
Commercial Interior Design

You interact with commercial interiors every day. Perhaps you visit a textile showroom to pick up samples for a project or join a friend at an athletic club to work out. You may have a meeting with a client at a restaurant or need to keep your doctor's appointment for a checkup. Maybe you pick up your child at a daycare center. All these facilities and many others represent the kinds of interior spaces created by the division of the interior design profession commonly called commercial interior design.

Commercial interiors are those of any facility that serves business purposes. Facilities that fall under the category of commercial interior design include businesses that invite the public in, such as those mentioned above. Others restrict public access but are business enterprises such as corporate offices or manufacturing facilities. Commercial interiors are also part of publicly owned facilities such as libraries, courthouses, government offices, and airport terminals, to name a few.

These interiors can be as exciting as a restaurant in a resort hotel, or as elegant as a jewelry store on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills or a casino in an international hotel (Figure 1-1). A commercial interior can be purely functional, such as the offices of a major corporation or a small-town travel agency. It may need to comfort and treat the ill, as in a healthcare facility. It can also be a place to relax, as in a spa.

There are many ways to specialize or work in interior design and the built environment industry. Of course, the *built environment industry* includes those professions that are involved in the development, design, construction, and finishing of any type of building. Specializing can be very sensible, as the expertise one gains in a specialty can provide added value to clients. Be careful not to create a specialty that is too narrow, as there may not be sufficient business to support the firm. Numerous specialty suggestions are listed in Table 1-1.

Figure 1-1 High-limit area. Casino at the Venetian Resort, Macao. Reproduced with permission of Wilson Associates.



This challenging and exciting profession has had a huge impact on the interior design and construction industry in the United States and throughout the world. *Interior Design* magazine reports on the industry's 100 largest design firms. In the January 2014 issue, it reported that approximately \$3 billion in design fees were generated by these firms in commercial projects alone in 2013 ("The Top 100 Giants" 2014, 84). This not only represents an increase from previous years, but it reflects only a portion of the total commercial interior design industry because it only relates to the top 100 firms reported by the *Interior Design* giants.

This chapter begins with a brief historical overview of the profession. An essential part of this chapter is the discussion of why it is important for the commercial interior designer to understand the client's business. It continues with an overview of what it is like to work in this area of the interior design profession. A brief discussion of topics focused on design professionalism concludes the chapter.

These terms are relevant to discussions in this chapter and throughout the book:

- *Business of the business*: Gaining an understanding of the business goals and purpose of the client before or during the execution of the project.
- *Commercial interior design*: The design of any facility that serves business purposes. May be privately owned or owned by a governmental agency.
- *Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FF&E)*: All the movable products and other fixtures, finishes, and equipment specified for an interior. FF&E is also called furniture, furnishings, and equipment.
- *Stakeholders*: Individuals who have a vested interest in the project, such as members of the design team, the client, the architect, and the vendors.

■ *Spec*: This is a slang term used to indicate a building that is developed and built before it has any specific tenants. Developers of commercial property are “speculating” that someone will lease the space before or after construction is completed.

Historical Overview

It is always helpful to have some historical context for a topic as broad as commercial interior design. This chapter provides a brief overview to set that context. Other chapters also include a brief historical perspective on the specific facility type. An in-depth discussion of the history of commercial design is beyond the scope of this book.

One could argue that commercial interior design began with the first trade and food stalls centuries ago. Certainly, buildings that housed many commercial transactions or that would be considered commercial facilities today have existed since early human history. For example, business was conducted in the great rooms of the Egyptian pharaohs and the palaces of kings; administrative spaces existed within great cathedrals and in portions of residences of craftsmen and tradesmen.

Another example comes from lodging. The lodging industry dates back many centuries, beginning with simple inns and taverns. Historically, hospitals were first associated with religious groups. During the Crusades of the Middle Ages, the *hospitia*, which provided food, lodging, and medical care to the ill, were located adjacent to monasteries.

In earlier centuries, interior spaces created for the wealthy and powerful were designed by architects. Business places such as inns and shops for the lower classes were most likely “designed” by tradesmen and craftsmen or whoever owned them. Craftsmen and tradesmen influenced early interior design as they created the furniture and architectural treatments of the palaces and other great structures, as well as the dwellings and other facilities for the lower classes.

