

CHAPTER 1

Finding Your Place in Interior Design

Whether you are considering entering the field, or you have been practicing for many years, it is valuable to consider its different aspects. A review of the abilities that are usually part of the successful designer will help you define if these talents are natural to you, or perhaps you need to design your career to have others fill in where you have weak spots. A review of the specialties is also very worthwhile.

As designers, we are usually not happy in doing the same thing year after year. This is why we create change. So, as you review the specialties, consider the ones that may fit your market. You may want to add them to your practice, or find another designer with that specialty to partner you.

Interior design is a very socially interactive discipline. We work with clients to define their needs. We often have many consultants on our team to develop design solutions. We then orchestrate the workings of many different types of resources, craftsmen, and artisans. Today, there are not as many large design firms as there were in the past. Considering the special needs of today's clients and the independent spirit of many of those in our industry, there is movement toward teams, joint-venture groups formed on an as-needed basis.

This often permits design work to be done on an even-higher level. The team leader can select the very best talents for the job.

We see the entrepreneurial trend in many types of businesses today. Interior designers are entrepreneurial by nature. So, this process is really very effective and practical and also provides a growing and developing opportunity for each

member of the team. Designers enjoy new challenges. The system really fits their personalities.

Interior design is a profession, a career, a vocation, and a lifestyle. It is not just a job. To practice successfully, it is important to have a clear idea of what interior design involves, as well as an appreciation of its demands. It is important to have the combination of personal attributes and interests a professional interior designer needs.

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

Design expertise comes from exposure and experience, a combination of academic study and on-the-job learning. Every one of your experiences contributes to your design vocabulary. Design education stresses problem solving. The four-to-six years you spend in the formal study of interior design gives you the informational tools to use in your work. Problem-solving skills may be the most valuable tool of all. Interior design demands a tremendous amount of ongoing research. To be a responsible designer, you must study new technologies; new-product specifications; laws and regulations; changes in building, fire, and safety codes; and environmentally responsible issues. With each new project there is more to study and learn. Your education never ends. Learning is part of a designer's lifestyle.

Interior design work, by nature, requires that those who practice it learn to temper their innate idealism with the practical demands of reality. You design for real people in the real world. In every design project you undertake, you must be willing to strike a balance between what you envision as "the ideal" and what you can achieve within the project's practical constraints.

Interior design is creative work, and it attracts talented, creative people. In fact, without talent, you cannot go far in this field. Your challenge is to direct and focus your creativity. You will have no problem coming up with new ideas, but it is often difficult to determine which ones should have priority.

The days of sitting at a drafting table and drawing pretty pictures are over—if they ever existed. Designers have to make things happen. Social contacts are important in acquiring new projects. You must like people and be able to get along with all kinds of people and inspire their confidence. Take the following personal inventory to help determine whether you have what it takes to be an interior designer.

Personal Inventory for Prospective Interior Designers

1. How important is interior design to me?
2. What kind of lifestyle do I want to have?
3. Do I have the innate creative abilities to become a successful designer?
4. Am I willing to spend the time and money required for the necessary formal training?
5. How much time do I want to devote to design work?
6. In general, do I like the people in the field enough to work with them?

7. Do I have the personality to work with any kind of client?
8. Do I enjoy planning and organizing?
9. Am I self-disciplined?
10. Am I self-motivated?
11. Do I have better-than-average physical and emotional stamina?

An interior design career depends on organization. From beginning to end, every project involves myriad details; keeping on top of things is absolutely critical. Even if your firm has someone on staff whose job it is to expedite the projects, you will always have to deal with mountains of details.

Interior design demands high energy and passion. It is almost never a nine-to-five business; on occasion, it is a 24-hour-a-day profession. Interior designers need physical and emotional stamina to fuel their long hours and to cope with the pressures of completing a job on schedule and to their clients' satisfaction.

Most extremely successful designers—those with annual personal incomes of \$200,000 to millions per year—are addicted to interior design. They live it, eat it, and sleep it. It is a passion they cannot live without. But design addiction can also be destructive, and the most successful designers are those who have managed to merge good business practices with their positive “addiction.”

This book is about how you can integrate your love for the creative parts of interior design—and the way of life that comes with your career—with good business practices. It is about success with profitability.

FIVE TRADITIONAL WAYS OF WORKING

Today's world is different. Designers often specialize in subjects they have never heard of before or needed. The field is ever-changing and requires a creative mind as well as an understanding of business to position oneself properly in a profitable way. As you look through the traditional ways to practice, you will find you will incorporate a number of them or grow from one to another. It is wise to look at the traditional standards to see the possibilities.

Designers may fill many different roles in their relationship with clients. Traditional roles that designers have held in the past include designer, agent, merchant, employee, and contractor.

Designer

In this capacity, the interior designer provides only professional design services: drawings, documents, and purchasing specifications for required interior elements and furnishings. The scope of the work may include parts of or the entire interior plan.

Agent

The designer acts as an agent on the client's behalf, placing the client's orders with manufacturers, dealers, or showrooms. The monies go through the designer's firm

or under his or her name. The designer is responsible for managing this process. The designer may also do the design and charge a fee for it.

Merchant

Many design firms procure and sell merchandise. The designer becomes a merchant when selling merchandise. In some smaller communities, there is no choice for the designer but to act as a source of materials and to see them appropriately installed. The design firm may also charge a fee for the design.

Employees

Some designers are employed by design, architectural, or facilities-management firms or retail stores. They are usually paid salaries. In some situations they are paid commission. The designer's services may be included or offered for a fee.

Designers often work for companies that manufacture products for interior projects. They may assist in designing or selling these products. Since many products are unusual, a designer's input is often required to demonstrate the proper use of the products.

Contractor

The designer may act as a contractor by employing the workers required to do construction, hang wallcoverings, finish surfaces, do drapery and window treatments, and so on. In some states, the designer will be required to carry a contractor's license when providing these services. The craftspeople may be directly employed by the design firm or work on a freelance or contractual basis.

WORKING STYLES

Interior design is a very socially interactive discipline. We work with clients to define their needs. We often have many consultants on our team to develop design solutions. We then orchestrate the working of many different types of resources—consultants, contractors, craftspeople and artisans, and others.

Today there are not as many large design firms as there were in the past. There is a strong movement toward joint-venture groups forming on an as-needed basis.

This often permits design work to be done on an even-higher level. The team leader can select the very best talent for the job.

We see the entrepreneurial trend in many types of businesses today. Interior designers are entrepreneurial by nature. Designers enjoy new challenges. The entrepreneurial system really fits their personalities.

Independent Practice

Lifestyle is so important in today's world. Designers and many other professionals select to practice alone because it fits their style. They often team with other professionals. This style of working gives designers the opportunity to control their own

schedules, the type of work they do, and those they work for and with. Technology permits designers to have others perform many of the required tasks virtually or on a part-time or as-needed basis—and often at a very high level.

