Not all designers are equal.

Design is a holistic process. That doesn't mean we sit with incense sticks burning beside our computers whilst we work, no, what it means is that to be any use the design must take into account many different factors, aspects & requirements.

Strangely though, not everyone has the talent to develop a design that takes all aspects into consideration first time around. Too often designers will focus in on one aspect of the design whilst at the same time completely forgetting about another aspect which is equally as important. The result is that when the design is reviewed by another person in the team, or worse still by the client, it becomes obvious that something has been overlooked. True holistic design requires a designer to be "switched on", it requires them to be thinking about how every change they make to achieve one aspect will impact on each of the other aspects. At the end of the day they will go home tired from thinking things through as they go about their job with passion.

A good designer will spot their mistakes before too far into the development process and take steps to fix them. They will periodically take time to reflect on what they have done, quickly realising that what they have developed to solve one problem has had a negative impact on another and correcting the issue. This is not bad design, rather it's good design development practice.

The design brief gives some indication of what the client requires of the development process but it's not a full description of everything that has to be taken into consideration. For example, cost is impacted by materials, manufacturing processes, number of parts and details of features etc. An inexperienced designer will often develop products that may function as intended but cost way more than necessary. On the other hand an experienced designer with a good breath of exposure to various manufacturing techniques will be mindful of previous projects and associated production costs when considering how best to set about solving a problem.

So before selecting a designer for your product consider if they are really the best designer you can get for your budget. Remember, the designer will have a big impact on the viability of your product. Ask around, find out if they generally get it right or do they make easily avoidable mistakes. Check out how long they've been in business. Meet with them and get a feel as to how quickly they dial into what's needed to move your product in the right direction.

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In product development overcoming the unpredictable issues revealed by prototypes is a big enough challenge without the added difficulty of having designed in problems that could have been eliminated, had the designer taken time to review their proposal adequately. Not all designers are created equal.

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