**EPISODE 14 – Home Maintenance with Erich Kleine at Goodsmith**

**STORY**

Welcome back, everyone. I'm Curtis Lawson and this is the Your Project Shepherd podcast. On our last episode, James, the owner's representative, came to the rescue after Brian and Heather noticed more damage in their master closet. They learned the hard way that a dryer vent was installed improperly and water was trapped inside the walls with no way to dry out.

Normally, Derek, the builder's warranty would have covered this, but he shut down his business after Brian and Heather's build was complete. He's back at his old job building production homes in the suburbs. Without his business in existence, there is no warranty. Fortunately, James comes up with a plan to remediate the mold damage and prevent it from happening again in the future.

Once again, Brian and Heather are incredibly thankful for his expertise and hopeful that their house problems are behind them. It's now been a full year since the mold debacle. Brian Heather and their two kids have been officially in the house for 18 months. Unfortunately, homeownership has proven more difficult with this house than their last. Hurricane season hit hard this year, and the constant rainfall uncovered several leaks around exterior doors and windows.

With the mold issue still at the forefront of their minds, they decided to call James first this time. He starts by looking at the issues and recommends a local handyman company who specializes in regular home maintenance. A few days later, Bruce, the project manager for the handyman service, comes out for an inspection. Brian gives Bruce a tour of their home, pointing out the areas where they'd noticed leaks.

"If it's okay with you, I'd like to inspect all the windows and doors," Bruce tells Brian. "Sounds great," Brian responds. After about 30 minutes, Bruce reappears in the kitchen. Hey, folks, Bruce starts. "I've gone through, noted all the areas that need work and documented them with photos. We can get one of our specialists to come out and take care of those this week. But I found a few other things that are more concerning than that. Brian and Heather jumped to their feet. Please show us. Brian request. With that, they walk through the house. Bruce points out some cracks in the brick mortar and places where the siding separating. Inside the house, he points out some drywall, cracks, a few of the door and window frames near the areas where the exterior cracks are showing.

When was your house built?" Bruce asked.

"Well, we just moved in about 18 months ago." Brian replied.

"Well, these types of cracks are pretty unusual for a house, this new Bruce said cautiously. It seems to me that there may be some structural issues. What? Brian and Heather exclaimed simultaneously. Well," Bruce said, "it's pretty typical that homeowners don't notice these types of things on their own.

So I just wanted to let you know we could repair the cracks, but I wouldn't want you to spend money on just a Band-Aid to cover up a bigger problem. Here's the card for a structural engineer and a foundation repair company. Bruce handed Brian a couple of business cards. Tell them that I sent you." Bruce goes on to explain that his home maintenance and handyman service offers annual check ups for all these little items that homeowners tend to neglect and don't keep watch for.

With two busy careers, two small children and a total lack of experience. Brian and Heather sign up on the spot. They are grateful that Bruce noticed the issues with the concern over the potential structural issues going to give them many more sleepless nights.

**INTERVIEW**

**Curtis Lawson:** Hey everyone, welcome to another episode of ***The Your Project Shepherd Podcast***. We are here to guide you through the custom home process, and we teach you that a successful project must have four key components demonstrated by a super simple child's drawing of a house. The foundation is planning. The left wall is your team, the right wall is communication and the roof protecting it all is proper execution.

Today on the show we are talking with **Erich Kleine** of GoodSmith Home Care and Repair, and as the name implies, GoodSmith is a home maintenance and handyman service right here in Houston. So, Erich, welcome.

**Erich:** Thank you. Thanks for having me.

**Curtis:** And tell us something about your construction background leading up to starting GoodSmith, and how you decided to get into this business.