As commerce grew, buildings specific to business enterprises such as stores, restaurants, inns, and offices were gradually created or became more common. Consider the monasteries (which also served as places of education) of the twelfth century, as well as the mosques and temples of the Middle East and the Orient; the amphitheaters of ancient Greece and Rome; and the Globe Theatre in London built in the sixteenth century. New types of interiors slowly began to develop. For example, offices began to move from the home to separate locations in a business area in the seventeenth century, and hotels began taking on their grand size and opulence in the nineteenth century (Tate and Smith 1986, 227). Furniture items and business machines such as typewriters and telephones, as well as other specialized items, were also being designed in the nineteenth century.

The profession of interior decoration—later interior design—is said by many historians to have its roots in the late nineteenth century. When it began, interior decoration was more closely aligned to the work of various society decorators engaged in residential projects. Elsie de Wolfe (1865–1950) is commonly considered the first professional, independent interior decorator. Sparke and Ownes called de Wolfe “the mother of modern interior decoration” (2005, 9). De Wolfe supervised the work required for the interiors she was hired to design. She also was among the first designers, if not the first, to charge for her services (Campbell

and Seebohm 1992, 17). In addition, she was one of the earliest women to be involved in commercial interior design. She designed spaces for the Colony Club in New York City in the early 1900s (Campbell and Seebohm 1992, 7).

Although most of the early commercial interior work was done by architects and their staff members, decorators and designers focusing on commercial interiors emerged in the early twentieth century. One woman designer most commonly associated with the beginning of commercial interior design was Dorothy Draper (1889–1969) (Tate and Smith 1986, 322). She started a firm in New York City and, beginning in the 1920s, was responsible for the design of hotels, apartment houses, restaurants, and offices. Her namesake firm still exists.

There were many changes in the building industry in the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century. These changes were led by the designs of architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Charles Eames, to name just a few of these early change influencers, each having a profound impact on interior design of commercial facilities.

Commercial interiors changed for many reasons in the second half of the twentieth century. Technological changes in construction and mechanical systems, code requirements for safety, and electronic business equipment of every kind have impacted the way business is conducted throughout the world. Consumers of business and institutional services expect better environments as part of the experience of visiting stores, hotels, restaurants, doctors' offices—everywhere they go to shop or conduct business. Interior design and architecture must keep up with these changes and demands. This is one of the key reasons that an interior designer must be educated in a wide range of subjects and understand the business operations of clients.

The interior design profession also grew in stature in the twentieth century with the development of professional associations, professional education, and competency testing. The decorators' clubs that existed in major cities in the 1920s and 1930s were the precursors of the current two largest interior design professional associations in the United States, the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and the International Interior Design Association (IIDA). The Interior Designers of Canada (IDC), founded in 1972, is the professional association and advocacy group for designers in Canada. Provincial associations also exist in Canada. As interior design is a global profession, many associations are located in other countries to serve their professionals. An Internet search for “international design associations” will help you identify numerous such organizations.

In respect to professional education, competency testing, and licensing of design professionals, the most significant advances occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. Here are a few of those milestones:

- In 1963, the Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC) was organized to advance education in interior design.
- In 1970, the Foundation for Interior Design Education Research (FIDER) was incorporated to serve as the primary academic accrediting agency for interior design education.
- In 1974, the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) was incorporated to provide for competency testing.

- In 1982, Alabama became the first state to pass title registration legislation for interior design practice.
- In 2005, FIDER changed the name of the organization to the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA).

Even when coupled with the brief history sections in other chapters, this overview does not give you a complete history of commercial interior design nor the profession. However, if you would like more information, many titles are listed in the references for you to explore.

Understanding the Client's Business

Would you want your doctor to diagnosis an illness or pain without first asking you questions about how you feel? Of course not! Although that example may be a little dramatic, designing any kind of commercial interior without asking questions and understanding the business of the business could lead to project failure.

Understanding “the business of the business” refers to understanding the goals and purposes of a business. In fact, it is important to understand the business specialty even before seeking projects in that specialty. The interior designer and team must understand the client's business in general and the client's goals for the project from a business point of view. This means that the design solutions and outcomes will be more functional for the client and lead to more creative design concepts.

The needs of each type of client will vary by their business focus. For example, space planning and product specifications are different for a pediatrician's suite than for the offices of a cardiologist. Planning decisions are different for a small gift shop in a strip shopping center than for one in a resort hotel. Understanding this from the outset is critical for the design firm.

