



Remodeling IN THE TIME OF COVID

**HOW TO DEAL WITH SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS
IN YOUR HOME PROJECTS** *By Cindy Brzostowski*

More than two years into the pandemic, one of the many ripple effects still being felt is the disruption in the home construction and renovations supply chains. Demand has outstripped supply, there's a shortage of materials, costs have risen and deliveries are being delayed. Add the fact that Austin is experiencing a building boom and a labor shortage in some of the trades and you can easily see why some home improvement projects have been progressing slower and with more difficulty than in the past.

Jessica Love, principal and interior designer of Austin's Urbane Design, expects that we'll have to deal with this reality for a while until there's a market slowdown. So, what should you do if you want to start a remodeling project before then? We asked her for her advice on handling just that.

Pick the Right Team

First and foremost, Love strongly recommends hiring quality contractors and designers, noting that this is especially important because Texas doesn't require a license for general construction. As for designers, Love urges homeowners to check the scope of their expertise, whether it's furniture design, remodels or new construction.

Hiring the right professionals the first time around can save you a lot of trouble in the future, especially when the unexpected happens. "There are only horror stories about these trades, in my opinion, because people search for the cheapest and not the best," Love says. "You will get what you pay for every single time!" >>



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Jessica Love's Checklist for Choosing a Designer or Contractor

- > Understand the difference between a designer and a decorator.
- > Understand the differences among designers and contractors.
- > Check their references for other projects your size.
- > Review designer portfolios, and ensure they have a website and a positive reputation on social media.
- > Interview a multitude of designers and contractors to ensure they meet your criteria.
- > Ensure that the designer and contractor specialize in whatever your project encompasses, whether that's remodeling or new construction.
- > Find out if your contractor has in-house employees or subcontractors and why.
- > Ensure that the designer and contractor offer sound agreements or contracts.
- > Check that both the designer and contractor carry insurance.
- > Understand the contractor's warranties.
- > Ensure that your designer and contractor work well together.

Stop, Collaborate and Listen

Another important step that should make the remodeling process smoother amid the industry's current challenges: Ensure that your design and build team are adept at collaborating so that the finished result will turn out as you envisioned.

"I recommend someone going into this process to be diligent in their interview with each party," Love explains. "That means asking specific questions, such as, 'Do you have a specific style you prefer, or do you collaborate with the client?'"

By knowing how your designer and contractor work individually as well as together, Love says you can get a clear picture of what the process should look like for you in between that before and after photo.

Communication Is Key

When working with your design and build team, Love says that honest and regular communication can make everything run smoother. That means, for example, sharing when

you're upset, when you don't like a selection or when you have budget concerns.

"Sometimes, people will refrain from sharing feedback, thinking it may hurt my feelings," Love says. "I encourage open and honest communication as my emotions are removed from this part of the process. My goal is always to design for the individual."

Manage Expectations, Practice Patience

Love says it has never been more necessary to set realistic expectations. "Don't pay attention to HGTV—it is not real," she notes. "The budgets are not real, the timelines are not real, and often the designers and contractors are not really as [proficient as] they say. It leads to disappointment."

"There will always be a designer or a contractor who says they can do it sooner or cheaper, but they are either greatly misinformed or lying," Love adds. "Expect delays, expect back orders, expect the unexpected."

While delays can understandably be frustrating, it's crucial to exercise some patience. "There is so much that is outside of vendors' and suppliers' hands," Love says. "You must remain patient and trust the teams you have hired to get you to completion." In the end, says Love, you should love the end result.



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