

Quick Cabinet Quotes

by Jim Krengel

If you've quoted many kitchen jobs, you've learned that even when your client tells you they know what they want, they probably don't. So, all the time you're working on the sale, you're silently wondering how many quotes it'll take before you clinch the job. The problem is that, during their process of information-gathering, homeowners tend to change their minds. For example, they choose a cabinet manufacturer, select a door style, and ask for a quote on the cabinets. In the belief that your client expects an absolutely accurate price at this stage, you put together an all-inclusive quote and present it to the client. In my experience, several things can then happen:

- They're surprised to learn that the price doesn't include counters and installation, and they think it's a little more than they'd like to spend.
- While you were spending all that time putting the quote together, they've found a door that they like a little better; unfortunately, it's by another manufacturer, so you'll have to start over.
- After browsing through your presentation book, they're interested in pricing another plan.
- They thank you very much for your time, and say they'll get back to you (they probably won't).

While there's no more accurate way to provide a quote than to tally up each cabinet and part required, it takes

up a lot of your time. But, before you've determined that they're committed to a specific plan, a specific cabinet style, and most importantly, to you as a contractor, giving a prospective client an exact price isn't necessary. What most customers need is an estimate that's close to a real price.

As an analogy, when you begin looking for a new car, or any other big-ticket item, you probably don't need an exact price. You want to know what ballpark you're in, and whether or not you want to be there. As you shop, you develop a concept of how much you're willing to spend, based on the particular options that you want. Only when you're really ready to buy do you need an exact quote. A kitchen cabinet customer approaches their project in much the same way. At first, they're only collecting information, and getting a general feel for price; they'll need a firm price when it's time to sign the contract.

The CCM Method


Some customers will always insist on an exact quote, and that's the only way you'll be able to deal with them. But, for most situations, I use a technique called the CCM, or "cabinet count method" (see sample worksheet, next page). It requires some preliminary price-gathering legwork, and has to be adjusted to the individual business, but it's quite simple to use, and surprisingly accurate. To use the CCM, you assign a point value to each type of cabinet, as follows:

- Wall Cabinet = 1 Point
- Wall Corner Cabinet = 2 Points
- Base Cabinet = 1 Point
- Base Corner Cabinet = 2 Points (lazy susan, dead corner turnout etc.)
- Tall Cabinets = 2 Points
- Tall Cabinets with feature = 4 Points (swing-out interior, sliding shelves etc.)

To further develop this technique, apply points to moldings or semi-custom features that you commonly use. In short, modify the concept to fit the cabinets you work with and your way of doing business.

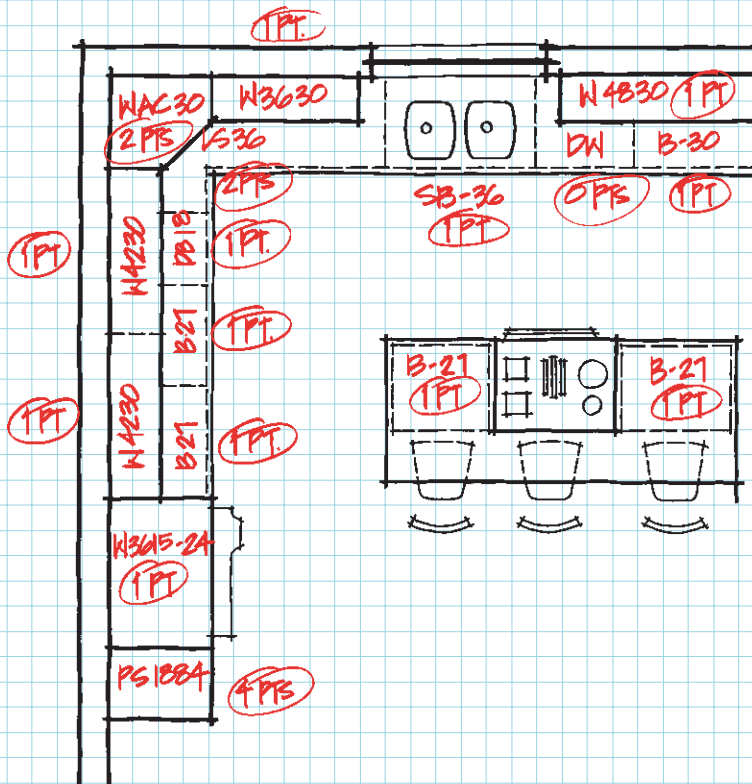
Assume that you work with a cabinet line that's available in four species of wood, and five door styles in each wood: In order to apply the CCM, you need to find the average cost for each door style, and each kind of wood. Begin with a combination of 40 different standard wall, base, and tall cabinets. Price each unit and total them up. Divide the total price by the number of units (40) to come up with an average price. If the total amount for our 40 cabinets is \$12,000.00, the average cost per cabinet is \$300. The CCM simply uses this average as the price per point.

Using the cabinet count method, you can provide a close estimate for a cabinet plan in less than five minutes. Even if you're only working with a rough plan and some overall dimensions, you can sketch out a quick layout that suits their needs, and have a price in their hands in very little time.

I like this method because it's simple, and it works. As with any estimating system, you have to put in the time to make it fit your business and the products you work with. 

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Cabinet Count Worksheet



TOTAL POINTS = 17 PTS.

- OAK FLUSH OVERLAY
\$ 269.83 x (17 PTS.) = \$ 4575.99
- OAK FLAT PANEL
\$ 282.90 x (17 PTS.) = \$ 4809.30
- OAK RAISED PANEL
\$ 295.83 x (17 PTS.) = \$ 5029.11
- OAK RAISED PANEL (FULL OVERLAY)
\$ 308.83 x (17 PTS.) = \$ 5250.11
- OAK ARCHED RAISED PANEL
\$ 321.83 x (17 PTS.) = \$ 5471.11

Cabinet Size	Points	Oak Flush Overlay	Oak Flat Panel	Oak Raised Panel/ Oak Raised Panel	Oak Arched Full Overlay	Raised Panel
W-3630	1	\$149.00	\$162.00	\$169.00	\$174.00	\$183.00
W-4830	1	157.00	170.00	183.00	196.00	209.00
W-4230	1	170.00	183.00	196.00	209.00	222.00
W-3615-24	1	195.00	208.00	221.00	234.00	247.00
WAC-30	2	483.00	496.00	509.00	522.00	535.00
PS-1884	4	606.00	619.00	632.00	645.00	658.00
SB-36	1	188.00	201.00	214.00	227.00	240.00
DB-18	1	195.00	208.00	221.00	234.00	247.00
B-27	1	192.00	205.00	218.00	231.00	244.00
B-30	1	196.00	209.00	222.00	235.00	248.00
B-36	1	200.00	213.00	226.00	239.00	252.00
LS-36	2	507.00	520.00	533.00	546.00	559.00
TOTALS	17	\$3,238.00	\$3,394.00	\$3,550.00	\$3,706.00	\$3,862.00
Average Total (Amount Divided by number of units)		\$269.83	\$282.90	\$295.83	\$303.83	\$321.83

The author uses a Cabinet Count worksheet to arrive at the average cost of a given cabinet style. By assigning one or more points to each cabinet according to its complexity, he produces a quick estimated cost for any style, by multiplying each average cost by the total number of points in the design.