

## Chapter 1

# Make Yourself At Home

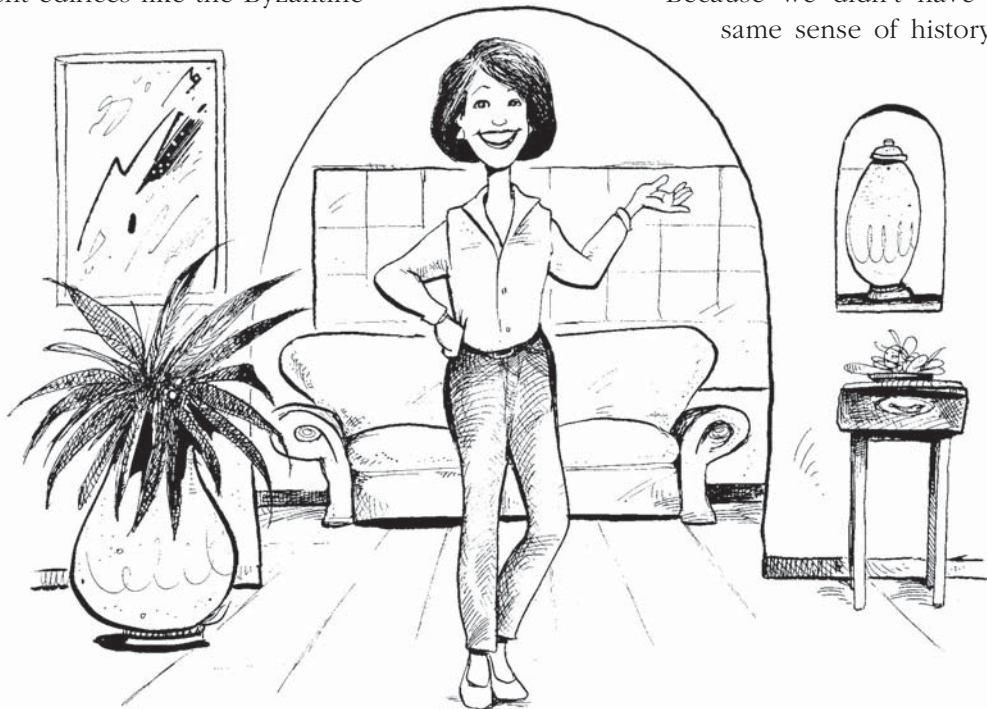
*There's a good reason why cable TV networks like HGTV, The Learning Channel and DIY Network have such a huge following from coast to coast: The home design and improvement industry is hot, hot, hot and is showing no signs of cooling off. There may be no better time than the present to tool up your skills and fire up your enthusiasm for a career in this creative and fulfilling field.*

Humankind has a long history of decorating his (and her) living spaces. We know that even prehistoric man decorated his caves, albeit as a way to enchant animals so they would become easier prey. Over the ages, artisans have produced magnificent edifices like the Byzantine

Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, with its massive dome; mosaics masterpieces like those at Pompeii; and incredible frescoes, like Michelangelo's work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Fortunately for all of us, the denizens of Europe and other places around the world respected these artistic accomplishments and did whatever was necessary to preserve them for future generations. In the United States, however, it wasn't until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that people really started to gain an appreciation of things both old and fine. Perhaps it's because our country is really still a new kid on the block compared to other nations of the world, some of which have roots stretching back thousands of years.

Because we didn't have the same sense of history, it



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was easy during the urban renewal movement of the '60s to let go of our past by tearing down stately buildings and homes with their fine woodwork and stained glass so cookie-cutter subdivisions could be erected in their places. In addition, cities with long histories of urban flight, like Detroit and Philadelphia, lost even more structures to blight and neglect. Even museums that housed the fine furniture, art and sculpture of our past fell on hard times, and in fact continue to struggle today.

There was another force at work that kept people from appreciating and beautifying their homes and environment until the end of the century: They simply didn't have the disposable income necessary to spruce up their dwellings, either by adding new furnishings and paint to give them a new look, or by lovingly restoring details on their vintage homes to preserve them for the ages.

But those days are gone. About 25 years ago, a genial curly-haired carpenter named Bob Vila burst onto the home improvement scene, and Americans instantly fell in love with the notion of fixing up and sprucing up. Suddenly people were strapping on their tool belts and taking on home improvement projects or decorating their domiciles with paint and plaster and a liberal dash of imagination.

