BEFORE HIRING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

THE DESIGN PROCESS AND WHAT TO EXPECT

QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK YOUR DESIGNER AND MUCH MORE
Debbie L. Talianko, one of California’s premier interior designers, is an award-winning professional known for the exceptional service and the health and wellness insights she provides leading residents in the West San Gabriel Valley.

Debbie has 16 years experience offering complete design services to prominent homeowners in such communities as Arcadia, South Pasadena, San Marino, La Canada. Sierra Madre, Glendale and Bradbury. She has won several customer service awards, and clients and colleagues alike refer to her with words like “fabulous,” “fantastic” and “wonderful” and phrases like “true visionary,” “beautiful, refined style,” “great eye for color,” and “very pleasant to work with.”

Debbie is the area’s first designer to introduce wellness processes and principles in her residential projects. She creates the healthy interiors that homeowners want and deserve by providing elements such as abundant natural light, enhanced refrigeration, and ergonomic furniture.

Her company, the Talianko Design Group, LLC provides services ranging from remodeling to interior consultations and furniture and fabric selection. The firm is backed by the region’s leading contractors, architects, painters, engineers, closet specialists, cabinet experts and other professionals, as well as a national network of vendors and suppliers.

Debbie is the President of the Pasadena chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), the nation’s largest and longest-established organization of design professionals. She is a past chair of the Chapter’s Home & Kitchen Tour, an event showcasing the work of some of the nation’s most distinguished design professionals.

She keeps up with design trends by attending industry shows around the country. She is a Certified Interior Designer in California and also received a Diploma with Distinction in Professional Interior Design from Rhodec International in London. Her clients benefit from the organization, time management, communication and other skills she gained from her highly successful earlier career in sales and marketing for a leading national company.
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Welcome back! We’re glad you’ve decided to take the next step toward realizing your dreams for your home. In this issue, we’ll take a closer look at how and why to hire a professional. We’ll shed some light on what to look for, what to ask when interviewing a designer and how to recognize when you have found the right one.

Just as there is a process to designing your home’s interiors, you will gain an understanding about the steps you should take to ensure that you hire the right designer. Together, you will then be able to formulate a game plan and see it to completion.
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE HIRING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

SIGNS IT’S TIME FOR A CHANGE

TALIAanko DESIGN GROUP, LLC
WHY HIRE AN INTERIOR DESIGNER?

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WHY HIRE AN INTERIOR DESIGNER?

Lately, we are inundated with shows about home remodeling and re-decorating. Many homeowners tackle their own projects with great success! But there are others who know that the wisest choice is to hire a professional.

A professional interior designer has an education in the field of design and has the training and expertise needed to plan, schedule, execute and manage your project from beginning to end.

In addition to their in-depth knowledge of materials and finishes, professional designers have a creative eye, can visualize the finished product and can create storyboards and renderings to help demonstrate their ideas. These skills save you time and money!
A professional designer has many resources. This also saves you time and money by eliminating the guesswork.

Working with a professional designer ensures that the project will be completed within your stated budget. So often, the “do-it-yourselfer” can fall into the trap of those four little words. “While we’re at it.” Having a budget is critical and will eliminate the risk of spending more than you intended.

The end result is a creation that is unique and will reflect your personality and lifestyle.
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE HIRING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

03

CORE VALUES TO LOOK FOR IN A DESIGNER

TALIANKO DESIGN GROUP, LLC
INTEGRITY
Someone who is honest and stands behind his/her work.

TRANSPARENCY
Keeps good records and is willing to share them if requested.

REPUTATION
Provides good referrals and understands the importance of a great reputation.

HARD WORKING
Is organized, on time, and has good follow-through skills.

PASSION FOR DESIGN
Loves the work and it is reflected in the process and the result.

GOLDEN RULE
Treats people the way they would want to be treated.
DESIGN IS A PROCESS, NOT A REALITY TV SHOW
DESIGN IS A PROCESS, NOT A REALITY TV SHOW

People sometimes think a designer can just “whip up something beautiful” with little or no effort. This couldn’t be further from the truth. Design is a process and there are tried and true steps that must be taken to ensure things happen the way they should.

Even before you call a designer, a great deal of thought should be given to the way you’d like your home to feel when it is finished. What inspires you? Collect some room photos that you like. Jot down a few adjectives that describe how you want to feel when you are living in your new space. Your designer will take the time to probe into the way you live and the way you want to live in the new space and if you’ve thought about this ahead of time, it will help your designer get familiar with you and your desires for the project more quickly.

