

Working With An Interior Designer

by *Tim Schelfe, ASID*

You've decided to hire an interior designer. Now what? First, don't panic. Professional interior designers are experienced and educated in arranging the details of your project, as well as creating the home of your dreams.

Like most business relationships, you and your designer should first address how you'll work together. Clearly identifying the "hows" and "whats" of your working relationship will make a huge difference in the outcome of your experience.

Your designer should prepare an agreement or contract for you to sign. Typically, a design agreement outlines the type of services to be provided and lists the rooms or areas included in the project. Interior designers can offer a wide variety of services, including space-planning, lighting consultation, cabinet design, and selection of interior finishes, fabrics, wallcoverings and furniture.

As do all design professionals, interior designers charge either an hourly rate or a flat fee for time spent on a project. You are paying for their experience, education and most important, expertise. Hourly rates can vary widely, from as low as \$50 per hour to beyond \$200 per hour, depending on the designer's experience, talent and the work being performed. Flat fees generally are divided incrementally and billed as work is completed.

Once you've reviewed the agreement and signed your name on the dotted line, what's next? One of the best ways to start a project is to create a design program, which is a comprehensive wish list of everything you want your finished project to have. No request or detail is too silly or unimportant. The final product you hope to achieve is about you, the homeowner, not the designer. The designer's job is to craft your wishes and hopes into a reality and to bring vision, creativity and experience to the end result.

The best way to convey your wishes and desires to a designer is with visual materials. Magazine pictures, books on architecture and design, and other similar items are a good way to express your likes and dislikes. Most homeowners may have an idea of what they like or don't like, but often have trouble expressing these ideas. Pictures can help. The designer can then evaluate your vision and direct the project for the proper function, look and budget needed to accomplish the project. Once the vision has been established, the pieces fall into place.

If you're interested in having a design consultation, please call Steiner + Schelfe Design in Raleigh at (919) 845-5151.



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