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A: If I have a toothache I go to the dentist; I cannot pretend to know why my molar is hurting me. It is the same with a renovation: **Unless building is your profession, you must always hire a general contractor.** I use Rory McCreesh at Duce Construction (718/383-3605). You can dispense with an architect or a decorator if your budget does not allow you such luxuries, but proceeding without a good contractor will result in catastrophe. That said, you must double check all their references. Prudence is the key word in this; you will come to regret any decision you make in a hurry.
—Robert Couturier, Interior Designer, New York City

A: E.R. Butler & Co. Hardware (erbutler.com) carries gorgeous door and drawer hardware. Their designs are so simple, yet so refined, that a Butler doorknob looks almost like a piece of jewelry. I love their W.C. Vaughan collection, a piece of hardware that beautiful would complete any renovation.—Eve Robinson, Interior Designer, New York City



A: Medite, a fiberboard paneling material (from sierrapine.com), would work very well in a kitchen or family room. The two-by-two panels can be screwed into walls or attached with an epoxy, and its rich wood tones warm up any space. What's more, **Medite is an environmentally sound choice for renovations, and that's very appealing to me.**—Susan A. Maxman, Architect, Philadelphia



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