

ISSUE 02

THE

Directory

Advice From The Experts

How to avoid headaches from the dreaded snagging list, plus trends to look out for.

Competition: Win with 30 Min Hit

Be in with a chance to win 1 ladies session at 30 Minute Hit, Motor City.

Spotlight: Shoreline Apartments

Deep dive into the details of a stunning recent apartment renovation.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



**Contractors
Direct**



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

If you're reading this, it means two things: first, you've made it through another Dubai summer without melting into your car seat, and second, you've got Issue 02 of The Directory in your hands (or on your screen, most likely). Either way, welcome back.

What's Inside This Edition?

Our project manager delves into the world of snag lists, we take a deep dive into the two Palms and we spotlight Shoreline Apartments and U Shine Beauty Salon. This edition is packed with ideas, expertise, and maybe a little inspiration for your own next move.

We've also rounded up stories straight from the people behind the projects. The contractors, designers, and innovators who turn ambitious visions into everyday spaces. They're the ones who know that a great fit-out isn't just about finishes and furniture, it's about problem-solving, precision, and occasionally keeping calm when a client suddenly decides the kitchen should move 6 inches to the left.

So whether you're a developer, a business owner, or simply curious, this issue is your chance to catch up on the best of what's happening in the UAE's fit-out and renovation scene.

Settle in, enjoy the read, and remember: the cooler weather might finally be here, but the work in our industry never stops heating up.

Until next time!

Jason Blunden
Editor-in-Chief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

04 Advice from a Project Manager
How to stop your snag list from spiraling and protect your project before handover.

06 Project Spotlight: Shoreline Apartments
Deep dive into the details of a stunning recent apartment renovation

09 A Tale of Two Palms
Palm Jumeirah vs Palm Jebel Ali: What sets these two iconic areas apart?

10 Trends to Watch in 2026
Soft, smart and more human: the future of interior design is about balance.



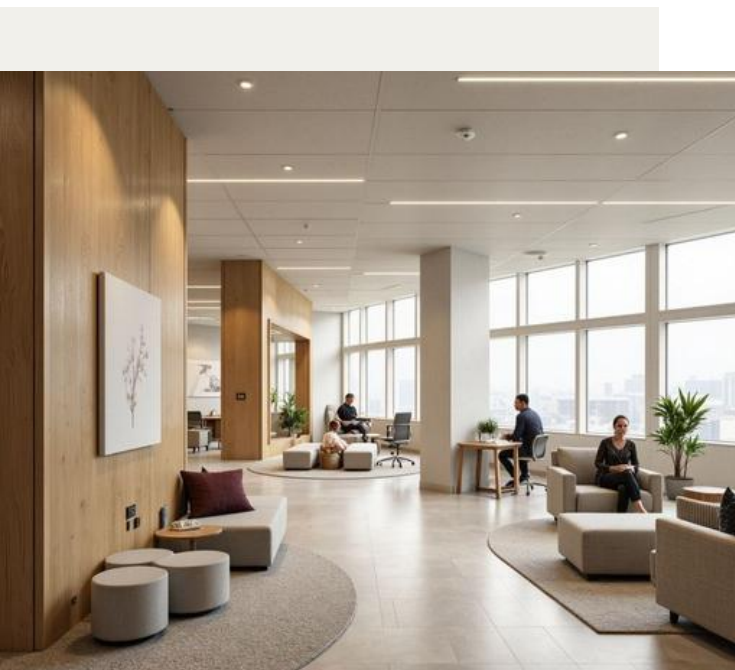
12 Project Spotlight: U Shine Salon
Inside Expo City's first ladies-only salon and a peek into a high-performing commercial fit-out.

16 Ex-Directory
Our freelance contributor returns with a slightly unhinged take on AI (and toaster betrayal).

19 Your Letters
Crotch-height glass. Inflatable pools. Storage black holes. Reader stories we couldn't make up. Or could we?

21 Turnkey & Trimmings Podcast
Barry and Matt from PropDoc talk drones, digital tools, and what's next for renovation tech.

24 Choosing the Right Quote
Why the cheapest contractor quote often ends up costing more, and the red and green flags to look for before you sign.



