



Putter

By Chris Mapson

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Before You Build

What you need to turn the cottage of your dreams into a reality.

You would never confuse Mike with the world's best carpenter, that's for certain. But, what he lacked in talent, he made up with in raw grit and sheer willpower. In fact, you could almost feel the determination in Mike's voice. At long last, after dreaming about it for his entire working life, that magnificent, little "retirement-cottage-by-the-sea" was just about to become—a reality.

Yes, this would be Michael's finest hour.

From the moment I first met Mike, he knew exactly what he was going to build. He had his financing all squared away. And now, he was working on putting together his team, the all-important people part of the equation.

Tenaciously pursuing his goal of building, Mike was doing all the right things. He was bringing together every step in his critical path and moving the project along in a precise and timely fashion.

And therein lies the rub, folks. This is the age-old question, indeed.

Why is it that some people are "living the dream" while others just never stop dreaming? And how is it possible for the average person to bridge the enormous gulf between dreaming about building a cottage and actually getting it stood up and finished off?

From my years of experience in the industry, all I can say is that building your dream getaway is not only possible, it can be a fun and enjoyable experience as well.

Here are a couple of keys to the process that just might help you along the way.

So, exactly what are you thinking of building?

It's just a few simple decisions, that's all. But the question of what you are building rains on the parade of many a would-be cottager.

Decide on the number of beds and baths, rough square footage, rancher or two-storey, the size of your kitchen etc. Also look at how you envision maximizing your views. Are you thinking open living concept? What about "green" building options? Determine the non-negotiable basics of what you're after first.

Providing potential contractors with plans will let them know you're serious, and will help attract a good builder..

you want. Remember, any plan can be modified in almost any way you like.

And you think you can build it for how much?

The tears of anguish were streaming freely down her cheeks, now. The pure agony in her countenance was utterly palpable. After all, this was supposed to have been her dream hideaway. Magnificent in scope and grandeur—palatial in fact—it was definitely more than most would call a "weekend retreat." But despite many words of warning, this home that she had designed on paper (and fallen madly in love with) was unfortunately well beyond her budget.

Building is the stuff of life. It involves complex,

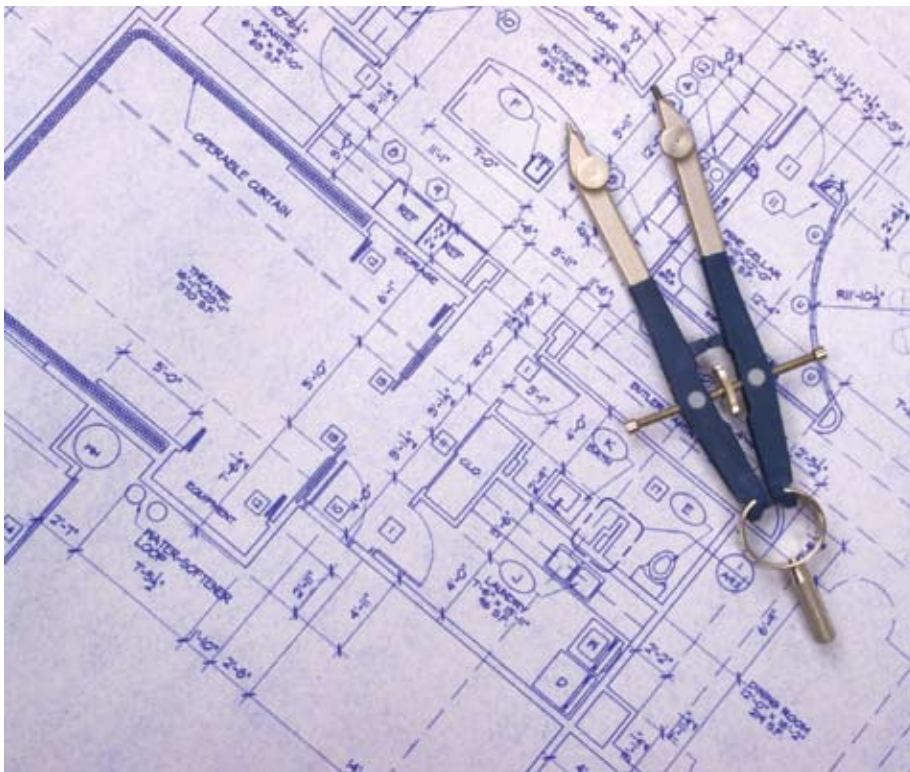
Then, you'll want to invest some quality time pouring over and hunting through home plans. Google it. All you really need is something close to what

flesh and blood family dynamics. No one should be telling you construction is a cake-walk.