**Erich:** Absolutely. Well, I was a builder for 20 years prior to starting GoodSmith and got into the industry by building for some production builders around the Houston area. After working with and for a bunch of production builders for the first eight years of my career. I broke off and in partnership with my father-in-law, built some low to moderate-income houses in and around the Houston area. Then for the remainder of my homebuilding career, I built high-end Custom Homes primarily in the inner loop areas of Houston. After building for 20 years, I realized the true need for people and homeowners around all markets really to have a good solution to their home care and maintenance needs. Through lots of conversations with homeowners and going out and talking to them at two years, three years after we'd finished a project with them, there was always a long list of honey dues and punch items that were not necessarily our responsibility because the project was so far in the past, but they needed a trusted source to come into their homes and take care of all these problems and that's where good Smith originated.

**Curtis:** Yep, we always get lots of those calls too and they're all things that are so small that they're not profitable to do, they're a time a time-suck. So, I think it's a fantastic service. I'm glad you've taken that opportunity and seized it. We've talked before about how I tried to get the same kind of thing going a number of years ago, it didn't really take off because I couldn't find the right people to do it, but you've been very successful in building that team and so, tell us about your team, like who do you have and what range of services you provide?

**Erich:** Absolutely. Well, originally, we started GoodSmith with my partner Morgan Booth and myself and he is a serial entrepreneur, and he really gave me that push over the proverbial cliff to start up GoodSmith. We realized quickly in starting this, going into the maintenance, and repairing and doing the smaller items, that we had to stop, or I had to stop building the homes. It's very difficult to have your priority to go out and change a few light bulbs or change a few doorknobs in and out when you have multiple million dollars or even $100,000 or $200,000 projects going on. We focus on doing the small things, getting the right people, and bringing as many people as possible in-house to handle those tasks. Third, partying out, or getting contractors, which is the norm in the residential construction industry. We found that does not work great for the service and repair model right because we didn't

**Curtis:** You can't control those people.

**Erich:** Right. That's exactly that's exactly it. It's really, we are going in and out of homes where the people are there, the children are there, the housekeepers are there and it's very difficult to, well, you can’t outsource culture. So, the guys coming in to change the lightbulbs or their filter, or just we've been called into to suck a cockroach off the corner of a ceiling because homeowners didn't have a ladder for it. So, you can’t outsource that you can’t send a van for someone to go over and take care of that. So, we've really tried to build a team of reliable trustworthy people that want to go out there and really serve people you know. We have to train a lot of this the individual skills for the basic maintenance items and then we go out and we talk to a lot of our third-party contractors that I've used for years and years in the industry and we'll try to bring them in-house and try to give them a more stable job and more stable workflow and come in and be a fine carpenter or be a great painter or be a great sheet guy. That's really the team that we have built is a team that is all in the house but has the ability to go in and do fine quality craftsmanship find home

**Curtis:** Yeah, I love the training room that you're setting up right now that you showed me. I mean, he's got this room that they're building inside their warehouse that's basically a room inside of a house that's framed, it's plumbed, and electrical and air conditioning, and it's a room that they can deconstruct and reconstruct and repair and it's just a great training space.

**Erich:** No, absolutely we're not quite to the metaverse yet where we could put on goggles and train guys, but I think that'll come sometime. I really do, but this we're really kind of calling it our ‘home simulator’ where we can go in and we can break something and have our guys go out there and train on how to do it or to confirm that to us in the hiring process that they actually can do that.

**Curtis:** Yeah, you could get some toddlers in there and let them wreak havoc and then turn the guys loose.

**Erich:** I've got a 7- and 10-year-old that can't wait to go in there and break some holes and throw rocks so that's it.

**Curtis:** Let them do the training for the guys ha-ha. But you've also brought on some licensed trades right like plumber electricians that are in-house, is that right?

**Erich:** That is correct. We are trying to have a master plumber and master electrician that are in the house so that we can provide those services to all our members with a minimal amount of friction. We are looking to bring HVAC in shortly, but we've found it is kind of said earlier that you can't outsource the culture going into people's houses, so we want to bring in-house and control as much of the experience that our clients have as possible. So, if it's financially viable, we will bring it in-house.