If you work independently, you can do whatever you want at whatever speed you choose. If you want to work only one day a week, you can. If your forte is specialized work, perhaps you will need to work alone. If you are certain you have mastered your art to the point that you can perform every task within your specialty, and have the personality to work alone, an independent practice may be for you.

Apprenticeship

The value of an apprenticeship cannot be overestimated. Working with a firm or directly under a person of great talent can be a designer's way to the top. When designers see something done, they can usually replicate it. Often designers are limited in their careers because they did not serve an apprenticeship or residency before beginning their own firm.

Apprenticeships are often very difficult to find today, but they are ever so valuable. They are not only for the beginner but are an excellent way for a practicing designer to learn a specialty. We all want to grow; this is a great way.

Teams

Teams are the way many designers work today. The team may be part of the company or corporate structure, or it may be composed of principally independent designers or specialists. They may be in the same city, or in different parts of the world.

Group Practices

Interior designers are also working together, as attorneys and physicians often do. They may share a business manager, an expeditor, and other professional management personnel. This gives them opportunities that they could not have alone.

When designers work with other designers, they have the opportunity to test each other's designs. When three other people look at a design and all say, "I don't see any problems," obviously the chance of the design being done successfully is much greater than if it is done in isolation. This process is important to high-quality design work.

Increasingly, clients want one firm to control the entire project. Multidisciplinary design teams of architects, landscape architects, interior designers, and engineers have an advantage in bidding for larger projects. They prefer teams that have had experience working together.

Technology permits us to connect with team members who may be located in different parts of the country and still work as one. We have the benefit of professional knowledge as well as the stimulation of other exceptional professionals. I often work with specialists in other states, yet we work so closely, you would think we're in same office.

The key to developing a successful firm is to understand your firm's capabilities, to realize its strengths and uniqueness, then seek work that is appropriate to your team. Some functions are easily filled by others, but the key areas of your firm should be controlled by the principals of your firm. This gives you the positioning you need. Review your market. Understand the needs and the social dynamics of the community in which you are working. Put together a working structure in which you can develop new business in a natural and profitable way.

Design Associates

At one time, people became design associates because they didn't have funding to go off on their own or were not ready to start their own company. Today, many interior designers who have been practicing independently are associating with larger firms. They can work as hard as they want to. If they work on a project that is highly profitable, they profit accordingly. If they elect to do a project for little mark-up, perhaps as a marketing effort, this may also be acceptable. Of course, certain overhead requirements must be met. If designers decide to take time off—for example, to study—this is their decision, because they are paid only for performance.

Experienced designers have found that being a design associate is one of the most profitable and most pleasurable ways to work. Let someone else handle the business problems; designers want to design. Also, if clients know there is a well-managed business and purchasing division, they are less likely to question pricing, billing, and other contract issues. In addition to high-quality management, the larger company atmosphere can also provide designers with sources and tools they could not afford on their own—a high-tech environment, library, consultants, support staff, network of communication with other designers, and so forth.

This arrangement also permits the designer to work as an independent contractor. Designers cover all of their own expenses and are responsible for their own design work. The managing company handles the actual processing of the project. The gross profits are usually split at different levels, depending on the varied responsibilities and levels of performance.

We want to work on the projects that use our best talents. There's no point in designers spending 75 to 90 percent of their day doing tasks they are not good at.

Design/Build Team

One of the major trends in our field is design/build, in which a team works together to produce a project. In this case, the designer may partner with an architect, civil engineer, contractor, and various other vendors to build a complete project with efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

SPECIALIZATION AND SPECIALTIES

At one time there were basically two specialties in interior design, residential and contract. Today there are many. Successful designers may specialize in a very small

area of design. Thanks to technology, they are able to work easily throughout the world, assisting other designers, architects, and professionals.

Many designers will combine two or three specialties but usually have one as their lead. If the market fades in one area, they can shift their focus to another. It is fascinating to see how our background directs us to a specialty.

Specialization most often produces a higher level of design. Specialists know their work; it is easy because they have done it many times. This lowers the risk of error and speeds up design production. They know how to be creative without getting into trouble.

Client demand may require you to change your area of expertise. A designer in Ohio who specialized in education interiors found over time that although she had become a specialist and did some of the most up-to-date and innovative designs for education, the demand was no longer there. She was forced to change her orientation and began designing psychological and psychiatric spaces, working with many therapists to develop spaces to support their therapies. When interest in this dwindled, she found herself specializing in interiors that supported profit-making endeavors—professional services, manufacturing, general business, and spaces with a marketing or production component. In each circumstance, she was able to use some of what she had learned in the previous specialty. Still, she had to study, bring in many consultants, and do a lot of traveling to master the new areas.

Today this could be done easier and faster, but it is still a serious and expensive investment. Changes can be expensive, but they are often the best thing that can happen to creative people. Boredom is one of their greatest problems. Developing a specialty out of another specialty is a profitable way of making a change.

Interior design is becoming more specialized than ever; some of the best and most interesting jobs are in the specialties.

The following sections offer brief looks at more than 140 areas of specialization.

Acoustic Design

Sound is an integral part of every environment. Controlling sound is a science. When people live and work closely together, quiet is a luxury. Specialists in acoustic design consult on projects that included concert halls, conference rooms, offices, restaurants, and residences. Video and teleconferencing rooms need the sound to be contained. In contrast, restaurants need a certain amount of noise to sell food. In any space, from residential to the most technologically demanding environments, there are sounds we want to hear and sounds we don't want to hear.

Adaptive Reuse

Reusing old buildings for new purposes is a growing trend. As cities change, there is greater concern for sustainability and protecting available resources.

Older buildings are often reused for very different purposes than they were originally designed for. A landmark building, once an office building, may be converted to a residence. The location may be wonderful but no longer appropriate for commercial use. There are many subspecialties within this specialty.

Administrative Headquarters Design

Every major company or organization has an administration building with needs and demands that require design. The demands change as the industry changes; interior designers streamline and develop spaces to support workflow. At one time designers just designed offices, but today interactive and social environments are very important. Sometimes, more important decisions are made over a cup of coffee than in the boardroom.

Airplane Design

Airplanes range from a standard passenger carrier to a flying conference room or living space. Designers must consider design elements in terms of weight, fire safety, and psychological and environmental effects. There are many variables and requirements, from the most utilitarian to the most luxurious.

Amusement Park Design

Parks may have many purposes and service many types and ages of people. The designs often include experiences that involve all the senses—not just the visual. The designs may be directed to recreation and fun or marketing or to incorporate learning experiences. Safety, efficiency and traffic patterns that keep people moving in appropriate ways are among the considerations.

