

Professional Builder®

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Aug. 12, 2019

Save Thousands of Dollars by Keeping a Job Site Clean



Sherwin Loudermilk

Sherwin Loudermilk founded Atlanta-based Loudermilk Homes in 2009 after an earlier career at IBM. Loudermilk Homes integrates the latest smart home technology with voice activation into every home, and its Loudermilk Connect app allows homebuyers to see real-time video and schedule and budget updates 24/7.

Do you want to know the easiest way for a builder to save several thousands of dollars when constructing a new home?

Keep a clean job site. It's so simple, and it's so true.

Keeping materials organized and stored properly, cleaning up debris at the end of every workday, and holding contractors to high standards saves \$5,000 to \$6,000 dollars or more on every luxury home we build. We track the data, and we can prove it.

Walk around most job sites, and you'll see various lengths of lumber haphazardly piled here and there. That means framers who need a half-cut board will probably reach for a fresh 16-footer that happens to be in easy reach just to cut off a couple feet. Now that costly 16-footer isn't as valuable anymore.

We once had extra doors and other materials stored at a site. Whoever stored them just piled them

on top of each other exposed to the rain. Contractors walked across the doors, which became warped, dented, and unusable. We lost \$3,000 worth of materials from sheer carelessness.

That was a very painful lesson, but we turned it into a pivotal learning moment for everyone at our company plus the contractors we work with.

Now we have language in our purchase orders and scope of work contracts that require contractors to keep a clean job site. If there are too many problems, we can terminate the contract. We take clean job sites very seriously, and confirm that the site and home interiors are tidy through the real-time video, photos, and work logs that are posted to our app, Loudermilk Connect.

One sheetrock contractor didn't take our requirements seriously. Although there were garbage bins all over the home, one day his crew left the place a complete mess. Discarded pieces of drywall, tape, mud, dust, tools and other supplies were all over the home, and there was trash and food waste from the crew's lunch scattered in the garage. This was after we had specifically asked the owner of the company to keep the job site clean, He promised to do so.

I took photos of the mess, sent them to the owner and told him how disappointed I was. He called the crew back to the site at 7:30 that night and had them clean it up the way they were supposed to be before leaving earlier that day. That job site was spotless thereafter, and the enforcement of our expectation left a powerful impression on the entire crew, the superintendent, neighbors, and the homebuyers who saw our commitment to quality in action.

In addition to saving money, a clean job site also reduces the injury risk, encourages accountability, builds trust and respect, fosters pride in our work, and strengthens our reputation. It's a subtle but powerful way of communicating that you have high standards and pay attention to detail, and that you expect everyone else to do the same.

To us, that's just as valuable as the \$5,000 to \$6,000 we're also saving.