Your designer will follow many steps in the design process and all of these steps play a part in the bigger picture. Each should be executed carefully with the end result in mind. So, although it would be nice to “whip up something beautiful”, it really takes a skilled professional to guide the client and the project to a successful conclusion.
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE HIRING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

THE DESIGN PROCESS AND WHAT TO EXPECT

TALIANKO DESIGN GROUP, LLC
Step 1: CONSULTATION

The design consultation is the starting point. After your contract has been signed and returned to us, we will schedule this first meeting. We will discuss the scope of your project, your goals and your budget. I will ask you to fill out a questionnaire and we’ll discuss your tastes, your lifestyle, and how you intend to use the space. Please make sure all decision-makers are at this meeting and budget two to three hours of time.

1. The scope of your project in detail
   This will include all the rooms involved in the project, how you intend to use each room, and your ideas and goals for each space.

2. Your tastes, preferences, likes and dislikes, style and lifestyle
   We’ll ask lots of questions and we’ll look at pictures to focus in on your tastes.

3. Budget
   We’ll set an overall budget before you begin the project. I will work with you to determine your options, goals and set a realistic budget for your space.

4. Assign the Main Contact
   If there is more than one decision-maker, you will assign one to be the contact person for the project. This person will be the one that makes decisions and approves the proposals. This will also be the person we will have direct contact with and receive direction from during the course of the project. Because it is not always possible to meet with both people at the same time, the contact person will be responsible for communicating any ideas or decisions to his or partner.
Step 2:
SITE MEASURE & ASSESSMENT

At this meeting, we will take detailed measurements and photographs of all the spaces involved in your project. Where appropriate, we will also arrange to have the trades people who will be working on your project come in and take their own measurements for estimating purposes.

Step 3:
SPACE PLANNING

Carefully considered space planning is crucial to a well-designed space. After all the measurements have been taken we will develop floor plans for each room. Floor plans allow us to determine what pieces will best fit into the space, how it is arranged, and the scale of each piece. We will then schedule a meeting to review each floor plan and discuss the pros and cons of each.
Step 4:

DESIGN CONCEPT

Once we have decided on a floor plan, the next step is to create the design scheme. This starts with developing a color scheme and sourcing fabrics, furniture, fixtures and materials. Custom furniture and built-ins are designed and finishes chosen. Materials for flooring, counters and cabinetry are selected. Wall and floor coverings are considered. Window treatments are designed and fabrics, trims and hardware are chosen. A lighting plan is developed. Drawings, samples and pictures are gathered. Quotes and pricing are researched. Every detail is considered. Throughout this step there will be a fair amount of communication and there may be intermediate meetings to discuss certain elements of the design. Creating the design concept is a multi-faceted process and generally requires several weeks, depending on the scope of your project.
Step 5: CONCEPT PRESENTATION & APPROVAL

Once the design concept is ready to present, we will schedule a meeting. You will be presented with carefully edited selections that represent the best choices for your space. We will go through the design in detail and you will be presented with fabrics, drawings, photos and samples for each element in the design. For some elements you’ll be presented with a few options. During the meeting you’ll provide feedback and we’ll narrow down the options to the best one for each element. If there are items that need to be re-sourced we’ll discuss the steps involved with that.

By the end of the meeting we should have a complete design concept that meets your approval. If you want to see, touch, feel or sit on some of your furniture options we can arrange a trip to the showroom. Timely approval of the design concept is crucial for maintaining accurate pricing and ensuring the availability of some design elements (fabrics or antiques, for example). If the design is not approved in a timely manner there may be additional costs associated with replacing items that are no longer available. Once the design has been approved and all elements are finalized we can begin executing on the design.
Step 6:

SCHEDULING

A timetable is developed for purchasing and ordering, work to be done by trades, and final installation. This may or may not include introducing you to one or two General Contractors if there will be construction involved in your project. You may also have a contractor you already know that you would like to work with. At this point, it will be appropriate to bring him/her on board to discuss the scope of services needed for construction. Please be aware that most projects take several months to complete. The lead-time on furniture for example, can often be 8-15 weeks. The project schedule will be adjusted along the way to accommodate unforeseen circumstances.
Step 7: 
PURCHASING

Before any trades people are hired or items are purchased on your behalf you will receive a proposal for approval that details the work to be done or item to be purchased along with all known associated costs. Nothing will be purchased without your approval. You will receive emailed copies of each proposal that you will sign and return to our office with a 100% deposit. Any subsequent costs such as delivery or fabric treatment will be added before the final invoice. Any remaining balance on each order will be due approximately 10 days prior to when the merchandise is ready for delivery or when services provided by trades are substantially completed.