An obvious advantage of understanding the client's business is that the interior design will be more functional, not solely focused on the aesthetic. Businesses seek interior design firms that are not “learning on the job” with the client's project. Creative solutions that are aesthetically pleasing are important to many clients. However, a creative and attractive office that does not work or is not safe is not helpful to the client. Creativity alone does not mean success in commercial interior design.

Five important issues influence the design direction and eventual solutions to commercial projects. They are

- *Type of facility.* Each type of facility has many different requirements. Space planning, furniture specification, materials that can be used, codes that must be adhered to, and the functions and goals of the business are just some of the many factors that influence the interior design, based on the type of facility.
- *Location.* The location of the business will relate to the client base the business wants to attract. The dollars spent on the interior may very well be different based on the project's location. Customer expectations will be greater when the business is located in a high-end area versus a strip mall.

■ *Target customer.* When a business begins its planning, it determines a target client base. Different design decisions will be made based on that target client. For example, a hotel located along an interstate will have a different target client than those of a resort in the mountains.

■ *The actual product of the business.* Design specifications for a coffee shop will be quite different from those for a luxury full-service restaurant. The design of the office of an advertising agency will vary from that of a law firm.

■ *The client.* The client can be a sole proprietor (of any kind of commercial facility), a branch of a multilocation business, a developer, or the board of directors of a nonprofit. The client might be the board of directors and the facility manager for a major corporation, or the local jurisdictional governing body for the school district.

Every client has different business goals, and the interior designer is challenged to satisfy all their unique demands. Thus, understanding the business of the business and its characteristics is important to understanding how to go about designing the interior. The more you know about the hospitality industry, for example, the more effective your solutions will be for a lodging or food service facility. Gaining experience and knowledge about retailing will be an advantage for you in designing any kind of retail space. In fact, the more you know about any of the specialty areas of commercial interior design, the greater your success will be in working with those clients.

Subsequent chapters provide an overview of the business of many kinds of commercial interior design specialties. They will help you begin to appreciate the critical issues that a business client will expect you to understand as you become engaged in the project. These chapters will also provide references for many of the design issues related to planning and designing commercial interiors, as well as indicating areas for additional research.

Working in Commercial Interior Design

The design of commercial interiors is complex and challenging. The number of project details can be enormous, and organizing those details is of paramount concern for the designer. Commercial interior design requires the designer to be attentive to details, be comfortable with working effectively as part of a team, and have the ability to work with numerous stakeholders. He or she must also understand the client's type of business before accepting a contract.

Often the interior designer works with employees of the business rather than the owner. However, design decisions must also please the owner. Few commercial design projects will be undertaken without the involvement of an architect. Being able to collaborate with the architect as the team seeks to meet the functional and aesthetic goals of the client is critical.

Teamwork and collaboration are necessary components in commercial design. Because projects can be very large, it is difficult for one or two people to handle all the work. Willingness to be part of the team, effectively doing one's job, and offering to be involved are not only important in completing the project but also bode well for advancement in the firm. Whether your role is small (which will be the case at the



Figure 1-2 Employee lunch areas are often places for teamwork and collaborative discussions.
Photo courtesy of Gary Wheeler, FASID. WheelerKänik, London, England.

beginning of your career) or you are the prime designer/project manager as your experience grows, your ability to work with a team and collaborate with others is fundamental to success. So do not be surprised if project managers and senior design staff are in charge of projects rather than an entry-level designer.

Effective communication goes hand in hand with teamwork. Project communications occur by email, texting, telephone, written documents, design graphics, and other electronic means. Designers use tablets, smartphones, and laptops on the job site as well as in the office. These electronic devices help document meetings, jot ideas, and provide a place to archive photographs of issues or good ideas on the site. Marketing and progress presentations are likely to be conducted using PowerPoint presentations, Pinterest, or other computer-based media. Naturally, skill with computer-aided drafting (CAD), SketchUp, or other media is mandatory in commercial interior design.

Communication must be conducted in a professional manner. Whether you are standing in front of your client discussing the project, sending an email, or texting a vendor (not while you are driving!), be professional in what you say and how you say it. Older clients may not easily interpret the shorthand used by many younger designers to communicate on wireless devices. One more caution: Those electronic messages don't just disappear; they are almost always archived by the client. What you say in an email must be what you can do or you could have legal and ethical problems.

In a commercial project, it is important to determine and discuss with whom the designer will be working. In residential design, the designer must satisfy the homeowner and family members. A commercial project involves satisfying several users in

addition to the actual property owner. Those who might have an impact on design decisions include the property owner, employees, and, very indirectly, the businesses customers.

