EPISODE 10: Transcription

Welcome back to the **Your Project Shepherd Construction Podcast**. Our last episode ended with Derek agreeing to pay to correct a mistake that never should have happened. When Brian and Heather decided to cut costs by going with a basic gas water heater instead of a tankless and a gas furnace instead of a heat pump, Derek assured them it was no big deal.

However, the spray foam insulation installer got nearly halfway through in the attic before he noticed these issues. Then his boss showed up to take a look and broke the news to Derek. Either replace the water heater and furnace, which will probably cost Derek $10,000, or pay them $3,000 to scrape off the foam insulation that's already been sprayed and start over with fiberglass insulation, which won't trap carbon monoxide in the attic and create a potentially deadly hazard.

After some back and forth with Brian and Heather. Derek agreed to cover the cost of scraping and replacing the insulation. He knows his wife is going to be upset. They just can't afford to spend that kind of money. A few months have passed since the insulation debacle, and Heather's due date is getting close. She's been visiting, visiting the job site less and less as her energy levels have plummeted.

But they got a call from Derek, and for the first time in a few weeks, she's feeling excited about the house again. According to Derek, it's time to start making selections for the home. Even at his previous job out in the suburbs, homeowners typically got pretty excited about this part. And Derek is hoping that this will lift everyone's moods.

Overall, this is normally one of the most exciting parts of the process. Plus, Derek is hoping Brian Heather will get distracted enough by making selections to get them out of his hair for a bit. In addition to eating the installation mistake, Derek's finances were already getting tight to help make things up. He decided to take on a couple of remodel projects in the neighborhood, despite having originally promised Brian and Heather that they will be his one and only clients during this build.

But things have changed for him and now he's going to do what he has to do for his family. Ever since the project started, neighbors with their own upcoming projects have seen his sign in the yard and stopped by to ask whether Derek could help them out. Until about a month ago, he declined. But money's now short. So now he has two new projects in the neighborhood and some distance from Brian and Heather right now is perfect for pulling it all off.

Meanwhile, Brian and Heather have decided to shave down costs and start to search for their home selections online. With Heather's feet on his lap, Brian goes back and forth between rubbing his pregnant wife sore feet, searching for appliances, and asking for her approval. It doesn't take long for the sheer number of decisions to get incredibly overwhelming. Heather has a style in mind, but now she realizes it's time to make some definitive choices.

Of course, she could swap the finishes out later on, but she'd rather not plan on spending more money down the line just because she can't make up her mind today. “Oh How do people do this?” She says, “Is there someone who can help with this kind of stuff?” Brian asks, “Remember how I was talking to Sara the other day? She mentioned that her sister Vivian, is an interior designer. Maybe she can help.”

Brian realizes that hiring an interior designer is going to be yet another expense. But Heather's eyes lit up with the idea, and there's no way he's going to ruin his very pregnant, very stressed wife's joy. Heather gets Vivian on the phone, and they begin discussing their home, where they are in the process, and what selections still need to be made.

Vivian asks some really great questions and agrees to take them on as clients. The next morning, Heather is thrilled that she and Brian are on their way to their first official meeting with the interior designer. Vivian welcomes them into her into her home office. She has shelves full of design books, fabric swatches and beautiful, hand-drawn renderings pinned to the walls.

Heather starts by letting Vivian know they've already ordered all the kitchen appliances and even bought a few of the light fixtures online. Vivian pauses because she's seen this scenario before, and it rarely ends well. Where did you buy all this stuff from? She asks. Brian and Heather tell her. Well, the appliances came from a local big box electronics store, which was having a clearance sale in the light fixtures came from a home improvement website.

Vivian looks through the detailed receipts on Brian's phone. He's just handed her. And suddenly Brian and Brian and Heather notice her eyes narrow and then shift from the prints on the table and back to Brian's phone. And after checking back and forth, Vivian says, “Are these the final plans and accurate dimensions?”

“Yep,” Brian and Heather say

“Well, the refrigerator is a different size than what the plans show, and the door swing on the wine fridge is backwards and your laundry room is set up for a stacked washer and dryer. But you ordered top load and these light fixtures, they seem to be the wrong scale for the room sizes and for the ceiling heights.”

Heather is turning red with embarrassments she can barely believe they ordered all that stuff incorrectly. “Can't we just alter the plans a little bit to work with what we bought? Those appliances were on clearance, and we can't return them. I think they were discontinuing models, even possibly.”

Vivian says, “but changing the plans isn't always that easy at this point, especially since all of your wiring and plumbing are in place. Let's see what orders we can cancel a return and start from the beginning.” Vivian wants to lift the young couple spirits as she presents, presenting them with the mood board she created.

“Yes, that's exactly what I've been envisioning,” Heather says, “How did you know? Well, I just put some ideas together last night after we talked. How do you feel about this, Brian? Is this the direction that you want to go?”

“Yeah it's great,” Brian says, “really”. Not to just be making progress, but to see Heather so happy since these last few weeks of pregnancy have been rough.

The next day, Brian, Heather and Vivian visit the job site together and Derek happens to be there too. Derek and Vivian introduce themselves and smile. But Brian and Heather notice that he seems to be a little annoyed with Vivian's presence as they go from room to room. Vivian tries to keep her voice to a whisper when speaking to Brian and Heather.

Despite not being needed at the stage, she notices Derek is trailing a few feet behind. In the master bathroom, she notices there's only one electrical outlet at the vanity. When she mentions this to Derek, he just looks at her and shrugs and says, Well, that's what's on the plans. She also points out that the placement of the shower valve and the showerhead aren't going to work with their selection and that the wrong type of cuff involves installed in the wall for the shower controls.

Derek says, “but you didn't even tell me this is what you wanted. This is standard stuff that I put in. How am I supposed to know It's going to be something special?”

Brian and Heather are starting to tense up with anger, but Vivian does her best to keep them calm. She says that they all need to keep looking forward rather than focusing on mistakes.

She'll send a list of all the changes and issues to Derek tonight, and he agrees to work through them. After reviewing Vivian's list, Derek meets with all the subcontractors who need to come fix the issues. Within a few days, he emails a breakdown of the costs for Brian and Heather to review. Brian adds them all up, and the total is another 60 $500 to fix Derek's oversights.