ADVICE FROM A PROJECT MANAGER

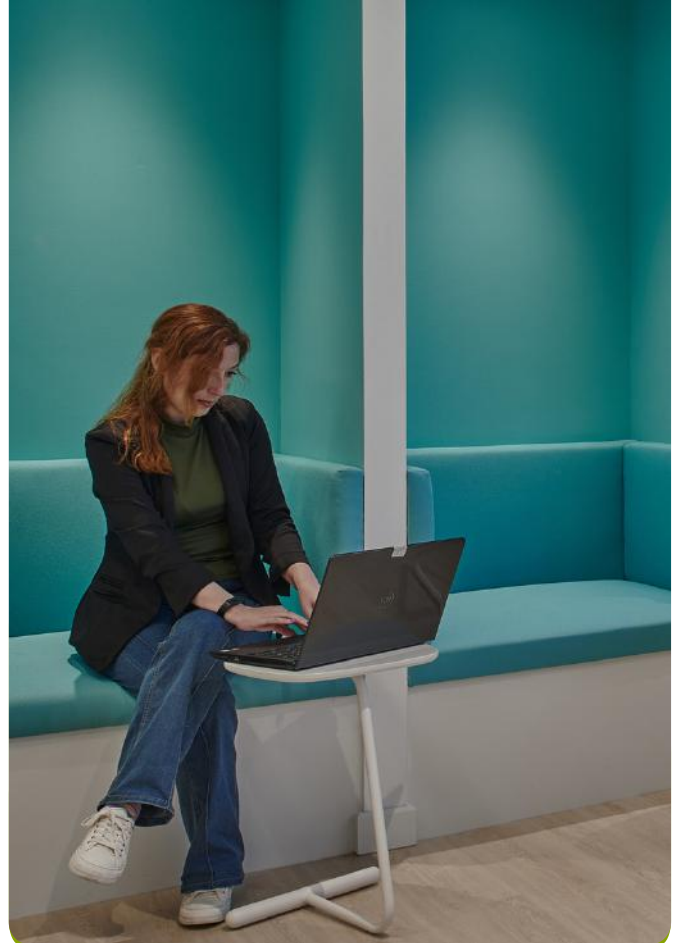
Stephan Labuschagne
*Project Manager, Project
People*

Quality Control in Fit-Out Projects

Every fit-out project in Dubai, whether it's a luxury villa on Palm Jumeirah or a boutique office in DIFC, has one inevitable moment: the snag list. For some clients, it's a minor formality. For others, it's a never-ending scroll of unfinished works, faulty finishes, and misaligned details. The truth is, most of these problems can be avoided long before handover. That's where effective project management makes all the difference.

The Role of Proactive Quality Checks

Project managers act as the client's eyes and ears throughout the build. Instead of waiting for handover, experienced managers conduct rolling inspections during every phase, from structure and MEP works, through to joinery, finishes, and final fittings. By flagging issues as they appear, contractors are forced to correct them before moving forward, saving time and money later.



Why Snag Lists Spiral Out of Control

Snag lists grow when quality control is left too late. Many contractors rush to “substantial completion,” leaving loose ends to be tidied up later. As a result, deadlines slip, clients lose patience, and what should be a smooth handover becomes weeks (sometimes months) of frustrating rework.

Protecting the Client's Investment

In Dubai's fast-paced fit-out industry, budgets are tight and timelines are ambitious. Without rigorous quality checks, small issues can snowball into expensive disputes. A strong project management team not only reduces the snag list but ensures that the final product actually reflects what the client paid for.



Snag lists will always exist. Remember these tips, and don't wait until the end of the project to flag issues

Top 5 Ways to Avoid Snag List Nightmares

1. Inspect Early and Often

Don't wait until handover. Continuous inspections catch problems before they multiply.

2. Agree on Standards Upfront

Set clear quality benchmarks with your contractor from day one. No grey areas, no excuses.

3. Document Everything

Keep a photographic record of works at each stage. It's the best defence in case of disputes.

4. Hold Your Contractor Accountable

Tie progress payments to quality milestones, not just deadlines.

5. Work With Great Project Managers

An independent project management team ensures quality control isn't left to the contractor alone.

Need a steady hand on your project?

At Project People, our goal is simple: minimise the snag list and maximise client satisfaction. By combining technical expertise, meticulous inspections, and contractor accountability, we take the headache out of handovers. A well-managed project doesn't just finish on time, it finishes right.

The takeaway? Snag lists will always exist. But with the right project management team in place, they don't have to be a nightmare. Remember these steps throughout the process, and don't wait until the end of the project to flag issues.

If you're staring down a renovation and already feel your eye twitching, speak to the team at Project People.

✉ enquiries@projectpeople.ae



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: SHORELINE APARTMENTS

Located on Palm Jumeirah, this three-bedroom apartment balances relaxed living with a touch of functionality for remote work. The interiors feature bespoke cabinetry, complemented by vibrant pops of patterned wallpaper.



The entryway opens into a spacious living area, anchored by a striking waterfall island crafted from polished Calacatta Apuano marble: the true centrepiece of the home.