With the high level of technology available today, the amusement park experience has gone beyond anything anyone could have imagined. These designers are not just artistic; they are also very skilled in scientific thinking and the use of technology.

Apartment, Condominium, and Co-op Design

With more multiple-housing developments in every part of the country, this specialty presents major opportunities. There is a lot of competition in this market. Those buying or renting apartments often look beyond the plan of the living spaces. Social, recreational and health clubs, workshops, and crafts areas are key. Shared office and conference or meeting rooms are available for those working at home.

Aquarium Design

This specialty is not limited to aquatic parks. Aquarium design can be featured in residences, offices, other businesses and many social and community areas. Medical evidence suggests that gazing at an aquarium offers many physical and psychological benefits.

Art Consulting

Searching out existing art or commissioning the creation of art suitable to a specific interior environment. Art consultants may work for the client or as part of a

design team. They provide the background to support the art investment. The specialist must have an extensive knowledge of fine-art disciplines as well as a practical and artistic understanding of interior design.

Art Dealing

Interior designers with an interest in fine art understand what people enjoy and will buy; they understand the space and know how to place art properly. This is a major asset for an art dealer, because art sells best when it can be envisioned or placed in an interior.

Audiovisual Design

Designing for entertainment areas for business, industry or residences encompasses the expanding technologies in the audiovisual field. This specialty is constantly changing. The technical requirements demand knowledge of electronics, acoustics, and lighting disciplines.

Auditorium Design

This field incorporates stage design, lighting, acoustics, and many other elements that are part of theater design. Each element is vital and complex. Productions can be made or destroyed by a very small design element of the house. The multimedia opportunities of the field are very complex and demanding.

Barrier-Free Design

Laws require commercial and public buildings to be accessible to those in wheelchairs. Barrier-free design is increasingly desirable for all spaces. Probably more money has been invested in designing for the physically limited or orthopedically disabled than for any other group. Designers review products and design spaces to ensure that standards are met. This specialty is part of almost every project.

Bathroom Design

Today the bathroom joins the kitchen as a selling point for houses. Modern bathrooms may include spa-like environments with whirlpool baths, saunas, and hot tubs. Public restrooms and bathrooms for commercial spaces demand state-of-the-art detailing. The consciousness of human factors has greatly improved aesthetics, safety, and the adaptations needed to make the bathroom barrier-free. International bathing customs have had an influence as well. Environmental concerns have brought new products and codes.

Beauty Salon and Barbershop Design

Designers may be asked to provide appropriate space for services such as waxing, massage, facials, manicures, and cosmetology, and many other services. State regulations and requirements differ. Interior designers in the beauty field often work with or for suppliers, who may offer financing and turnkey projects.

CAD Specialization

Although almost every designer uses CAD, the highly skilled specialists are still very valuable. They know all the most up-to-date techniques. Computer-assisted drafting (CAD) and drawing is increasingly important for communicating with other design professionals, contractors, and clients. CAD's accuracy and capability to make quick changes is invaluable.

Carpet and Rug Design

Interior designers are responsible for a large volume of floor-covering sales. Interior designers often work with textile specialists to develop suitable rugs or carpets for a given situation. Designing hand-woven rugs is very different from designing for the technical demands of Axminster, Wilton, tufted, woven, or printed machines. Designers may either study textile design or work extensively in the carpet field.

Ceramic Tile Design

This field encompasses foreign and domestic sources used in functional areas, as well as for decorative effect—including as murals and sculptures.

Closet Design

Closets may be large or small. They may be in any part of the house or in almost any type of business or commercial space. Having items conveniently located is the key to this field of design, which is a very strong specialty in today's market.

Color Consultation

Color and its effects on people is a recognized science with well-documented results. Color is the most noticed of all design elements. This specialty is used by all the design disciplines, as well as by marketing firms, corporations, governments, and medical practices—anywhere that encouraging specific reactions is desired.

Commercial Design

This specialty designs everything except residences—including retail space, businesses, offices, laboratories, factories, medical facilities, and other commercial space. Most commercial designers specialize further.

Computer/High-Tech Office Design

Designing to accommodate today's technology use is much in demand. The requirements have changed. In some ways, they are less rigorous. We are seeing some very unusual spaces that don't look at all like traditional offices. The design supports the desired interaction of the staff.

Construction Supervision

Designers supervise, manage, and review the components of a project and advise on decision making. Interior designers are often hired to act as liaisons between the contractor and client. They may be responsible for hiring other consultants and contractors.

Corporate Campus Design

The designer creates a total environment. The corporate campus promotes efficiency and expresses the mission of the company through design tailored to its specific needs. Campuses can include administration buildings, training centers, manufacturing or production facilities, fitness centers, and other social areas. Some demand space that can be leased to support other related companies.

Corporate In-House Design

The staff interior designer for a corporation is responsible for maintaining the company's design identity. The designer may initiate and complete the design or hire design consultants on major design projects, as well as act as liaison between outside consultants and the firm.

Cosmetic Dentistry

The emergence of cosmetic dentistry has brought new challenges to the design of the dental office. The office must blend the professional medical requirements of dentistry with fashion and beauty to create effective, visually pleasing surroundings. The client who buys cosmetic dentistry services is very conscious of design and detail.

Country Club Design

These spaces combine aspects of residential and commercial design. The buildings must conform to area regulations and codes for fire, safety, labor, and industry. They must encourage proprietary feelings among the membership but also give the staff the tools to run programs with time and financial efficiency. Facilities may include areas for all forms of sports activities, food services, and various sized rooms for social activities and meetings.

Dental Office Design

This is a highly engineered segment of the medical field; the design specialist must have an understanding of the mechanics as well as the antiseptic and medical aspects of the discipline. The dental profession has developed business management techniques to improve time use to make dentistry more efficient and professional. Space design is an integral part of today's dentistry.

Design Coordination

These designers work directly with the client to define the client's wishes and take the information to the design specialists. They select the team of specialists and determine who is best able to do the specific work—they also see that the team works together in an efficient way—to meet the needs of the client. The design coordinator must be able to accommodate the artistic attitude and approaches of the design professionals and understand and work closely with the client. The design coordinator may work with design specialists all over the world and is responsible for bringing specialists and the client together in a productive way. It takes extensive knowledge of the field to be able to create this bond.

Design for Children

Environment affects a child's behavior; there is a body of research indicating that what stimulates a child is not what stimulates an adult. Spaces for children must be adaptable, since children change and grow so rapidly. These spaces include every place a child might use—doctors' offices, libraries, schools, and retail spaces—as well as residences.

Children are very demanding clients. They are very aware of multimedia experiences and have high expectations.

Design for In-Home Medical Care

At one time, patients with chronic, debilitating illnesses were confined to hospitals or nursing homes. The trend today is in-home care for these patients to enjoy the comforts of home. The residential space must be adapted to meet geriatric, orthopedic, and other medical requirements of both patients and caregivers.

