contractors staying in business is decreasing.

Box Stores, examples Home Depot & Lowes. Twenty five years ago they didn't exist and now they are continuing to grow and becoming more popular. Prior to this, lumber yards only sold building products; the difference is these box stores also perform home improvement installations... Some examples are roofing, siding, gutters, remodel kitchens & bathrooms, carpet, wood flooring, ceramic tile, doors & windows. A homeowner feels more confident in being assured a completed and quality job knowing their installers are backed by a billion dollar company. Homeowners have gotten burnt so many times in the pass from independent self-employed companies that weren't qualified. Also these Box stores can offer promotions that independent companies cannot.

Other Retail stores (Mom & Pop stores selling tile, wood flooring & kitchen cabinets) Twenty five years ago they only sold the product, now they also do installations. Decades ago independent home remodelers such as

myself were able to be awarded a kitchen installation job by just showing the homeowner photos of various kitchen cabinets to choose from , now this market is being awarded to retail stores illustrating showroom displays , 3 dimensional drawings and full time designers.

Homeowner involvement, Twenty five years ago a homeowner would never think of doing any type of home improvement project other than install a mail box. I remember talking to an owner of a lumber yard twenty years ago and telling me that homeowners were only .05 % of his business, however he preferred not dealing with them because he would spend a lot of time explaining and guiding them to the proper materials compared to having to spend no time with a contractor because they already knew what was needed. Homeowners participation is now greater than ever which started to evolve twenty years ago when television programs illustrated to homeowners on " How to do "along with Box Stores offering classes on " How to install "thus giving knowledge , encouragement and confidence to tackle their home improvement projects that normally would have been done by self-employed carpenters / contractors. Some examples are building a deck, tiling a floor, installing drop ceiling tiles, alternates on tongue & groove oak flooring such as clip-together laminate flooring, remodel a basement, installing replacement windows / doors. Another homeowner involvement is dealing directly with supplier and purchasing products "on line". Years ago contractors could make a profit by "marking up "these items.

Advertising. Twenty five to forty years ago carpenters / contractors solely advertised in the yellow pages in their local phone book competing with less than 100 others with advantages of knowing no other competitors will intrude until the next yearly publication and you can place yourself in a favorable situation by purchasing a large size display ad. Usually the few established companies had an advantage knowing they could afford and commit to a large size ad for a full year while smaller un-established companies couldn't and didn't . Also at this time this industry was seasonal and owners usually worked in their own town or maybe adjoining towns. Now with the creation of the internet the yellow page is an "old dinosaur ". The internet has created competition among thousands of contractors (state- wide) opposed to less than a hundred (town- wide). Also because all internet ads are now the same size theirs no separation among competitors. Also present un-established / money strapped companies are no longer obligated to advertise for entire year opposed to monthly with the internet, thus more competition. Contractors are expanding their territories due to necessity thus more competition. Also recognition of a companies web site could be seen randomly opposed to 100 % noticeability with the old yellow page format. All these scenarios increases competition thus reduces job opportunities.

Becoming self-employed. Decades ago one became self-employed because they learned their craft well enough and chose to leave their present employer, now a majority attempt self-employment out of necessity (un-employed or in a different profession making minimum wage) with less experience of yesteryear candidates. It should be noted that judgment of being qualified of yesteryear candidates were solely based on workmanship with little consideration toward the "business aspects ". Today a successful self-employed contractor has to have the complete package which is further explained below (number 6)

Look at yourself in the mirror. Even thou I agree earning a license acknowledges being knowledgeable , however it doesn't assure being successful , Knowledge doesn't necessitate being honest, hardworking,

determined, disciplined, conscientious , dedicated, being professional or likeable, do quality workmanship, be productive, have leadership qualities or be drug free. It takes a combination of all these qualities to be successful to survive.

I feel State testing should not discourage qualified candidates from applying nor diminish a job opportunity if they fail test because the qualified reputable licensed contractors will have an opportunity to grow and hire them .You must understand , presently the Home Improvement Industry is the only industry in which you can go directly to the "Major Leagues " The process of becoming a major league baseball player is first being drafted among tens of thousands of candidates and moving up the ladder in the minor leagues, Single A ball League, Double A ball league and Triple A ball league and more likely failing to enter the Major leagues. I'm stated this because there will be casualties. The present "registration format" is a failure. It encourages unqualified individuals in this profession along with others in different professions even making minimum wage to saturate the home improvement industry. These individuals can charge double, triple the minimum wage and be in a position of being awarded the proposed project because those rates are still 40 % below market price.

Present ideas, I believe the following items should be mandatory in the home improvement industry.

1. All web sites should include a photo of contractor's registration card supplied by Department of Consumer Protection. This illustrates both effective & expiration date. If contractor doesn't have a web site they must supply customer a photo copy during initial meeting and be included as part of contract.
2. All web sites should include a photo of contractors insurance policy supplied by their insurance copy. If contractor doesn't have a web site they must supply a photo copy during initial meeting. Prior to signing a contract, contractor must include insurance policy as part of contract along with stating homeowner as "an interested insured party "in the "certificate holder" box.
3. All testimonials that appear on web sites should include the 3 following criteria's, (1) date (2) detailed description of work and (3) either full name of homeowner or Town with Building permit number. Any omission, testimonial not allowed.
4. All web sites should include contractors Ct Better Business Bureau rating regardless of being a member or not. If contractor doesn't have a web site than they must supply rating upon initial meeting and be part of contract.
5. If contractor wishes to display "amount of experience "it must be first investigated and confirmed by the Department of Consumer Protection and / or IRS.
6. All work must be submitted to the Towns Building Department to confirm this type of work doesn't require any type of permit. Building Official will supply document indicating homeowner name, address and description of work confirming such mentioned work not required to obtain permit. This document would be required to be part of contract. I'm sure a fee would be welcomed by a homeowner to assure contractor met building officials.

7. Have suppliers that deliver certain products (examples are vinyl siding / roofing shingles) supply the Department of Consumer Protection a list that includes delivery address and purchasing contractors name to later investigate and confirm a permit was issued. Similar to Pawn Shops having to keep transaction records. If no permit was obtained a fine will be applied to contractor. Expense of such research will be generated from fines.
8. Offer a monetary award similar to a finder's fee when one reports seeing possible zoning, building or OSHA violations. Building and / or zoning violations could be recognized by not seeing a posted permit. Presently permits must be posted however they are too small in size to possibly be seen, they should be posted on a 2' 0" x 2' 0" sign that is no more than 4' 0" from street. As far as OSHA violations, educate the public on visible and obvious violations, examples are shingling a roof or working on staging without proper safety requirements and removal of exterior lead paint without proper precautions.

The reason to comply with any / all of these 8 aforementioned examples is, no matter what system is acclimated (registered or licensed) you'll still have people not complying similar with gun control. However there's a difference, these ideas can and will expose the violators, they can't hide.

Thank you and I hope I contributed to the cause. John Arnone