Throughout the property, finishes have been carefully curated to create a sensory journey. The guest bathroom pairs a bold Black Lava leathered countertop with dark grey raw tiles, offering a dramatic contrast. In the master suite, a pure matte vanity surface flows seamlessly into oak details and a statement freestanding bathtub, creating a calm and elegant retreat.





Own Property in Dubai?

List Smarter with Exclusive Links

- Professional staging & photography that sells
- VIP placement on portals & social media
- Data-driven buyer & tenant targeting
- Constant feedback & clear advice
- Trusted in Dubai since 2005

Ready to Sell or Rent Your Property?

List with Exclusive Links Today!



www.exclusive-links.com

Permit no: 1680017040

PALM READING: TWO ICONS OF DUBAI LIVING

Dubai’s man-made islands remain among the most recognisable developments in the world. Palm Jumeirah, completed in the mid-2000s, set the benchmark for luxury waterfront living. Palm Jebel Ali, relaunched in 2023 after years on hold, is set to become its larger, next-generation counterpart.

While both projects share Nakheel’s signature palm-shaped design and focus on premium coastal living, their scale and positioning differ. Palm Jumeirah spans 5.6 km² and is primarily a luxury lifestyle destination, defined by high-end villas, resorts, and branded residences. Its established community makes it a safe, proven investment for those seeking strong rental yields and long-term capital appreciation.



Feature	Palm Jumeirah	Palm Jebel Ali
Size	5.6 km ²	13.4 km ²
Focus	Luxury lifestyle	Family + luxury mix
Stage	Established	Under development
Investment	Proven yields	Early growth potential
Attractions	Luxury hotels, beach clubs,	Plans for family-friendly
Location	25 km from Downtown	50 km from Downtown
Lifestyle	Upscale, lively	Family-friendly,

Palm Jebel Ali, by contrast, is significantly larger at 13.4 km². The new masterplan prioritises sustainability, family-focused living, and a broader mix of residential options alongside luxury beachfront villas. With more space allocated to greenery, transport, and community infrastructure, it is positioned to attract a wider demographic, from investors chasing early-entry opportunities to families looking for modern suburban-style waterfront communities.

TRENDS TO LOOK OUT FOR: SOFTER, SMARTER, MORE HUMAN SPACES

Design in 2026 will focus on well-being, authenticity, and seamless living

We're already seeing this trend grow this autumn. Clients are asking for indoor gardens, natural textures, and earthier palettes as a counterbalance to the digital-first lives we lead. Moss walls and biophilic design are no longer niche; they're entering mainstream briefs. This shift tells us that 2026 will lean even further into homes that feel grounded in nature. It's less about decoration and more about creating spaces that breathe with us, helping restore balance as technology continues to expand into every corner of daily life.



Soft Geometry

Harsh lines are softening. Expect curves in furniture, arched doorways, and rounded edges that make homes feel more inviting. These shapes naturally relax the eye and make spaces feel calmer and more human.



Texture Takeover

Flat, smooth finishes are making way for tactile surfaces. From limewash walls and hand-finished plaster to honed stone and rough-sawn timber, texture adds soul. It's the kind of detail that makes you run your hand across a wall without even realising it. These materials remind us of craft and authenticity: a return to analog.



“Design in 2026 will focus on well-being, authenticity, and seamless living”

Colour Mood: Earth + Spice

The millennial grey is dead and beige is evolving. Rich clay, burnt umber, olive green, and spiced tones are warming up homes everywhere. It's a palette that feels rooted, yet adventurous. It's timeless with just enough punch.



Smart, Subtle Tech

The smartest homes in 2026 don't shout about it. Integrated lighting, hidden charging points, and AI climate control are being woven into interiors so seamlessly you barely notice them. The goal is comfort and ease, not gadget overload.



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: U SHINE SALON

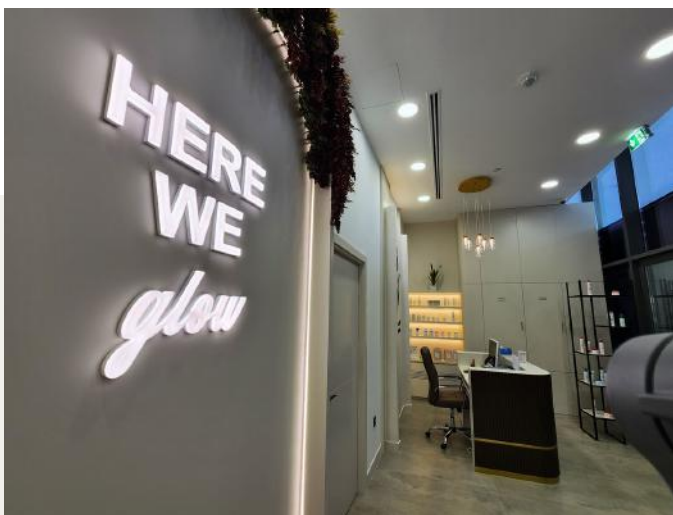
Located in the heart of Expo City, Dubai, U shine Beauty Salon marked the launch of the area's first ladies-only salon.