There are many types of property owners, including:

- A single business owner developing a building and needing tenant improvements
- A developer having an office or retail structure built on spec
- A corporation building a branch facility
- A chain remodeling a property
- A government entity building agency offices, schools, or the like

Employees will also have an impact on and perhaps have direct input into the design of the facility. Research shows that if the facility has been designed with a pleasing and safe atmosphere as well as a functional environment, employees will work more effectively. An exciting interior for a restaurant that attracts large crowds willing to spend on food and drink will bring better-quality waitstaff to serve those customers. Unfortunately, employees don't usually get to vote on design decisions; however, they may vote unofficially through their willingness to stay with the company and serve its clients effectively.

A third influencer is the customer who comes to the facility. In some instances, the ambiance of a restaurant or the beauty of the setting influences whether a customer returns. In other circumstances, ambiance plays a minimal role in this decision. The relationship of a doctor to a patient is more important than the doctor's exquisitely designed office. If your local city government offices had marble on the walls and floors and gold faucets in the restrooms, as a citizen you might think that your tax dollars had been misspent. Designing for these various users is challenging, to say the least.

As for working on a project itself, commercial interior design projects follow all phases of the design process. Of course, the interior designer's responsibility within each phase will vary based on the project, licensing issues, and the designer's experience. Missing steps or doing any of the tasks halfheartedly can be disastrous. Margins for error are often nonexistent, as many projects are *fast-tracked*, where design plans for one phase of the project are created as construction is proceeding on another phase to ensure early occupancy. These challenges are discussed in Chapter 4. Being detail oriented and organized are very important qualifications for a commercial interior designer.

Commercial interior designers must know how to manage a project as well as design it. This task is defined as project management. *Project management* is a systematic process used to coordinate and control a design project from inception to completion. Project management requires leadership, planning, coordination, and control of a diverse set of activities, people, money, and time in order to accomplish the goals of the design project. Project management is primarily the responsibility of experienced designers who oversee the team of designers and others who are involved in a project.

Project delivery methods have evolved into four approaches. These will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 4. However, brief definitions are provided here to lend context to the overall scope of this chapter.

■ *Design-bid-build*. This is the traditional project delivery method, where a client hires a firm to design the project. It is then sent out for competitive bids to multiple suppliers, and a contract is awarded to the firm chosen by the client.

■ *Construction management*. The client hires a firm to be in charge of the execution of all responsibilities of the project from feasibility studies and design to construction and installation, together with supervision of the work of all the stakeholders.

■ *Design-build*. This is a collaborative process where multiple stakeholders are likely to be included under one contract for both the design and construction of the facility.

■ *Integrated process*. This team-oriented process puts more emphasis on the people involved in the project so that a better outcome is delivered.

Nearly all the project types discussed in this book flow through the design process of programming, schematic design, design development, contract documents, and contract administration. It is important for a designer specializing in any type of commercial design to be very familiar with all the tasks that occur in each of these phases, whether or not the designer is actually responsible for all those tasks.

Programming is of particular importance, and the information obtained at the beginning of the project must be carefully gathered. (A discussion of the design process can be found in Chapter 4.) Information about the client's space and aesthetic preferences is only the beginning. Of course, it is important to understand what codes or other standards may apply to the project. Regardless of the type of facility, the client's business goals and plans are very important in the successful functional design of the interior. Knowing where the business wants to go is as important to the designer as where it is on the day that programming information is obtained. Many large interior design firms offer assistance with strategic planning for businesses that do not already engage in this type of planning.

There can be no margin for error with the codes in a commercial project. Adherence to building, life safety, and accessibility codes is another critical part of the work of commercial interior designers. The health, life safety, and welfare of the client and the various users of the facility affect many design decisions, including space planning, architectural materials, lighting, furniture and fabric specification, and even the color palette in some situations. The user of the facility trusts that the design and specification of the facility are safe in all the ways the jurisdiction requires. Understanding and application of regulations implicit in the type of project are a necessity, not a choice.

Finally, as mentioned in the previous section, the interior designer should know something about the client's business before seeking a commercial interiors project. Understanding the business of the business is crucial to solving problems and achieving the functional and aesthetic goals of the client. No designer can solve the client's problems without understanding the problems as thoroughly as possible.

Table 1-1 lists numerous examples of specialties in commercial interior design. Please understand that this list is not all-inclusive.

