

The Proven Model

How Red Pen Procurement Was Built from the Inside Out

An FF&E procurement partner created to protect design and deliver it on spec, on schedule, and under one roof.



WHERE THE IDEA STARTED

Before founding Banko Design, Melissa Banko worked across commercial interior design firms in hospitality, multifamily, senior living, and private clubs. The design work varied. The procurement frustrations didn't.

The typical setup looked like this:

A designer would finish specifications, hand them off, and immediately lose control of the process. The purchasing agency might handle ordering and tracking, but receiving and inventory sat with a separate warehouse.

Assembly and installation required another vendor entirely. And none of these parties were coordinating with each other in a meaningful way.



Timelines slipped. Install days turned chaotic. Designers showed up expecting to style and instead spent the day managing logistics they didn't plan for.

Then there was the spec-swapping. Purchasing agencies would take a designer's carefully curated FF&E package and substitute products from manufacturers where the agency got a better markup. The designer's selections, the ones the client had approved, quietly changed for someone else's margin.

This was standard. Melissa decided it shouldn't be.

BUILT TO SOLVE A REAL PROBLEM



When Banko Design launched in 2014, Melissa knew procurement had to work differently. She's a designer by training. Sitting inside spreadsheets and tracking freight isn't where her time has the best ROI. But handing specifications to a fragmented vendor chain meant losing control of the finished product.

The question was specific: How does a designer keep her specs intact, deliver on procurement promises to clients, and stay focused on the creative work?

No existing agency answered that question well enough. So she built one.

Red Pen Procurement started as the purchasing agency supporting Banko Design's projects. One team handling pricing, purchasing, warehousing, inventory, assembly, installation, punch items and damage claims. No outsourced warehouses, third-party installers swapping in on delivery day, or spec substitutions for margin.

The model worked for the BD Studio Collection portfolio of interior design firms across the nation for years before Red Pen began partnering with outside designers, architects, and developers. By the time it did, the system had been pressure-tested across dozens of projects and multiple sectors.

Today, Red Pen works with design firms and development teams across multifamily, senior living, hospitality, private clubs, restaurants, and commercial/mixed-use projects.

THE RED PEN APPROACH



We Don't Swap Specs

Red Pen operates with one standard: the designer's specifications don't change unless the designer says so. If a product is discontinued or lead times shift, communication is direct and timely. Alternatives are presented clearly, and decisions remain with the design team.

That commitment is carried from purchase order through installation.

One Team, Full Process

Red Pen manages the full FF&E procurement lifecycle with a single team. Estimating. Purchase orders. Vendor coordination. Freight logistics. Receiving and inspection at Red Pen's own warehouse. Inventory management. Assembly. Installation of furniture, art, and drapery. Trash removal from the site. Post-install punch items and damage claims.

Receiving and Inventory Management at RPP-Owned Warehouse

All goods ship to Red Pen's warehouse. Our team receives, inspects, codes, and inventories every item. Assembly occurs before install day when required. Quality checks occur prior to site delivery. Issues are identified early and resolved before they affect the project schedule.

Installation with Oversight

Having one team handle all of this under one roof changes the experience on installs – especially when large commercial projects are installed in 5 days or less. There's no scramble to coordinate between a warehouse company, a furniture installer, an art installer, and a drapery crew who've never spoken to each other. Red Pen's crew arrives with the designer's floor plans, places items accurately, installs art and drapery to specification, clears trash, and manages any issues that surface, with a Red Pen agent always on-site to oversee the process.

Most procurement agencies outsource at least part of the installation process. Red Pen doesn't.

THE IMPACT

For Designers

Working with Red Pen gives designers their time back. The hours that would go toward coordinating freight schedules, chasing vendor updates, managing warehouse logistics, and supervising chaotic install days.

As Melissa puts it: "If you could pass off the parts of the project that don't make sense for a creative, and to someone you trusted who is built for it, why wouldn't you?"

For Developers

Developers working with Red Pen get consistent communication throughout the procurement process, coordinated timelines backed by a single point of oversight, and material quality that matches the approved design.

Adam Mitchell, Managing Partner & Director of Development, LifeCare Properties:

"Not having to worry about the procurement side of things has been a big weight off my shoulders... With Red Pen everything is on time and there's so much communication back and forth."

"It feels like Red Pen is an extension of our team, which has been invaluable."

For the Finished Space

When specifications are preserved and installation is executed by one coordinated team, the finished environment reflects what was designed. Material quality holds. Placement is intentional. The space performs the way it was meant to from day one.





A Purchasing Agency Built For Designers

Red Pen Procurement partners with design firms as a full-service or à la carte FF&E purchasing agency. The scope flexes to fit the project: pricing, purchasing, warehousing, inventory management, installation coordination, or the full lifecycle. The model was built by a designer who needed it to exist. It's refined through real projects, across real sectors, every week.

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