**Curtis:** Yeah, I think having those licensed trades is really the key, right? I mean it's better for the homeowner, it's better for you for liability reasons you have a licensed person doing these tasks versus you know, I mean, you know, Joe might be a great home electrician so to speak, but you know when you're working on a complex home or maybe a very expensive home, you know you kind of want that licensed guy working on it.

**Erich:** Well, yeah, exactly and my insurance company requires me to have those licensed people. So, a lot of the handyman experiences that people have or they will have the proverbial ‘chuck in a truck come out to their house and put in a couple of dimmers and do a ceiling fan installation or you know, goodness gracious, go in and do breakers or things of that nature, but if you do not have a licensed professional doing that, I mean, you're putting your own, your property, and your life in the hands of an unlicensed contractor. So that is a dangerous and kind of scary situation.

**Curtis:** Yeah, totally. We were talking about a couple of weeks ago that there's like this perfect storm of houses getting more complex and then like the average homeowner, is probably less handy than they used to be. Like folks of our father’s and grandfather’s generation, they were more likely to handle all their own stuff, right? They would go to the hardware store, buy breakers and plumbing parts, and get in there and fix themselves right. But now I think it's a combination of, you know, we as a society, we've kind of lost some of those skills. Our lives are busier; maybe many of these people are at a different income level and would rather pay someone else. Right?

**Erich:** I think that's absolutely the case and for all the reasons technology has made our lives easier, it has also increased the amount of time we're working. We're now sitting on our couch checking emails all night long. We're not going to the hardware store and getting air filters or light bulbs or a breaker and coming home and replacing it we just keep moving and keeping everything has become more important in our lives than maintaining our homes.

**Curtis:** Totally

**Erich:** Now look at something as simple as the garage door you know; originally you got out of your car and you lifted your garage door right then you got to the electric opener, and then the low opener had a remote control on it.

**Curtis:** Now smartphone control and home automation integration.

**Erich:** Exactly, I mean it's like God forbid you to get home, and your phone doesn't open up your garage door and at this point, it used to be oh the power was out or now it could be your router is out your internet's out. Your power is out, your GFCI is out, 15 different things could break anything in your home at this point, and troubleshooting and knowing where to look for that is getting more and more complicated, and people don't want to spend the time to figure it out on their own.

**Curtis:** Yeah, people don't do hardly anything on their own anymore. I mean, in our neighborhood, I think I've seen maybe one or two neighbors that actually mow their own grass. I mean, that's the task that everybody used to do. You know when I was growing up, I mowed the grass, or my dad did. But you just don't see any of that kind of personal engagement and home maintenance anymore. You were talking about the complexity of just a garage door opener and all the things that could go wrong, but overall, I think homes are more complex. I mean, so many systems in the home are more complex now. So, let's talk about that for a second. What are some other examples of complexity that you can think of, in homes today?

**Erich:** We see a lot, particularly here in the Houston area, of the climate in your home not being correct weather, usually, it's too hot. It's usually too humid, or a moisture issue. There's mildew forming on a wall. There's mold growing in places that certainly should not have mold.
I feel and then you really saw this as I was building every single year, we had more complex or more magical materials that we were going to put in our homes that were going to make them less expensive, more efficient, and a much better place to live overall and they all have unintended consequences. Without the right builder, without the right architect, without the right engineer, one misplaced type of insulation or vapor barrier can completely ruin the livability of a home. We see that a lot where we're coming into homes where they're three years old, that should still be really in their prime, but people move out because their air quality is so poor since somebody skipped a step in the construction process or the planning process. It's great for my company but it's terrible for the homeowners. It can be a really, really hard thing to fix, and even more than hard, it's expensive. So, after building a custom home the last thing someone wants to do three to three years later is going to spend 20,000, 50,000, or $100,000 ripping out brand-new stuff.

