

Renovating agent makes dreams come true

A Wellington company specialises in project managing renovations to help homeowners get it right first time.

A WELLINGTON woman has pioneered an innovative renovation service by thinking outside the tri-square. Michelle van Dinther set up realtyRETURNS – The Property Improvers five years ago to make home improvement easy.

“Renovating a house involves hundreds of issues and decisions that many people find overwhelming,” she says.

“It’s easy to make mistakes about design or materials when you’re distracted by having to get quotes or arrange deliveries.

“And how can anyone be expected to make good planning and buying decisions when it’s only their first or second renovation?”

“It’s crucial that homeowners focus on a project’s outcome – after all, this is what they’ll have to live with for years and years – rather than on the work done to create that outcome.

“A good renovation agent will have all the tools, knowledge and experience to guide them through the entire journey.”

Traditionally, homeowners who didn’t want to project manage a renovation paid an architect or builder to oversee progress.

“This is no longer the case,” Ms van Dinther says. “Now a renovation agency like ours can arrange and manage everything.

“We specialise in managing renovations for residential clients who prefer to spend their time on things other than trying to understand the building industry. They get to focus on what they want the result to be, and we take care of the mechanics to make it happen.”

Ms van Dinther says using a renovation agent not only can be cheaper than project managing your renovation yourself, but also reduces the stress, time and risk of undertaking such a challenge.

“Our projects are very well organised and we guarantee our contractors’ payment. We have a large number of trade suppliers who all go the extra mile because they value our quality and regular work. It is a real win-win arrangement.”

Ms van Dinther says renovating is becoming a popular alternative to relocating.

“This year, particularly with the



Screen solution: This backyard, above, offered the owners very little privacy so realtyRETURNS helped them add expansive decking and attractive indoor-outdoor living, left, with the addition of screens for privacy.

attractive mortgage rates, we have seen people start to feel more comfortable about investing in their lifestyle by improving their homes.

“Sorting out your home makes an enormous difference in your quality of life. Warm, comfy, healthy, tidy, clean, attractive, functional, spacious, and inviting are just some of the qualities renovating can bring to your home.

“Having said this, there are still people wanting to renovate their home to sell it. It has long been known that the good-looking properties generally sell the fastest and we have not seen any let-up in this regard.

“Over the last five years until today, the average timeframe a house we have renovated for someone takes to sell has remained at just a few days, each time with the owner making money on it.”

Ms van Dinther says her company has succeeded in making renovating easy because it doesn’t have any conflicts of interest.

“Our job as your renovation agent is to make it easy for suppliers to step up and

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Royal flush: The old closet-style ensuite, above, is now fit for a queen with this elegant renovation, left, which included adding underfloor heated Italian Travertine tiles and a glass walk-in shower.



Feeling blue: The cold, clinical bathroom of a previous era, above, was given a modern makeover, left, with Italian marble and ceramic wall tiles making it attractive and timeless.



Entertaining change: With no children to use it, above, this backyard was impractical for the professional owners of this property. In the transformation, left, it is designed for the Wellington climate. The new low-maintenance backyard has a purpose-built barbecue area that is perfect for entertaining.

Experience saves time and money

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do what they should. You can only do that if you are a third party.

"Our processes aim to eliminate the traditional challenges of renovating, both for the homeowner and the contractor."

Ms van Dinther says one of realtyRETURNS' key strengths is matching a homeowner's needs with what's on the market.

"If you think selecting a TV is hard because of the wide range of choices, it's nothing compared to the quantity of selections that must be made for a large renovation."

"Your renovation agent should know you and should know what's available so they can match you to a few recommended choices. This saves you hours and stress and is a major

contributor to you getting a better renovation outcome.

"We need to anticipate a client's needs and use our experience to prompt a client's thinking and vision. We call it 'Ready, Aim, Fire'.

"Many people who have renovated without using a renovation agent learn during their renovation. Because we have more than one property under renovation at any given time, we know what's what and how much everything should cost.

"We are very focused on quality planning to ensure the best outcome against budget.

"Another significant advantage we have is being well connected in the industry. I don't think there is a single issue we can't obtain expert guidance on."

Ms van Dinther says the regulatory environment is a key part of planning any renovation.

'If you think selecting a TV is hard because of the wide range of choices, it's nothing compared to the quantity of selections that must be made for a large renovation.'

Michelle van Dinther



Hot stuff: This new open-plan living area, which was a realtyRETURNS' project, features a chef's kitchen and scullery and is an ideal space for entertaining.

"We have found all the local councils to be very professional and helpful, especially Wellington City Council.

"There is a strong focus on healthy, safe homes without over burdening the homeowner with expense.

"Plotting your course through the design phase is critical to avoiding wasted time and cost. It's so easy to go

in a particular direction only to find the building rules restrict certain options.

"We have selected designers and architects who understand our strong ethic to guide clients in the most cost-effective and creative manner."

Most of the company's business is word-of-mouth driven, Ms van Dinther says. "We also exhibit every year at the

Wellington House and Home Exhibition, which generates a lot of work for us."

For more information go to: realtyreturns.co.nz.

Wellington House and Home Exhibition is on at Wellington's TSB Bank Arena next weekend (June 5-7).