Not wanting to get Heather riled up so close to her due date, Brian steps out into the backyard and calls Derek. Derek, Brian says, I know you've had a lot of costs and I appreciate you covering those, but you've now caused another 60 $500 worth of mistakes and we just aren't going to pay for that. Derek says, “look, I know I'm new and yeah, there were some minor mistakes on that list, but most of those items are where you didn't give me your information or you changed your mind. Your designer comes in here and wants all the special stuff that is isn't even on the plans. How am I supposed to anticipate what she wants? Besides, I just cannot afford to keep paying for this stuff. Honestly. I'm barely going to break even on this house, if I'm lucky.”

At this point, Brian is feeling defeated. He knows Derek can't afford it, but their savings account is now dangerously low, and soon they're not going to be able to afford to make double mortgage payments. He's already made up his mind to suck it up and ask his dad the more money to keep them afloat.

After another design meeting at Vivian's office, Brian and Heather are starting to feel a little better again. Despite Heather's due date being just around the corner, she's in pretty good spirits and wants to accomplish as much as possible before the baby arrives. Her sister agreed to babysit that night so that they could get in one last dinner date. So Brian and Heather decide to drive by the construction site on their way home. They park out front and talk for a little while before deciding to check out the neighborhood a bit before heading back home a few blocks away. Brian stops the car and takes a photo with his phone. There's a shiny new sign that says Derek Swanson Construction and another house's yard.

“No wonder there have been mistakes,” Brian says “he's taken on more projects.”

“Brian,” Heather says, there a few deep breaths. ”I think we just need to let it go and deal with it later.”

“No,” Brian insists. “I'm going to call him right now.”

“Brian.” Heather cuts him off, “Drop it. I think my water just broke.”

With that, Brian rushes Heather to the hospital.

Calling her sister on the way home to let her know they won't be home in a bit, as promised. Did the baby come in? Just in time to get Derek off the hook for taking these side jobs? Tune in next. Time to find out.

**EPISODE 10 – Shannon Vestel Transcription**

**Curtis:** Welcome back to ***The Your Project Shepherd Construction Podcast*** on this show we teach that every successful construction project has four key components which are illustrated by a simple outline drawing of a house. The foundation is planning. The left wall is your team, the right wall is communication, and the roof is proper execution. Have all four of these components in your project, and it will succeed. Well, today, we have a designer on the show. We have **Shannon Vestal is Steve Shannon Designs.**

**Shannon:** Hello hello, thanks for having me

**Curtis:** Steve Shannon is a residential design firm and that covers architectural drawings, interiors, the whole shooting match will start to finish, right?

**Shannon:** Absolutely.

**Curtis:** Let you tell us a little tussle with a little bit about how you and Steve came together and kind of what you guys do.

**Shannon:** Steve and I actually met through a custom home builder back in 2015, he had already done the design for this particular builder's model home and then I was hired and made all the selections for the home. So we started working on that project - Steve saw that there might Be a way to introduce me to a lot of his projects that he was working on in getting a little bit more in the weeds, as I would call it in the design of the home and some of the questions that I would ask the clients as far as the design of the home and started out doing about 10 hours of my time on those projects and then things just started taking off. Pretty soon it was you know well, this kind of makes sense we should team up and just offer this as a full-service. It was not the case where you hire one or the other - It was a hire-us-both package. So, we got pretty slammed right after Harvey we were probably, we only had three, three people a day coming in to interview us as you and I both know our land was pretty much where we lived so to speak after Harvey. So I feel like that really got us going out there and ever since then we have tweaked some things and tried to make our business better. It's been great. We love it. Steve's been designing homes for 30 years he designed his first home when he was 20 years old. He is a residential designer, he's not an architect so he cannot design commercial projects, but he has designed a lot of homes. So my part is not only helping with the design of the home, and some of the little details, but I also then follow up with all the selections. So, I'll work with the clients and the Builder to get all the selections made with the home and get it to the Builder, before you need it, it is my goal.

**Curtis:** Yeah, so do you guys have kind of an overall design philosophy or philosophy when it comes to working with clients?

**Shannon:** Well, we want often times people ask us what our style is, if you look on our house page, we don't have style. I tell people and Steve agrees whatever their style is what our style is. If we did the same thing over and over again it would get pretty boring so our philosophy is when you come, you should be open-minded and enjoy the process. I think that's the biggest of everything I could think of in designing a home. I feel like people struggle with that definitely, in the beginning, you and I both know it's a large investment and so it can be a little nerve-racking, but I know we'll talk about this later, but if you get the right team together, then it should be a fun process.

**Curtis:** Yeah. So, you know, there's a story that we've been following on this podcast of a couple who is going through this process of building a home and they just try to do everything themselves. They get their house plans on the Internet or sisters that want to be “interior designers.” and we see a lot of that kind of approach, unfortunately. So, tell us why should somebody work with a professional designer instead of just trying to do it themselves?

**Shannon:** Oh my goodness there are a lot of reasons

**Curtis:** We have lots of time.

**Shannon:** Part of it, goes back to the team approach in getting your builder, your architect, your home designer, and your interior designer all together, all three of those people need to work on the project from day one. The interior designer oftentimes gets the bad rap of being the one that's going to come in and blow your budget or being super expensive now. They think “we can't afford a designer we'll do it ourselves or get my sister, my aunt, or whatever to help us with selections.” I start to bring up things to clients like well, I know you think it's going to be fine because you're going to get to pick out tile and countertops and paint and while that is fun, the lighting, too, etc., your builder also is going to need to know what kind of interior doors want, do you want to stain it, do you want to paint? What kind of baseboards? Do you want the outlets in the baseboards? What type of finish do you want on the sheetrock? Right? I try to throw out all the decisions, right?

**Curtis:** There are a million decisions that they are just not aware of.

**Shannon:** Exactly. And I try to throw out the ones that are, which I've learned a lot of people think is just a standard and that's what they say well, that's not standard, but in a custom home, there is no standard. And while there might be certain things that are “standard” with the builder, whether it's the framing or the guts of the home, everything else that goes into that home somebody needs to have a discussion about it and know what that's going to be. You as the Builder need to know what to tell your sheet-rockers and your painters.

**Curtis:** Yeah, I mean, “standard” might not be the same as what's in the client’s mind, but they think should be standard.