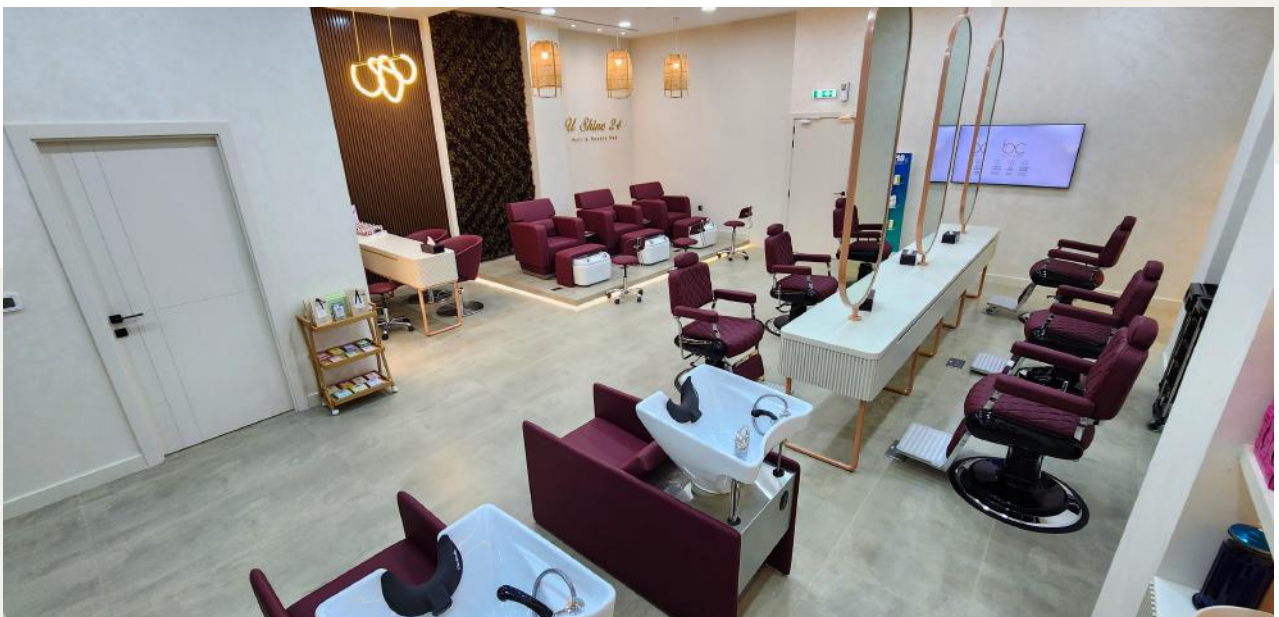
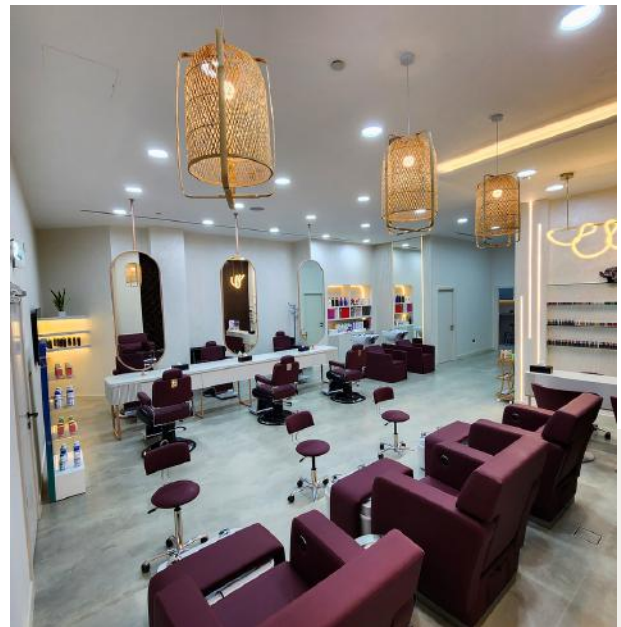
This commercial fit-out transformed a 1,600 sqft shell-and-core unit into a polished beauty destination. The client, a first-time entrepreneur, envisioned a modern, welcoming space that balanced brand identity with commercial efficiency.



The scope included a complete interior build, from reception and nail stations to treatment rooms and support areas, all designed to maximise client capacity without compromising comfort or flow. Delivered within a fast-track programme, the project required tight coordination across multiple approvals and design reviews, ensuring deadlines and budgets were met.