Design for Vision or Hearing Impairments

The number of people affected with vision or hearing impairments grows each year. More than 60 percent of people in the workforce today have some hearing loss, and probably a much larger percentage have some vision impairment. People are becoming more aware of the problems as well as of the design, and technology solutions available to resolve them. There are successful applications for every situation, from residences to theaters.

Display and Exhibit Design

Retailers, wholesalers, specialty shops, museums, and all types of public spaces use display and exhibit design to sell products as well as ideas. These displays may be permanent or built for travel but are always educational.

Energy Conservation Design

An energy specialist advises on energy-efficient products and design planning for better use of energy. This may include adapting existing structures or developing new ones, or simply finding new uses for traditional products and appropriate uses for new ones.

Ergonomic Design

Ergonomic design is the science that relates people to the way they use things. It is based on the physical needs of the human body. Factors considered are the measurements of the human body, human sensory capacities, comfort, body functions, safety, and emotional satisfaction.

Estate Management

With the investment that owners make, properties require a knowledgeable person to secure their investments and manage all activities of the property properly. A designer may be part of the design team, acting as the owner's representative in procurement and handling issues with contractors and artisans.

After working on the design of the property, the designers may become the estate managers assigned to update and maintain the property, furnishings, art objects, and so on. They may also prepare operations manuals, establish budgets, and handle all financial issues relating to the property.

Estate managers hire and train appropriate staff, oversee inventories, and do party planning. This position requires a person of background and sophistication.

Facility Management

This is the person or department responsible for the physical management of a facility—coordinating purchasing, repairs, and maintenance. Facility managers plan and act as liaisons between the firm’s executives and the consulting designers, architects, and engineers.

Factory and Production Consulting

This specialty includes traffic control and design to improve safety and to increase productivity. (See “Ergonomic Design,” previously described.) The emphasis is on keeping the environment stimulating so that workers stay alert, are productive, and are able to handle the machinery and equipment safely.

Faux Finishes and Stenciling

This is no longer a craft, but a developed fine art of finishing. Some outstanding furniture and architectural finishes have been developed.

Feng Shui

The ancient Chinese art of placement is considered the mother of the natural sciences. Harmony and balance are the goals. A feng shui practitioner serves in the multiple roles of healer, psychologist, therapist, cleric, business consultant, financial advisor, and matchmaker. The concepts are drawn from Tibetan, Chinese Buddhist, and folk wisdom.

Forensic Consulting

When a product is made or used incorrectly and results in injury or death, a forensic designer may be consulted by attorneys. In addition to expertise in ergonomics and product construction, the forensic designer must also be familiar with court terminology and the correct way to testify. This field requires not only training but a special personality that holds up well under pressure.

Funeral Home Design

Funeral homes comfort and support people at an emotionally vulnerable time. They usually include personal meeting areas for family viewing and chapel spaces that must be visually pleasing as well as practical. There are presentation, physical, and financial aspects to consider. These facilities may also include a great deal of technology, such as video theaters, social areas, and provisions for food service. This is a constantly changing and developing field of design.

Furniture Design

Interior and industrial design must be blended for good product design. The interior designer knows how and where the furniture is used; the industrial-furniture designer knows construction techniques.

Furniture Management

This person handles all the purchasing documents, usually for a commercial project. The furniture manager also handles the bidding through the final installation and is very much like a project manager on a construction project.

Geriatric Design

As our society grays, design for the mature market gains in recognition as a specialty. Retirement centers, nursing homes, and condominiums are designed to meet the physical, psychological, and cultural needs of older people. It's not just a case of dealing with illness and infirmity, but rather, acknowledging the pleasures of life and the opportunities still available. Older people are no longer simply old; they act young, and require athletic and other activities once reserved for the young.

Graphic Design

These specialists develop a corporate image or design graphics, logos and icons that may be used throughout the facilities. These graphics may also be used on everything from business cards and stationery to websites, for example.

Greenhouse Design

Greenhouses are incorporated into residential and commercial spaces. Depending on the climate, greenhouse design can involve controlling temperature, light, and humidity. Insulating elements and the design atmosphere are other factors. Designers also work for manufacturers consulting on the design of greenhouse components.

Hard-Surface Flooring Design

Designing this type of flooring product demands knowledge of color trends, as well as a working knowledge of the properties of materials—such as wood, ceramics, marble, vinyl, and others. There are so many hard-surfaced floors and flooring products that each one of them requires specialists.

Hardware Design

The work of interior and industrial designers enhances the functional and decorative effects of knobs, hinges, and handles—the hardware for use in buildings and on furniture. The demand is increasing for beautifully sculptured, handsomely crafted hardware.

Health and Fitness Club Design

Personal fitness is a major industry. Health clubs are not just places to exercise but to meet people with similar goals and interests. Athletic, exercise, and recreational

facilities of all sorts are everywhere. Health and fitness club design has some aspects in common with country club design. As trends change, these spaces must be redesigned to meet new needs.

Hedonistic Sustainability

Transforming the sustainability movement into something very youthful, dynamic and egalitarian. It proves that design and architecture can be economically profitable as well as environmentally sustainable. Taking a big picture view, hedonistic sustainability is what happens when you stop thinking about buildings as structures and start thinking about them as ecosystems that can be used to help create a closed loop for recycling energy, minimizing environmental impact and creating a higher quality of life.

Historic Preservation

Historic preservation demands technical and scientific knowledge and an ability and willingness to research small details. The restoration may involve the same materials that were used originally and applying and constructing them in the same manner. Great lengths are taken to preserve the quality of the original building or furnishings.

Home Office Design

The home office is a space tailored to the way an individual works. With so many people choosing to work at home, this specialty has become a very strong one. Most home offices incorporate high levels of technology. The personal systems and preferences of the residents are a strong part of the design. Professionals often select this lifestyle, because they want to work the way they feel is most advantageous.

Home Theater Design

Home theater design is in great demand. Involving extensive technical, audio, and visual knowledge, home theater rooms incorporate many different aspects of design. Depending on their use, these rooms can be both very luxurious as well as comfortable, but the owners also expect the sound to be perfect and the pictures to be crisp and clear. This has become one of the highest-budget rooms of a residence.

Hospital Design

Hospitals have such complex technical requirements. Accommodating the needs and comforts of patients, staff and visitors—along with legal and insurance requirements—places strong demands and constraints on the design. Some designers do only one part of the facility, such as the emergency room or intensive-care unit. Others may design patient or visitor areas. This is an ever-changing and demanding specialty.

Hospitality Design

The work can range from bed-and-breakfast accommodations to large hotels or resorts with conference centers. Some are practically cities in themselves.

Accommodating travelers, business activities, community gatherings and celebrations are only a few of the many functions that take place in these facilities. Rental spaces, sports complexes, exercise rooms, spas, and theaters may also be featured.