**Shannon:** Yes, absolutely and I found that with baseboards, that’s, and door casings. That was one of the bigger ones. Even if you're going from Builder to builder, while you're searching for your builder, each one can have different as you said standards and so what might be an upgrade to one Builder, may not be to another. So that's one of the first things. Another thing is you can pick out our tile. Your aunt can help you pick out the tile but there's more to it than just handing your builder the list from Dell Tile or wherever it is, you went to make your selections. It's how do you want that tile installed? Do you want it vertical? Do you want a horizontal? Are we doing a herringbone pattern? Which size absolutely are we doing? You know Schluter strips first thing your strips? I mean the common person. You know, we don't. We rarely do bullnose Edge tile anymore. What size grout joint do you want? Not to mention the grout color? All of those things have to be relayed to the Builder because again, the tile guy shows up and he's got to have a plan and there is no standard, right? So, those are things that your designer is going to help you with. Lighting can be one of these examples where they see and say look those are so pretty when you walk in the showroom. Rarely have I made a final selection with a client from a fixture that's hanging in the showroom. I always tell people those are more of a reference point for size, maybe for the finish, the amount of light it puts out but typically we end up going to catalogs or going online and I'm sending them other options. So, there’s so much to it. There's a lot to it and being able to really pull the whole thing together. I think you can focus on what you want your master bathroom to look like because of photos that you found on Pinterest or HOUZ but does this style of that bathroom, go with the style of the rest of the house, right? Even the exterior of the house and all of that's got to go together.

**Curtis:** Yes. Having a cohesive design concept for the whole house. You know if someone just goes to the tile store and then they go to the granite store and then they go to the But, you know, right. They might pick out 10 different things that don't necessarily work well together.

**Shannon:** Absolutely and a lot of the showrooms do have interior designers that work there that are very helpful but that Designer at the tile showroom doesn't know what you may or may not have already selected or going to select at the countertop showroom

**Curtis:** They do the plans for the house they don't know what the overall style of the home is, there are so many things that they can't know.

**Shannon:** Absolutely. And a lot of it comes down to, how does your home function? How do you live? We've got clients that have three young kids, two dogs are going to have a swimming pool and we're having conversations about what type of flooring we're going to put in the house because there are pros and cons to all of them and so we really have to dig deep to really learn more about their life because there are lots of beautiful products out there and you don't have to spend a lot of money on them to still get accomplished the look of maybe your inspiration photo, but you also want it to be durable. I mean I hear that word all the time we want low maintenance, right? These days are fast-paced I think we all want everything possible in life to be low maintenance.

**Curtis:** The kind of level of product knowledge is a big component of that, like you mentioned just kind of knowing that you don't just pick a white Carrera marble tile. There are a million options just within that one tile - the size of the tile, the weight, and the direction that way, the edge, the grout joint. There are thousands or tens of thousands of individual decisions to be made on a custom home and while some people can definitely grasp the big things, the appliances, for example, they can't know all the little things that go into that. If you want the appliances, though, you have to know what kind of cabinets you are doing. How are they going to be installed? What are the dimensions? The proper Dimensions. You know, how's it going to vent, right?

**Shannon:** Right, well and one thing that I think also benefits folks for hiring an interior designer is we stay on top of new products hitting the market. A lot of these, especially the bigger vendors, which the builders do too, you know, they send us to the corporate office, the factory and we sit through two or three days of training, we see the product, we go through the factory, we see how the products are made. I remember going to Kohler and doing their training a few years ago and believe it or not, it makes you appreciate a toilet a whole lot more. If I mean when you see these guys out there with a wet sponge smoothing this toilet that just came out of a mold. I mean, so product knowledge is a big part of it and I always tell people you want to know, you don't want your house that you're going to, that's going to be finished with say, in 2023, we're in 2022, their house is going to be finished in 23. But the inspirational photos that you showed me when we first got started were the best Pinterest 2019. Yeah. And you can't even guarantee that, right? We don't know when those pictures were posted so do you really want to move into a house in 23 and already have it dated? So, I tell people you want me to go take you to a towel showroom where the salespeople that I work with their say, hang on a second. Shannon, we just got something in yesterday, let me go get it because they know I want to show my client the latest product. Now, they may bring it out, and my client looks at me like, I've lost my mind, but I'm saying just bear with me. Let's get through this whole process but I'm there to push you out of your comfort zone, and it's okay to tell me, you don't like it. So I'm going to hurt my feelings, but at the end of the day, when all of your selections are made and you're moving into that home, you want to feel like, wow, no one else has this. My friends are coming over there going, oh my god, I've never seen that before - that's what a designer can do for you, and make sure that you're putting products in your home that are what my guy said before, *not only functional but durable* and are going to last you for a while. You don't want in a few years go “oh my God honey we're going to have to rip this out and remodel.” Yeah, I don't think honey would be really happy if that happen.

**Curtis:** Yeah. If you would only spend one dollar more per square foot, it would have lasted.

**Shannon:** Steve, I've heard Steve tell people is oftentimes, he said with the amount of money that you're going to pay Shannon to get through this process and get all your selections made, she will save you that and plus some, in the end. That kind of would lead us into a budget. I use that word maybe more than a lot of interior designers do but I've just seen it happen so many times with people going over budget and there's no reason for that to happen.

**Curtis:** Yeah, I think that people's biggest fear when they think about working with a designer is that “oh the designer is going to push me to spend way too much money.” Honestly, there are a lot of designers that do that, absolutely, I've got plenty of horror stories about designers blowing up a job, either from the budget, going crazy, or coming in and making and changing everything at the last minute.

**Shannon:** My gosh, so then yeah, then your client incurred the change orders which were their fault

**Curtis:** Right? So having somebody you know, who is grounded, you know, who is grounded in reality and people actually do have a budget. You know, you're not designing every house for somebody that lives in the most expensive neighborhood in town, right? These are, you know, most of the houses that we do, and you or I think most people would consider them high-end or luxury, but honestly, in this market, their kind of middle-of-the-road houses, you know, eight hundred thousand dollars to a million and a half dollars. It's a lot of money, don't get me wrong, but that's kind of a middle-of-the-road house for Houston.

**Shannon:** Yeah. These days I agree.

**Curtis:** You know we're not dealing with the super-rich guy, we're dealing, you know, who actually have a budget and I even tell people, you know, because I've got a good friend that works for a super, super crazy high-end home builder and you know, when I hear the budget they're talking about, they still have clients that pushback when they present a budget even if it's you know, here's the budget, it's 15 million we were really hoping to be more around 12 million and everybody has a budget. To me, that's what can make the project not fun. So, just talking budget, I mean, I said that people show me photos, it might be a tile on there, that's $20 or square foot, but they're showing me, but I tell them your builders giving me a $5 per square foot budget we will make it happen. We will find you something, right? There are way too many products on the market just sometimes it might take a little more digging but it's doable.

