

STORE DESIGN 101

PULL TOGETHER

A successful construction project demands timing, coordination and teamwork, say Keith Kovar, Ruth Møllergaard (with Sarah Yates)

THE CONSTRUCTION process has two parts: the general contractor and the fixture piece. Sometimes jewelers act as their own general contractors; otherwise they hire someone to facilitate one or both parts of the job.

"I'm like the band leader making sure someone plays the right instrument at the right time. You don't want your showcases delivered before your flooring is complete, for instance," explains Robert Dykman, of R.A.D. Construction Consultants in Livingston, NJ.

Construction managers like Dykman coordinate and budget both parts of the job, putting together a team of experts and working hand-in-hand with the designer.

To make every decision on the site strengthen the design rather than compromise it, everyone must understand the intent.

When your drawings arrive, look at them carefully, comparing the elevation to the plan to help you understand how the lines translate into three-dimensional space.

Stand in the center of the space and eyeball where the walls, fixtures and doors appear on the plan, then walk yourself through it, as they appear on the drawings.

Discuss the drawings thoroughly with the contractor and designer to ensure everything that you want is a part of the design and won't later be added as an extra. Construction requires a team of experts who work well together. Even though your brother-in-law may be an excellent cabinetmaker, if he can't read drawings, your design will be compromised.

The fixture piece in a jewelry store includes showcases, wall cases, workstations and cash. Some clients opt for standard fixtures



DURING. At Summerwind Jewelers in Portsmouth, NH, a remodeling project presents obstacles to the daily routine.

and work directly with a manufacturer. Many designers use a fixture questionnaire to get details about what the jeweler needs. When they've been numbered on the plan, consider them in detail. Some customers read every word on a drawing and ask questions. This is ideal. No surprises are the best surprise.

Your designer will also review the lighting plans with you in detail. If you can't visualize how certain lights will look, ask to have

some samples sent to you, or ask where you might go to see a built environment utilizing comparable light fixtures or light types.

Lighting jewelry is complicated. One client, who used his residential designer to design his store, had beautiful lights on the plan, but they were not sufficient to illuminate the showcases for sales. Not only should the lighting fit with your plan, it needs to work in the field.

"You need the expertise of

someone who knows how to illuminate the product as needed," says Brian Viger of Trinity Engineering in Rohnert Park, CA.

A separate floor plan should specify placement of your phones and other devices requiring an electrical or cable outlet. Before going to bid, make sure you agree with this placement.

"You need to keep all the parties on the same page. When fears and emotions start to develop, address them immediately. When changes start happening and things start costing more, people second guess and get nervous. They act unprofessionally," Viger says.

"Working as a team and hearing what people want to accomplish is essential for the contractor because the worst thing on a job is to find an extra. It is so much better if everything can be included upfront," Dykman says.

Contractors who are knowledgeable about retail examine the plans and make sure the information is complete, before taking them out to bid.

With the owner, the costs are reviewed to ensure nothing seems extreme, either too high or too low, or out of place. It's all part of the bid process.

Your designer may recommend one or more contractors in your area or you may get recommendations from an industry association. You may choose one or more contractors, familiar to you, for a quote and avoid the bidding process.

If you are building into an existing structure, when you open things



THE PAYOFF. Once finished, the results wind up being worth the hassles of construction.

up you may find that the existing electrical system isn't up to code, for instance. These things add costs. Typically budgets have allowances for these extras, especially in heating and air conditioning.

If value engineering is necessary, this is the time for it to happen. Ideally, it is

done between the designer, the contractor and the client to ensure that changes stay within the design parameters. Substituting a carpet in the backroom with a cheaper one or combining standard wall cases with custom showcases can lower costs and still not compromise your design.

Before anything can be built, permits must be obtained from the local government, depending on your location. Many general contractors obtain all the necessary building permits.

You need a firm budget: The cost of the permit is based on the cost of the job. Experienced contractors can provide accurate time estimates for building your store, barring catastrophe, based on the size and complexity of the job.

Six months is typical, with two to three months in the design phase and two to three months to build. Close teamwork can sometimes shorten this slightly.

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