

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3, 2008

© 2008, Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

Dressing Up Our Bare Windows

We Try Design Services To Find Curtains, Blinds; Forgoing the Froufrou

BY SUZANNE BARLYN

Our living-room windows have been bare for the past 10 years. We're not exhibitionists. We just have never been able to make up our minds about what to hang.

But indeci profes servic Th the w Stuart Resea resea tion. V thro the ef last ye for ite declin To servic for de lar living

A consultant from V2K Window Decor & More, a unit of V2K International Inc., was prompt and easy to work with. We explained that froufrou designs were out, given that we need the room to be a comfortable space for a man to sit and read. (We also use our living room as music room and library.) Our V2K consultant suggested woven wood shades -- typically made from reeds, grasses or thin wood strips. He generated a price quote on a laptop, and also showed us digital simulations of how the shades would appear on our windows. His recommendation was smart-looking -- and among the most economical, at \$270 per window.

tal rug with another whose colors are a better match for our sofa and furniture.

A consultant from V2K Window Decor & More, a unit of V2K International Inc., was to work with. We explained signs were out, given that we be a comfortable space for read. (We also use our living room and library.) Our V2K conl woven wood shades -- typical eds, grasses or thin wood strips. price quote on a laptop, and also 1 simulations of how the shades our windows. His recommen- -looking -- and among the most 270 per window. from J.C. Penney Co.'s J.C. Decorating said she had been a r for 10 years, which instilled onfidence. She was sensi- s multiple purposes and our casual look. She suggested cornice and knew immediately which fabric books to consult. (Her car's trunk was nearly overflowing with fabric samples.)

of a proposed window treatment. It was an elegant swag style -- scallop-shaped gathered in horizontal rows, but more sophisticated than a ready-made, with beaded trim. The starting price of about \$400 per window (depending on fabric), however, was nearly double that of J.C. Penney's cornice.

We used the virtual design center of Cornerstone Brands Inc.'s Smith+Noble, an online window treatments retailer in Corona, Calif., to see how different styles would look in a variety of fabrics. This helpful tool also let us change wall and window trim colors. We revisited our saved creations to give the look some further thought. Fabric samples, which we ordered online, arrived a week later. The company's measuring service cost \$59.95, but we waited four days to hear from the measurer, who wasn't available for yet another week. The different styles of window treatments we designed online were lovely. But the prices, which often approached \$500 per window, including custom-designed rods, were a strain on our budget.

An Ethan Allen consultant photographed our room and discussed our concerns about the

lar living-room windows (measuring about 42 inches wide by 67 inches high). We found that custom-design advice from the pros is preferable to choosing readymade window treatment at the mall -- especially for our home's most visible room. Custom services, however, are pricier. A prefabricated cornice we considered including the rod, cost about \$75 per window plus the aggravation of hanging it up -- no feat for allthumbs homeowners. The price for custom services, however, ranged from \$260 to \$800 per window, including installation.

of the servi a free consu the one onl (Smith+Noble fee.)

The serv existing fur Long heavy option, given the desk, bookshelf and piano already cluttered our window area. A couple designers also suggested replacing our orien-

SHOP-AT-HOME SERVICE	SUGGESTED WINDOW TREATMENT/APPROXIMATE PRICE*	EST. COMPLETION TIME	COMMENT
Ethan Allen	Rectangular cornice upholstered with a plaid fabric in shades of green, brown, beige and maroon. Trimmed with two rows of wooden tacks / \$800 installed.	6 to 8 weeks	The window treatments our designer suggested were the nicest, but also the most expensive. We visited the store after her at-home consultation, where she showed us a fabric that blended with our existing rug and sofa. She also gave suggestions for rearranging our furniture.
Interiors by Decorating Den	Swag-style valance, but more sophisticated, with generous fabric allotment and beaded trim / About \$400 installed, possibly more depending on our final fabric choice.	6 weeks	Our prompt, professional window designer suggested switching our living- and dining-room rugs, since the colors of our dining-room rug blend better with our living-room sofa. She maintained a courteous, business-like demeanor despite our loud children and barking dogs.
V2K Window Décor & More	Standard woven wood shade in earth tones / \$270, installed	2 weeks	Our window designer was sensitive to the multiple purposes for which we used our living room and suggested a style to capture the feeling of a study. We looked at digital window décor images on his laptop.

received an email several days later with a photo

ow-treatment ideas from ar trunk practically rics, but she knew just practical for our home. sign center was the next- We made digital window ave to mull over later. But ibric swatches via the mail. onal swatches cost \$5 sensitive to the multiple our living room and suggested a style to capture the feeling of a study. We looked at digital window décor images on his laptop.