

# Power Drills & Chanel No. 5: Why Your Interior Designer *Must* Have Construction Experience.

By Debbie Costa, CKD

Imagine this: the contractor you've hired to do the remodel of the home you've dreamed about for years is doing a great job. You're so pleased with the progress he's made that you take the next step and hire an interior designer to begin her preliminary work. But, the day she shows up at the job site you feel a sudden shift in the energy coming from your contractor and his workers.

Suddenly the pace of the job has slowed. You notice there's a certain attitude that wasn't present when things were going so well. What happened?

It could be that you should have hired your designer and contractor at the same time (or, hired your designer *before* you selected a contractor). Hiring as a team nearly always works best. But, it could be that it was your choice of interior designers.

You see, though they will probably not say it out loud, most building contractors *hate* working with interior designers. And there's good reason. Many designers simply don't understand construction. They disrupt the process by showing up on the job site and begin suggesting changes

(sometimes costly changes that dig deeper into your wallet and slow down the project). Because of this lack of knowledge, which leads to a certain lack of respect (from both sides), conflict arises and what was once a happy job site has become a battleground.

This example may sound extreme, but I've often heard the stories contractors tell of their run-ins with interior designers who "don't get it".



These costly, time-consuming scenarios are completely avoidable. And it starts with hiring the right designer for your job, and hiring them *before* you select your contractor.

First, you want to **make sure the designer you hire has construction experience**. No, they need not have donned a tool belt and operated a nail gun (though it helps), but they need to understand construction principles. If your designer understands the job your general contractor has in front of him, the better the communication should be and the more respect will be present.

Having earned the respect of the contractor, your designer can then be a much better liaison between you and the contractor.

She can clearly communicate your vision to the contractor in the technical terms the contractor understands. On the other side, if unexpected circumstances occur that require change orders and more cost added to the job, your designer can help the contractor soften the blow when communicating the necessity of these changes to you, framing the information within the context of your vision.

Ultimately, by having construction knowledge as a part of her experience, your designer becomes an effective project manager. There are a number of benefits you will experience by having a qualified designer fulfill this role.

- Connects you and the contractor in ways that make jobs run more smoothly.
- Subcontractors are happier – they get their work done faster and with greater precision.
- Reduces costly change orders and revisions by having the vision clearly at the forefront from the beginning of the project.
- Headaches and stress are reduced because she ensures everyone is working toward the same goal.
- Jobs are done on-time, allowing you to enjoy your completed project sooner.



Money is saved. Jobs done on-time and with fewer revisions are less costly.

A designer who understands the construction process, and who possesses project management skills, is like someone preparing a beautiful dinner in which every dish comes out perfect at the same time. That's the value of having a designer who can also be your project manager.

Taking on a remodeling or new construction project is a big undertaking. You can drastically reduce the stress of projects like this by having the right people on your team. So, when you interview interior designers make sure you ask how knowledgeable they are about construction.

You might even ask them for references from general contractors they've worked with in the past. If they can't provide those references, you may want to think twice about selecting that person because making the right selection can, in the end, save you thousands of dollars, get the job done more quickly, and save you from unwanted and unnecessary headaches



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