

is an interior designer worth the cost?

BY MEGHAN STREIT

WE ALL WANT OUR HOMES to be comfortable and beautiful, but what price will you pay for a highly functional and expertly decorated abode? Chicago interior designer **Julia Buckingham Edelmann**, who's worked on many North Shore houses, says you generally can expect to spend 10 percent of your home's purchase price for full interior design. Of course, many designers, including Edelmann, take on smaller projects like color consultation or space planning, and fees can range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.

Not only can professional interior design be costly, but homeowners now have access to more free decorating resources than ever before. HGTV and websites like Pinterest and Houzz are available 24/7 to inspire and inform us about how to create stylish spaces. So, we have to ask: Is an interior designer worth the cost?

Chicago public relations executive **Orly Telisman** reads design magazines and is an HGTV fan. To Telisman's delight, she was selected by HGTV to have her kitchen renovated by **Meg Caswell**, a Kenilworth native who hosts "Meg's Great Rooms" and is a former winner of "HGTV Star." After working with Caswell, Telisman says she'll never redecorate another room without professional help. Telisman is interested in design, but considers paying a pro to be well worth the cost.

"Designers have training to think of this stuff differently," Telisman says. I wouldn't be able to watch *Law and Order* and become a lawyer, so why would I think I could watch HGTV and become a designer?"



Meg Caswell,
Kenilworth
decorator,
HGTV Star

Experienced designers may actually help control the cost of renovations because of the resources they bring to the table. HGTV's Caswell says part of the value she offers to clients is her long list of trusted carpenters, painters and other contractors.

"A lot of homeowners get in trouble when they hire the wrong [contractors] to bring their designs to life," Caswell says. "[Designers] have access to furniture companies, lighting companies [and other vendors] that normally the general public cannot order from or don't even know they exist."

Deerfield designer **Linda Eisenberg** says professionals might be able to trim costs with solutions that are creative and stylish.

"Sometimes you have a great chair in the bedroom and you can reupholster it and put it in the entryway," Eisenberg says. "A designer will see with a clear eye how to repurpose pieces."

DIY-ing a home renovation means hours of scouring the web for inspiration photos and afternoons driving from one furniture store to another. If your time is money, Highland Park designer **Paula Winter** says hiring a professional may be worth the cost just for the hours you'll save.


"I will put in hours and hours on a project, but we only need to sit around [the client's] kitchen table for two or three hours to make decisions," Winter says. 

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