**Curtis:** Oh yeah. I mean, that happens all the time. I mean, we had Toner Kersting on a recent episode, and you know, Toner. He and I work on a lot of cases together, where you know, products of combinations of products that shouldn't have gone together have been used together or a builder or a subcontractor installer didn't know the right way to install something. So now that we're having all these weird issues, and as you said, it's great for me and Toner and you because we're getting paid to go and take care of it now nut, I would much rather see people not have those issues.

**Erich:** That is exactly, absolutely the case.

**Curtis:** There's also some of these items, though, that are just general maintenance items that have to be kept up with and it's not necessarily in those cases. It's not necessarily the builder’s fault, right, or whatever. But there's a danger in not keeping up with those maintenance items. So, you know, what are some maintenance items that people kind of consistently, don't think about or they forget to do and end up causing problems?

**Erich:** All of them – absolutely all of them. Yeah, it's one of our taglines is, you know, your home does not have a check engine light, right.? There's the only way you know something's going wrong in your house is if something breaks. It's too hot. There's water leaking in there, your window will start leaking in three months, and so, the biggest thing that homeowners overlook is the basic inspections. It's walking around the house and looking to see if something doesn't look new anymore, or if there needs to be some more caulking someplace. Or are my filters dirty or my air registers dirty? All of these things there are usually small visual cues to let you know that something is wrong, and something needs to be done. So, the routine simple inspections like looking underneath the sink to see if there's water dripping underneath a P trap. Those are what are really missed the most homeowners do a pretty good job of changing air filters or when the room gets too dark and only one of the four can lights is working. then they'll go in and they'll change the light bulbs but as homes get more complex they go to Home Depot and they buy the wrong color temperature light bulb and then they have three bulbs that are different colors and then then the fourth one, so you know things are getting harder and homeowners will only really look at the things that affect their life that day or the light hit them in the face that they can see what’s right in front of their nose. You know talking about not mowing your yard anymore - one of the consequences to not kind of not maintaining your property anymore, is if you're out there mowing the yard, you're working outside your house, you're walking around the house, you're seeing all this stuff. But there are people that never probably in years haven't gone down the five feet between their house and the fence. They don't know if there's water dripping out of something. They don't know if there's caulking missing, they don't know if there's a crack in the brick. They have no clue until a bigger problem surfaces. And they're like oh crap, I never noticed that.

**Erich:** That's absolutely it and one observation is the younger generations, the sub-35-year-old’s that I'm seeing out in the market right now. They've turned their homes into disposable items where they go and get their starter home. They fix it up a little bit when they move in three years later, they moved to a new house. They never maintain it, and then after three years after that, they'll move into another one I thought you know, the baby boomer boomers, my parent's generation, they built a house or moved into a house, and they lived in it for 30, 40, 50 years.

**Curtis:** Yeah, that's exactly it and they knew everything about it. I mean, it's the same thing with cars, right? People buy a car now, they may never change the oil, but they may not do anything. They keep it for three years and it's gone. Just go buy a new car. That's right, everything is disposable.

**Erich:** That's it, like never put new tires on it, right?

**Curtis:** It's their mentality is like Well, I'm always going to have a car payment, so, I'll just swap it out every couple of years and you know, whatever

**Erich:** That’s exactly it and that's the disposable economy that we are in right now because of the supply chain and different COVID issues you cannot get new appliances. I'm sure you're running into this in the custom home market and a lot of the manufacturers are not making parts for appliances that are over eight years old. They just want you to go out and buy a new one. So there really are certain items, and the maintenance is just going away. But the items that are out there that are the higher quality and higher-end ones, the homeowners are not looking out for them. The ones that do the basic cleaning and touch-ups and things of that nature that need to be done to make those appliances last 15-20 years like they are actually built to do

**Curtis:** When was the last time the average person pulled their refrigerator out from the wall and vacuumed the coil on the back of the refrigerator, you know? I mean, I do it every once in a while, because I think about it. I'm aware of it. Most people never pull the refrigerator out until it starts it stops working. They're like hey, it wasn't my refrigerator cooling and then the repair guy shows up and it's like a dog back there behind the refrigerator that

**Erich:** That is absolutely it we see that and we see dryer vents in winter they're really scary situations a lot of the built-in refrigerators we love the look on people's faces when we walk in, and we just pop a little cover off the front that is so easy and stick a vacuum in there and they see what we're pulling out of there. A lot of this stuff is not difficult. It's just the knowledge of knowing what to go through and what checklist you need to look at every six months or a year.

