

HomeWorks Application Project Brief

Company Information

HomeWorks Incorporated is a service company that connects homeowners with reliable service technicians who can perform a variety of home repair and maintenance services. It maintains a list of certified contractors and guarantees the quality and timeliness of work provided. The company makes its revenue by taking a percentage of work booked through the service.

The company would like to expand the service they provide to include an application that will not only allow customers to get bids from contractors easily, it will also provide tracking and guidance on when standard home maintenance is due to be performed.

The Application

This application needs to fulfill two primary functions:

1. Provide a homeowner with a list of standard maintenance that should be performed on their house, tracking of when maintenance was last performed, and reminders when maintenance is due.
2. Connect homeowners to a list of qualified technicians in their area who can perform the standard home maintenance needed, and allow them to obtain bids on performing the work.

The Users

The primary target audience for this application is a busy, single professional. This person lacks the time or the skills to perform regular home maintenance and has no one else to share the task of tracking when standard maintenance needs to be performed. Nor do they have time to research available resources who can perform the work reliably. They frequently take contractor recommendations from friends or family, and have not always been pleased with the results. They need someone who can provide a list of contractors who have already been screened for the quality and

reliability of their work, reminders on when standard maintenance is needed, and an easy way to engage these people to do the work.

The Competition

There are numerous companies that provide home maintenance services, but they are primarily self-contained and focus on specific areas of expertise. There are also websites, like Angie's List, that provide lists of contractors in a particular location, along with reviews of their work. I wasn't able to find a company like HomeWorks, that screens independent contractors that specialize in particular types of maintenance and repair work, and guarantees their work.

There are also home maintenance apps available, but they tend to be focused on specific types of work; designing rooms, maintaining appliances, outside maintenance, indoor maintenance, etc. I even found one home maintenance app, but it was basically just a simple checklist of what to do, and when it was last done. What I dislike about these apps is that you would need to download multiple to have a truly comprehensive list, and they don't seem to have the ability to connect with other apps.

Functionality

The application will need to allow a user to:

- Register with the service.
- Enter information about their property, such as location, type (home, condo, co-op, etc.), the square footage, number of floors, number of rooms, the year built, type of construction (brick, siding, etc.), type of roofing material, appliances (including age), current landscaping/grounds information, and the last known date specific maintenance was performed.
- Track more than one property, such as vacation homes or rental properties, as needed.
- Manage reminders on when maintenance is due, such as type of reminders (email, text, etc.), how far in advance they are received, how many follow-up reminders will be sent, etc.

- Access the list of standard home maintenance, and filter it by frequency, season typically performed, estimated cost, etc.
- Integrate with Internet of Things (IoT) enabled appliances and systems, to receive notifications about issues.
- Integrate with secure payment applications, like PayPal, Foursquare, etc.
- Integrate with standard budgeting software applications, like Quick Books.
- Post a notification about work that needs to be performed on their property.
- Review responses/bids from contractors, and schedule the work with the winning bidder.
- Provide feedback and ratings on the contractor and the work done.

The application will need to allow contractors to:

- Receive notifications when work that is within their area of expertise is placed for bid in the geographic region they cover.
- Respond to posts with questions, availability, and amount they would charge for the work.
- Integrate with their accounting system/software, and payment systems.
- Indicate when work has been completed.
- Submit an invoice for payment.

I would envision the bidding process to work similarly to EBay, with posts made about work needed, the ability for multiple contractors to bid on the work, the ability to exchange questions and answers, and the ability to see previous ratings. The difference would be that the winning bid would not be automated; the homeowner would need to award the contract to the winner. Invoicing could go through the app or be handled offline.

Platform

I envision this as a cross-platform app, which would enable it to be used on desktops, laptops, and mobile phones that use both iOS and Android operating systems. I think this will provide the best usability experience, because it will give users the ability to perform some tasks on their phone, such as receiving reminders, checking on bids, etc.,

while also allowing payment and budget tracking to occur on other platforms with greater security.