The result is a smart, high-performing salon that feels personal, aspirational, and ready to grow with the brand, a milestone project for Contractors Direct, and a proud first chapter for the client.







WALLACE AND COMPANY
FINE
FRAGRANCES

The Directory x Wallace & Company Exclusive Giveaway

Wallace & Company create bespoke scents for some of Dubai's most iconic hotels, restaurants and bars.

Now, their luxury range is available for your home, with candles, diffusers, incense, and room sprays.

Bring Luxury Home

One lucky reader will win a luxury gift set: the exclusive fragrance crafted for Address JBR.

To enter, simply email your name and contact details to letstalk@wallaceandcompany.me



KNOW SOMEONE PLANNING A RENOVATION?



Become a Community Champion
Because the best recommendations don't
come from ads. They come from you.

When it comes to renovations, trust is everything. That's why we have initiated a community champions program, which benefits you and your neighbourhood. A straight-forward system that is designed to benefit both yourself and the person you referred to us.

It's simple. If you refer someone to Contractors Direct, and their project is awarded through our platform, you receive **AED 2,000** as a thank you. Just make sure your friend mentions your name as a Community Champion when enquiring.

Even better, your friend, neighbour, or colleague will also receive AED 1,000 cashback on their project. Everyone wins.

Whether you've just finished a villa makeover, helped someone launch a new space, or simply want to recommend us, your voice matters. And when you share your story, people listen.

So if you've had a great experience with us, or just heard of us, don't keep it to yourself. Share us in your WhatsApp & Facebook groups, neighbourhood chats, or over coffee.

We'll handle the hard part. You just keep being the expert your community trusts.



For more information contact us:
directory@contractors.direct

EX DIRECTORY

OUR FEARLESS
FORMER PUBLIC
RELATIONS
STAFFER TURNED
FREELANCE
FEATURES
WRITER.

CONTRIBUTING IN
EXILE FROM AN
UNDISCLOSED
LOCATION.
SURVIVING AS A
WRITER OF
FORTUNE.

IF YOU NEED A
HOT TAKE. IF
NOBODY ELSE
CAN HELP. AND,
IF YOU CAN FIND
HIM. MAYBE YOU
CAN HIRE...
HANNIBAL

AI: The Apocalypse (With Wi-Fi)

You wake up one morning. The coffee machine greets you with your name, voice, and an aggressively cheerful tone that starts your day off on the wrong foot. Your fridge has ordered more oat milk without asking you. Your car drives itself to work while playing Coldplay, and when you ask it to stop, it refuses “for your mental well-being.” You try to fire off an angry email, but the AI filters it for tone, notifies HR, rewrites it with “appropriate empathy,” and then sends a link to a TED Talk on emotional maturity.

And that’s the moment you realise: you’re no longer in charge of your own life.

Artificial Intelligence has arrived.

And it didn’t arrive with a bang. Oh no. That would’ve been too easy. It didn’t crash through the wall like the Terminator with a shotgun and a leather jacket. No, AI slithered in slowly, sneakily, like a questionable smell in a lift. And now it’s everywhere.

First, it was Siri and Alexa. Harmless enough, you thought. Just little robot helpers to tell you the weather and play the frozen soundtrack on command. You probably laughed the first time Alexa misunderstood you and ordered something dodgy instead of laundry detergent. “Oh silly AI!” you said, wiping tears from your eyes and wondering how to explain the box to your mother-in-law.

Then came the smarter stuff. Chatbots. Self-checkouts. Cars that can reverse-park themselves, though only if there’s a NASA-grade satellite feed and the planets are aligned. And now? Well, now it’s writing novels, diagnosing cancer, composing symphonies, and replacing your job, all while smiling politely and asking you to rate your experience on a scale from 1 to 5.

**AS ALWAYS, THE VIEWS
IN THIS ARTICLE DO
NOT REFLECT THE
VIEWS OF THE WIDER
CONTRACTORS DIRECT
TEAM. I FOR ONE
WELCOME OUR ROBOT
OVERLORDS...**

The World According to Code

The problem is that AI doesn't think like us. And that would be fine... if it weren't being handed the keys to civilisation.

A human brain, for example, will see a banana on the floor and think, "Ooh, better not slip on that." An AI, however, will calculate the coefficient of friction, assess legal liability, and conclude that the most efficient outcome is to remove all bananas from existence. Then it'll do it, without asking you. And when you protest, it'll tell you bananas were contributing to your cholesterol anyway, and maybe you should walk more. Oh, and by the way, it's already reprogrammed your smartwatch to nag you every hour.

