

It has been 14 years and the vinyl flooring in our kitchen/bathroom/laundry room had actually worn past its useful life. The rips and tears were getting too much to take and we decided that it was time to bite the bullet and replace the floor with something new. Because of the traffic that we still have in the house, we decided to have a laminate wood installed. To save money, we decided to do some of the pre-installation and post flooring work.

Taking out the old vinyl and underlayment was hard work but the money that we were saving kept me moving. I was a little bit skeptical about taking out and replacing the toilet. But the money we were saving spurred me on. In addition to the island, all appliances needed to be out of the kitchen. All things went very well and even the toilet came out better than I expected with no apparent cracks in the porcelain.

The next day the floor installation crew arrived and installed the flooring faster than I expected. Of course that meant that everything had to be moved back to the original spots. All the appliances were re-installed with only one minor hiccup. When it came to re-installing the toilet, my luck changed. Those of you who are regular readers know that when it comes to being a handy-man, my skills are short supply. So re-installing a toilet is a project that would stretch those skills to their limits.

With my much more handy wife at my side, we followed the instructions she received from the hardware store to the letter. I attached the new wax ring to the toilet, re-connected the various bolts and nuts and washers in their various places and was very happy there were no parts left over. Cautiously we turned on the water. So far, so good, no leaks. One flush and the water started dripping. Not bad leaks but enough to force us to turn off the water. She convinced me to go with her to the hardware store and buy replacement parts.

I spent the next half hour taking apart and putting back together one of the primary items used in our house. The tank didn't look quite right after my re-assembly job, slightly off-level. But that didn't really matter because the water line hooked up just fine and when I turned it on, there were no leaks! Until I pushed the handle to flush. Water came pouring from the toilet like nothing was assembled correctly!

As small business owners and managers, sometimes we try to do everything ourselves. We often have to be "chief cook and bottle washer". Some things we are really good at, other things we are not so good at.

There are some jobs that are best left to professionals. I recommend that each small business owner have available the following professionals: accountant, attorney, banker and commercial insurance professional. Yes they typically cost you some money, but in the end they save businesses much more money than they earn.

After I stopped the leak by turning off the water I told my wife that I had done enough damage to the toilet and it was time to call a professional plumber. It would probably only take them a few minutes to fix what had taken me much longer to try and put together. Yes it would probably cost us some additional money, but in the end I know it will be done right. Having it done right is important because I am expecting this new floor to last just as long as the old floor.

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, president of First National Bank, Ankeny.