

M Dream Big

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Selecting an interior designer can feel intimidating, but it doesn't have to according to the experts. Photo was taken at the Thomasville Showroom, Brookfield.

If you've ever considered working with an interior designer but weren't quite sure how the process goes, look no further. Here, two "in-the-know" designers talk about the pros of working with an expert.

"A designer will help you establish a direction toward achieving your goals," notes John Edbauer, ASID, an interior designer at McNabb & Risley in Thiensville. Before starting a project, there are several questions he asks clients.

- 1 What do you currently have in the room?
- 2 What do you like and not like about the room and its existing furnishings?
- 3 How does the room currently function and how do you ultimately need it to function?

Using the answers as starting points, Edbauer then forms a plan. He can do anything from adding a new piece, like a sofa, and integrating it with the rest of your existing furnishings, to simply accessorizing what you already have, to completely redoing the room with new paint, window treatments, furniture and accessories.

Working with an interior designer will help solve your design problems. For example, Edbauer says the recent proliferation of new technologies and electronics such as flat screen TVs have presented new challenges in the design world. "They might completely change the way a room needs to be laid out. The bottom line is we will do whatever necessary to help you meet your design needs. We are on your side. Our goal is to make you fall in love with your room all over again."

Mara Wierschke, an interior designer at Thomasville in Brookfield, feels effective communication skills are critical when selecting an interior designer. The design process is a team effort between designer and client. "You need to have a 'vibe.' You should have a good vocabulary with that person. Putting words and pictures together is essential. If you can't do that with a prospective designer, that might be a red flag."

Wierschke feels seeing a designer's work is invaluable. Additionally, you should lay the groundwork for the successful completion of a project by establishing parameters.

- 1 Ask to see a portfolio. Tour prospective designers' work in showhouses and showrooms, too.
- 2 Establish a time frame.
- 3 Be sure to have a budget.

"Designers should be able to communicate around these settings," says Wierschke. "There are different pricing options for professional interior design services so pick the one that works best for you." As Wierschke observes, "Using a designer prevents mistakes. Whatever the upfront investment, it's well worth it in the long term."

Wierschke sums up the partnership between interior designer and client: "Ultimately, my job is to listen. Then I try to take my clients somewhere they might not go on their own. When a client tells me they love the final result, then I know we have worked well together." **M**