

CALL IT A **SAFETY NET(WORK)**

REFERRAL SERVICE MATCHES RELIABLE CONTRACTORS, HOMEOWNERS

BY **CAROL MCCARTHY**
MARKETPLACE EDITOR

Imagine it's a Saturday afternoon and you are a homeowner with a burst pipe in your basement. Or you are running out of time before the new baby comes and you really need that addition built.

Who are you going to call?

As any homeowner knows, finding the right contractor or home repair professional is no easy task. But Dean Bosse of Bozrah is trying to make it easier. Earlier this year he started Connecticut Home Network, a resource for consumers in need of contractors. It's a simple yet brilliant idea.

Here's how it works:

Bosse meets with a variety of contractors who are interested in joining his network: handymen, electricians, roofers, painters, plumbers, general contractors and everyone in between. To start, each contractor has to be licensed and must provide proof of insurance.

"There are a lot of criteria," Bosse says. "I want to make sure that they are the kind of people that I would want to do work in my home."

Bosse checks the contractor's credentials with the state, his or her standing with the Better Business Bureau, interviews each contractor and speaks to the contractor's references.

"If I don't get glowing reports, then I kind of don't want to bring him into the network," he says.

He might be reluctant to work with someone who he hears does good work but is slow or late in finishing a job, for instance.

"The more I do it, the more I interview people, the more I get a sixth sense about them," he says.

Once the contractor is part of the network, Bosse fields inquiries from homeowners in need of work done. He then matches the homeowner to the contractors.

The contractors pay Bosse a commission, like a finder's fee, once they've been paid by the homeowner.

"We negotiate a commission based on the job," he says.

The service is free to the homeowner.

Bosse, a computer programmer by profession, got the idea for the business after experiencing typical homeowner troubles with various contractors.



DEAN BOSSE OF BOZRAH HAS STARTED A BUSINESS TO MATCH UP HOMEOWNERS WITH RELIABLE CONTRACTORS. **JEFF EVANS PHOTO**

"I understand how the process works from both ends," he says.

Homeowner Ann Chambers of Bozrah contacted Bosse for a referral during what she calls "a year from hell" after her husband suffered a paralyzing cervical injury that would eventually cost him his life.

Chambers needed to have the couple's center-chimney Cape torn up to accommodate her husband. The last thing she needed were the headaches of finding qualified and trustworthy contractors.

"One of his clients refinished my floors and did an absolutely remarkable job," she says.

In addition to looking for honest contractors who do quality work,

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he seeks professionals who have the customer-service aspect of their business down, too.

"I'm looking for guys that are punctual, are there when they say they are going to be there and they don't disappear," he says.

For contractors who are super busy or don't enjoy the aspects of their business that involve returning phone calls and setting up appointments with potential customers, Bosse can handle that, too. That's something he and the contractors can negotiate.

The flooring contractor who worked for Chambers lived up to her expectations on all counts. "They cleaned everything up; they came when they were supposed to, they left when they were supposed to — they did a beautiful job," she says.

Chambers say she plans to turn to Connecticut Home Network in the spring, when she hopes to add a garage to her home. "I could depend on Dean to deliver me a quality individual," she says.

Once Bosse has matched a contractor and a homeowner, the contractor handles the details from there on. Bosse checks in with the homeowner while the work is being done to be sure everything is going smoothly and then again when the work is finished.



DEAN BOSSE OF BOZRAH STARTED THE CONNECTICUT HOME NETWORK AFTER SOME FRUSTRATING EXPERIENCES WITH CONTRACTORS AS A HOMEOWNER HIMSELF. **JEFF EVANS PHOTO**

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