Purchasing involves many steps such as:

- Obtaining quotes from our vendors for labor, delivery, merchandise, etc.
- Ordering and approving samples,
- Creating purchasing orders
- Receiving payments
- Placing merchandise orders
- Tracking orders
- Scheduling deliveries
- Installations

**Some of our clients prefer to do their own purchasing. If you have the time to place, track and schedule deliveries, we will structure your project with this in mind. Remember, you will lose that wonderful “WOW” factor and you will need to handle problems (and there will be problems) when they arise.**
Step 8:
DESIGN & TRADES IMPLEMENTATION

If there is work to be done by our trades, we schedule this as soon as possible. We manage the scheduling and oversee the work to make sure the design is executed properly and with the highest quality workmanship. Throughout the design process, we manage all of the details. We make sure work by trades is underway or has been satisfactorily completed, all concerns have been addressed, furniture ordered, payments made, schedule on track, and no detail overlooked. We’ll schedule a brief meeting to review anything left outstanding or any changes that need to be made.

*Please note-the General Contractor will be responsible for scheduling and directing his own sub-contractors and we will make every effort to coordinate our own trades around his.

Step 9:
INSTALLATION & ACCESSORIZING

This is where the vision becomes reality. All work by trades has been completed. Now the furniture is delivered, window treatments are installed, rugs laid, accessories placed and art hung. We will have it all done on the same day so you get that “WOW” affect when you come home. Styling is what elevates your space to magazine quality status. It involves adding finishing touches and follows a different process than the rest of the design. Before the installation we’ll go to a number of stores and choose various accessories for your space. This could include art, lamps, throws, vases, candles, and other types of accessories. On installation day they’ll be placed throughout your space. We’ll provide you with the cost of each item and you’ll have a day or two to decide what you want to keep. You’ll pay for what’s staying and we’ll return anything you don’t want.
Step 10: REFINEMENT PUNCH LIST

Once the installation is complete, we’ll walk through the space and review each room together. We’ll compile a punch list of all the little things that are left outstanding or need attention (such as paint touch-ups or a needed item). We will have each item on the list addressed as quickly as possible. If there’s something that’s not right, don’t worry. We’ll make sure it gets taken care of. Once all the items on the punch list are completed, the project will have come to a close. We may then discuss plans for photographing the space.
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE HIRING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

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QUESTIONS THAT YOU NEED TO ASK

TALIANKO DESIGN GROUP, LLC
QUESTIONS THAT YOU NEED TO ASK

Are you overwhelmed with the number of choices you have in choosing an Interior Designer? Don’t know where to begin? Here are 10 important questions to ask when you interview potential designers. Asking the right questions will help you choose the right designer for you.
WHAT TYPE OF DESIGN EDUCATION HAVE YOU HAD AND ARE YOU ACCREDITED IN SOME WAY?

Some people don’t realize that there is a difference between Decorators and Designers. Anyone with a “knack” for putting color and fabrics together can call themselves a decorator. But Interior Design is a profession and one that requires years of education and experience. In California, designers may qualify to take a rigorous exam, which deals with the California Building Code, Title 24 and California laws and regulations. This is especially important when doing a project that involves construction and building permits. A designer who has passed this exam is a Certified Interior Designer in CA (CID). It is a legal title. CIDs are concerned with the health, safety and welfare of the public, first and foremost.

WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE?

Ask why you should hire this particular firm. What makes them stand out ahead of the pack? We do things a little differently at Talianko Design Group.

- We have many tools at our disposal to help us get to know you and your project needs quickly and efficiently.
- We also begin the planning phase with a budget. We don’t believe our clients should ever start spending money without a plan.
- Our accounting software is industry specific. This means we work very efficiently when it comes to billing and purchasing, etc.
- Our follow through is excellent. We treat people the way we’d like to be treated.
DO YOU HAVE A MISSION STATEMENT?

A mission statement can say a lot about a company. What is it that drives them? Are they a cohesive group with a common goal?

HAVE YOU WORKED ON SIMILAR PROJECTS?

