



Developing Your Dream – Part One

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Keep Things in Order

In much of my life, I'm really not someone who just *loves* order. I'm not the guy who has the same routine every day. You won't find me each day at the same coffee shop grabbing a cup of coffee, or at the same gas pump fueling the truck. I sometimes wish I were that way, because I can see there being a whole lot of comfort in the idea of some structure. It's just not me.

If that's the case, then why am I so adamant that *a remodeling project has to be tackled in a prescribed order to be ultimately successful?*

The one word answer is: experience.

I've been involved in hundreds of projects over the years and I can say without reservation that planning and order are of utmost importance. Are they *the* most important factor? Probably not. A perfectly planned out and executed job based on a poor design is still going to be lacking.

But, on the other hand, the absolute best design can fall apart at the seams if there isn't sufficient planning and order. A truly successful project, of any size, requires the complete package from the idea stage until the last piece of furniture is placed.

Does that sound scary or hard to do? It doesn't have to be. It's just like any other journey toward something you want, but don't yet have.

Just take it one step at a time!





Dream up a Vision

Remodeling requires a **vision**. It doesn't matter if you're going to repaint the hall closet, or if the job at hand is the complete rebuild of a 20,000sf mansion; there is no way to start without a vision.

Take the closet repaint job for a simple example. You have this closet. It is dirty and dingy because the previous owner used to keep all the lawn tools in it. You need a place to keep your photo albums and you just bought this great little shelving unit for next to nothing from Ikea; it would fit great in that closet. But yuk!, the closet is gross. What should you do?

I know this is obvious stuff here, but these are the building blocks for your vision. The vision for a project is arrived at through the assimilation of **needs, desires, problems, resources, and ideas**. You *need* a place to put your photo albums. You *desire* that it be a nice and inviting space. Your *problem* is that you don't have a place and that the only possible place is a disaster. So you have the idea that a paint job is in order!

You can then take a look at your *resources* such as money, time, skills, tools, etc. and you can formulate a vision from which to plan. This one of my favorite parts of the process. I love to dream...even about what can be done with a closet!

Where to Begin

I've met hundreds of people at the very beginning of this process. One of the most common things I've found is that **people don't give themselves enough credit!** Just because you don't have a degree in architecture, interior design, or visual art, does not mean you can't play a serious role in the design phase of your remodeling project! You can do it! And, truth be told, *you are the most important player in the game!*

It's your house. This is where your family lives day-in and day-out. How can anyone else know better than you what you would like? They can't. Please don't get me wrong, there is certainly a place for a professional. Designers of all sorts are among the coolest people I know; and there are projects that simply couldn't be done without a professional.

My point is this: You are the end user of you project, so you are the one who needs to develop this dream! After you do that, if you feel like the job requires it, you can *pass the torch* to a professional or team of professionals to take it from there...but **you must give it life first!**



Know Thyself

Assuming that you have taken my words to heart and dispelled any notion that you are somehow not qualified to be involved in designing your project, we can proceed...

The first step is to get “in-tune”. The most creative people in the world require inspiration. **Inspiration is the fuel that keeps the creative train rolling** down the track. Before you begin to seriously get into the process of defining your remodeling dreams, you should fill up on high-octane inspiration! Doesn't that sound fun!? I'm excited just writing it!

I wrote a post recently on RemodelingGuy.net that gives you the prescription for how to begin this process. Go to a bookstore (the bigger the better) and grab every magazine they have that looks like it might remotely inspire you. I'm thinking house magazines here, but in reality anything that inspires will help fill your tank. Take your whole stack of magazines, grab some coffee, and start looking at pictures. **You'll feel the fuel gauge rising.**

Clip out and save those photos that really get you excited about the potential of your home. To each his own, but my practice is to buy the magazines before I clip out the photographs! Start building a file full of pictures that excite you and make you feel like there are possibilities with your house! ***This is an incredibly important first step!***

You'll use these pictures later to help you:

- develop a design
- sell your spouse on the idea!
- hire a designer
- hire a builder
- select materials
- pick colors
- communicate your ideas to workers
- calm yourself during demolition!
- and more...





Build Momentum

Once your tank is starting to fill up and the creative train starts to roll, momentum kicks in. **Creative momentum can work wonders!** Just roll with it. Don't worry if you have ideas that "can't be done" for reasons of budget or time or practicality. Don't let ANY of the negative forces take hold during this time. There will be a time for careful consideration later.

