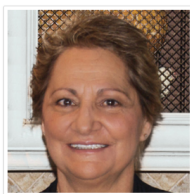


## An Interview with Kitchen Designer Tereza Hello



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– Tereza Hello, The Cabinet Studio

The Cabinet Studio is a successful kitchen design business run by a mother-daughter duo, Tereza and Leigh Ann Hello. They offer sustainable, toxic-free cabinets that complement any kitchen style. Tereza and Leigh Ann both use 2020 Design to create beautiful kitchen spaces and renderings. In this interview, we ask Tereza about her inspirations, her struggles, her favorite designs trends, and more.

### What inspired you to become an interior designer?

I fell into the industry 27 years ago. I was asked to manage a local kitchen showroom because of my management skills. Since I was in charge of all the designers and trades on the floor, I had to learn kitchen design. I left that company within the year because we had very different business ethics. When I left, I was quickly approached by another woman to start our own kitchen business together. Knowing the competition, I agreed only if we sold high-end cabinetry.

Within a year of drafting the business plan and searching for cabinet suppliers, I knew this was the right career path for me. The competition would have been fierce as there were over 50 guys who were selling/building and competing with each other. There was one woman selling high-end cabinetry and that's the path we chose.

### What were some of your struggles when you first started off?

Receiving money was a big challenge before we even started the business. Most managers at the banks at that time weren't shy about telling us that we were not eligible for the money because we were women entrepreneurs.

The biggest struggle I had when I started the business was that my business partner left after only 6 months (at the same time my husband lost his job of 25 years), leaving me with a 2,000 sq. ft. showroom to manage alone and obvious debt for the showroom expenses and no name for ourselves or clientele yet.

The last struggle was trying to keep the showroom open and do all the appointments on my own. After five years I was running like crazy - business was good but my showroom was never opened (I had a real problem with getting someone reliable and who shared my commitment to clients to keep the showroom open while I was on the road). All debt was paid, and I finally closed the showroom. I continued to do personal appointments and my clients loved it.

I was then very blessed to have my daughter Leigh Ann join me in the business 14 years ago and we still work on a personal basis and work off of repeat clients and referrals.

### What are your favorite design trends?

I am loving that one of the trends we are seeing a lot of is green and sustainable design. We offered the first non-toxic cabinet on the market in Southern Ontario 9 years ago and have continued to be the only company to offer a full water-based finish and non-toxic construction in the area while still maintaining the quality, durability and integrity of the cabinet.

### What are some of your favorite paint colors?

I have always loved the timeless look of Hunter Green from Benjamin Moore. So much so that dark green and white are my corporate colors and still look timeless 24 years later. I am always drawn to creamy, rich dark jewel-tone paint colors. I believe that it's better to go for a richer and bolder color than to play it safe. If you choose a color you love, it's easy to live with.

### What do you like most about your job?

I think the satisfaction of seeing a client go from hating being in their kitchen to then being proud of their space, wanting to entertain and falling back in love with cooking is the part I love most about my job - it's quite rewarding.

### What should someone starting a design career know?

The biggest thing someone starting out needs to know is that we are in the customer satisfaction and service business. Our clients are looking to us for our honest expertise and we should be setting realistic expectations for the project. An important thing to remember is that even though we are dealing with kitchen renovations and new projects daily, this is an experience most of our clients will typically only do once or twice in their lifetime. Therefore, we need to guide them through not only the design choices and details of the project, but also through the emotional portion of living through a renovation or new build.

### In your opinion, what will be the top design trends for 2019?

I believe more people are going to realize how important it is to choose non-toxic options when renovating or building their homes, whether it be in kitchen cabinetry or even their paint and furniture. I also see a shift back to quality products, understanding that longevity and durability is just as important as design.

### Do you have any interior design accreditations?

My daughter and I have been to many classes for product and design. We've attended many classes through the NKBA.

### What are some of your favorite features in 2020 Design?

I love that 2020 Design is moving toward a Cloud-based catalog, so we always know we have the most updated appliances etc. in our designs.

### Is there a 2020 Design trick/hack you can share with us?

Using the hidden-line renderings to really show the details to clients is important. Not just wow them with color but impressing them with your design capability. 24 years in the business and we are still selling high-end cabinetry using hidden-line perspectives coupled with bringing actual door and color samples to the design meetings in their home/site. This gives our clients in their own space a more realistic view of what their true kitchen will look like, rather than relying on the coloring on our computer screen.