Ask to see examples of work done which is similar to your project. Listening to the designer explain the project will give you insight into whether or not they understand your own project needs. This is a question that will be determined when you first call us. We will tell you if we are comfortable with your type of project and if we have had experience with similar projects in the past.

WHAT SPECIFIC CHALLENGES DO YOU THINK WE WILL NEED TO OVERCOME ON OUR PROJECT?

This is an important question and one that will allow you to peek into the near future. Our hope is to overcome any challenges by managing your expectations at the onset. So let’s make sure we do our homework, plan properly and communicate with one another throughout the process in order to avoid any misunderstanding.
WILL YOU STAY ON TIME AND ON BUDGET?

A reasonable inquiry and by asking this question, you’ll get a feel for how knowledgeable and experienced your designer really is. Your budget is your investment in your home. We take this very seriously. That is why we begin every project with a budget. Time frames will vary depending on a lot of factors. The thing to know is that we will communicate these factors to you so that there are no surprises.

WILL WE WORK WITH YOU OR SOMEONE ELSE?

Is this design firm too busy to take you on? Will you be shuffled around? How “hands on” will they be with your contractors, etc.?

At Talianko Design Group, we work as a team. You will know our team members well. We will work with you and on your behalf as your liaison and spokesperson when it comes to meeting with contractors and architects, etc. We are careful to manage our workload in order to keep on top of all of our projects properly. Sometimes, we will ask a new client to wait for a period of time for this reason.

HOW DO YOU CHARGE FOR YOUR SERVICES?

There are many formulas for charging for design services. You’ll want to find someone who is completely transparent and open about this topic. We are flexible in our approach to our fees. They are based on the scope of work required for each project and time required to complete the scope. On occasion, we work on a consulting-only basis and this is quoted by individual project.
DO YOU DO THE PURCHASING FOR US?

Some clients will want to do their own purchasing and some will not. This may be because they know that it takes a lot of time and follow up when furnishing a room or several rooms. You’ll want to find out if the designer you are considering has a system in place to manage this part of the process for you if that is what you choose.

We at Talianko Design Group, have industry specific software that helps us be very efficient when it comes to purchasing and project management. It is item based which means once the information is entered about each specific item, the remainder of the process such as proposals, purchase orders and invoices follow more easily. The more efficient we can be, the more time we have for the creative side of your project and the less it will cost you.

ARE THERE OTHER FEES FOR YOUR SERVICES?

Again, an open and honest discussion about this topic at the time of the interview is a sign that you will not have hidden fees or unexpected charges down the road. An “open checkbook” arrangement such as hourly billing may harbor hard feelings and can ruin a relation between the client and the designer.

Before work begins, you will be presented with a Letter of Agreement, which will explain in detail, the scope of work that we will provide to you, the amount of time it should take and the fee required for this work. Occasionally, a client will add to the scope of work so a secondary arrangement will be made. This will be in writing, as we believe that everyone should always be on the same “page”. There are no secrets here.
THINGS TO DO BEFORE CALLING A DESIGNER

TALIANKO DESIGN GROUP, LLC
THINGS TO DO BEFORE CALLING A DESIGNER

Do you feel completely overwhelmed about your remodeling project? Not sure where to begin? Before you pick up the phone to call for help, here are four things you will want to do before calling a designer.

1. Make a list of all the things you love about your home. Then make a list of all the things you don’t.

2. Write a wish list of everything you thought you would ever love to do to improve your home. Don’t leave anything out, put it all down. You never know what is really possible until you prioritize your list and start to form a concrete plan.

3. Get very clear on your budget. This may not be easy but until you are sure about what you are comfortable spending, you’ll be wasting valuable time.

4. Save photos from magazines, internet sites, this ebook and anything else you have that inspires you. These will prove to be invaluable when you begin the conversation with your designer.
Now...pick up the phone and call a few designers. But before you dial, make sure you have checked their websites and you think their portfolios invoke the same feeling you may be looking for in your own home.

Be prepared with your questions and be ready to talk about your objectives and your budget.

All of this will help you to make sure the designer you choose is the right fit for you.
We offer award-winning residential interior design services for prominent clients throughout the West San Gabriel Valley region and beyond. Our expertise allows us to provide turnkey design projects for whole home makeovers, room-by-room updates, major renovations and luxury new construction.

Fall in love with your home again.

626.836.2935  |  www.TaliankoDesignGroup.com  |  Sierra Madre, CA 91025