



# Get decorating results

## Working with a designer

by ADENE LUCAS

**THERE ARE SOME THINGS I CANNOT DO.** Actually, there are a quite a few things that I can't do and if you quizzed my family and friends, they could add to my list substantially! Here is a short list of things that I have yet to master: completing tax returns, assembling Lego, installing anything electrical, using a sewing machine.

It's not that I haven't tried – I have. The reality is that I simply don't have the skills or patience required to master these tasks

which is why I appreciate the fact that others can do these things. Luckily, for a fee, I can hire people to complete specific tasks for me (aside from the Lego, which has become my husband's job).

Decorating your home is no different. Some people continually struggle to get their homes together. They select furniture that is the wrong size. They paint their walls a colour that looked great in the store then discover that it looks terrible at home. Others long for a nice looking home but are paralyzed by the fear that they



may purchase the wrong item. As a result, they don't buy anything and the home feels unfinished. Rather than trying to be good at everything, tackle the projects that you know you can do well and hire a professional to handle the rest.

To find a qualified and reputable designer/decorator, ask friends, family and colleagues first. Check the Yellow Pages, then go online to see their web sites, credentials and their portfolios. A good designer/decorator is only as good as their work (despite the claims!) Once you have found the right individual to assist you, there are a few things that you can do to get ready for the design process.

### **KNOW THE ISSUES**

Focus on a particular area or a single room. What's working for you and what's not? These are simple questions that can help you get the process started without overwhelming you. Think about the challenges or problems that you're facing in a particular space,

then create a written list. If the room is not working, and you don't know why, this is a great place to start. Your list will help keep your meeting with the designer/decorator on track and ensure everyone's time is used as effectively as possible.

### **A FEW SAMPLES**

To ensure design success, the designer and homeowner need to communicate. Because the process is so visual, showing us what you like/want is as important as telling us. No matter how well you explain it, it's better if we can actually see it. Go through decorating magazines and cut out images that appeal to you. Be ready to discuss your three to five favourite samples with your designer. If none of the samples work, your designer can reselect.

### **MAKE TIME**

You owe it to yourself to get the most out of the appointment. Once you've decided when you'll meet with your designer, make

a point of eliminating as many distractions as possible. Turn the stereo down, calm the dog and create a diversion for your child. As a mother and dog owner, I understand what it's like to have your attention pulled in multiple directions simultaneously. It is very difficult to discuss your ideal home in a less than ideal setting. It also helps to take notes since this is probably not your area of expertise and you'll be discussing a variety of issues and details. You'll be able to refer back to these notes after your consultation with the designer/decorator.

### **BE HONEST**

The designer needs to know how you live and what you're comfortable spending to enhance the space. Understanding your lifestyle is crucial as is sharing the amount you're thinking of spending to repaint the room or replace the sofa. Clients always have a number in mind, but hesitate to share that number because they're afraid it may be too low. A good decorator will

respect the client's dollar amount and work within those parameters.

If you like to stay home and never entertain – your designer needs to know that. Conversely, if you have a monthly book club meeting and 10 people attend regularly, tell your designer. If you enjoy watching television while lying down - that will dictate the style of sofa to be used.

### **DO THE HOMEWORK**

If the budget is not an issue then the designer/decorator can handle absolutely everything for you, including the more mundane to-dos, such as returning samples to the stores and showrooms. However, it is your home and some involvement is not only rewarding but fun, so figure out which tasks require the designer's specific skill set, then tackle some of the other items yourself. It can be as simple as looking for furniture online or as challenging as meeting with your designer at a lighting store and going over the possibilities.

When you're aware of the issues, select the samples, make the time, communicate honestly and do the homework, you will get the best possible results as you and your designer bring your visions to life. ☐



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