**Curtis:** Sure. I mean, yeah, there are a ton of projects out there that are products out there that are kind of made to have that crazy expensive look that is really very affordable, you just have to know the right sources to find them, and not to buy crap, honestly.

**Shannon:** Yeah, exactly and that's why it's an again, it's an education process. I mean if your family that we're talking about here, this family we've been talking about – do they have a name?

**Curtis:** Yes, Brian and Heather.

**Shannon:** So, Heather goes out she's dropped the kids off and now it is mother's day out so she's like, I'm going to go make tile selections today if she just goes and doesn't work with the salesperson at any of these tiles showrooms and just make selections and then she brings him to you and she says your Curtis “This is the tile for my bathroom floor,” and you look at it and it's a ceramic tile, your immediate reaction is to say no I wouldn’t do that. Do they have it in porcelain? Or you know she brings you marble and says, this is my kitchen countertop. Well okay, we'd be more than happy to install that for you…

**Curtis:** But not a good choice

**Shannon:** …I need to educate you and then you become not only the Builder but because you don't want to just put it in, right? You don't want it later, you're going to, she moves in and requires some product education, and relies a lot on the vendors, I tell them that and that's why I go to certain vendors because of the product knowledge. I can't know all of it. I don't want to know all of it. So, there are times when we are at showrooms that I'll look to my salesperson and say what can you answer that because I don't know the answer to that. There's just so much more to the products out there that I think people realize.

**Curtis** Yeah and having good vendors is important too because you know, people that will say hey I found this tile that looks just the same as two dollars, a square foot cheaper at this other place and I'll say, you know, we need to stick with my vendors because we have a relationship. I trust the sales reps, I trust that if there's a problem with the product, we can return it and exchange it I stand behind it. You know that guy over there, they're selling leftover seconds, there are issues with it, they have bad customer service, they promised that the stock, it's not. So, you know

**Shannon:** I’m sure you and I both have plenty of horror stories with that. Oh yeah, scenario.

**Curtis:** So, you know, we have our preferred vendors and occasionally will venture outside of that if we can kind of “vet” them and make sure that they're legit. But that's part of what you get working with somebody like you. You know the good vendors and a lot of times it's the same What I would say is my preferred vendor list to yours. I would we've got a lot of the same ones on there.

**Curtis:** Yeah. And I think that kind of goes along with also the quality, the quality level of the Builder, the designer is probably going to have a comparable quality vendor list, whereas a, a cheap Builder a bad Builder, a cheap designer, bad designer, it’s probably going to be using the cheaper, Places.

**Shannon:** Absolutely, one of the things I think we, I mentioned earlier, and I know maybe we wanted to touch on was, you know, when I mentioned the team approach and that going back to the budget and you being involved in the beginning, designing the home. So that we're talking numbers from day one. Yeah. And I think that's what I really harped on in the big beginning with these builders really looked at me like I was crazy when I said I really want to sit in on your presentation of this preliminary budget and you know, I get it, it was probably like what, it's not really any of your business what my budget looks like but the more I explained that it is a lot of my business because I was the one that when we hit the tile showroom and of course, they make a beeline to the most expensive tile and I have to say, no, that's not in the budget, no you can’t have that.

**Curtis:** Why is my budget so low?

**Shannon:** They gave me hissy fits, yes, temper, tantrums thrown in the middle of the tile showroom, and I'm looking and I'm like, I'm sorry, I'm relaying, I'm just here to tell you it's not in the budget if you want it, Absolutely, will do it, but just know you're going to be over budget. If we do this at every selection appointment, you’re going to be miserable by the end of this process. If we can get together from day one and start talking numbers and design a house that's within budget, and not a house that's X numbers per square foot. This is the house we want is this the style, this is how much money we have to spend. You're not going to spend it all. I think people are afraid if, you know if they say, you know, budgets a million Curtis you and I are going to spend every bit of that million, right? It's like, for me, I tell people it's kind of a challenge if I can get you under that. You know what? If I can get you every selection and you're happy with everything and Curtis can build and where we're at you know, five dollars under that. Yeah, I mean that's what we want to do and it's being transparent

**Curtis:** But that's not going to happen unless we're all at the table at the beginning because, you know, Steve's experienced but Steve doesn't necessarily stay up on a daily basis on the current costs to build various things.

**Shannon:** Absolutely

**Curtis:** You know, and he also doesn't stay up on, maybe the interior stuff, and I don't stay up on the interior stuff as you do, so having all this the table together, allows us just to say right off the bat, “Mr. and Mrs. Homeowner but that's not a realistic budget that, you know, for what you're telling us, you want”

**Shannon:** Right and then only having to tell the story once, right? Come in with those photos. Come in with just all the information and this is what we want to do, and if we're all sitting in that meeting together, we're all seeing those photos at the same time. We can all say pick a pick the photos apart, what is it about it always the windows. Okay, well that's a twenty-foot slider. That right there is, you know, you can throw them a number, I can throw them numbers on some things and say we're not telling you; you can't do it. Just keep that in mind. As we move forward, there might be something else down the road that's more important to you than that. Slider, we are in Houston and it's 100 degrees

**Curtis:** Not going to open that very often.

**Shannon:** It might look cool and it looks really cool on that photo but you know being realistic foundations, always a big one, you know, we start talking about the style of homes or the roof on some of the modern homes and I feel like that's where Builders can come in and say, yeah, that does look cool but just know that's going to kick up your number just to have a cool roof. So how important is it?

**Curtis:** Yeah, so I'd rather get a nip that in the bud early instead of killing all the way through design, then I get a set of plans. Then I got to break somebody's heart that you can’t realistically build that.

**Shannon:**  That's what we are really, really trying to convey to people is to be just transparent and open with your numbers from the date from day one, it will serve you well for the time that house is finished, you should have a house that you're so excited and happy about and it was in budget.