### Opportunities Abound

But while Americans are keenly interested in home improvement and home design and have made household names out of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition's" Ty Pennington ("Driver, move that bus!"), professional organizer Peter Walsh from "Clean Sweep" and other home design show hosts, the fact is many don't have the time, talent or inclination to undertake such projects themselves. Or they enthusiastically take up a paintbrush, rearrange the furniture or make a stab at organizing their lives, then toss up

their hands in defeat when they realize it's not as easy as it looks. (They don't put those disclaimers about contacting a professional for help at the end of shows like "Weekend Warriors" for nothing.)

### Fun Fact

HGTV debuted in 1994 and reached 6.5 million homes in 44 markets. Today, the network has more than 86 million subscribers and is the fastest-growing cable network in history.



All this means there are plenty of opportunities for entrepreneurs like you to start what we are broadly calling a home design business. In this book, we'll give you the advice you need to start five different home design services: interior design, interior redesign, professional organizing, building preservation/restoration, and faux painting. However, what we *won't* do in this book is tell you how to practice your creative craft. Frankly, that's a skill best left to the professionals, so we've included contact information in the Appendix for a number of schools and professional organizations that can help if you need instruction.

In the meantime, read on for a closer look at starting the five types of home design businesses discussed.

### Interior Design

If you have a knack for planning spaces and coordinating furnishings and accessories, then this is the field for you. Interior designers (aka decorators, if they don't hold a degree from an accredited university or college) beautify, improve and update the appearance and functionality of

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interior spaces in both residential and business settings. Many specialize in a particular type of design, like kitchen design or lighting solutions, and many augment their income by selling decorative products like accessories and furniture.

According to the 2004-05 *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH), there are approximately 60,000 interior designers in the United States, one-third of whom are self-employed. This is the only design field regulated by the government—nearly half the states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and seven Canadian provinces require licensing for interior designers. To become licensed, designers must pass a rigorous certification exam, which they can only take after they've accumulated six years of experience in the field and a college degree. But this is not to say that you can't become a designer if you don't have these qualifications. Rather, if you live in one of the jurisdictions where licensing is required, you can call yourself a decorator instead and do all the same things a designer does and still be in compliance with local laws.

Employment prospects for designers are excellent, according to the OOH, which says, "Overall employment of designers is expected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2012." So if this is your preferred trade, now is the time to launch a business.

### Stat Fact

The demand for professional interior design services and decorating will rise by at least 17 percent by 2010, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Standards.



### Interior Redesign

Imagine taking stock of a person's furnishings and decorative accessories, then rearranging or "repurposing" them in the same space. That's the function of the interior redesigner, who uses design skills similar to those of the interior designer to work his or her magic. There are actually two career paths in interior redesign. The first is in residential or commercial redesign; the second is in real estate staging, in which the redesigner sizes up a home for sale and makes improvement and updating suggestions that can help the home sell faster.

Although the notion of interior redesign has been around for the past 20 years, the concept has only just caught on and become mainstream in the past five to seven years. As a result, there is no hard data or statistics to suggest exactly how many redesigners there are. But thanks to the efforts of a handful of people who blazed a trail in the field, redesign is now heating up. Shows like HGTV's "Designed to Sell" are helping to make redesigners even more sought after.

### Professional Organizer

This is another field that's still in its infancy but growing fast. Professional organizers cut through the clutter in people's homes and businesses to help them live simpler, more organized lives. They also develop customized organizational plans us-



### Stat Fact

According to a recent HGTV survey, 61 percent of people who attend open houses aren't in the market for a home—they're looking for decorating and landscaping tips or a glimpse at how the other half lives.

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ing filing and storage systems that their clients can live with and maintain easily.

While there aren't any available statistics on the number of professional organizers practicing today, what is known is that the National Association of Professional Organizers, which was established in 1985, counts 3,200 people among its membership. There's also a similar organization in Canada. Because there are no educational requirements, few equipment/tool costs and no licensing issues, this is one of the easiest home design businesses to establish.

### Restoration/Preservation

This is the field that Bob Vila single-handedly launched in the mid-'70s and is being perpetuated today by shows like "Restore America." Restoration/preservation professionals (also known as conservationists) may specialize in one type of home project, such as carpentry, or may act as general contractors and handle various types of projects on homes and businesses that were built before 1930. (Anything after that date is considered to be from the modern era.) You'll find these pros engaged in just about any home building activity related to electricity, plaster, masonry, stucco, woodworking, tile, tin ceilings, painting, post and beam construction, and the preservation/conservation

of vintage elements like horsehair plaster, fresco, adobe and lime plaster, to name just a few. These professionals also use their skills to preserve and save objects like furniture and accessories. However, make no mistake: A restoration/preservation professional does not renovate. Rather, he or she either restores buildings or objects to their former state or preserves them in their current condition so there is no further deterioration.

