

How To Get The Best Deal On A Metal Building

The airwaves and internet are full of advertisements for steel buildings, often promising savings of 50% or more and “experts” standing by to assist you. These ads target individuals, small business and even churches and try to make the process of buying and building seem simple with prices too good to be true. Are these claims realistic?

While these marketers have made the public aware of metal buildings, they do a disservice by luring buyers into thinking that “buying direct” or “doing it yourself” is the way to save money. Here are some facts about metal buildings and some inside knowledge that may help you avoid costly mistakes.

Pre-engineered metal buildings are a great choice in today’s economy

Steel buildings are increasingly popular for economical, long lasting structures used for shops, storage buildings, manufacturing plants, aircraft hangars, churches, gymnasiums and just about any project where open floor plans are called for. There are unlimited combinations of width, height, length, span, bay spacing, roof and wall panel types and finishes, each with options, features and benefits that can be customized to suit your particular needs and budget.

Metal buildings can achieve much greater clear spans and eave heights and support higher snow, wind and seismic loads than a wood framed building. Metal buildings can also be designed to support auxiliary loads such as sprinkler systems, conveyors, or overhead cranes. Metal roofing and siding offer superior protection and are available in a multitude of attractive colors and paint finishes that will last for many years.

Steel is considered to be one of the “greenest” building materials available because it’s recyclable and long lasting. Modern insulation materials and insulated metal sandwich panels also contribute to metal buildings being very energy efficient. Pre-engineered buildings utilize steel in the most efficient computer aided designs which further saves money when compared to conventional construction. Steel buildings today account for about 60-70% of all low rise non- residential construction in the US.

Don't confuse metal buildings with other types of construction

Wood frame structures with light gauge metal cladding such as pole barns, or post frame buildings are sometimes confused with “all steel” buildings. A pre-engineered steel building uses welded rigid frames with roll formed steel purlins and heavier gauge panels that will outlast and outperform a building which relies on wood framing. Wood can burn, suffer dry rot, or be eaten by termites, and wooden posts that are buried in concrete or in the ground will eventually decay. The idea of a “Pre-fab” building is another misconception. Most metal buildings are custom engineered for a specific project, thus references to “off the shelf” or “stock” buildings are often misleading.

Don't become a victim

The truth is that most of the companies who mass advertise on the radio and the internet do not actually manufacture buildings. Although their claims sound enticing and their websites look credible; most are in fact brokers or re-sellers of buildings that are manufactured by other companies. Their so called experts are no more than telemarketers trying to get callers to send them a deposit. Phone tactics may include pretending to work in the shop but then asking what size building you need. *“Well you're in luck because it just so happens that a customer couldn't take delivery of a building they ordered and it's just about what you are looking for. It's a great deal, but you better send in your deposit right away before someone else buys it.”*

Don't be misled; there is no factory on the other end of the phone line, and rarely a complete building waiting for you to grab. These are simply sales tactics intended to create a false sense of urgency and to prey on your desire to get a deal at another's expense. Once they have your money, the story changes. A so called “building on the floor” may still take weeks for the plans to arrive and months for the building to ship. Further, by saying it was already ordered by someone else; they can then claim that necessary accessories such as framed openings, doors, gutters, and other options were not part of the package, and this becomes another opportunity to gouge buyers for extras at tremendous markups.

These marketers may claim to have knowledge of the local building code requirements in your area and promise to provide engineered plans for your permits. However; building codes have become increasingly complex and the range of loads for seismic, wind, snow, as well as local soil conditions all affect the design. The occupancy and end use of the structure also have significant code implications that require expert knowledge to assess.

All too often buildings are sold and even delivered which do not meet code, or may be unsuitable for the end use the owner intends. Unsuspecting buyers often get stuck with a building they cannot use, or are overcharged for the required changes.

You might even be offered a “*Dealership*” for their buildings in hopes of getting even more of your money. Don’t fall for their high pressure tactics.

If you can’t meet the supplier face to face and they don’t have an office in your area, why would you send them your hard earned money?

Know who you are dealing with

Reputable metal building companies are members of the Metal Building Manufacturers Association (MBMA) and are certified by the International Accreditation Service (IAS). Reliable manufacturers employ knowledgeable and experienced field sales people and market their products through a network of Authorized Builders. Local builders are familiar with the building, planning and fire codes and know the best sources for materials and sub-trades such as earthwork, foundation engineering, concrete, heating, electrical, plumbing, and interior finishes.

A good builder knows the tricks of the trade and can help you design and order the most appropriate and affordable building package for your needs. They cultivate ongoing relationships with manufacturers who consistently offer the best pricing and quality along with good customer service after delivery. Builders can arrange payment, delivery and erection of the building system and their business is dependant on having you and many others as satisfied customers.

If you are not an expert, don't expect to erect the building yourself

While it's not "Brain Surgery", metal building erection is an art which requires expertise with high strength steel connections, use of cranes and lifting equipment, and knowledge with sheet metal details to assemble a structurally sound and weather tight system. Specialized knowledge, tools, and safety equipment are essential for proper installation.

If you don't have the training or tools, aren't prepared to work safely and don't understand the building codes; OSHA and building inspectors can make your life difficult. Or worse: Your building may not look, last, or perform as you expect. Hire an expert to get the job done right.

Buying and erecting a metal building is not for the novice

A metal building can be a great investment when it's done correctly or a pain in the rear if it's not. Trying to save a buck on your project is a quick way to waste your money. When it comes to metal buildings; the slick radio ads promising huge savings are misleading, and the internet is not a magic portal to a huge source of bargains. Today's market is extremely competitive which means that "apples to apples" proposals will normally result in similar costs for the same product or service.

The differences are hidden in the details. Getting the building ordered correctly is the first hurdle. Taking advantage of the service, quality, and expertise provided by a reputable manufacturer and their local builder are the best way to save money on a metal building.

Ask for references, visit completed projects, check out the manufacturer, and buy from a local Authorized Builder you can trust. You will be glad you did.

"The sting of poor quality lasts much longer than the joy of low price"

This article was authored by an industry veteran with over 30 years of experience. It is offered as a source of helpful information to the consumer who may be considering a metal building purchase, not as an advertisement for a particular brand of building.