

Why Interior DESIGNERS CHARGE FOR CONSULTATIONS, PRELIMINARY DESIGNS AND sometimes even PRICING

A lot of people I talk to are surprised to learn that more established Interior Designers charge for design work ...before they even begin work!

“You want \$2000 for what?”

Take our client, Mrs. J.
She stated with great frustration when we first met:

“I’ve had three designers here already. Before each one came, they all assured me I would have a clear idea of their vision for my basement by the time they left our first meeting. Well, I still have no clue what they had in mind and they wanted to charge me a design retainer of \$2,000!”

But what Mrs. J. didn’t understand that any good interior design firm would put in about 45 hours of work just for this “vision,” or what we call the design conception.

Let me explain.

Before a true interior design firm can do any work on improving your space, they must develop a blue print of what the final room will look like. It’s almost like a blueprint for a new house, or a pattern for a \$20,000 wedding gown. And just like the architect or Vera Wang, this important, required step will cost between \$1,500 and \$5,000.

Because professional, dedicated design firms (like ours) are not cookie-cutter companies, CHURNING out run-of-the-mill designs and products, they have to invest real time on each project and with each client.

For comparison’s sake, think of hiring a custom home builder who will interview his clients in great detail about what they want in their dream home. He (or she) will sit with them for hours at a time to ensure that he tailors their home to *their* needs and wants.

Contrast that with someone who’s more of a mass builder, with whom you may have a few choices in some last-minute options—but by nature, mass builders don’t give their clients too much say in the process. What you see in the model home is what you get. It’s all very standard: no special details, no customization, with very limited options.

This is really about Architecture or Space Planning...

Interior architects and space planners—that's really what we are—will look at your space from a very different perspective. We start on the inside and work our way to the outside. Why do we do this? We do this because you live *inside your home*. We even take it a step further than what a custom builder will do, because we see possibilities that you (or your builder) may not see. We transform a standard box of an interior into something that is not only very functional but beautiful as well. To us, space is like clay for a sculpture: we mold it into a work of art that is as useful as it is beautiful.

Which means: you get something that is—in every sense of the word—truly *designed*. But this design takes time...takes energy...takes expertise...takes work. A design for a medium-sized kitchen usually takes between 10 and 20 hours of our work to create. So the cost for the floor plan could be \$2,000.

Here's a breakdown for a recent client in Lancaster and their \$2,500 Floor Plan:

Case Study #65: Lynn and Andy H's Kitchen

Step 1: Preliminary Design Meeting*

- We visited the client in their home, and had an in-depth conversation with them on what they wanted from their kitchen.
- Specifically, we discussed what their complaints were about the space.
- We listened to their initial thoughts about possible solutions, such as putting an addition onto the house.
- After hearing their complaints, and after interviewing the couple at great length, we asked if they would consider foregoing adding more space to their house if we could show them that they already had lots of space—it just wasn't being used well.
- They liked the sound of that very much, because it meant saving a lot of money!

Step 2: Field Survey

- First, we measured the entire first floor.
- We looked at not just the room (“the box”), but at the entire space: we looked at how all the rooms relate to each other. (In some cases, it makes sense to remove some walls to integrate spaces or even add walls to help *define* spaces. **NOTE:** The average kitchen planner is not going to do this. He or she is just going to go out there and look at just your kitchen space and nothing more.
- The average new-home builder does not think this way either. His (or her) focus is on building a house that has a certain number of rooms, and can be built for resale for so many dollars per square foot.
- We take informal pictures of the interior and exterior the home.

- We document details of a client’s home (location of electrical panels, location of ductwork, etc.), so that when we propose a new design we know that it will be accurate and it will be buildable.

Step #3: Created Lynn and Andy H.’s Design

Gavi’s Free Advice...

One of the reasons contractors enjoy working with us is our attention to detail. We know exactly where the load-bearing walls are, where the ducts are, etc...so that when we propose a new design we know that it realistically can be built.

Be wary of other “designers” and decorators who draw their visions that are not “doable.” We hear this complaint from contractors all the time. Interior Dimensions’ Designs are doable, because we have the expertise and we do the proper research on your home to give you something that will work.

- We came back to our design studio and drew the dimensions (which we had gathered during our field survey) to scale. Then we developed three designs.
- There are usually two or three solutions, but here is always *one* really good solution.
- In some rare exceptions, as in this case, there were two really good solutions—so we took them back to the clients and let them decide.
- We often have to research the proper materials and products that would be best suited for our client’s needs and wants. In some cases, we actually have to back up and reexamine the space.

Step #4: Appliance Shopping and Selection

- In this case, we spent about 3 hours with our clients at a kitchen appliance showroom. The clients and I looked at many different appliances, reviewed each one’s features, and figured out which was the best selection based upon what they wanted, how they would use the appliances, and their budget.

Step #5: Prepare Drawings for Presentation

- Most people mistakenly think that this is the longest phase.
- Although it does require expertise and time, it’s actually pretty straightforward.
- In this case Study #65, we just took our design in rough form from tracing paper to vellum, then to blueprints.
- The next step was to present our drawings to the client for discussion.

Step #6: The Actual Presentation

Back at our clients' home, we sat down and unveiled our presentation.

- We started with an overview of how their new kitchen related to the first floor and their whole home.
- We then went through each element of the design, explaining why we designed what we did.