And yet, somehow, there still remains a very real desire of sorts somewhere deep within you. It's almost an instinctual yearning, if you will. You want to provide the very best for your family, to provide them with more time together, a legacy of memories—more of the good things in life.

Enter the dream of building your very own cottage getaway.

Design only what you can afford. Big costs money. Why not "right size" and then spoil yourself with the more refined extra special details that can really make all the difference. Be sure you nail down your financing early. Don't wait. Give yourself time to "shop" your mortgage and make effective use of "sweat equity." Doing portions of the build yourself or calling in favours from friends and family can help contain costs and get your cottage built so you can begin enjoying the perks of cottage life.



Who's going to help you?

The need for a strong support network of professionals cannot be understated. And at the top of that list is your contractor. Find your contractor early. Ask friends for referrals. Check with the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA). They are a great source for qualified contractors. Certainly, ask for references but most importantly—listen to your gut. And, when securing your trades, remember that skills are scarce. Good people are hard to find. A quick word to the wise: Be cautious in how you approach your trades.

In many regions, the best contractors have the luxury of being able to “pick and choose” their clients, due to the growing labour crisis. As such, you as the client will want to make sure they choose you. Be positive. Do your homework. Show the contractor from the minute you meet them that you know what you want, that you will be an efficient—and pleasant—client, and that you realize building a cottage is quite the endeavor and will take some time.

“No Individual Has Ever Achieved Success Without The Help And Cooperation Of Others.”
—Napoleon Hill

It's all in the attitude: don't meet with your would-be contractor and immediately ask “how fast and how cheap can you possibly build it for?” because chances are, they have 10 other would-be clients with a “money is of no matter” mantra. That's not to say you need to be extraordinarily wealthy to secure a great contractor; you just need to have a plan, a realistic budget and a positive attitude. Try as much as possible to make building your cottage a great experience for your contractor as well as yourself—they're there to help make your dream come true.

Why not begin enjoying the process of building your cottage from the very first contractor contact(s) you make? This will go a long way toward attracting the best-in-class builder. One practical example of something you can do is understand that busy trades need completed construction working drawings in order to quote prices.

If you truly are serious about fulfilling your cottage lifestyle dreams, get your plans done early. There have been too many sad stories of families trying to develop plans, secure a contractor and start building all at the same time, in the busy spring.

Now, you're probably thinking you have a whole lot of planning to get started on. If so, you might want to download the Home & Cottage Planning Checklist by visiting www.wintonglobal.com. It is a very useful tool that will help keep you organized and point you in the right direction.

So, be encouraged. Building is possible. Know what you want, button down the financial side, line up your people and most of all, have fun—you're just about to start living the dream! 🎯

WINTON'S HOME & COTTAGE

Planning Checklist Highlights

- Check with the Building Authority in the area where you plan to build.
- Determine if you'll be self-financing or seeking a standard construction or draw mortgage.
- Start the financing process with your bank early.
- Ask yourself if you need to move in fairly quickly or if you have lots of time?
- Are there any architectural guidelines, covenants or other restrictions in place that will affect your design/finishing details?
- Are you planning on exploring any green building options?
- Are you going to use traditional, labour-intensive stick framing methods? Or will you build using precision, factory-built, pre-cut floor systems, pre-built wall panels and structural engineered roof trusses delivered to your site? (i.e. from Winton Global Homes)

To download the full checklist or for more information, visit www.wintonglobal.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Started working in the industry and helping people fulfill their new home dreams in 1995.

Winton Global Homes is a leading supplier of precision engineered building components and high-quality panelized home packages.