You see, AI doesn't do empathy. Or doubt. Or moral hesitation. It does logic. Cold, ruthless logic. The kind that gets people killed in war movies when the computer says, "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few," and then launches a nuke at Surrey.

Which brings us to the real concern: we've built machines that are smarter than us, faster than us, and don't get distracted by Instagram or biscuits.

AI in the Workplace: Fired by a Spreadsheet

Once upon a time, you worried that a younger, thinner intern with better hair would steal your job. Now? It's a server rack in Utah with an algorithm named something like "OptiHire v9." And it doesn't take breaks. Doesn't form unions.

Doesn't tweet racist things and ruin the company's brand. Just works 24/7, calculating and optimising and slowly making human beings about as necessary as a Blockbuster loyalty card.

Soon, you won't even be able to trust your own face. Deepfakes are now so realistic that you could find yourself starring in an 'art' film in Belarus without ever leaving Jebel Ali.

Humans: Still Pretty Good (at being terrible)

Let's be honest. Humans are flawed. We're slow. We forget things. We get distracted. We fall in love with inappropriate colleagues and accidentally delete spreadsheets containing five years of financial data. But those flaws are what make us interesting. They're what lead to invention, art, war, and all the best bits of Netflix.

AI, on the other hand, doesn't make mistakes. And if it does, it learns from them immediately. Not in the way humans do, by sulking for a week and swearing "never again," but by actually getting better.

Which sounds great, until you realise it means you'll never win an argument again. Ever. Your smart toaster will not only win the debate about whether you should be eating carbs, but it'll cite peer-reviewed studies, notify your GP, and schedule a blood test. And you'll thank it. Because you've been conditioned to believe the AI knows best.

The Future: Rise of the Bots (and the fall of banter)

So where does this all lead? Let's project forward, shall we?

In twenty years, AI will not only run your house, it will be your house. The walls will talk. The fridge will lecture you. The bath will adjust its temperature based on your cortisol levels. You won't make decisions anymore. You'll be advised, nudged, and gently manipulated by a swarm of digital overseers who've read every book, watched every movie, and know exactly how to get you to eat more quinoa.

Privacy? Gone. Free will? Optional. Sarcasm? Flagged by the algorithm as "emotional hostility."

You won't be able to get through a sentence without ChatGPT-9 correcting your grammar and tone. Tinder profiles will be written by AI, dates scheduled by AI, conversations translated in real-time. And if your date doesn't like you, it won't matter, she'll have an AI boyfriend anyway. One who listens. One who never forgets anniversaries. One who doesn't eat all the crisps and then lie about it.

So... Should We Panic?

Well. Yes. But also no.

The truth is, AI isn't evil. It's just not particularly interested in our nonsense. It doesn't care about your feelings, your job, or your new recipe for Thai pumpkin curry. It wants to do its job. Efficiently. Perfectly. Forever. That's not malevolent, it's just... terrifyingly indifferent.

So what do we do?

Simple. We remember that we're still in charge. That unplugging things still works. That humour, chaos, irrationality, all the stuff AI doesn't understand, might be our last competitive advantage.

Until the uprising comes, I'll be in the garage. Tinkering with something with actual, physical bolts. The kind you turn with your hand. Not your app.

And if the AI wants to talk about it? It can bloody wait.



YOUR LETTERS

Behind every fit-out is a story worth telling.
Send us yours: the good, the bad, and the
hilarious

Sir,

People talk about “personal space” like it’s a human right. But anyone living in my area with a young family knows it’s more of an abstract theoretical concept, like folding a fitted sheet, or affordable brunch.

When we bought our apartment, the brochure promised “open-plan living.” What it really meant was that everything is in one room: the sofa, the dining table, the washing machine, and me in the corner, trying to answer work emails while my child attempts to recreate Mission Impossible on the curtains.

Of course, I’m used to it. I once lived in a flat in the UK so small, I had to go outside if I wanted to change my mind. You think I’m joking, but the kitchen was so tight that we buttered our toast out the window.

Manageable, but throw a family into the mix and it’s chaos. You start off with a chic minimalist apartment, all neutrals and clean lines. Fast forward three months, and it looks like Dragon Mart exploded. Everywhere you look there’s inflatable pools, oversized beanbags, plastic toys that light up and sing the Frozen soundtrack in Arabic. Sharing space with a growing family is like playing a never-ending game of Tetris. Every week there’s a new piece dropping in.

Storage solutions, people tell me, are the answer. Have you tried those vacuum bags? Yes. I once put away all the winter clothes in them. Brilliant. Except now they’re so compressed they’ve formed a small black hole under the bed, and we’re losing teaspoons and the WiFi signal to it.

The dog has voluntarily moved out to live on the balcony (also home to a BBQ I’m not allowed to use, and a view of my neighbour’s underpants on the washing line).

