

House needs doing up? Get on with it, then

Nick Prescott, chief designer at Style Within, reminds us that when all is said and done, there's a lot more said than done.

I know it's a cliché, but it's so true, first broadcast by a hippopotamus (call me and I'll explain). Many and varied are the reasons for not getting on with doing up your home. Most are entirely understandable: you're simply too busy in your working and family life; you don't know where to find reliable tradesfolk; you have some ideas for what needs doing, but are not quite sure where to start. There are new products and technologies around the corner; maybe it's best to wait... And so you do. And you've been stuck here for ages... Shops, offices, hotels can all suffer the same; and when business premises look tired, tatty, and forlorn, what does that say about the business?

Remember those other sayings: 'You're not getting any younger'; 'time stands still for no man'; 'you are only as old as the home you live in' (!). So if your décor is trapped in the '60s, '70s and '80s, it will stay that way unless you do something about it. Several new clients said of our last article: "You described

us precisely: we have collected stuff over the years, assembled a look of sorts, but when we thought about it, nothing actually goes with anything else." Some would call this 'eclectic'; others prefer to be more honest.

There are folk around who can help you to get started with home improvements, and some that can help you finish too! For those that took note of our last little chat, your briefs should now be nice and tight. For those that didn't, we can help tighten them for you. Good; you've said what needs to be done; now you want to progress to the *doing* stage.

If you need some help, interior design companies offering a 'one-stop shop' are a good place to start; here you can get sound advice on all aspects of your use of space, storage, lighting, flooring, heating, colours, choice of furnishings and options for bathroom suites and kitchens.

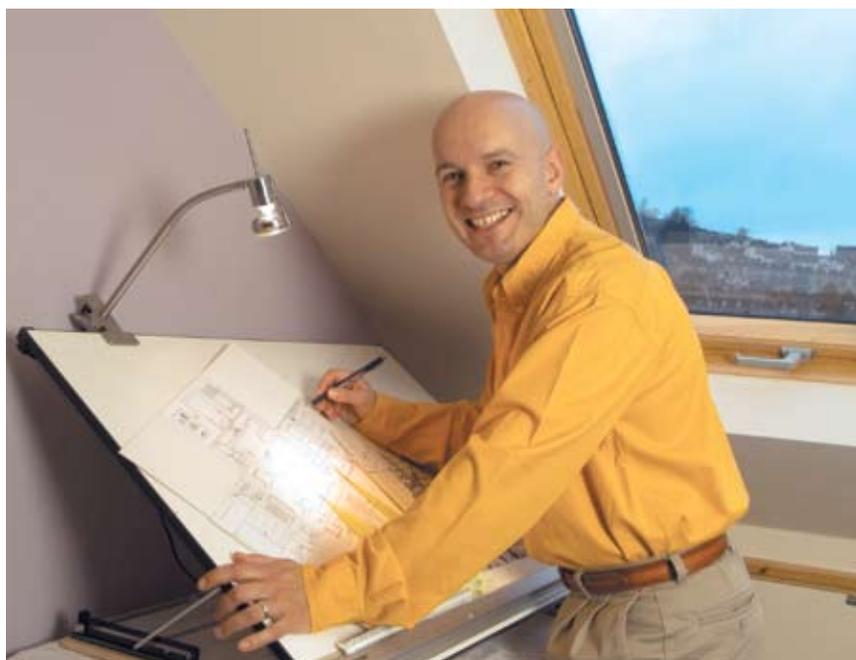
If you think you know what you want, but can't find it, the professionals can save you time, money and effort by delving into their extensive knowledge and stock of resources.

If you're busy, they will meet with you at your convenience to take your brief and manage the whole process on your behalf; if you're not sure where to start, they will lead you through a well-established process and provide clear plans for the design; if you need support in confirming your ideas, they'll review them with you and provide options to give you confidence in the best way forward; and if you are not sure what's on the market, they will introduce you to a remarkable range of products to suit your budget. We continue to surprise clients with amazing products that they simply would never have discovered on the *High Street*. We can often get things cheaper too.

One-stop shops will then project manage your work for you, engaging established tradesfolk, co-ordinating their activities and completing the job. If you need support when dealing with the trades, it can be reassuring to have an intermediary, such as the designer, with whom you have developed a sound, professional relationship, and in whom you have the confidence to look after your interests with integrity. Then there should be no surprises in achieving the specification, the quality of the work and the timescale required. Let's not pretend that this removes your stress completely; but it will certainly minimise it as the designer/project manager assumes responsibility to you for the project's success.

We advocate another hackneyed saying; 'seize the moment'; get on with it. Get your much-needed project underway now. Do those home improvements that you can start to enjoy in the next 6 months; don't wait another 6 years. Of course, the beauty of the one-stop shop is that you have a single point of contact for pretty well everything from design through to completion: one eye to poke; one ear to probe; one cheek to kiss...

So, what are you waiting for? □



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