**Curtis:** Okay, you mentioned the dryer vent. My mom called me last week and said you know our dryer wasn't working and your dad couldn't figure out why, so we called the appliance repair company he opened it, pulled it off in the water looked at and he said the dryer vent was completely compacted. And they have one of these vents that goes out through the roof. Yes. And they've been there for, you know, 20 years and they've never cleaned it out.

**Erich:** Yeah, and it's amazing. They have a great dryer because it lasted that long. But yeah, we see it all the time absolutely all the time where I mean we will put a leaf blower on the vent on the inside and go to the outside and get a big mesh net and catch everything that we blow out of there and it's shocking what we can pull out of there.

**Curtis:** That's a great method or never thought about that.

**Erich:** Yeah. So, electric leaf blowers make it much easier. He can't bring the gas one inside ha-ha.

**Curtis:** Right. So, this is probably obvious now based on that conversation, but what are the benefits of having a GoodSmith provide a home maintenance contract? So, what do you guys all do? What kind of costs - in not getting down into the nitty gritty on costs, but generally, you know, what kind of money am I looking at to have you maintain their home for them?

**Erich:** So, we have a couple of different packages depending on how much you want to sub out for someone to maintain your house. We have maintenance projects where we are the products that we go in once or twice a year and we have a product that we go in once a quarter and we also if you're a member of our service, we will do anything you want on it on demand or al-a-carte basis. Our basic maintenance programs handle light bulbs, and air filters, flushing Hot Water Heaters cleaning out dryer vents, checking caulking around the showers and wet areas, and changing water filters and refrigerators. Pretty much any of the prescriptive items that you really need to do multiple times a year. We have that in our maintenance program. The best part is when one of what our clients really appreciate about our service is the fact that it is automatic. All of those basic items that they need to do are taken care of we show up with the air filter we show up with the light bulb they don't have to go to Home Depot for an hour and go wait in line and get the air filters to get the lightbulbs and get all the materials we show up - we charge them a very fair price for it - we pass a lot of our discounts along through them because we buy in bulk. We're buying 1000s of air filters a quarter, you know that they're buying three. So having a company that comes out there and buys in bulk and is able to pass along those savings really will save the homeowner a lot of money in the long run and having someone come in there and look after your appliances and take care of those things we avoid, and our homeowners avoid a lot of the emergency services that are out there. It's hard for us to prove the negative that your air conditioner didn't break because we were out there but after being in business for a couple of years, we find that a lot of our members will come to us and go, you know what? My house is good. Nothing's really broken that much in the last year and a half, two years. I don't think I need your service anymore like you know that's great. That's your choice. We'll be here if anything happens, and they usually are back in about six months or so after that after they stopped maintaining things.

**Curtis:** Yeah.

**Erich:** The other good thing about having a trusted maintenance partner is when something does break. It's an easy way to have someone you trust to come out to your home. You don't have to go to the Yellow Pages no one goes through those anymore, but you're not going to Google exactly as whatever and just you start hammer dialing down the list and you don't know who's going to show up or who if you can trust them if it's going to be a good bid or you know, or if they're going to come out and do a good job or if they don't do a bad job and you pay them will they ever come back and fix it. So, it's building relationships. There's a little bit of money up-front to do these, but it will more than pay for itself, in the long run. It's not if something's going to go wrong in your house it's a matter of when and then having the right person to fix it will save you a lot of money and a lot of headaches in the long run.