**Curtis:** Yeah, I think being transparent is definitely important. You know, we always ask that question like that is on our questionnaire that we get people first questions is, what is your budget? But I think that also trying to get people to get to be realistic and in and understand that things cost what they cost. I might charge a little more or a little less than the next Builder, but my profit my fee is probably not going to be, what makes or breaks that house. It's going to be the design of the house, what's in the house and so if your budget is a million dollars, then don't be ashamed of that, you know, it's a lot of money, right? Don't be ashamed of that, like, but be realistic, and I'm not going to get a million-and-a-half-dollar house for a million dollars. I have to temper my expectations and realize that, hey, I can't get that 20-foot slider, and I can't get the 60-inch Sub-Zero fridge and a wolf range.

**Shannon:** Then I think on the other side of that is you probably have Clients that come to you and say, our budget is, you know, six or seven hundred thousand and then they start telling you what size house, how many bedrooms and bathrooms and they kind of just give you an overall of a modern home. When they do that with *us*, we look at them and say, “I don't think that is going to happen, and here's why” Sometimes they don’t have a builder yet, so we tell them when they come to talk to us so we go ahead and tell them because you know, why would you want to go through the process and have an architect or designer and get this great floor plan designed his beautiful modern home and then they bring it to you and, you know, you don't know that their budgets let's say 700,000 dollars and you spend your time and come back with or billion 1.5 there's – there is no shaving some money off to get them back to where they would like to be. If the budgets of million and we're a little over then yeah we can go back and look at some numbers but then they're back to what they spent, you know, 30 grand or more and hiring somebody to design this home and I got to start over or scrap it and at 700 Grand, my thought is you don't have extra money sitting around to have a whole other house designed. So I would want somebody to at least, explain that to me upfront and then decide. Okay. Do I want, do we want to continue, and do we want to go through with this or at least say, okay well, I guess we'd be willing to give up a bathroom or maybe do a little bit different style home, you know, that sort of thing. So again, it's just it's an education process.

**Curtis:** Yeah, I think one, one problem or one mistake people make when they don't hear what they want to hear, sometimes like oh I can find somebody, that'll do it for that price, right?

**Shannon:** So you can find somebody that would tell you, they can do it for that price…

**Curtis:** Exactly. And that's what I run into a lot on my Consulting side with Shepherd, which is, you know, those this podcast is we get calls from people who, you know, believe that guy that said, oh, I can build that 1.1 house for 700 and then, you know, 18 months into, we get a phone call and it's a disaster. It's like someone who, you know, wants to buy a BMW and they go to the Ford dealer and demand a BMW. And the Ford Sales guys like, okay, well I can turn this forward and do it again.

**Shannon:** We could trick out this Fusion over here and maybe make it right.

**Curtis:** It's never going to be a BMW

**Shannon:** Yeah, exactly.

**Curtis:** So other than yes, trying people just trying to do things themselves and, and some of the mistakes that we talked about so far. What are some common mistakes that you see clients make, maybe it is in design or in process?

**Shannon:** If they have a designer or don’t have a designer?

**Curtis:** People who try to do it themselves sorry, I should have clarified that.

**Shannon:** Oh, my goodness. So, we've covered some of them as far as they're going in just trying and make these selections on their own, something that also happens probably nine times out of ten on these jobs is that the selections are not made in a timely manner. So, if you've got a construction loan, we know there's a time on that and so that house is got to be built in what 12 to 18 months usually somewhere, right? So you just can't make up your mind on the tile and you can't make up your mind on the door hardware. Meanwhile, your builder has been emailing you and reminding you “Hey we really need that we really need that at some point,” you're going to show up to your house again, you're going to have all these like an anthill and all these workers and things are going and it's dead they can't wait there their tile guy is ready they have got him scheduled. They know when they need to, but the tiles are not there, and he's got to move on to another job and you may not get him back for a couple of months depending on where he goes. So by not being able to get those selections done in a timely manner and get him to your builder and like I mentioned before, all the information that goes along with those selections you potentially are costing yourself more money so if that million-dollar home is not finished in to update two months, it's costing more money. Chances are the Builder is charging for every day that you don't have the selection. I mean, I know all Builders are different as far as that goes. But you know at some point you do have to put the pressure on and get the selections made.

**Curtis** The problem now is like supply chain, it's like if you don't pick it out on time, that could really mess your project up.

**Shannon:** I am ready to quit talking about supply chains

**Curtis:** I am too. I'm sick of it.

**Shannon:** I'm so over it but I see things slowly improving slowly

**Curtis:** In some areas. Yeah, some appliances are still a mess, and windows I've heard or still getting better

**Shannon:** Yeah

**Curtis:** Yeah. I got an email this week from an appliance rep that we deal with a lot, and he said – and I won't mention the brand but one major brand - still will not give a definitive lead time. They'll say well, you'll get it in 12 months but we're not guaranteeing that.

**Shannon:** Yep. So I think I know who you are talking about.

**Curtis:** It's like we're in the same position that we were with them a year ago or just two years ago, they just won't give you a date. So if those kinds of things aren't, you know, chosen at the very beginning of the project before the foundation ever gets poorer absolute, or your appliances, but doesn't happen. You're screwed.

**Shannon:** And they look at me like even before supply chain was an issue. When I'd say our first, appointments are going to be plumbing and appliances and they look at me, like, why would we look at appliances? Now we're not going to need those for 10 months, it's like, okay. But then I have to go through the reasons why we need to pick out plumbing and appliances first. I just can't imagine what Builders do with clients who don't make have a designer. What do you hand them a list of these things that we're going to need you to make selections for and back and give them a schedule, how does that work? I don't know. Yeah, I just mean I know there were some Builders now that are insisting that you have a designer. Yeah. If they're going to build your home.

**Curtis:** Yes. I mean we don't do a job without a designer we won't and there's just there are too many details and we don't have time to do it ourselves and we don't want the customer to do it themselves. So yeah, we won't do a project if a designer is not involved and a legit designer - not my sister that watches HGTV and she's an aspiring designer.

**Shannon:** Yes, I agree. Well and I think some things that I know they've come up even with my clients and obviously, The designer on the project and you know we could be at framing already and electrical is complete and then they all of a sudden say well I don't know, just walking through the house and I'm thinking, what if could we possibly change this and this? As a builder, having to address that and spend time with it, why does it make sense to change it or why they shouldn't change, or it can't be changed, but that's something I've been able to address in the builder never even know it until later over a happy hour I can say, “let me just tell you where I saved you on this one we didn’t have to do that.”

