



help for homeowners

HANDY GUIDES RANK ARCHITECTS, ELECTRICIANS
AND EVERY SERVICE IN BETWEEN BY JANE ADLER

IT'S HARD TO FIND A GOOD plumber or carpenter. Just ask anyone who's remodeled their kitchen lately.

Many homeowners rely on friends for referrals. Others resort to the yellow pages for help.

But now a handful of guides are available that list the providers of home services. Even more helpful, some of the guides actually rate the services.

The Franklin Report calls itself the ultimate insiders guide to home services. The guide started in New York City, but has since expanded to Chicago and Los Angeles. The first Chicago edition of The Franklin Report was published in 2001.

The Franklin Report covers about 25 categories of service

providers, such as movers, contractors, architects, electricians and painters. Only recommended providers are listed in the Franklin Report. Recommendations are gathered from architects, interior designers and other service providers. Homeowners who have actually used the services contribute too.

"We choose those listed in the guide only through recommendations or through people we know and respect," says Elizabeth Franklin, a former investment banker who, in 2000, founded The Franklin Report LLC, New York City.

Services are rated in four different categories on a scale of 0-5. The categories are quality, cost, value and how highly the

service is recommended.

Ms. Franklin considers the "recommend" category most crucial. It gauges homeowner satisfaction with the provider. A rating of "0" means the homeowner would never call the provider again. A rating of "5" means the homeowner would never call anyone but that provider. Most of the providers listed in the Chicago report rated a "3" or "4" in this category.

About 10,000 copies of The Franklin Report's Chicago edition have been sold so far. The book costs \$22.50 and is available at bookstores and at specialty home supply stores. There's no charge to view the Franklin Report online (franklinreport.com).