I've been to so many meetings where people say "I would love - fill in the blank ; but that would probably:

- be overbuilding
- not match my neighborhood
- cost too much
- not be allowed by my HOA
- be impossible to find someone to do
- be beyond my skill level
- take too much time



The list goes on and on. *These things will kill your vision* before it ever gets going. There is a time for these questions, but it's not yet! The idea at this stage isn't to come up with a working plan. The idea at this point is to develop **a vision, a dream, a feeling...of what you want in your house.**

So let the creative train roll forth. If it leads you to drive around your neighborhood (or one you like better) looking for ideas, go for it and bring the camera. If it leads you to visit a local art gallery, furniture store, or sidewalk art fair, go do it! If you start feeling the urge to make something with your hands, make it! The whole point is to encourage those ideas that inspire because **inspiration is fuel** and *you gonna need some fuel!*

The end result of this process is:

You will develop an inherent sense of what you love in houses. You will be able to recognize in an instant an idea that you can identify with versus one that just isn't you. Your eyes will begin to notice things that you didn't notice before and you'll be able to express those ideas to someone else. Your ears will begin to pick-up key words in regular conversation that make you think of your remodeling design! When that happens, you're going to recall reading this and you're going to think, *"that's cool"*.

You will know yourself better and that is the first step in developing your dream.



What do You Need?

The next step is to take a look at your needs. Every remodeling project has a list of needs. For some, the needs are very practical. If you have four kids and two adults living in a two bedroom house, the need is obvious: *more bedrooms*. If you love to cook and your kitchen is falling apart and the appliances don't work properly, you need a kitchen remodel. And so on it goes.

Needs are extremely important because if they are not met, then the work won't satisfy a real problem and the result will be unsatisfactory no matter how well everything else goes.

I suggest that you make a list of your needs rather than try and keep them in your head. This way, as time passes and you consider various options, you can compare each option to your list of needs and see if it meets them. I know this sounds simple, but it is easier than you might think to get so excited about the look and feel of a certain idea that you can start on it without even realizing, until too late, that it really didn't do what you needed.

So grab a pen and paper and sit down and consider your needs. Write them down and file them for later use.

This is a great time for me to say that every time I use the word "you" in this series, I mean "both of you" if you're married and you and your spouse live in the same house. All of these exercises should be done together. People often try and "assign" the task of remodeling to one half or the other of a couple. That does not work! You live in the house together and you need to come up with the ideas and handle the process together.

The Time Need

There is often an expressed "need" for the work to be done in an allotted amount of time. I place this particular need in the *resource* category which we'll discuss later. I think saying "I need this to be done by March 1st" is the same as saying "I need this to be done for less than \$10,000.00". If its true then the way I would express it is by saying "I have until March 1st to get this done." Thus the time between now and March 1st becomes a *resource* which needs to be accounted for and budgeted, just like money.





The Time Need *cont.*

The time “need” is usually only real if, for example, **a baby is on the way** and there is no place for it to sleep. That is a real time constraint and the time between now and the due date is a resource. If it’s more like the usual: “School is out on May 30th”, we need to be done by then.” This is an expression of a want, which is the next thing we *need* to think about!

What do You Want?

Wants are way more fun than needs! Seriously, we really don’t need that much from a food, shelter, clothing perspective. We could live in a tent! We could cook on a fire! We could store our food in the bags from the grocery store and we could hang our clothes on a tree! Needs have rarely been the main purpose behind any construction project I’ve been involved in.

Wants are where it’s at! **We want awesome stuff!** We want *beauty* and *colors* and *textures!* We want things like flow, and a sense of space. To use the words of a great architect I work with, we want “authenticity of design”. I still haven’t figured out exactly what that means, but I know it’s good! And I want it!

So the next, and arguably the most fun, step in developing your dream is to think about what you want! For most folks, this is easy as pie! I’ve never met a person looking to remodel, creative or not, who couldn’t rattle off a whole list of wants in a heartbeat!

So go for it. On that same sheet of paper, after your relatively short list of needs, start listing your wants, your desires. We’ve recently moved into an older home in a historic area near the water. We’ve done very little remodeling so far...so our list of wants is pretty huge. Yours might look like mine:

- more bedroom space
- a study area for the kids
- a new kitchen
- a remodeled living area; more open
- a Key West style exterior
- new bathrooms

You get the point. My list could go on forever...I am, after all, a Remodeling Guy.



Be Specific

I suggest you delve deeper into each category and get as specific as you can. Take my line “a new kitchen” for example. That should be defined more, sort of like this:

New Kitchen

- open “high bar” type separation between kitchen and living area
- colorful cabinets, probably painted, but maybe a type of stain
- natural stone counters...not sure of type (consider concrete?)
- some glass incorporated into upper cabinet doors
- some really awesome light fixtures; maybe multi-color pendants
- ??? on flooring; maybe hardwood- like a heart pine wide plank
- new appliances...colors?

Something like this is will help you develop your dream.

Pay attention to your creative train at all times. If it starts to slow down, just remember...inspiration is the fuel of creativity. Just find more inspiration.

If you need some, you can always find some at www.remodelingguy.net

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- How to Consider your Problems
- How to Consider your Resources
- How to Develop your Ideas