Houseboat Design

Houseboats can be used for both residential and commercial purposes. There is a tremendous amount of technical engineering required to keep them afloat, as well as to meet health and safety requirements. Houseboats can be several stories high and provide sizable living and workspaces.

Human Factors

Human factors deal with our personal performance in work or personal spaces. Designers who specialize in this field often consult with owners and other design specialists to incorporate human concerns in standard and special-needs spaces.

Interior Landscaping

This field requires knowledge of landscaping and botany to understand the proper placement of plants. The designer's work may include contracting the maintenance and design changes for seasonal updates and plant health. "Plantscaping" is an increasingly important component of a building's atmosphere. Design factors include temperature, light, and humidity control.

Journalism

Through writing, designers can expand the design field, making our work more understandable to people inside and outside it. Designers can educate through the soft media; through the Web, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter; through columns and articles on design for newspapers and magazines; as well as television. Writing is a special skill, as is the ability to relate on camera.

Kennel Design

In the competitive world of breeding pedigreed pets, space design for each species is a serious business. The designer must understand animals and their needs. In kennels, there are areas for grooming and training, food preparation and nutrition, as well as testing. Maintenance and health care are a prime concern.

Kid Friendly

Designing furnishings to meet families' needs for comfort, safety, and enjoyment.

Kitchen Design

The kitchen is often one of the most expensive parts of the house. Equipment is constantly changing. There are historic designs infused with new technology. Scientific and artistic detail goes into the design and planning of components for residential and personal-use kitchens. The designer must have knowledge of currently available products as well as the dietary requirements of the users.

The National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) has created a curriculum that is offered by numerous design schools throughout the country. This program accredits designers in kitchen design.

Law Office Design

Law offices have many features in common with residences. A designer who is skilled in residential work can be excellent at designing them. Image, cost, and work efficiency are important considerations. An environment that supports legal professionals, visiting clients, and consultants provides visual and acoustical privacy. Law offices incorporate technical equipment, as well as areas for client interviews and meetings.

(LEED) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

Clients are looking for not only long-lasting products but also sustainability. LEED is a recognized system for evaluating and recognizing the environmental sustainability of a building. There are many roles this professional can play in a project—from design to supporting the qualifying aspects for LEED certification. Many designers are LEED APs.

Library Design

Libraries are individual and specialized, catering to various needs. A library may be a quiet space to read, study or work, or a resource for information and communication from around the world. Libraries need space planning, with special attention to lighting and acoustics. Many libraries support the community with exhibit areas and rooms for functions. They are multimedia environments—and lending books, DVDs, art, and music are only a small part of their activities. Technology has changed almost every aspect of libraries, including card catalogues, periodical indexes, and subject-dedicated databases. Personal libraries are also enjoying a comeback. They are no longer just for English country homes.

Licensing

Designers license their names to a product line. The designer may style or develop the product or merely endorse it. This may encompass just about everything that can be used in interior spaces. Noted designers may design mass-produced, inexpensive products, since licensing fees are based on volume.

Lighting Design

Lighting, with both natural and artificial elements, is used for design, drama, ecology, and, of course, function. Technical requirements and codes are also an important part of projects.

Lighting Fixture Design

In any space, the human eye goes to the windows and the lighting fixtures. Scale, structure, engineering, and knowledge of the end use are critical components of good fixture design. New types of lamping have greatly changed this field.

Liturgical Design

Churches, synagogues, and mosques are not just monuments but living centers that actively serve the community. These buildings are used for social events, theater productions, educational lectures, and other community activities. Each religion has its own design requirements, so the designer must incorporate the specifics of that liturgy.

Manufacturer In-House Design

Designers may work on the design of products or on merchandising them. To promote sales, some manufacturers offer interior design services at little or no cost to the end user. Designers, especially interior designers, work directly for manufacturers to help align products to the needs of today's design public.

Manufacturer Representation

This sales position is the link between the manufacturer and interior designer. Some of the best manufacturers' representatives are former interior designers. They understand the product and know how to sell it. They appreciate interior designers' needs and requirements. Within assigned territories, manufacturers' reps call on designers—providing catalogs, samples, and so on. They may also assist in specification preparation and writing purchase orders.

Marine Design

This specialty requires extensive knowledge of fire codes, marine standards and regulations, weights, and materials. Many products are made specifically for marine use. Marine design may encompass vessels—from working boats to cruise liners with the size and complexity of small villages. The design demands range from stripped-down—where every inch must have more than one use—to extravagant, with swimming pools, shops, ballrooms, and health spas. The designer deals with physical, psychological, and ergonomic issues as well.

Marketing

Marketing specialists develop and position design firms with appropriate clients. Some designers are better at design work than at selling, so the need for and value of this specialty is well recognized and compensated.

Medical Center Design

Hospitals, clinics, medical campuses, rehabilitative-care centers, and nursing homes have requirements so specific and technologically complex that only a specialist could keep up with the constant changes in standards, codes, and equipment. This specialty may include emergency rooms, intensive-care units, lobbies, and administrative support.

The medical field is changing so rapidly that some facilities are not even completed before major changes must be made. Medicine is advancing dramatically, so we can look forward to much more work in this area.

Medical Office Design

Every medical specialty requires special equipment, as well as appropriate space planning, traffic patterns, and storage management. Today's specialties use such an extensive array of high-tech equipment that offices require total replanning every few years. An understanding of medical procedures and aseptic issues, codes, legal aspects, and privacy issues codes, is needed. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) introduced regulations that force many offices to make major changes.

Medical Spa Specialization

Medical spas encompass plastic surgeons, dermatologists, and all types of skin treatments. These facilities require a considerable amount of equipment. The knowledge of both the processes used and the necessary equipment is essential for this design specialty. The medical spa may also include cosmetic dentistry, anti-aging systems, hydrotherapy, and many forms of massage and exercise treatments. These specialists often want their spaces to be more artistic and beautiful than the typical medical office.

Model Home Design

Model home furnishing may be handled by an independent designer who may also specify the architectural details of the interior to be purchased and installed by another contractor or by companies dedicated to furnishing model homes. There are also companies that rent all of the furniture, accessories, and appointments to builders for their use for several months or a year. At the end of that period, the companies retrieve the furniture to reuse in another project.

Model home design can be a promotional tool for design firms. In some areas, interior designers pay contractors or developers for the privilege of doing their models. The work may encompass all the interior architectural details, lighting, fixture specifications, and hard and soft furnishings. The furnishings are often sold with the home. In other instances, contractors consider this work part of the presentation of the home and will hire designers or lease furnishings, or both.

Modular Prefabricated Design

A high level of quality with skilled engineering can be accomplished by factory building. Understanding the requirements of building and delivery is critical. It's not just price, but quality, that is relevant. A better product can be produced under controlled conditions. Factory-built housing or modular complexes also come with guarantees, something not usually available in standard construction.

