

Plan the ideal reno

Realistic expectations key to successful renovation

LINDA WHITE

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After months or even years of being an arm-chair renovator, you've decided to tackle a renovation of your own. Just don't get tricked into believing it will be as affordable or completed as quickly as a renovation on your favourite home improvement shows.

Those words of caution come from Rebecca Hay, president and principal designer of Rebecca Hay Designs in Toronto. She has worked as a show segment designer on HGTV's *Income Property* and *The Property Brothers*. "They don't always give you a full sense of what a renovation costs. A lot of materials are provided for free and that's not communicated on screen," she says.

Nor do those shows factor in the cost of a designer, which is picked up by the producer and not the homeowner. And those timelines? "They're fast paced. You pull in favours and people work on the weekend so you can complete a full renovation in six weeks but that's not realistic," says Hay. "If you can't find something, like tiles, you choose something else to meet the TV deadline."

So how do you pull off a successful renovation with Instagram-worthy results? Consider the following tips:

Set realistic expectations. Begin with a detailed budget. Hay recommends creating an Excel spreadsheet and entering in every single item you'll need for your renovation, including contractor costs.

"It's always better to know ahead of time what things will cost than to be surprised halfway through the process," she says. Hay also recommends a contingency fund of 15 to 20% of the cost of the entire project to cover surprises that might be lurking behind walls or unexpected structural issues. Also, set realistic expectations regarding the project timeline.

Sara Bederman, principal designer of Sara Bederman Design in Toronto also values a detailed budget. "I like to offer my clients a detailed budget so they understand where their money is going and where they can save if they start to like something that's more expensive than what was originally budgeted and they don't



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want to spend more overall." Whether you're working with a designer or contractor, begin your project with a clear contract that outlines all fees, a payment schedule and billing practices.

Plan properly. Failure to do so is the most common cause of stress and delays in reno-

visions, Hay warns. Select your finishes and order them ahead of time — not a couple of days before your contractor tells you s/he needs them.

Working with a designer can be invaluable because s/he will help you create and fulfill your vision. "Picking one item you love is great but

it's just one piece of the puzzle," says Hay. "You might design an entire room around one piece of fabric but if it's out of stock, that will impact other design decisions."

Be flexible, decisive and tolerant. "Things will change and you'll have to roll with the punches," Hay says. "Indecisiveness can impact the length of time it takes to complete a project. A contractor will replace the flooring if you change your mind but you will pay for that in time and money."

"You have to find a tolerance level you may never have known you had when undertaking a renovation," says Bederman. If you're ordering natural products like granite, marble or wood, for example, the item delivered to your home may not look exactly like the sample or picture. You'll need to decide if it's acceptable or if you'd rather re-order the product and extend the renovation timeline accordingly.

"The ideal client is someone who trusts their designer and doesn't do too much of their own homework," she says. "The ideal client wants two or three concepts presented to them and is ready to say, 'I love it, I'll take it' or perhaps, 'Let's combine the three.' People need to put a stamp on where they're living."



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Failure to plan is the most common cause of stress and delays in renovations.



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