**Curtis:** We appreciate it

**Shannon:** But things do come up and so I think for a designer to get in there, really help people to understand what the overall design of the home and the look is, and let's get in and make selections and keep them moving and as long as the people can stay excited about it and get excited about the next appointment and checking things off the list. They seem to have a good time. So it doesn't have to break the bank and yes are there designers out there that charge three four hundred dollars an hour with a minimum of, you know, 100 hours? Yes, I've seen the quotes. Yeah. But like you said earlier, not all interior designers are expensive. I think it's like we talked about finding the right builder, finding the right architect or residential designer is just doing your homework. It's worth it in the beginning, to spend some time doing that, you're to be working with these people for the year to year and a half and

**Curtis:** And then we have been living with the results for a long time.

**Shannon:** Absolutely. And the best thing for us is when we get a referral from that client, you know they're super happy, they enjoyed the process. We kept him in the budget if they went over it was on them you know it was yeah I know I was just in the showroom and I saw that gold leaf on that tile and I just had to have it, so I know I'm going over but I'm okay with that and my husband I talked about it, we're good to go - that's one excuse for going over budget.

**Curtis:** Sure. So what's as a designer, what is your ideal client like was the perfect client to work with?

**Shannon:** If I could get on the computer like Weird Science and just create the perfect client?

**Curtis:** Yes.

**Shannon:** Oh gosh. I think one for sure, is somebody that can be open-minded and willing to let me throw new products out in front of you and things that maybe not at all, like your inspiration photo, but based on the feedback you've given me and kind of what you're wanting things to look like, be willing to explore some of those things with me, I can't always show you a picture of what it's going to look like finished and that's a struggle, I know but I tease them a lot of times and said “just trust me that's why you pay me the big bucks” ha-ha, but so being open-minded it makes the process fun. Understanding the budget and understanding that we're not, I'm not here to spend every last dollar of your budget but kind of like we need to know the price - you know what you're willing to spend on this home - you know if you've got a million dollars it's great or if you've got 800 800 it is but I do know honesty, just this is it. This is all we've got I can't go a dollar over; we'll make it work. Flexibility and Patience are key. There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes so although you might spend a couple of hours with me, one day at an appointment, then you may not hear from me for a week, maybe two weeks. Don't panic, I tell people up front, you know, this is a process because once we get tile selections made, I've got to get pricing all that, I've got to see where we are and I’m pretty sure when we were there that I think our average is going to come out, okay, I know we had a five dollar allowance or I know we had some that were 20, but we had some that were three, you know, I there's a lot of time that I spend not face-to-face with you right behind my computer to try and work the magic and communicate with the Builder and maybe there are questions, I have with the builder saying listen, they want to do this, you know, got to make sure it's not going to be more money. I want to lay the tile and a herringbone pattern, some Builders charge more, and some tile setters charge more.

**Curtis:** Yeah, but it's not always just the product itself - It's how it's being installed that can be a big cost driver, sometimes.

**Shannon:** Absolutely. So there are a lot of emails going back and forth, and I typically do everything via email because I want to have it documented. So there are emails going back and forth and there is scheduling. I mean, I've got more than one client at a time. So it's trying to schedule, everybody each week and make sure I have time that I have a day or two where I have no appointments so I can be right behind the computer. So I think just the understanding and that and patience is a big one and knowing that we're going to get the selections made.

**Curtis:** Yes. Trust the process.

**Shannon:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Curtis:** So, on the opposite side of that, you know we all had some rough situations every once in a while, what's kind of the opposite of that. What's the non-ideal client?

**Shannon:** The one that texts you, whenever. It could be, you know, eight or nine o'clock in the evening could be on the weekends, or could be a text during the day, even when I'm in appointments, my phone is silent, and I don't see it. Many of my appointments are two hours long when Steve and I are doing design criteria meetings, that could be a three-hour appointment, I don't have my phone.

**Curtis:** (Imitating a client) “Yeah. So why aren't you answering me?”

**Shannon:** Yes, and then what happens is it'll be a phone call and they will leave a voicemail, then 20-30 minutes later. It's a text. “Hey, I just called I left you a voicemail, but I really need to talk to you about such and such” and then three hours later when I finally am able to check my email, much less check voicemail and all the texts have come in while I've been in that meeting, there's an email, “Hey, I called you didn't answer. I left you a voicemail and also sent you a text. I'm not sure why I haven't heard back from you.” Now, it's going to be even longer before you here, but it's like you know, “when I was with you, for three hours on our appointment and I wasn't answering my phone, you appreciated that, right?” and trust me I was getting blown up with text messages, maybe voicemails, emails all that, but it's like they just have blinders on to you know in this they're thinking they are the only client. Yeah and when you know okay I'm going to check with your Builder and I'll get you on this and this and this, and then the very next day “So did you find out what Curtis would occur to say about this and this and this” I said, well, “first of all, we finish that conversation at 5:00 yesterday when we finished our appointment, and it's 8:00 in the morning on the next day and I'm just now opening my computer. So, Curtis didn't even know I'm about to ask him 5 questions”

**Curtis:** What that boils down to is having respect for your time, personal space things like that.

**Shannon:** Absolutely and again, it kind of goes back to just understanding the process and knowing you're in good hands, you hired me for a reason. Sure, you've vetted me out, you talk to people, you know, it's going to get done, it's going to get done in a timely manner. You've talked to people who use Curtis, you know, it's going to get done and it's going to get done properly. Just be patient and don't drop by the house every single day and expect to see progress, you know, there could be progress, but it might not be something that you don't even notice. Yeah, so I try to help you out in that regard and tell people don't go every day unless you just are that excited, and you want to look but just know that there are many times you're going to go that things aren't happening but there's a reason for it. Yeah, there's been all sorts of things and that's why I mentioned putting things in email these days because when you think you got them all everyone smiles, they'll be one that slips through and well Shannon you're the one that said the light fixture needed to go there and that's why I told him to do it. Like I would have never put that light fixture there ever in my lifetime, right? But now I'm being thrown under the bus, you know, just it seems silly, but you know at the time when it's happening it's those kinds of things that are continuing to happen with that particular type of client.