There are companies specializing in building single units. Modular prefab construction is usually most practical when building multiple units. The designer creates a standard, builds a sample, checks all the details and analyzes the finished product, then confirms with the client. When all has been approved, the rest of the units are built. These units ship well over water, which can be an advantage when placing large complexes on islands where there are very few construction trades.

Multimedia Center Design

These specialties design spaces with extensive communication equipment, including production equipment, that may be used by an individual person or a company. The designer needs experience with today's equipment and knowledge of ergonomic issues that relate to the spaces. This area must have the flexibility to be shared by others, such as in an educational facility, apartment building, and office center.

Mural Painting

A number of mural artists are interior designers with fine-arts backgrounds. They may first paint a miniature for the client, and then execute the full-size product on canvas or directly on a wall. Demand has increased in both traditional and contemporary designs.

Museum Design

At one time, only people with backgrounds in history or art history worked in museums. Museums today offer many opportunities for interior designers to design exhibits, promotions, and community projects. The preservation of artifacts is as important as the display; understanding the effects of humidity and lighting on artifacts is also important. Interior designers may work directly for museums or be employed by consulting firms that specialize in museum work.

Nursing Home Design

As the levels of health care change, so do the codes, systems, regulations, and requirements. Nursing homes now cater not only to senior citizens but also to young people who have short-term needs. Some nursing homes are dedicated to long-term care, so many residential features are included. The spaces vary considerably, depending on the length of stay and the special equipment the residents will require.

Office Design

There are still some traditional offices, but today we see many other versions of the work environment. Communication is key. Some offices are very creative in the way they place much emphasis on gathering areas, where people can share and interact. Today's equipment permits a lot more flexibility and adds to comfort and productivity.

Park Design

Parks must be exciting, experiential and ever changing. Amusement parks, municipal parks, and other parks need to be safe and efficient and have effective traffic patterns and management systems. Designers develop signage, fixtures, food-service areas, restrooms, souvenir shops, and so on. Some designers work only on theme parks. Parks may also be designed for marketing and educational purposes. They support our physical and psychological health, the arts and business. The emphasis is on getting people to come back often.

Party and Ball Design

Designers organize and orchestrate parties and balls for corporations, charities, and other organizations. Entertainment and celebration require a special atmosphere; they bring fantasies to life. The competition is intense. This is an opportunity for designers to really use their creativity. Fire codes and regulations are part of the challenge.

Passenger Train and Bus Design

With the emphasis on public transportation today, trains and buses must be attractive and designed for the safety and comfort of travelers. They incorporate technology for both work and recreation.

Patio and Outdoor Room Design

Outdoor rooms are an important part of many buildings. Some can be used year-round, while others are used only on a more limited basis. These rooms often have serious design considerations because of their structure and use. Some may include complete kitchens, bathrooms, or spa facilities. They may be complete living spaces. Interior designers team with landscape architects to create exciting and functional spaces.

Permaculture

This is a design system based on ethics and design principles used to establish design, and manage and improve all efforts made by individuals, households and communities, toward a sustainable future (co-originator: David Holmgren).

Photographic Set Design

These specialists work with manufacturers, marketing directors, and advertising agencies to create settings designed to sell products. They may maintain an inventory of props and backgrounds—spend weeks creating and building a set, then tear it down immediately after photographing it. The specialty requires an understanding of the art of photography.

Photographic Styling

Designers style spaces to improve photographs. This may involve moving furniture and accessories or making other alterations—whatever is needed to add to the quality of the photographs.

Plumbing Fixture Design

To design sinks, lavatories, bathtubs, and spas, the designer has training in plumbing requirements and a special interest in sculpture. Designers may recolor or redesign an existing line, but more often, they create new forms. Manufacturers may revive the shapes of antique items or items from Asia, reworking them to meet today's plumbing standards. The day of strictly utilitarian bathroom fixtures is gone.

Prison Design

A prison facility serves not just to confine but also to rehabilitate. The changes in this field have been extensive and developing. Our country is continuing to build a large number of prisons, making this area of design extensive.

Privacy Design

Privacy is a major issue in almost every type of environment, from public buildings to private residences. Privacy consultants have a design background, complemented with sound engineering training. Privacy means different things to different people. Both visual and auditory issues may be incorporated. Certain cultures have stronger requirements for privacy. Highly populated areas also have additional demands.

Product Design

Opportunities in the field of product design are as numerous as the products themselves. Designers can make vital contributions in helping manufacturers find and develop products that are wanted, function well, and suit the environments they will be used in. Designers have a hand in almost every product available today.

Product Display

Interior designers have traditionally designed store windows and product displays, but never has this type of design been brought to so refined and sophisticated an art form as recently. This strong merchandising approach often permits unlimited budgets, which encourage a free range of ideas.

Product Evaluation

Hiring designers to evaluate products for design quality, practicality, and marketability is a sound investment for manufacturers.

Product Marketing

Interior designers assist with marketing products by developing ways to use them. They are well qualified to assist in product design development, as a complement to the manufacturer's design staff. Consulting interior designers can help maintain a firm's position in the marketplace.

Professional or Trade Organizations

Trade and professional organizations often hire interior designers as spokespersons or interpreters to build links between the product group and the designer or client. The designer's skill and knowledge can strengthen the relationship. Designers understand the needs of the end user as well as the multitude of design disciplines involved.

Project Management

Project management can be as simple as handling interior design development for one's own firm or as complex as running a multiple complex project. This requires an understanding of the client's objectives, the conditions of the contract, the time

schedule, and the budget, as well as the requirements of each of the contractors and craftspeople working on the project.

Proxemics

This design is dedicated to the scientific part of design including the physical, psychological, and cultural impact of space on people. Their work is usually incorporated into any interior space that directs human behavior—such as educational, medical, business facilities, or any space where there is social interaction. Private-use spaces, such as residences, can also gain tremendously from this specialty.

Psychiatric Care Facility Design

Although many of the codes in the psychiatric care facilities are the same as in other medical facilities, the type of therapy practice determines the design response. Use, practicality, safety, and ease of maintenance are prime concerns.

Public Relations

Interior designers with strong communications skills may choose to draw media attention to the work of other designers rather than run a design practice of their own. Some act as liaisons between manufacturers, designers, and end users.

Purchasing

The designer may act as a purchasing agent for a client or company—reviewing and testing products, then negotiating and ordering the furnishings. These designers may work for the end user or procurement company.

Real Estate Development

Knowledge of space, its uses, and its potential for change has given many interior designers an edge in real estate sales and development. Some designers assist developers by restructuring and designing buildings for turnkey or development projects. In some states, interior designers need a realtor's license to be recognized and compensated for their contributions; in others, interior designers are part of a real estate development firm.