Although there are no specific statistics available concerning people involved in historic preservation/restoration, it's possible to get an idea of the potential in some of the individual home design categories from the 2004-05 OOH. For instance, the OOH says there were about 659,000 electrical jobs in 2002, and the median hourly earnings were nearly \$20 an hour. There were about 1.2 million carpenter jobs, with a median wage of \$16.44 per hour. The nation's 59,000 plasterers and stucco masons earned a median wage of \$15.91. Finally, construction managers held 389,000 jobs that same year, and their median wage was \$63,500 annually. Opportunities for each of these occupations are expected to grow at a better than average rate through 2012.

While some of these wages may sound very low, keep in mind that the statistics refer mostly to employees. Self-employed people often earn much more. Plus when you factor in the specialty nature of preservation/restoration, you will find your earnings can be significantly higher.

And the work is definitely there. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Approach program, called Historic Preservation Equals Economic Development, 96,283 building rehabilitations undertaken since 1980 in more than 1,700 communities have resulted in 244,543 jobs and 60,577 new businesses. So there's room for you, too.



#### Fun Fact

The National Trust for Historic Preservation was established in 1949 through legislation signed by President Harry Truman. Its primary purpose is the acquisition and administration of historic sites. Today the Trust oversees 24 historic sites nationwide.

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### Faux Painting

This purely decorative art form is usually practiced by true artists, although it is possible to achieve a certain level of competence through hands-on instruction. "The key to success is being able to follow step-by-step instructions and take your time," says faux painter Brian Bullard, who's also owner of The Decorative Arts Center in St. Louis. Faux painters apply decorative finishes to walls, ceilings, floors, furniture and accessories. They use paint, glazes and other media, and must be masters at mixing colors and applying them with just the right touch. Among the types of faux finishes popular today are marbling, precious stone, patina, trompe l'oeil and stenciling.



#### Fun Fact

The first faux painters in antiquity were the Minoans of Crete and the Greeks, who painted frescoes (a technique in which paint is applied to wet plaster on a wall or ceiling) in about 1500 BC.

Bullard says that because of the specialty nature of the job and the technical skill involved, faux painters can earn \$400 a day or more, or around \$60 by the hour. Other faux painters say it's possible to earn up to \$1,000 a day depending on the size and scope of a project as well as who's footing the bill.

### A Homebased Bonanza

One of the greatest advantages of starting a home design business is that it can be operated out of *your* home. That keeps your overhead low, and you may be able to take a home business deduction on your taxes (more about that in Chapter 11). If you start

as a sole proprietorship as many home design business owners do, you will have few paperwork requirements when it comes to filing taxes. What's more, you can operate any of these businesses without employees, and you often can start out with tools and materials you already have.

Of course, as a one-person business, you also will shoulder a lot more responsibility to keep the business running. For this reason, some home design businesspeople purchase a franchise. With a franchise, all the legal aspects are handled for you. You have access to prepackaged marketing and advertising, and you can use the name of a recognized company in your advertising. The problem is, franchise fees can be steep—often tens of thousands of dollars to as much as \$100,000. But for some people, having all their ducks in row is worth the extra money, so we have included the names of a few franchise home design businesses in the Appendix. But for the purpose of this book, we're going to assume that your intent is to take the design world by storm as a self-employed owner.

There is a way you can benefit from the experience of another home design business owner without paying high franchise fees: through a professional affiliation such as that offered by Minneapolis interior redesigner/stager Lori Matzke. For an annual fee, redesigners are linked to her company's website, [www.centerstagehome.com](http://www.centerstagehome.com) so they can receive referrals to hot prospects. They also receive leads from Matzke herself, as well as unlimited marketing assistance and ideas by phone. Such an arrangement can be very beneficial if marketing isn't your strong suit.

### Meet The Entrepreneurs

In this book, you'll find plenty of information to help pave the way to success in the home design business of your choice. A lot of the wisdom included here

## Colorful Connotations

**One of the strongest influences** on home design trends is color, and the Color Marketing Group (CMG) is devoted to promoting color's use "as it applies to the profitable marketing of goods and services," according to the organization's website. Toward that end, CMG's 1,300 color designers predict future color trends and select salable color palates for manufactured goods like home design products.

