

Time to hire a professional architect designer or colour consultant?

If you are planning to undertake more than cosmetic changes, professional architects and designers can add an extra dimension to your project through their knowledge of building materials and processes and their unique combination of design and project management skills.

The benefits

The right design professional will provide:

- A complete design service transforming your ideas and dreams into reality.
- Advice on regulations and bylaws that must be adhered to, such as the Building Code and Resource Management Act.
- Experience in project management, including contractor management, running tenders and balancing legal issues, which will save you time and energy.



More importantly, by combining all of the above skills, the right design professional will minimise stress by helping you achieve your desired result. One of the most important functions of a design professional is their objectivity - literally their ability to sit back and objectively discuss your project with you. When you are planning changes to your home, it is easy to become too focused on the smaller details of the project rather than seeing the big picture. The design professional will be a useful 'sounding board' for your ideas and ensure that all elements of the design work cohesively together.

An experienced colour consultant can help you explore broader colour options with confidence and bring together your favourite colour options into a harmonious palette. While colour consultancy professionals will not generally assist in the technical aspects of the project they will often team with other design professionals to give a holistic service if the customer requests this.

To get the best quality job you need to hire the best people. Make sure the design professionals who work on your home are experienced professionals by checking their references and other projects they have completed.

Get involved and stay involved

Hiring a design professional is not your cue to sit back and relax. The more you put into the project, the better the final result will be. Work with your design professional and you will achieve a better result than simply issuing them instructions and leaving them to do the work on their own. It is critical that you hire a design professional you will find easy to work with, and with whom you have a rapport and understanding as you will need to work as a team to get your project completed. Ask yourself whether you like the designer as a person - if the answer is no, don't hire them! Don't be tempted to hire a design professional that you feel uncomfortable with - choose someone that suits your own style and personality.

Of course, they also need the technical and creative skills to complete your project. Ask friends, family and neighbours for personal recommendations or contact professional societies for recommendations. Once you have reduced the potential candidates to a shortlist of 3-4 design professionals, arrange a meeting with each so that you can choose the right design professional for you. Check the references of any design professionals you are interested in and arrange to view their portfolio and/or visit other projects they have completed that are similar to yours. If possible, seek a second opinion from a trusted source who has recently employed the professional.

The initial meeting with the design professional should include all those in your household involved in the project. This is your opportunity to table all of your collective ideas and minimises confusion and disappointment later. Often two partners will have different views of the project that may only come to light when agreeing on the scope of the project with the design professional.

The design professional you hire will have a major impact on the final result you achieve, so take the time to choose the right person.

Be honest

Set a budget for your project and be upfront about the amount you have budgeted to spend. Be specific about what you wish to achieve and any preferences you have. Some design professionals may not be able to achieve the desired results within the budget you have set - it is better to know this at the start! There is no point hiring someone outside your budget as it will simply lead to heartache or larger bills later.

Get a quote

Ask the shortlisted design professionals to prepare a quote for the work. The quote should include their understanding of the complete project, what their role in the project will be and a suggested payment schedule.



Request initial sketch plans to give you an insight into how the design professional views your project. This will assist you to assess their suitability for your project.

Don't be afraid to question. Good design professionals will outline their plans for the project. Question anything you do not understand, otherwise you may be agreeing to, and potentially paying for, unnecessary and undesired features.

Get it in writing

Record all agreements in writing, including the quote, scope of the work, payment schedule, your initial budget and any other specific agreements you have made. These may be needed if something goes wrong at a later stage.

This is just the beginning

Design professionals will typically follow a design process that includes initial meetings with you to discuss your needs, writing and confirmation of a brief, an information gathering process focusing on the site and proposed project, development and refinement of potential concepts through to working drawings, running tenders on your behalf and management of contractors.

Remember, the work does not stop once you have selected your design professional. The more you put into your project, the more likely the design professional will be able to translate your dreams into three dimensional reality. Feedback is also an important part of the design process. Each project you undertake will be a learning curve not only for you, but also for your design professional. Debriefing the project is important, particularly if you plan to undertake more design projects in the future.

A note on architects

Most New Zealand architects belong to the New Zealand Institute of Architects. In New Zealand, it is illegal to call oneself an 'architect' unless you are registered by the Architects Education and Registration Board and have met academic and practical experience standards.



For ideas, inspiration and instructions:

In Australia: Call 1800 738 383, visit www.resene.com.au or email us at advice@resene.com.au

In New Zealand: Call 0800 RESENE (737 363), visit www.resene.co.nz or email us at advice@resene.co.nz