**Curtis:** Yeah. So, I bet if people add up all the costs of the little items that they should be doing, they probably aren't. So, like all the items they should be doing plus what they're currently doing, add in the time value of their money, and then add in the fact that they may not have to have emergency service calls. It's probably a wash honestly on paying you guys versus what they would have spent do you think that's accurate?

**Erich:** I think that's very accurate. We really look at it like the metric out there is you should spend approximately 1% of your home's value every year on maintenance and repairs. And so that's a high number because that also builds in replacing your roof which might is going to be a big check every 20 years 15 years or depending on the type of roofing averages out, but it totally averages out over time. Our average client spends about $5,000 to $7,500 a year with us which seems like a big number but when you were doing power washing, we're doing window washing we're doing a lot of things that people do not consider home maintenance but is all part of the home major

**Curtis:** So that is not your contract pricing. That's kind of what people were your contract pricing plus whatever people are adding on add-on service.

**Erich:** That's exactly what our basic maintenance program is at $89 a month and then you can add on and build up from there. which you know ends up being it's let's just call it $1,100 a year which for your largest asset is not that big that not that big of a number considering you're spending at least that on your car.

**Curtis:** Yeah, I've been thinking about this and I'm not just blowing smoke here; I will sign up with you guys. I mean, I'm a contractor, right? I can do this stuff, but I'm going to sign up with you guys because I just don't want to mess with it. I mess with other people's houses and problems all day. I don't want to go home and do this stuff.

**Erich:** Full disclosure probably the first six months of GoodSmith I was still doing it you know being a home builder. I really enjoyed doing it but it's it. It wears on you go home and you know having a family and wanting to hang out with your kids it's so easy to have someone that will come out there and take it you don't have to worry about air filters or light bulbs or anything like that.

**Curtis:** My water heater went out last night. So, I'm scrambling this morning to go get a water heater, get my plumber out there and get it replaced. So, I mean I'm real-time dealing with these issues here.

**Erich:** Yeah. Well, it's that that's the service that we provide. It's one message and we're out of your house taking care of it. So, my wife would really appreciate that.

**Curtis:** So, in the next episode that we have, we're going to talk about builders’ warranties and you're familiar with that you are in the business and the importance of homeowners not doing something that voids their warranty. If you read your builders' warranties closely, there are actually a lot of maintenance items in there that the homeowner is responsible for maintaining and if they don't do that, they could void their warranty, and then if something does happen.
So, I think this is one of the most important parts of our discussion is you know, what things can you think of that you provide that, you know, if it's not done, that it could void your builder's warranty on a custom home?

**Erich:** I mean, the really easy ones are anything that's bringing you comfort in your home, your air conditioning unit, don't change your filters, it voids your warranty. Your hot water heater, if you don't do the proper maintenance and flush, it out, you're going to void your warranty on it. Something as simple as replacing a light bulb, if you go in and you put the wrong wattage light bulb in there a wrong type of light bulb on there, you're going to blow the fixture out, you're going to blow the fuse out, guess what? You've voided your warranty, really anything that you touch in your home that is not done in a workmanship and high-quality way in a very specific manner, you can void your warranty. A lot of things that you know caulking around windows, it's a really, really simple one, but it's very pertinent in our environment here in Houston. But you don't caulk around your windows, and you have a metal window or particularly a wood window - warranty voided.

**Curtis:** Yeah. So, it is one of those things that people just don't think about until there's a leak. But you know, caulking is not made to be something that's going to be there forever. It's a material that shrinks and deteriorates, you know you're supposed to replace that regularly. That's one of those items people don't think about.

**Erich:** Yeah, they don't realize how quickly it actually deteriorates and the worse place for the roof. Yeah, roof jacks. Yeah, someone must go up there once a year and look at that. Yeah, your roof leaks, and you have not done basic maintenance on it.