Real Estate Upgrading

Improve the building and sell it: These are the objectives in design upgrading. Many experienced designers have moved into this specialty. Designers in this field must be experienced in buying appropriate products at the best prices. If they are also creative, they will find this specialty very profitable.

Rendering

CAD can do a lot, but there is nothing like a beautiful hand rendering. Rendering is a special art, requiring knowledge of graphics, fine art, and design. A good presentation is vital: Many design firms, even small ones, hire good renderers, either staff or freelance.

Residential Design

This field may incorporate many different styles and types of construction. Residential work requires knowledge of human behavior—physical, psychological, and cultural. The ability to communicate with the client is very important, since these are personal spaces that must support the individual lifestyle of our clients. Clients usually select a designer with whom they share similar tastes and values.

Resort Design

Resorts host many types of activities, from the spa-type resort that is very luxurious and indulgent to the experiential resort that boasts everything from extreme sports to “tame” activities, such as music or other specialized interests. Resorts are found all over the world in many environments. They generally have many unique features. Resort designers are often experts in a particular specialty as well as in hospitality design, including spaces for living and activity areas.

Restaurant Design

There is room for design in every restaurant, from the fast-food stands in malls to local eateries to establishments for gracious dining. Knowledge of all design disciplines as well as of food management is essential.

Restaurant Kitchen Design

This requires knowledge of kitchen equipment and the know-how to adapt it to the preferences of individual restaurateurs. Kitchen specialists work independently or for equipment suppliers. Kitchens for country clubs, educational facilities, and large commercial restaurants are typical projects.

Retail and Specialty Selling

Selling is part of every design practice. Some designers own, manage, or work for retail and specialty stores. Designers make good salespeople, especially in design-related areas. They understand how to use products and can show clients how. Interior designers may help develop a product mix for a specific store—creating a design package to be sold by other people. They may work with artists to market their work.

Retail Store Design

This specialty requires skill in image development, marketing, traffic patterns, and security and concern for financial return on space. Custom fixtures are often part of the design. The designer may customize local spaces for national chains or work with individual store owners.

Safety Code Specialist

This person keeps up-to-date information on building, fire, and safety codes in all states. This specialist may consult with other designers, contractors, manufacturers, and owners.

Security Consulting

Security must be built into every part of a building's design today; it is not just supplementary. Security incorporates many different types of systems. Security consultants are now so specialized that some deal with only one type of building, such as educational institutions or office buildings. Others do residential environments.

Set Design

Many interior designers started in set design; others expanded their practices to include set design. Set designs for movies, theater, dance, and opera are different worlds. Everything is designed to be seen from a certain perspective. The director's vision of the production and the performance space are all parts of the design.

Shop-at-Home Services

There are extremely successful firms that specialize in shop-at-home services. Some stock a van or truck with a coordinated line of pictures, accessories, pillows, and draperies. Others sell everything on their iPad; they may be part of a franchise or independently owned. There are many creative ways of bringing products into a home. When a client sees a product in his or her home, it is easier to make a buying decision.

Shopping Mall Design

Each store in a mall must contribute to the total mall concept, which can range from discount to luxury. Each mall promotes a different lifestyle or environment. Designers may work directly with the mall owners to coordinate the mall design and common areas or with individual retailers. The mall of today must allow space for entertainment and other activities. It must be an experience in itself, not just a place to shop.

Showroom Design

In Manhattan, Rome, Paris, London, and in every small city in the world, the primary job of the showroom is to sell products. Whether the showroom is beautiful is a question of taste, but whether it works and produces can be measured.

Socially Dedicated Design

Many designers are committed to improving the lifestyles of those less privileged. They work on a voluntary basis. Some may work for many years, earning and saving, so they can dedicate part of their careers completely to charity work. Others devote a certain percentage of their time and income each year for this purpose.

Solar Design

This specialty coordinates solar and environmental concerns with human needs. Energy efficiency, sun control, sunlight-resistant materials, and insulation are all key. Many parts of the design are affected by this design issue.

Spa and Skin Clinic Design

This requires many specific design considerations. Spas and skin clinics usually include areas for skin treatments, plastic surgery, dermatology, facials, and all forms of special treatments—ranging from therapeutic massage to cosmetics. The demands of the specialties and the equipment required are so varied that appropriate design is required. Privacy and the visual experience are primary.

Spaceship and Rocket Design

This is the ultimate challenge in ergonomic design—every inch must count. Many consumer products have been developed as a result of studies done for spaceship design. Designers who have worked for NASA have taught the rest of us many things we can use in our general work.

Stadium and Arena Design

While architects and engineers are most often involved with shaping these spaces, interior designers are consulted on public areas, private salons, dining areas, kitchens, service areas, and even the choice of seating. This specialty has aspects in common with theater, restaurant, and store design. Today's stadiums and arenas are expensive and luxurious, but they also must incorporate safety and security as primary concerns.

Storage Design

Planned storage is an essential design element. Storage specialists catalog the clients' storables, and then plan for growth. Custom storage can range from making tiny drawers to accommodate contact lenses to developing automated filing areas for offices. Good storage places things in convenient locations near where they will be used, and lesser-used items in less-accessible areas. Since storage is generally an engineering process within each of the different disciplines of design, a designer will usually specialize in a particular aspect of storage design—such as residences, legal offices, medical offices, or other types of commercial space.

Tabletop Design

This specialty involved designing and coordinating all the components used on a table. The functions may vary considerably, from a breakfast to a banquet table design. The specialist also creates an attractive design for the table when it is not in use. Styling for restaurants, residences, and even picnic tables is included.

Restaurants and department and specialty stores use tabletop display to sell food and other products. Clients today expect both drama and practicality.

Television Design

There are many television shows featuring interior design. Some designers prepare the concept; others do the preparation and still others the on-camera work. A theater background is valuable.

Tenant Development Services

Interior designers work with landlords and developers to coordinate interior spaces for homes, apartments, and commercial offices. They may devise color schemes and layouts or may only ensure that the work of other designers coordinates with other components of the buildings.

Textile Design

Requires knowledge of the technology of production as well as the understanding of where they will be used, and how they will be tailored or applied.

Training Center Design

Education takes place in many settings. Corporations have training centers in their facilities. Hotels and resorts often include these areas as well. The centers incorporate many types of technology, so this specialty requires a serious coordination of technology and design. Acoustics and sidelines are also components.

Transit Center Design

Airport, train, and bus terminals have become almost total-living environments. Interior designers are called on to enhance people movement, to entertain travelers, and to accommodate their needs with airport shops, small conference areas, VIP clubs, and cocktail lounges. There is not much one cannot do in transit centers these days—from banking to seeing a podiatrist to hiring a secretary. Transit centers have become like cities in the range of services they offer the daily commuter, as well as the traveler who may have a layover of many hours. Chicago's O'Hare Airport has a laser show. Some centers offer college courses; others have interactive educational displays. There is usually a church or chapel. There may be rocking chairs or compartments where a person can sleep for a few hours. Today's security demands have also changed many facets of transit centers. These areas will continue to reflect a significant demand for innovative design.