Everything we did was based upon what the clients said and wanted back during the preliminary design.

"We spend many hours getting inside the heads of our clients—understanding what they want, getting a clear idea of what they are looking for. We have a tried and true method for doing this. And the real secret? The clients really enjoy this process "-
Megan Murak, Senior Project Manager, Interior Dimensions.

Case Study #17: You don't need a \$50,000 edition; you just need a mud-roomette"

Client challenge:

Amy and Tony wanted to have a larger more functional kitchen and two distinct living spaces; one for adults and one for the kids. They also wanted a mud room to hide their two preteen boys' "stuff," such as school book-bags, jackets, etc. When she first called us, Amy thought that they would have to put an entire addition onto the house that they had built eight years ago to gain more space. *(Most people have no idea how much space they are actually sitting on!)*

Interior Dimensions solution:

After interviewing both Amy and Tony in great detail, we recommended removing the wall that was formerly between the dining room and the kitchen. This opened up the space and doubled the size of their kitchen. *(More and more, we find that people want to do away with the "formal" dining room, which in most cases gets no use at all. Nowadays, even when people entertain large groups, they seem to prefer a more informal atmosphere).*

However, what REALLY made a huge impact on their existing space was that we added a few walls right at the entrance from the garage. We didn't take much space, only enough to create what I call a small "mud-roomette".

Client reaction:

They were thrilled! Both Amy and Tony LOVED this idea. Not only did it get the boys' "stuff" out of sight, but it redefined the kids' living area by separating it from the rest of the kitchen. *"Nobody in our neighborhood will have a kitchen like ours! When I saw the final result, I realized that the \$2500 design plan was well worth it. There's no way they would have been able to verbally explain this to me,"* our happy client Amy told us.

By working with certified design professionals such as Interior Dimensions, you can "find space" within your existing square footage. I came up with a simple idea – tall storage cabinets we called "lockers"; one for each child - with a beautiful frameless arched opening to transition between the mud-roomette and the kitchen. No addition was necessary. The clients didn't have to deal with digging a new foundation, pouring footers, connecting roof-lines, or a hefty price tag. It was just a simple mudroom-ette."

So, how does a professional interior designer price a project?

Before we can start estimating prices for a project, we start by making sure our design concept, done in the form of a drawing; (a floor plan) is what the client wants. During our Complimentary design consultation, we spend hours interviewing our clients so that we can have a very good idea of what they are looking for—and what would be best for them. "We are putting together a whole look...it's not just picking out a few cabinets and lining them up on the wall. This is more about giving them a look...a lifestyle," Gavriella Fiedler, principal of Interior Dimensions, explains. "This is very different from a builder or a remodeler because our job is literally to reinvent the proverbial "BOX".

Once we get this information, we process it and meet as a team to discuss it.

"You give us your 'wish list'...tell us what you want...if you've always wanted a big statue of a pink elephant in the corner, but you don't think it would work, don't worry...that's our job. It's up to us to make your specific wants work with the entire design."

Our company has a history of producing extremely functional as well as highly stylish designs for the home. We are known for providing unique, one-of-a-kind designs that truly meet our clients' many needs and desires. In fact, we often exceed their expectations.

Some Insider Secrets: A word of warning...

If you think you're getting a design for free—as some contractors and kitchen design outfits will tell you—I hate to tell you, but you're not.

Here's how it really works:

When you walk into a place that baits you with a free design if you purchase the product, what you're not seeing is that they sneak the cost of this design into the project.

AND...

The quality of the design from a place that gives them away for free is *nowhere near* the caliber of a design from a professional design firm. They don't put nearly enough time, energy or thought into the design. Yes, some will do better than others, but overall you get what you pay for.

Think about it...

Would anyone put 45 hours of work into a design and not charge for it? Anyone considering a remodeling project should consider this.

Interior Dimensions is more up-front with its pricing. And we are different from other firms because once you have purchased your design, you own it! You can sit on the design for a while, give it to another builder, have your cousin Lenny do the work, or continue with us to complete the project.

The next step is painless and simple...

If you'd like to make a change to your home that will make it seem like new, or if you're considering building a new home—even if you are at the very beginning of thinking about it—the wisest choice is to speak with an interior design professional early on.

Interior Dimensions offers our Step 1: preliminary design meeting for free. This ***Complimentary Design Consultation*** gives you an hour or so to pick the brains of a professional, get some clarity on which direction to take with your project and—most importantly—get a rough draft of the timeline that you'll need to follow; all without any obligation, pressure or commitment. Yes: while we offer these free meetings as way to secure new business, we find that these consults really help people decide if Interior

Dimensions is the right company for them to work with. And because the relationship between Interior Dimensions and our clients is so important, we must begin these relationships on complete trust.

“Although I am going to wait for a few years to redo my master bath, I was thrilled with what I got out of my free consultation with Gavi. Even though I only had a little bit of space, I learned from Gavi that it was possible to get a full master bath—with two sinks—without adding any square footage to my house—all by showing me how I could remove a closet and reclaim some space from my bedroom. I would have never thought of that had Gavi not shown me during my free design session. Becky T., Harrisburg.

Call us on 717-526-7866 to set up your free Design Consultation Meeting.

* P.S.: We are offering this step in our process for free for only a limited time. Give us a call to schedule your complimentary pick-our-brain meeting!