**Curtis:** Probably when that roof Jack was installed, or when that window was installed or whatever the roofer the guy doing it probably didn't use the most expensive tube of caulk that you could buy right probably it's probably going to be the cheapest because that's how they're, you know, that money so that's exactly, and even a good builder. I know from experience that even a good builder is not checking every tube of caulk that his subcontractors are using, right? right? So, I mean, I'm not Hey, are you using the A-100? Or whatever. So, you're trusting your subs to use good products, but most of them are just going to grab whatever they can make the most money on and so that means it's not going to perform as well as something. That's a top-shelf product.

**Erich:** That's right. That's right. I know I don't know a builder that is going up on every single roof and punching out every roof Jack, that's just not happening and so that's right if a quality builder will have quality subs, which will you always hope will make the quality decisions but just like why home maintenance industry is a hard one. It's all about the people and sometimes people have bad days or run out of caulk, and they need to get the job done. And you might have a spot or two that was neglected.

**Curtis:** Or just the totally wrong time. Even you know, there's a bunch of different types of caulks and sealants, and yeah, let's just grab one tube, it's kind of the same thing and able to slap it on there.

**Erich:** That's right, walk down the aisle at any big box and you'll see that there are 100 different types of silicone and acrylic and different caulks out there.

**Curtis:** That is what I like about you guys, too, is that I've seen your storeroom, you stock all these different products and so, you guys know what's the right product to use. Even on stuff like air filters, now you're buying the kind of air filter that you should buy. I think some people get suckered in air filters right – they go on Amazon, they just click something, and order it and it can be crazy expensive and just the wrong kind of filter even, but they don't know they're just buying an air filter.

**Erich:** That's exactly it and that's all they've been ever taught is just put a new air filter in there and you're good to go because the last one they took out was filthy. They do not know that there are, you know, 13 different grades of them to actually put in there and an anti-allergy one that costs $75 might not be any better than just a standard MERV 10 or MERV 13 that costs $30.

**Curtis:** So, yeah. Especially if it's not changed regularly. That's right. My philosophy has always been to buy cheap air filters and change them more often.

**Erich:** That's a good way to do it if you're changing them often then you can't go terribly wrong.

**Curtis:** Yeah. So, I'm going to change directions, a little for the last few minutes and this is kind of unrelated to our maintenance discussion, but these are some questions that I'm asking all of our guests and since you're a former or recovering a custom home builder, you probably have a hot take on this. What kind of person is kind of shouldn't go through the custom home process? Because some people are better off, maybe I should buy a house in the suburbs or a house that's already built. So, what kind of person shouldn't go through? The custom home building process.

**Erich:** Oh, man, I probably have a couple of names of specific people.

**Curtis:** We would definitely not do that. You know, I don't

**Erich:** I don't think that there's anybody who should not go through it. I think there are a lot of people that jump a lot of the preliminary stages of it and really evaluate what they need. I mean, there's a custom home, I was just telling my clients, it doesn't have to be super expensive. It's going to be more expensive than a run-of-the-mill spec house or particularly a production builder where there are a lot of scales of economy, but if you want to live in a very specific area, you will more than likely need to find a custom builder. I think the person that really shouldn't do that is the kind of person that isn't comfortable enough with themselves, to take good advice from trusted professionals.

**Curtis:** That is fantastic.

**Erich:** So, that's why you have to be at least humble enough to know that you are not the expert on everything and must be able to take at least some leaps of faith, to trust your contractor, trust your architect, or the people you are paying to do what's right by you and do your part up front to vet them to make sure that if they do make a mistake, they will be there to stand behind their product can help you recover from any mistake.

**Curtis:** Yeah, that's a great answer. I asked that question to everybody and I think that's the best answer I've heard so far, and you weren't ready for it either. So, on the flip side of that, who do you think is the ideal customer or the builders’ dream and perfect client to have, as a builder?