Tree Hotel

As part of the back-to-nature trend, this is a design of the tree-house cabins comprising tree hotels with scenic views.

Turnkey Services

A team of designers, contractors, and vendors take a project from a client's desire to a completed, move-in, ready-to-use building. The client deals only with one person or firm, agreeing to the terms and costs of the total project. This is a very efficient and cost-effective way of working. All the client needs to do is turn the key and open the door.

Underground Habitation Design

Because the temperature underground is a constant 55 degrees Fahrenheit, underground space has become a practical and appropriate area for living and working. Some outstanding work is being generated.

Universal Design

Universal design is not just designing for the physically handicapped; it is intended to be useful for all. Spaces are often designed for multiple purposes, so they can function for many different people and reasons. Universal design is becoming standard among many building specifications today to ensure that the structure is user-friendly and convenient for all.

Vacation Home Design

Second homes are big business, but they often must be designed as turnkey projects because the clients are involved elsewhere. This market is growing. For some clients, the vacation home is a place to indulge in an opulence they would not feel comfortable expressing in other areas of their lives.

Vastu

Vastu is an ancient practice from India that has been in use for over 1,000 years. The objective is to achieve harmony, maximize the flow of energy, and make the home a retreat where people can recuperate from the stresses of the world. This requires a systematic approach to building and design. Practitioners believe that people's homes play an important part in helping them achieve their purpose and goals in life.

Videoconference Center Design

This field includes areas dedicated to various forms of audiovisual communication. Teleconference centers exist in many types of buildings. There may be formal teleconferencing rooms in a hotel, residence, or a home office used for video and audio communication. Many of us use multimedia communication in many settings for which appropriately designed spaces are required.

Wallcovering Design

Many interior designers design wallcoverings—drawing on their expertise with color, pattern direction, and scale. The field demands production and design expertise as well as an understanding of current trends.

Wall Finishing

Marbling, fresco, and textured finishes—some of which have not been seen for centuries—are again in demand. This specialty is no longer limited to historic restoration work; commercial and residential clients also request novel wall finishes.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding involves signage but also many other aspects of the interior design discipline. It incorporates designing a space, building, or complex that is easy for people to move around in, so that finding one's way becomes natural rather than

complicated and confusing. This specialty first became popular in hospitals, but it is now relevant to almost every large complex. People want to be able to find the places they are interested in easily—whether on a campus, in a conference center or hotel, or in any other complex.

Window Treatment Design

Draperies, shades, louver drapes, valances, cornices, and a broad spectrum of other treatments make up this specialty. Insulation, ventilation, light control, and energy conservation are all part of this specialty.

FINDING YOUR PLACE

With a plan, effort, and research, designers have a reasonable chance to find their career niche.

Using this plan, you can design your own successful career. I admit I have a bias against starting to work independently too soon: It can be very risky, and for that reason, I strongly discourage it. To give yourself the best chance for success in your career, find someone whose work you admire. Find a mentor and learn everything you can from that person or firm.

Find out as much as you can about the principals of the company—especially the person you have identified as the one you would like to have as your mentor. Know their educational and business backgrounds. Be familiar with their career histories: Where did they start, how do they work, and how long has it taken them to reach their present status? That information may rest with former employers, clients, and other designers.

An interior design firm works as a team. Selecting a work relationship is almost as important as choosing a marriage partner. You are going to spend a lot of time with these people, and you are going to share many different experiences and pressures.

If you put the same care into planning your future as you do into your interior designs, you will most likely get what you want from your career. No one can expect to have the perfect job handed to them. Go after the job you want and really should have in a professional manner.

In conducting seminars to assist designers in defining their best work opportunities, the structured process with the group synergy has helped many individuals attain their goals.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Is a successful interior designer one whose name appears frequently in newspaper columns and in the popular design press? Or is it one who has achieved a reliable, steady income and some continuing creative satisfaction?

After one of my lectures, a senior student at the Philadelphia Textile School asked for advice on how to get a job in textile arts in her home state of Colorado. She had found that most of the textile-design positions were in the Northeastern United States.

There was one firm specializing in fabrics for men's and women's ready-to-wear clothing; she did not know much about them other than that they had a large factory and had been in the same location for many years. When she inquired they said they had no openings.

Her father was in insurance, so I pointed out that he would know a lot of people in the community and could find out about the major people in that firm—including their educational and work backgrounds. "You want to know about their families," I counseled, "whether they live within the community or commute from a distance—anything you can find about how they relate to this company."

I suggested that she use her Saturdays and free days to visit apparel specialty stores and department stores of neighboring states to research this firm. I told her to talk to the buyers about how they felt about this company's fabrics. Prepare an outline of appropriate questions for buyers: do they like the quality, which colors sold better, which year the line was best. I suggested she should use the next six months to accumulate the information and then create a professional presentation.

After this was completed, I suggested that she test the presentation, polish it, refine it, and ask her professors to review it. Then, at my urging, she called the president of the firm when she went home for Christmas vacation. She told him she had spent six months doing research on his company, after which she asked for an appointment to review it with him. She got the appointment. He was surprised at her interest in his firm, and he was intrigued by some of the information she had gathered, which differed from what he had heard from his staff and marketing people. It is hard to know just what impressed him most, but the main thing is that he was impressed by the attention she had given his company. She told him of her textile-arts training and that she intended to move back to Colorado.

The young woman's tangible interest in the firm convinced the president that he wanted her to work with them. He asked her if she would consider it. He did not know which job he was going to give her, but she was hired. At the time the company had only one textile designer who was expected to retire in a few years. He told the young woman to come back in June, and he would have a position for her.

Public success and personal satisfaction go hand in hand. You do not have to be an Elsie de Wolfe or a Syrie Maugham to be successful today. There are opportunities open to you that did not exist when these two grande dames of the industry started their businesses on chutzpah, contacts, and not much else.

Successful designers do not take success for granted. In researching my book, *Profitable Career Options for Designers*, I discovered that they are always looking ahead to the next project. Their favorite project is the one they are working on at the moment.

Today this means making choices, developing an area of expertise, and being receptive to change. Successful designers are always looking for ways to improve. There isn't only one correct solution. There are various ways of approaching a problem.

It is not unusual for designers to become bored with their work. Profitable businesses develop a good product and then repeat it. This is fine, but creative people need new challenges. There are ways to change your career to maintain the joy in your work, as well as to keep your business profitable. An experienced business consultant who specializes in our field can help you redesign your career.