

# When it's a live-in makeover, let an insider sweat the small stuff

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Everyone has their favourite horror story about home renovations and all of the terror and disruption that can follow a decision to undertake a major revamp while still living in your home.

My personal story is a little more reassuring, thanks to my professional interior designer.

I've just lived through six weeks of drywall dust, plywood floors and daybreak visits from noisy tradesmen. The job is not quite finished, but I simply can't imagine getting this far without the expertise of my designer, Richmond-based Cindy Bouchard of Inspiration Central, who has been practis-

ing her trade for 20 years.

She has transformed my renovation from an adventure into a project with a game plan. She has been implementing that game plan with admirable efficiency.

That's what interior designers are supposed to do, though we often look at them as simply decorating consultants who pick paint colours and fabrics.

Not only has Cindy provided me with the creative input that has been the vision behind my project, she has also sweated all of the small stuff.

The small stuff can be massive when you add it all up, from moving furniture around four or five times to make way for painters and floor layers, to making sure the cabinetmaker gets precise measurements so that every component of the stereo system fits in the entertainment centre.

Vancouver interior designer Virginia Richards, reflecting on more than 25 years in the residential design business, concluded that good designers build their reputation not by being creative trail blazers, but by producing livable surroundings for their clients.

With a major renovation like

mine, a good interior designer makes sure every detail is considered. Their mission is to ensure the renovation creates a space that is both esthetically pleasing and livable.

They line up the contractors to do the construction work and schedule various phases of the project to ensure everything is completed on time and on budget.

Richards says a good designer combines a client's personal desires with their own experience and looks beyond to create a vision that can be reflected in every aspect of the finished product.

Implementing that vision means sweating the small stuff. An initial game plan helps make some sense of that small stuff and it starts with a space plan, furniture plan and fairly detailed budget.

Your designer also takes care of all of the nitty-gritty details, like completing detailed drawings for cabinets and millwork, painting plans and the like.

Your interior designer is your product researcher and your solution person.

They have both the experience and the product knowledge to find a particular item

that might not be on the shelf of your favourite home renovation store. Some products are exclusively available to designers. That perfect sofa you saw may need to be custom-built — something your designer can easily arrange.

I've toured a lot of show homes over the years and have seen my share of product displays.

When I sat down and started thinking about renovating my own home, the choices were overwhelming.

There was simply too much information and too many decisions to make.

Working with an interior designer like Richards or Bouchard, your vision for that perfect home becomes much clearer — and the decisions around renovation become that much easier to make.

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