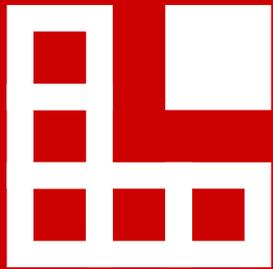


**designer
competence**



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What should you expect from your cabinet dealer and designer?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Average
- Poor

Reasonable service: Many customers complain that they have called a number of cabinet dealers and some of them do not arrive for the appointment. Never mind arrive, some do not even respond to the customer's enquiry.

If you called a dealer and he does not respond, take your business elsewhere. Unless they call beforehand and cancel the appointment, just simply do not arrive for the appointment, they do not deserve your business.

Instead of chasing after these incompetent dealers, you are far better off finding a dealer who is keen, efficient and prompt. The actions of the dealer, prior to you signing any contract, is a good indicator of the type of service you can expect.

House Call: The cabinet dealer will appoint a designer to respond to your enquiry. For fully fitted kitchens, the designer must visit the place of installation and measure the complete kitchen. You should avoid designers who is prepared to work off your dimensions or another designers dimensions. The onus is upon the designer to ensure that everything will fit properly. If they never took any measurements - what assurance do you have that there are no mistakes which will cause you great inconvenience to correct.



Measurements: You can gauge the competence of the designer of what and how the kitchen is measured. All the windows, doors and walls must be measured. The ceiling height should be measured in at least two different places. Every appliance should be measured - width, height and depth. The position of existing plugs, light switches, water feeds and outlets must be measured and noted. The designer should look inside your existing cabinets to look for hidden problems, water pipes, gas lines and waste pipes. Handheld laser measurement instruments are generally accurate to within 10 to 30 mm - this is not accurate enough for kitchen designing.

The above issues are critical to ensure that your new kitchen will fit properly. Pay close attention how the designer does this job as this is your indicator whether you are in good hands or not.

Consult: Did the designer only speak to you about your new kitchen? Then what about your spouses view, likes and dislikes? In order to learn about you, your family, likes and dislikes and tastes, a good designer will insist to speak to both of you. In this manner the designer is more able to guide you through numerous products, design styles, shapes, trends and colours.



Questions: The expert designer will initially ask a lot of questions. They will prod here and they will push there. All of this is to get to know you so that the best possible product, solution, design or style can be recommended.

Budget: Your budget will be discussed as this has a direct bearing on what should be designed, what products and materials is best suited. Your budget will in some cases even determine the range of colours most appropriate for you. It is only the absolute amateur who does not enquire about your budget.

Design ideas: Your good designer will also explore certain design ideas with you during the initial appointment. Beware the designer who does not do this as his final design will be a reflection of his likes and dislikes instead of yours. The saying; "There are no two people alike" is also true for kitchen design. Each and every kitchen should be designed around the tastes, likes, dislikes and lifestyle of the customer. If you consider all the variables such as budget, materials, cabinets, functions, colours and styles, a kitchen can be design in infinite number of manners. But which one has your number?

Talk: A designer worth his salt, has a wealth of knowledge, ideas and know how. The only means available to inform you of these options, is for her to talk. Beware the designer who does not talk or has an overflow of ideas that she wishes to share with you. No talk normally means no ideas or no interest.



3D Designs: Due to computer design software, good designers are able to show you what your kitchen will look like prior to you signing any contract. This will allow you to visualize what the final product will look like - prior to committing yourself. No ugly surprises or costly changes. Beware if your designer is unable to provide such a 3D design. It does not mean that the hand drawn design will not work - you are simply unable to visualize whether the final product will be to your taste. For if you do not like the final product, you will be required to pay for all alterations or additions.

3D Design software can also render near photographic images in the colour combination that you want your kitchen. This greatly assists in visualising what the final product will look like.

Don't underestimate the benefits of seeing 3D designs.

Laptop: You are even better off if your designer has a laptop and is prepared to spend a few hours with you completing the design in your presence. This will allow the designer to alter the design on the fly and you are party to all the design decisions. This means that everything can be done in one visitation. The benefit is that don't you waste any time or have to wait days or weeks on end before seeing the final product.

Designers who don't have laptops will initially visit your home - see you on another day to show you preliminary designs - see you yet on another date to show you the final design. All of this can take weeks to finalize.



A kitchen design: Some dealers charge for their kitchen designs whilst others offer it as part of the service. Before asking a designer to visit your home discuss whether a fee is required or not and the terms thereof. Dealers who offer free kitchen designs as part of their service, normally retain copyright on their material until such time as you buy their product or design. Dealers who offer free kitchen designs will normally retain the design until such time as you purchase their cabinets or pay for the design. If you are only after a design be honest about it and be prepared to pay for it.

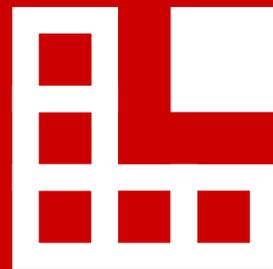
Costing: Beware of price calculations done by means of just a calculator. Written or printed quotations normally only reflect the final asking price. At the point of sale, ask your designer to show you the complete bill of materials. This will allow you to verify that the prices asked is true and correct. **It is not unheard of in the industry for huge price calculation mistakes.**

Today, there are very sophisticated costing programs which interface with design software. This allows the designer to give you a range of different prices in a matter of minutes. These programs make it impossible for the designer to artificially inflate your price.

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