



## ***The Kitchen & Bath Insider***<sup>®</sup>

Paul Bookbinder, M.I.D.

### **Buying a Kitchen by the Pound**

Occasionally, when shopping for cabinets, people ask, “how much do these cabinets cost per foot?” I usually respond by asking them, “When you’re shopping for a car, do you ask the dealer how much the car is by the pound?” Of course not! No one would buy an automobile by the weight because this strategy would not include many factors that impact the final price of the vehicle such as quality, style, accessories, warranty, etc.

Many of the box stores use linear foot pricing for cabinet comparisons, which is not a good indication of the actual price. When cabinets are quoted by this method it usually does not include internal accessories, molding, toe-kick, touch-up kits, and other items, which are all part of a complete order. These extras, which are not included in a “per foot price” can add substantially to the total cost.

Linear foot pricing is the roughest type of estimate, and should only be used to compare one dealer’s cabinets to that of another (if they, in fact, sell similar cabinets). It can give you a general idea of competitive pricing, but do not rely on it to be the final price of the products.

Pricing a “10 foot by 10 foot kitchen” also leaves a great deal to be desired. If the store doesn’t list what is included, you can only use this figure to compare other cabinets at the same store. It is necessary to get the details of what is incorporated in this 10x10 offer so you can use it to compare it with other stores. You must make sure that each contains the same set of cabinets and accessories. There is a great deal of leeway in this fictional 10x10 kitchen such as size of appliance spaces, window quantity and size, and cabinet height. One company’s 10x10 may have considerably less cabinetry than another.

So how do you accurately compare costs? Unfortunately, pricing cabinets is not as easy as pricing a car. If you’re shopping solely by price, the box stores are usually your best bet. Have them create a design and give you an actual quotation. You can then use this quote to get competitive bids at other home centers.

If you want to compare prices, but also get the best *value* for your money, including customer service, higher-quality products, and personalized attention, it’s best to turn to the specialized kitchen and bath dealers. They will be happy to give you a rough idea of the cost of cabinets, but an accurate estimate cannot be created until a design is drawn and a cabinet style is selected. Not all dealers will give you a full quotation without a fee because of the amount of time needed to prepare a design and estimate. Some companies will allow you to apply the money spent on the design towards the final order, if you purchase the cabinets at that store.

Several firms have a staged quotation process, which includes a minimum initial design/estimate charge. If, after reviewing the design, you wish to pursue the project, they have a secondary fee for additional work on the design or releasing the drawings to you. This seems to be an equitable compromise. The designer charges a minimal fee, confident that they will create an exciting design, within the budget that you specify. You get a chance to review the design and get an estimate, before laying out a lot of money.

If you’re intent upon getting an estimate for a 5,000 pound kitchen, most firms, when pressed, will give you a price per foot (or pound). But, keep in mind that this price should be used for comparison only and not construed as the final price for everything that is needed to create your Dream Kitchen.