**Curtis:** Yeah, I mean, to me, it kind of boils down to the ideal client being someone who wants to participate in the process, and you trust the process, right? Then the opposite side of that is somebody who just doesn't want to participate, who wants to do it their way and not be an active participant, kind of in the normal flow of things,

**Shannon:** Right and there have been clients in the past that I've had to part ways with, and I just said, you know, I this just this isn't a match, this isn't working, no hard feelings but this is my process, there's a reason that I've created the process. I've worked with a lot of different custom home builders, I've kind of taken pieces of each of their processes to try and create you know what, I feel like is the best one (benchmark) and as far as getting selections to these builders on time and what they need, so it might seem crazy to you but there's a reason for it and I'm not saying the way you want to do, it is the wrong way, it's just not how I do it so we need to part ways. Because I have spent over-time doing this and working with different Builders - every Builder has their process - you might have a building software that you use and there are several of them out there and so, I have to have this conversation every time I start working with a new Builder, you know, share your preferred vendors with me. How do you get things done? When do you want selections? You know that sort of thing because to me building a custom home that's a really special opportunity and your life to get to not a lot of people get to do that and when I say custom home, we're talking Custom. A lot of people go out and buy homes, that production builder you know, a David Weekley or Perry Homes and you still get to pick some things, right? But it is not buying a piece of dirt and then designing whatever has grown from scratch, where, you know where every nook and cranny that when you move in, you know, where everything that you're bringing into that home has a place and you know where that goes and there is a reason that is there and I feel like it should be a little bit more of a hand holding experience and not a rush. Let's get, you know, we need all your selections right now and we have not even moved dirt. I found that custom homeowners, they need to absorb some stuff, you know, I take them to make a selection, they go home, they think about it, they might do research on it, whether it's appliances or plumbing, you know. They have to kind of let it sink in that “wow we just, we just picked all the plumbing for a house in an hour or two hours.” I got to go back and look at the picture book that we got sent and see if we are. We sure we like it, or we sure like the finish, right? It's not just, okay, that's it. Send it to the Builder and now, you can't change it, right? So, you know, maybe I do take, I take a little longer in working with these clients to make selections, but I've never had a builder, wait on me for selection and I don't specify things that have to be ordered and on the slow boat from Italy, you know, some fancy tile. I mean, knowing when you need it, we're going to make selections that are available when you're ready to order it***. I think there is a little bit more of a white glove service when it comes to Custom Homes.***

**Curtis:** Definitely. So, the last question. Do you have any stories and the stories of horror stories of things that have gone wrong that you could share with us and maybe talk about how people can avoid that situation?

**Shannon** My goodness.

**Curtis:** Sorry to put you on the spot - I always ask people this question.

**Shannon:** It is fun to hear some of the horror stories.

**Curtis:** I don’t like to dwell on the negative too much but it's more like a cautionary, tale of like, hey, this is the mistake these people made, and here's what you can do to not do that, right?

**Shannon:** Absolutely. I have had some *tile* nightmare stories, unfortunately, more than one, and this goes back to a couple of projects where I have been pulled on board and hired midway through. I got into it. I was going to do it myself and then go. Oh, dear Lord, I can't do this myself but unfortunately some of my God in a little too late. So say tile was already Selected order set, and then you walk in and look at it is absolutely atrocious and has to be all ripped out because they're, like, there's no way I can live with this, you know, that's a big expense. Just make sure that when your builder is sending you things to approve, if you don't understand it, get clarification on it. I did have a really nice front door Steve, and I had designed it had fixed windows next to it so when you look at the home, it was pretty much all glass, right? Well, the windows and the door with the divided light - So I’ll explain to people with divided light is - it's the dividers in the window where they're vertical or horizontal, these were all horizontal more modern home between the windows in the front door. Those horizontal metal pieces didn't line up so, when you looked at Steve's drawing, it would have looked like all one unit, which was the goal knowing that only one of those was actually the door and when the builder’s fault, because the drawings, but from the window distributor you and I both know what we're talking about, those are they're fairly small there, a computer generated. Usually pretty generic actually very generic and it was pretty small. And even me looking at it, I wouldn't have caught it. I would have looked at that whole thing and said, yeah that's our front door and our windows and It was very expensive and you can't do anything about it, but just the window distributor said, no, you signed off on it, and said, well if you look at the plans it shows this is how it's supposed to look. Clearly doesn't look like that and it was really, really disappointing I have had unfortunately for that same client, we had some cabinet disasters on that project, and it wasn't the cabinet manufacturer, it was the distributor and we ended up with a lien on that house, from the dealer’s installer. I remember calling him saying he was great as the installer was fantastic and I said, are you kidding me? You cannot be putting a lien on this house. He said she and I don't know what else to do so, and so is not paying me, I've installed the cabinets, you know, whatever I said, yes, he said, I don't know what else to do and I ended up getting involved with his lawyer. I called his lawyer. I was like tell me what I can do, what are we You know, I'll talk to this dealer whom I've done business with. We were fortunate I was able to convince him to pay his installer whatever money problems you're having is not your installer’s fault. The sad part is it was somebody I had used on a couple of jobs previously and did a great job unknown to me, which I didn't find out till much later there were some major, you know, ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul’ and on these jobs and this job just went to, I won't curse…

**Curtis:** This is a family show ha-ha

**Shannon:** Yeah, I know, I know, I have to remember. This isn’t *our* podcast. But yeah, it was a disaster. I mean, I felt I felt horrible. It was my first project with this quiz with Steve Rutten. It's my first project with him and he went out on a limb and trusted me that I'm bringing in a vendor that you know was going to do a good job. It was just God. What else? What else? And I did have a countertop issue on that house, too. It was just it was a mess. I just felt horrible for the homeowner.

**Curtis:** So with the door, what could have been done? I like to come and talk about like how could these things have been avoided like on the door – so what could have been done to avoid the door issues?

**Shannon:** That's what I talk to that Steve route and what about that? I said, you know, this could easily happen to us again, and like I said, it wasn't his fault, it was not my fault. I mean I guess realistically maybe it wasn't the vendors’ fault either because that's how they always send their quotes out and have people sign off on them.

**Curtis:** They could get a request to shop drawing for those doors

**Shannon:** Yes, I think something like that is what Steve and I talked about is in the future. We need something that technically is supposed to look like one complete unit we need to see that blown up on its own page detail with dimensions because at that point, if we had seen that, it would have been obvious, right that it didn't line up. But, you know, we all learned a very, very hard lesson but it won't happen again, and I say when you drive by the house when you were to walk, if you walk up to their house, you would never notice, none of their friends would notice. No, no.

