

# Be a good home reno client

The best client will cheerlead the process

**LINDA WHITE**

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**“Consider if the chemistry is right between designer and client,” says designer Sara Bederman.**

and you’ll enjoy the journey, she assures. “Trust that your designer will make recommendations that are best suited to your project and your needs.

A lot of information gathering, research and strategizing goes on behind the scenes before concepts and finishes are presented to client.” Rushing that process can be detrimental to the project and second-guessing your designer can confuse the process.

“Obtaining accurate measurements of spaces is essential to accurate pricing and material estimating,” Bederman says. “Stock availability is also a key component to keeping projects moving forward... It’s always best to allow the designer

If you’re a fan of home improvement shows, you’ve seen the frustration. A designer is making great progress on a carefully-planned renovation when the homeowner requests one or more changes that could require tearing up work already completed or going back to the drawing board to source new materials.

“Each piece of the design has been carefully thought out and curated to balance, flow, work together and compliment one another, creating a fabulous one-of-a-kind space,” says Andrea Colman, principal of Fine Finishes Design Inc.

“It may be difficult to envision the final result but that’s our strength. We know it will all come together beautifully. Changing your mind on something may ultimately end up costing more money in the long run because there’s a ripple effect and the designer now has to revise the design.”

As you tackle your own renovation, here’s how to be a model client: Hire a designer thoughtfully. “Consider if the chemistry is right between client and designer,” says Sara Bederman, principal designer at Sara Bederman Design.

“Can you openly share your preferences and concerns? Do you feel the designer has your best interests as priority? Once the designer has been hired, the client has an important role in maintaining the pace and budget of the project.”

**Share your vision.** When meeting your designer for the first time, have a list of questions prepared, Colman advises. “What’s your style? What feel would you like the room to have – cozy or inviting? What isn’t working for you currently?” Tell your designer what you don’t like. “Perhaps lemon yellow makes you cringe or traditional feels too stuffy for you.” Also, make sure you and your partner have discussed your budget. Take advantage of image resources like Houzz and Pinterest. “Designers are, by nature, visual communicators so there’s no better way to get to know each other than over a few favorite tear outs,” Bederman says.

**Trust your designer.** Once you’ve engaged a designer, trust the process



**Andrea Colman of Fine Finishes Design says it’s good to be pushed a little out of your comfort zone.**

to gather all the information required from the site or plans provided so these estimates and orders can be prepared right the first time.”

**Be open minded.** Remember, your designer’s job is to create a space that meets your needs and reflects your personality. “You may be pushed a little out of your comfort zone but that’s what you hired a design professional — to give you an extraordinary space,” Colman says.

“Allowing the designer to lead the creative journey is essential to the success of the project,” Bederman



Be patient when approving concepts. **SARA BEDERMAN DESIGN**



Share your vision with your designer. **FINE FINISHES DESIGN**

says. “They’re trained to manage client needs, budget guidelines and stay on top of trends. They’re experts at distilling information into the perfect package for client consideration. The best client will cheerlead the process without getting in the middle of the work.”

**Develop a detailed scope of work.** Doing so ensures everyone is on the same page and reduces the risk of delays or disappointments because your designer didn’t realize exactly what you wanted. “Communication is everything. Organization

is a close second,” says Bederman.

Don’t approve any concepts or finishes until other interested parties — a spouse and/or kids, for example — have provided their input. Understand the fee structure. The letter of agreement with your designer should outline the fee structure.

“Don’t be afraid to ask questions, especially about fees. Being clear from the onset avoids any misunderstanding in the future,” says Colman. Avoid the temptation to skip to the dotted line without reading and understanding all terms.

**Allow your designer to engage their own trades.** “After years of collaboration, your designer will work best with their own trades and these established relationships will save the client time and money,” Bederman says.

“The designer knows the level of service and workmanship to expect from their own trades. They will not guarantee any work done by trades that are brought in outside of their recommendation. They may, in fact, refuse to even manage these new trades.”