For instance, CMG predicts that the colors for 2006 will be warmer and brighter. "Reddened oranges will replace coppery hues, yellows will gain importance, blues will dramatically recede, and complex neutrals will add sophistication and luxury to the 2006 Consumer Color Palette," according to CMG experts. In the home, CMG forecasts that four-color directions will dominate. They are: Asian rose, a multiculturally inspired hue; Decoesque, an interpretation of green and blue from the colors of nature; elemental gray, a dark neutral; and Flemish gold.

CMG design professionals emphasize their choices are directions, not predictions. Even so, professionals in various industries listen when they speak, so you can expect to see these colors showing up in stores near you soon.

came directly from the experience of a number of home design professionals who graciously shared their knowledge. You'll find this insight liberally sprinkled throughout this book, plus these professionals also have agreed to be resources for you if you ever have questions pertaining to your new venture. The home design entrepreneurs include:

● **Sue Becker:** The owner of From Piles to Smiles, a professional organizing corporation in Downers Grove, Illinois, holds an MBA in marketing and finance, which she says gave her a realistic view of how to run a business. She launched From Piles to Smiles in 2000 as a homebased business and helps around 150 customers annually. She's a specialist in chronic disorganization and also offers paper and time management services as well as help with photo organizing and moving.

● **Brian Bullard:** A faux artist and owner of faux finishing school The Decorative Arts Center in St. Louis, Bullard earned a

Master Craftsman's degree from the School of Paint and Lacquer Techniques in Frankfurt, Germany, and practiced his craft there for eight years before returning to the United States. His commissions have included both commercial and residential faux finishing and decorative artistry projects in locations throughout the United States and Europe. His school, which he started in 1994, offers comprehensive courses in the trade of decorative painting, with a focus on faux finishing, Venetian plaster and trompe l'oeil murals.

● **Karen Crorey, ASID:** The owner of K.C. Interiors Inc., an interior design company in Oakland, Michigan, holds a BS in home economics with an interior design concentration from Central Michigan University. Crorey put her interior design skills to good use in the interior design department of an upscale furniture store for 17 years, which included eight years on the sales floor, before striking out on her own in 1997.

● **Jeff Finch:** The owner of Heritage Restora-

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tion Services, a 4-year-old restoration sole proprietorship in Franklin, New York, has more than a quarter century of experience as a historic building specialist. Finch specializes in carpentry restoration and 19<sup>th</sup> century decorative finishes and colors. Heritage is actually Finch's second restoration business; he owned his first company, Golgotha Restoration Services, for 20 years.

● **Diane Lauer-Harrison:** The owner of Illudere, a 9-year-old decorative painting and design sole proprietorship in Soquel, California, Lauer-Harrison holds a BA in studio painting and murals and started painting commercially while employed in the visual merchandise department of a now-defunct department store chain. Today, she provides custom mural painting and design services, accepts fine art commissions, offers color and design consultations and design services, and trains others in the art of faux technique and application.

● **Noelle Lord:** Lord is co-owner (with her husband, Peter) of Peter Lord Plaster & Paint Inc., a restoration partnership started in 1981 in Limington, Maine. She handles the business side of the restoration business, while her husband is the tradesman and also is a talented jazz musician in his spare time. She writes on restoration topics as a regular contributor to *Old House Journal* and as a columnist for the *Maine Sunday Telegram* newspaper.

● **Lori Matzke:** The owner of Center Stage Home, a real estate staging/redesign company in Minneapolis, started the business in 1999. Her clients include real estate agents and sellers who recognize that staging a home (i.e., "packaging" it for the best visual effect) before it's shown can mean a

faster sale and bigger bucks for the seller. She also conducts redesign and staging workshops and seminars across the United States and Canada and contributes a staging column to the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

● **Nancy Peham:** Peham is owner of Helping Hands Personal Services, a professional organizing sole proprietorship started in Plano, Texas, in 2001. Peham studied classical dance until she was 25, so she knows a lot about discipline and perseverance, two traits that are very helpful for a professional organizer. She obtained certification in computer programming at a trade school and took a lot of business classes at community colleges before she started her business. Besides organization services, she offers home staging and paper management and moving services. She also conducts professional organizing workshops.

● **Lee Snijders:** This interior designer from California, who is also host of HGTV's design show "Design on a Dime," has had a remarkable career, including stints designing multidimensional wall sculptures and a limited edition art collection for the exclusive Martin Lawrence Galleries (at the tender age of 21), working as a dimensional designer with Walt Disney Imagineering (where he helped create numerous theme parks and attractions), and running a residential interior design business. The springboard to his current cable show was a guest appearance on HGTV's "Designing for the Sexes" and as the "chosen" designer on two episodes of "Designers' Challenge."

You'll find contact information for each of these professionals in the Appendix. And now, let the designing begin.