**Curtis:** But it's a big deal when it happens

**Shannon:** It was it was one of the worst in the past I would say, three or four years of projects that were that, and then the cabinets at the same project and then I and then he was doing cabinets at another project is screwed up. I screwed up all three, I had two new homes and one major Remodel, and he was doing the cabinets on all of them and screwed. All of them up. It was a mess and obviously, I felt like a big heel because I'm the one that brought him in. And again, it wasn't. The cabinet line wasn't, the manufacturer’s great cabinets, it was Yeah,

**Curtis:** The dealer the dealer. Yeah, yeah. Well you know even good builders, good architects, and good designers’ issues come up. We're all human, we make mistakes. So it's just about how we deal with that and how we handle the adversity. It's going to happen.

**Shannon:** Absolutely. And Steve talks about that. Terry said, I've been little things that mistakes I've made the Builder calls me says, hey, these stairs aren't working out like, they should, you know. Yeah, and he will drop what he's doing, you know. No, go to the job site. Meet with the, with the Builder, and get it fixed. Oftentimes the clients don't ever know what happened, right?

**Curtis:** Yeah, I mean there's no such thing as a perfect set of plans, I don't care how good the architect that home designer, the interior to the engineer. There's no such thing as a perfect set. So it goes back to that, teamwork collaboration and knowing that I can pick up the phone and say, hey Steve, I found an issue in the drawings, or call the engineer. Hey Karl. I found this is this issue. You can even Steve both come over on us, put our heads together, and figure this out.

**Shannon:** And that's something we tell people to be part of the team and I, sometimes I forget the engineering piece of it because they're not, it's sitting in those investigations little time. But we always when people say well, who should we use it for an engineer? We always say, to let your builder, make their recommendation, you want your builder and your engineer, to have a good relationship. So, if there are questions down the road, oftentimes it tends to be the same engineer. Yeah. We all kind of like the same, you know, working with the same people.

**Curtis:** Yeah, we had Karl Breckon on an episode recently, I know that you guys had them on yours as well.

**Shannon:** Yes, Karl's great

**Curtis:** We have been using him for a long time.

**Shannon:** Yes, they're great. Now Reese I have seen him more in the emails these days

**Curtis:** I tried to get Reese on the show, but he was out of town – I just wanted that kiwi accent on the floor for the podcast.

**Shannon:** Yeah, that would have been fun.

**Curtis:** So I said next time, Reese is coming on, no offense Karl but you know.

**Shannon:** Well, you can always break them out, I know we ended up breaking out some episodes and we had talked about just framing, for the engineering of just the framing versus the foundation so maybe you could get him to come on for a special episode.

**Curtis:** So that's it, a great segue, I mentioned or rather I failed to mention at the beginning of this episode that you guys have a podcast, I feel bad because I should have started off that early on, but Shannon and Steve have their own podcast, which you should definitely check out as well.

**Shannon: *Two Designers and a Builder Walk into a Bar***. Yep, and I got to hand it to Rutten, his wife Ali came up with that one and we love it.

**Curtis:** They’re way cooler than I am because they always have cocktails.

**Shannon:** We're not the family show but you can still, you can still listen to it in the car, I Steve Rutten, we tease him all the time, because one of our earlier episodes, I think it was on “Meet the host” and I said a curse word and his eyes popped out of his head, and then, he beeped me out on that episode. He's the one that goes in and adds our intro music and all that soon, and I teased him after that, I was like, are you kidding me? I was like, we don't edit, we just go live and whatever and he said you know, people are driving in their Minivan, and they've got their listening and then their kids are in the backseat. I said, if their kids are listening to our show, they have fallen asleep, but more than likely their kids have on headphones. In the back seat and they're playing a video game, right? So don't worry about it. So, yes. And we do have cocktails when we are recording.

**Curtis:** So I definitely should come on and be a guest on your podcast, I'm inviting myself.

**Shannon:** Yes. Well in that, that's, that's these days, that's what they say is, you know, have guests on from other podcasts and share podcasts.

**Curtis:** Yeah. They say that most of the guests on podcasts are hosts of other podcasts and it is like this self-perpetuating thing.

**Shannon:** Well, you know who yes, and who we just recently had and he has done a lot of not just podcast, but he's been on some of our life, local news stations talking about it is Energy Ogre. Oh yeah, that one was a fun episode, there's a lot – hmm I think you would geek out on that one.

**Curtis:** I met him recently at the Energy Council.

**Shannon:** Yes, talk to him, lots of information, a lot of cool things that are coming in the near future with our energy conserving, it and storing it and all that. Good stuff.

**Curtis:** Awesome. So, again, that's ***Two Designers and a Builder Walk into a Bar*** that's the name, right?

**Shannon:** You can find it anywhere that you can find a podcast. Apple podcast, Amazon,

**Curtis:** Wherever you are listening to this one, you can find it there.

**Shannon:** Yes, exactly all of those.

**Curtis:** Awesome, so it has been great talking to you. I appreciate you coming to the show today.

**Shannon:** Thanks, thank you for having me.

**Curtis:** Can you tell people who are listening and watching if they want to work with you guys how can we find you?

**Shannon:** <https://steveshannondesign.com/> will take you to what we call our landing page and on our landing page there are different tabs to take you to our house page, which will show you a lot of the projects that we've worked on and are working on. There's an introductory video that you can watch which kind of tells you a brief description of what we do, why we do it, and the way we do it, and there's also a link to our podcast, so we would love to hear from anybody that is looking for a set of house plans and a designer to go with it.

**Curtis:** Great, well, they should definitely give you a call and go have a cocktail with you or a cup of coffee or whatever.

**Shannon:** Hey we have done plenty of meetings like that with beverages and adult beverages too.

**Curtis:** Awesome, well thank you so much again, it's great having you on.

**Shannon:** Thanks for having me on it was fun.

**Curtis:** So on our next episode next week we'll be talking to another architect Bradley Hirdes, and will talk about the importance of doing phase checks and inspections, it's a big piece that people don't think of necessarily but it's a service they should definitely have an architect participate in to make sure that they're getting what they paid for, make sure that things are being done, right, so I'm looking forward to Bradley on next week.

Once again, remember that there are four key components to every successful construction project. The foundation is planning. The left wall is your team, the right wall is communication, and the roof is proper execution. Having all four of these components in your project and it will succeed. Thank you and we'll see you next time.

**Steve Shannon Design.com Residential & Interior Design**

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