

# BUSINESS OF HOME



*White marble envelops this bathroom by Sherrell Neal* Madeline Harper

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## How do you find and vet new makers?



By Aidan Taylor

Tapping into the maker-sphere can bring special and distinct pieces to your projects, but finding the right indie vendors can take some time. This week, we asked seven designers—Jeannine Bogart, Amy Courtney, Guillaume Coutheillas, Sherrell Neal, Theresa Ory, Nicole Roe and Rosa Santiago Zimmerman—how they discover new artisans to work with.

### STEP BY STEP

“Nothing will derail your project or your reputation faster than the wrong maker. The people you choose to work with, especially your makers and fabricators, are an extension of your team and a reflection of your abilities. If you’re spending days chasing quotes, putting out fires or constantly pivoting to ‘make it work,’ it’s time to tighten the process. Have your assistant or junior designer create a shortlist based on your nonnegotiables: budget, lead time, location, material and style. Approve a standard email script to request rate sheets, minimums, lead times and portfolio samples. Once that info is in, pick up the phone and ask your trusted trade pros, contractors, installers and other vendors



Rosa Santiago Zimmerman  
Courtesy of RSZ Design +  
Development



[for their experiences and recommendations]. Ask the right questions and triple check anything that seems too good to be true. Trade associations and design centers exist for a reason—they save you time and connect you to people who already speak your language. Tap into professional groups like ASID [the American Society of Interior Designers], NKBA [National Kitchen & Bath Association], IDS [Interior Design Society] and NAWIC [National Association of Women in Construction]. Ask their referral desks for fabricators and makers who have been vetted by other members. When using social media, look for clear product photography that shows the actual workmanship; process videos or behind-the-scenes reels that show how things get made; real feedback from designers who've tagged them; highlight reels that include FAQs, pricing or lead times; and, finally, quick response time to direct messages. If they take days to answer a DM, imagine how they'll handle production delays. Never go all-in with a maker you haven't worked with before. That first job is the interview. Start with a single piece or a prototype. Ask for a clear timeline and request progress photos at each stage. Pay attention to packaging, freight handling and communication during delivery. Take notes on how they handle bumps along the way. Everyone makes mistakes; what matters is how they respond. If they meet deadlines, communicate clearly and fix issues fast, that's someone worth working with again." —*Rosa Santiago Zimmerman, RSZ Design + Development, Freeport, Florida*