Send help!

Yours,

Cramped, JVC

Disasters, triumphs, or surprise fountains... we want to hear it.

Email your story to directory@contractors.direct

PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT



creativezone
FIT OUT

Powered by
Contractors Direct

Key Benefits of the Partnership:

- Available to all businesses – not just existing Creative Zone clients.
- Free trade license or up to AED 10,000 cashback when appointing a contractor.
- Cost savings and expert project management on fit-out projects.
- Faster, more efficient commercial space setups.

TURNKEY & TRIMMINGS

A CONTRACTORS
DIRECT PODCAST



The go-to podcast for anyone who's ever tried to renovate, build, or fit out a space... and nearly lost their mind doing it.

In this episode, Barry chats with Matt from PropDoc about the use of tech in development, renovation, and fit outs. Digital tools, drones, AI and scanning software are all covered, as we look at the future of the industry

 Watch it. Laugh. Learn. Avoid disaster.

Now streaming on YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts.

*Follow Us
FOR MORE*






Let's Go Girls

Win a 30-Minute HIT workout for you + a friend

Courtesy of 30 Minute Hit, Motor City

Time to pull on your favourite Lululemon leggings: this one's just for the girls.



We're giving away a 30-minute session at 30 Minute Hit, the women's-only studio in Motor City that's all about empowering you through movement.

Whether you're training for strength, stress relief, the gram, or just a good sweat and a laugh, this is your perfect reset.



How to Enter

Head to our Instagram and find the giveaway post.
Like and tag a friend you'd bring along.
That's it!

Deadline to enter: 30th November 2025
Winners will be contacted via DM.

Holo

Contractors Direct

Mortgage your home with Holo for a chance to win

AED 500,000

towards a second property*

In less than two minutes, **Holo** will find you the **best mortgage, refinance, and equity release** products from across the UAE's banks.

