

You Do It!

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DIY and I don't really get on.

It's not that I can't do it – just this week I fixed some leaking taps and the connection to the dishwasher, much to my own, and my wife's, surprise. Mostly because I couldn't find a plumber who could do it any time in the next month. We were also leaking into our downstairs neighbours. Again.

But I really don't have confidence in the techniques, or the right tools, needed to achieve a satisfactory result. I'm still a bit concerned about that dishwasher connection if I'm honest.

When we moved into our current home I went wild and bought a Foscarini light fitting for the living room. I'd been lusting after it for ages but hadn't ever had ceilings high enough to accommodate it.

It was quite a bit heavier than I thought it would be.

After I had several screws just fall out of the ceiling I excavated the centre rose to discover that these Georgian ceilings were, perhaps unsurprisingly, made of crumbling lathe and plaster.

There was no way they would support the weight of the Big Bang.

Undeterred, I drove a 40 mile round trip to the nearest B&Q and bought myself some small “joists” that I could push up through the now gaping hole in the ceiling.

Much swearing later, I’d managed to screw the first part of the fitting to my new “joists”. Then I discovered I needed a very specific Allen key to join the rest of the fitting together.

Another 40-mile round trip later, I had the Allen key but no way to hold the weight of the light fitting at a height that would allow me to connect it.

Luckily, my soon to be oft-flooded neighbours had a pair of stepladders that would do the job and, much more swearing later, the thing was in place.

It hasn’t fallen down yet.

More by luck than design I’m sure.

I lost an entire day to that light fitting.

It’s not the last time I’ve lost a day (or more) to something I really should have left to someone better equipped for the task. Someone who knew what they were doing and who had the right tools for the job could have had that light fitting up in an hour or less.

Time isn’t a scalable resource.

So it's important to try to understand what you're good at and what you're not. Then, if at all possible, spend the majority of your time working on the things you're best at, whatever they are. Playing to your strengths will yield far better results than trying to compensate for your weaknesses.

Of course, this also means you need to seek out people who are good at the things you're not. They'll get a better outcome, faster than you'd ever be able to deliver on the things you're no good at. You might even learn something useful from them while they work.

One note of caution though.

As David Epstein discovered in the research that informs his book *Range* (<https://www.davidepstein.com/the-range/>), in many fields generalists, not specialists, are more likely to excel. So, in order to be the best at the things you're best at it's important to have an interest in things outside your specialism.

The best work we do is when we understand and respect the contribution that each of us provides. Making the effort to understand your own, your colleagues and your clients/agencies strengths and weaknesses will help you work more effectively.

Meaning fewer wasted days.

And a lot less flooding.

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