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## DESIGN CHRONICLES

### DESIGN IN A BAG®: KITCHENS MADE EASY!

0 Comments 27 OCTOBER 2010

Designer **Rebekah Zaveloff** and her husband Nick wanted to make professional design accessible for all. They own **Kitchen Lab®**, a Chicago-based interior design firm specializing in kitchen and bath design, and saw a real need for solutions for those who don't have access to (or budget for) hiring a professional for their kitchen and bath remodeling projects. Their concept? **Design in a Bag**: "collections of professionally coordinated and proven kitchen and bath design recipes, offering the expertise, access and eye of an interior designer without the price tag."

Hmmm...sounded interesting, so we pulled up a virtual chair and asked Rebekah how their concept works...

NN: WHO'S SHOWING INTEREST IN **DESIGN IN A BAG?**

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RZ: Our ideal clients typically live outside major metropolitan areas and don't have access to many design resources and materials, other than those from their local remodeling centers. They are working with a contractor (or they're DIYers), but not with a professional interior designer, because it isn't in the budget, they choose not to, or they don't have access to one. When it comes to selecting materials, these homeowners want to save time. They understand the value and convenience of being able to order coordinated samples with a the click of a mouse and see them in their own homes...and not just on a computer screen or in a magazine.

**Design in a Bag** was created to help homeowners who struggle with making decisions and lack confidence in knowing what goes with what...the homeowner who is afraid to make the wrong choice and needs an extra boost of confidence. I always say it's like having a best friend who happens to be a professional designer just a text away to advise you on your choices (I have to interject here that my sister and friends are very lucky : ). We want to make the process fun, rather than overwhelming.



## Giveaways

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*this look!*  
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NN: HELLO! THIS KITCHEN HAS ALL SORTS OF PROBLEMS...WE CAN SEE WHY THE HOMEOWNER COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO!

RZ: Yes, this homeowner (I'll call her Sally) wasn't sure what she wanted. She is on a budget, buying her cabinets from a local remodeling center, and working with the rep on-site to help her lay out her kitchen floor plan. The rep offers little advice regarding materials selection and overall look. Sally wants something different, something special. She also wants to be able to visualize what everything will look like when it all comes together. She's having a tough time picturing it and is afraid she'll make the wrong decisions.

NN: SO SHE DISCOVERED **DESIGN IN A BAG** AND THEN WHAT?

RZ: In this case, Sally selected three bag styles: the **Southport**, the **Petworth**, and the **Sheffield**, and it only costs her \$187! She feels that having three coordinated options will help narrow her choices, and she can make a confident decision on which way to go.

- Her three bags arrive in a week. (If she did a special order or custom bag, the leadtime would be a bit longer). She was concerned about budgeting for the tile shown in the different bag collections, so she checks with her contractor about the estimated square footage of her backsplash. She calculates that it will cost her approximately \$490 not including tax and shipping...she thinks, "that's doable!"
- Also, inside her cute canvas totes (which she finds handy later on while carting her samples around to stores looking at fabrics and tables for her new kitchen), she finds the cabinetry wood samples, countertop samples, tile samples, 4 paint swatches, 4 architectural drawings illustrating the coordinating materials and wall colors, a resource list, and where to shop.
- Sally lays out everything in her current kitchen so she can see how the materials play off each other. She quickly decides she likes the contrast of the black countertops in the **Petworth**



- Sally lays out everything in her current kitchen so she can see how the materials play off each other. She quickly decides she likes the contrast of the black countertops in the **Petworth** over the **Southport**, which surprises her, so she calls her best friend to come over to see what she thinks. She leaves the materials leaning against the wall so her husband can see them when he gets home from work. Sally notices that the wall colors look different than they did earlier that day, and she's now leaning toward two of the color swatches over the others. The next morning, she and her husband look at everything again while having a quick cup of coffee before heading out for the day. After a few days of processing, Sally has narrowed down her choices to the **Sheffield** bag. She just can't stop looking at the green tile...it makes her so happy!



*The Sheffield Materials*

- Sally verifies the square footage estimate from her contractor and calls the supplier number and sales contact from the Design in a Bag shopping list to order the tile. Everything is processed via phone, email and fax. This tile is in stock, and ships to her door in 7 to 10 days. She takes the granite and cabinet sample to her rep at the remodeling center, shows him the cabinet finish sample from her Design in a Bag, and finds one very similar to price out for her. (As an alternative, she could have handed her bag over to her contractor and ask him to order everything in the finishes shown, referring him to the shopping list for resources.)
- Sally goes to a local stone supplier recommended by her contractor and picks out slab of granite comparing it to the sample in her bag. She's satisfied it's a match.

*Benjamin Moore Fernwood Green 2145-40*





*The AFTER Kitchen*

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RZ: Sally would have spent hours scouring design blogs and magazines looking at inspiration rooms and tear sheets, trying to find the perfect pictures to represent what she thought she wanted, and more hours trying to track down the names and resources for these materials. If Sally wasn't inclined to this sort of research, she might have just settled for whatever her salesperson or contractor suggested, feeling like she didn't have choice and didn't know where else to look.

NN: HOW DID IT SAVE HER MONEY?

RZ: Sally saved the money she might otherwise have spent on a designer...if she had been able to find one in the first place! If she had selected a paint color for the kitchen walls and didn't like it, she would have to spend money having the contractor repaint the walls...which is what happened with her dining room! Not to mention she saved the cost of numerous paint sample pots (and cans of the ones that don't come in the little pots).

NN: HOW IS **DESIGN IN A BAG** WORKING FOR YOU AS A DESIGNER? HOW IS IT GOING TO EVOLVE AND GROW?

RZ: It's been an amazing experience! We are so thrilled at all the enthusiasm and outreach from people...some who just email us to tell us they're not doing a project right now, but they love the concept and will use it in the future. Right now we're focused on letting people know about it, but I can't wait to dig in and start adding more collections, and asking guest designers to design collections. We'll be growing the bathroom section of the site as well as adding flooring, lighting, plumbing fixtures, hardware, barstools, kitchen tables and chairs...the other items that homeowners struggle with selecting. In addition, we'll be adding an a la carte option where homeowners can select and create their own styles. Design in a Bag is becoming a one stop shopping experience for design and product resources for the kitchen and bath.