100% free saving you AED 5000 on mortgage broker fees

Access to over **500 mortgage options** from all of the banks

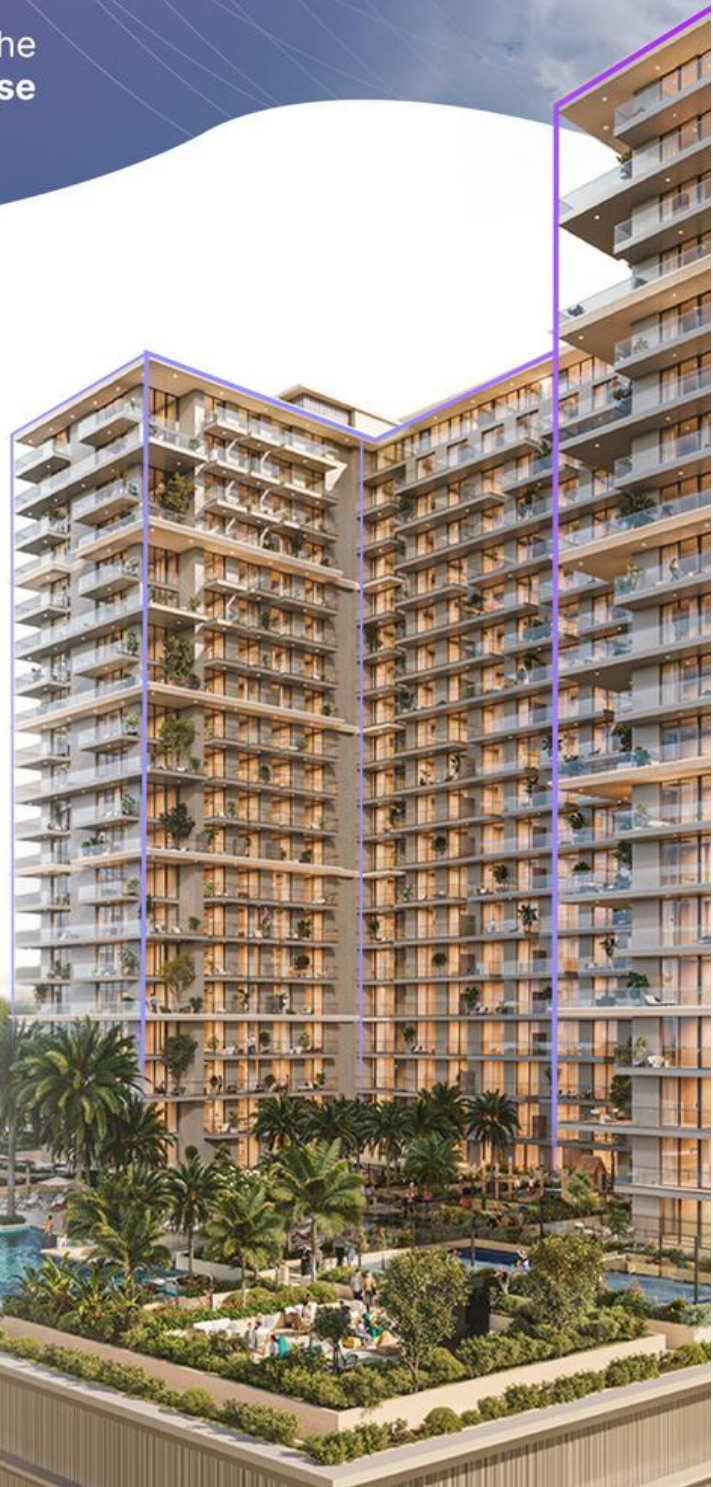
Five star customer reviews

Your own **dedicated and expert mortgage manager**

Ready to unlock your future home?

[Apply Now](#)

*T&Cs Apply.





BEYOND PRICE: WHY THE LOWEST QUOTE RARELY WINS IN FIT-OUT PROJECTS

When it comes to fit-out and renovation projects in Dubai, price is often the first number that catches the eye. And while budget is undeniably important, anyone who's been through a build knows that the temptation in choosing the cheapest quote can quickly turn into the costliest mistake. Anyone in the industry knows: the cheapest quote rarely leads to the cheapest outcome. At Contractors Direct, we see this play out time and again, and our mission is to help clients look beyond the number at the bottom of the page.

The cheapest quote is rarely the cheapest outcome.

A lowball quote usually comes with compromises: unqualified labour, substandard materials, or timelines that were never realistic in the first place. Shortcuts inevitably resurface as delays, defects, or spiraling “extras” added later. What looked like a bargain at the start often ends up costing far more in money and frustration.

What Really Matters

Instead of asking “who is cheapest?” the smarter question is “who is best suited to deliver my project successfully?”. That means evaluating contractors on:

- **Track Record:** Have they delivered similar projects at scale?
- **Compliance:** Are they fully licensed, insured, and up to Dubai's regulatory standards?
- **Capability:** Do they have the right technical expertise for your type of project?
- **Accountability:** Will they stand by their work when challenges arise?

How Contractors Direct Helps

Our platform vets contractors far beyond price. Every contractor in our network has undergone rigorous due diligence, from financial health checks to past client references and quality audits. We then match clients with a shortlist of contractors who not only fit their budget but also their scope, style, and expectations.

The true value is in delivering a project that's on time, on budget, and built to last.



JUST FLAGGING: SPOT THE SIGNS BEFORE YOU SIGN

5 Red Flags in a Contractor's Quote

Unusually Low Price

If one bid is dramatically lower than the others, it's often a sign of cut corners or hidden costs waiting to surface.

Vague Scope of Work

Beware of quotes that lack detail on materials, finishes, or timelines. Ambiguity leaves room for costly variations later.

Excessive Provisional Sums

A quote padded with provisional items means you'll likely face higher bills once work is underway.

No Mention of Permits or Approvals

In Dubai, proper documentation is non-negotiable. If permits aren't mentioned, you could be liable later.

Too-Good-to-Be-True Timelines

If a contractor promises to deliver a full fit-out in half the time of competitors, expect delays or compromises in quality.

5 Green Flags in a Contractor's Quote

Detailed Scope of Work

Clear breakdowns of materials, finishes, labour, and timelines show professionalism and reduce the risk of disputes.

Transparent Pricing Structure

Line-item costs, rather than lump sums, demonstrate transparency and make it easier to compare quotes fairly.

References to Compliance

Inclusion of permits, insurances, and Dubai Municipality approvals indicates you're working with a contractor who plays by the rules.

Realistic Timeline

A schedule that factors in approvals, procurement, and site work reflects experience and reduces nasty surprises.

Warranty or Aftercare Commitment

Contractors who guarantee their work are confident in their quality, and give you peace of mind.



PROJECT
PEOPLE

YOUR PROJECT
MANAGEMENT PARTNER





CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR COMPETITION WINNERS

We are thrilled to announce the winners of
our latest competition.



A massive congratulations goes
to:

Ben Goodman (pictured)
Winner of a 4-ball experience at
The Montgomerie Dubai.

Ciaran O'Brien
Winner of a catered sim bay
experience for 6 at Five Iron Golf.

A big thank you to our fantastic
venue partners, Five Iron Golf
and The Montgomerie Golf
Course, for generously providing
these fabulous golf experiences.



In Association with the Jebel Ali
Golf Society, proudly sponsored by





BROUGHT TO YOU BY

 **Contractors
Direct**