**Erich:** Somebody building their third or fourth custom house and has already made every mistake and has a very clear vision or at least by the time they get to the bid process on it has a very clear vision and a pretty solid budget on what they want to spend. You know, it doesn't have to be the highest budget, but they should have realistic expectations. So, that's really it. I don't think there's a cookie-cutter perfect client, but somebody who is aware of the situation and has preferably gone through it a couple of times, it's always great.

**Curtis:** I think those people probably tend to have a higher level of trust to yes, there are they're probably making better decisions on who to hire to begin with so they're putting more trust and more faith into their team.

**Erich:** That's absolutely right, let’s just hope they have not been ‘burned’ on their last home, because then otherwise, they can be very skeptical.

**Curtis:** So exactly. Any stories that you've seen either or dealt with or projects that have gone awry or horribly wrong?

**Erich:** Oh, man should have been more ready for this. You know, I guess really the 20 years of building houses you see a lot of crazy things you see, you know, I've seen a framer accidentally cut himself off the second story of a building kind of road runner style.
That was way back at the beginning of my days. That was a very interesting one, but I think really some of the craziest things that recently, particularly with the homecare is how far people will let their home go because it's slowly evolved in front of them and it's not always relevant or prevalent to them when they walk in their house every day that suddenly you have a dryer vent that you can pull out 17 sweaters because it hasn't been cleaned out in 20 years. Those are the really wild and crazy things that are unfortunate because they almost are always preventable, particularly in the maintenance and repair of things. But gosh, I'm sorry, I don't have to have any better, more fun, hysterical stories.

**Curtis:** I actually found one time a skeleton of a possum and all of her babies all together under somebody's Jacuzzi tub, you know, behind the access panel.

**Erich:** Oh gosh.

**Curtis:** I was thinking that had to smell bad for a while, right? Yes. So, first, I'm not sure how they got in there, and secondly when that thing was rotting, how did they not smell it and call somebody to take care of it or just open the door and look for it though?

**Erich:** That's right. I've got one. My dad was a homebuilder for a short period. of time, not in that short period of time, but this is up in Kentucky and kind of dovetails into that story. The reason you always seal behind the bathtub when you are before you install it is that critters can crawl up there, he had a skunk get in and managed to work up into an awkward spot in the wall and could not find it and they couldn't figure out where the smell was coming from. Eventually, I think he ripped out about a third of the sheetrock of the house and all the carpet just because of what you know one little crazy skunk that got in there. So that's it happens. Right?

**Curtis:** Well, I think that's about all I've got for today. I really appreciate you coming on air, Kleine. It's been fantastic having you.

**Erich:** Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

**Curtis:** I'm so glad that you're out there killing it with good Smith. It's a much-needed service and I hope that our Houston area listeners and viewers will take advantage of your services. So, before you go tell us how they can find good Smith.

**Erich:** Excellent. Well, the easiest and most informative way is mygood[smith.com](http://smith.com/) That's obviously our website and it has all of our membership information and the different programs that we provide. And then you may find us GoodSmith on Instagram and I honestly don't know my handle on Instagram or our Facebook on those…

**Curtis:** You don’t do it yourself?

**Erich:** I do not do it myself; I'm a little old school. I think when it comes to that, I've let my partner run with the marketing.

**Curtis:** So, if you just search good Smith on Instagram, I'm sure you will find it. And when we publish this episode, we will link your website and your Instagram and Facebook, so it'll be out there for our viewers and listeners.

**Erich:** That's fantastic, my business partner is cringing as he's listening to this right now, I'm sure.

**Curtis:** Well, thanks, Erich, and thanks to all of you for tuning in for another episode of ***The Your Project Shepherd Podcast***. Once again, remember that every successful project has these four key components represented by a simple drawing of the house. The foundation's planning the left walls, your team, the right walls, communication, and the roof is proper execution. So, tune in next week and you'll hear our interview with Chris Bolio of older homes. And we're going to discuss builder's warranties, and that ties in a lot with the discussion we just had. So, thank you for joining us and we'll see you soon

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