Table 1-1 Common Specialties in Commercial Interior Design

Corporate and Executive Offices

Professional offices

Financial institutions

Law firms

Stockbrokerage and investment brokerage companies

Accounting firms

Real estate firms

Travel agencies

Many other types of business offices

Restoration and renovation of office spaces

Healthcare Facilities

Hospitals

Surgery centers

Psychiatric facilities

Special care facilities

Medical and dental office suites

Senior living facilities

Rehabilitation facilities

Medical labs

Veterinary clinics

Hospitality and Entertainment Facilities

Hotels, motels, and resorts

Restaurants

Recreational facilities

Health clubs and spas

Sports complexes

Golf clubs

Convention centers

Hospitality and Entertainment Facilities

Amusement parks and other parks

Theaters

Museums

Historic sites (restoration)

Retail/Merchandising Facilities

Department stores

Malls and shopping centers

Specialized retail stores

Showrooms

Galleries

Institutional Facilities

Government offices and facilities

Schools—all levels

Daycare centers

Religious facilities

Prisons

Industrial Facilities

Manufacturing areas

Training areas in industrial buildings

Research and development laboratories

Transportation Facilities/Methods

Airports

Bus and train terminals

Tour ships

Yachts

Custom airplanes, corporate vehicles

Recreational vehicles

Where the Jobs Are

Commercial interior design is very challenging and requires experience in interior design. Like any career, it is also hard work, exciting, and oftentimes involving long hours, certainly working effectively with team members, and perhaps dealing with irate clients. However, few interior designers who have worked in commercial interior design for many years would do anything else.

Whether you are a student considering entering this part of the profession or a professional considering moving from residential to commercial interior design, there are important issues to consider when working in commercial interior design. This section will cover some key concepts about working in the field.

Regardless of the project size, commercial projects require a team of designers and related professionals. Led by a project manager, the project team may include interior designers at many different skill and experience levels. The team may involve architects, lighting designers, engineers, and consultants—such as, perhaps, a commercial kitchen designer for a restaurant. Of course, the client is part of that team. There may be many levels of client team members involved in the decision-making process. Other team members are contractors and subs hired to build out the project. Thus, being able to work as part of a team and take directions is critical whether one works for a small or a large firm.

In addition to the comments in the “Working in a Small versus Working in a Large Firm” sidebar (p. 12), here are a few considerations concerning what it is like to work in different kinds of commercial design firms, starting with the small firm: Many small firms specialize in order to give better service and expertise to potential clients. They will rarely have the opportunity to work on glamorous projects like casinos, large resort hotels, flashy new restaurants, or corporate headquarters. However, the experience gained in the small firm provides the entry-level interior designer with valuable training and skills that can be taken to a larger firm.

Large firms often specialize but have enough employees to venture into multiple types of facilities. A designer may specialize or be asked to work on different types of facilities based on personal experience and interests—and office needs. You will definitely need to work well with others and willingly take orders and directions from more senior interior designers. As an entry-level team member, you may also find yourself spending time doing what may seem to be drudge work—taking care of the library, endlessly drafting small project details, and keeping files organized. This is part of the apprenticeship common in larger firms.

Another place to work in commercial interior design is an office furnishings dealership. Companies that specialize in offices and feature systems furniture are great places to begin and maintain a career in commercial interior design. The interior designers in such companies focus on large corporate and professional offices. The learning and training received here prepare many interior designers to move to an interior design firm that might specialize in hospitality, healthcare, or government facilities.

WORKING IN A SMALL VERSUS WORKING IN A LARGE FIRM

Small Firms

- ◆ Designers probably will not be involved in large plum jobs, such as a large hotel.
- ◆ The designer will need to have more experience because he or she will have greater responsibility for project completion.
- ◆ The designer must be able to manage a project and all stakeholders involved.
- ◆ Design firm owner will have more decision-making responsibility than designers.
- ◆ Working in a small firm gives entry-level and less experienced interior designers an opportunity to become involved in projects sooner.
- ◆ Designers often work directly with vendors of the FF&E (furniture, fixtures, and equipment).

Large Firms

- ◆ Entry-level designers rarely get their own clients/projects for at least two to four years.
- ◆ Experience provides opportunities for faster and greater project responsibility.
- ◆ Designers must be comfortable working on smaller segments of the job as part of a team.
- ◆ Project manager will lead the team and likely make all decisions and recommendations related to the design.
- ◆ Designers will have less direct client contact and little decision-making responsibility with clients.
- ◆ Entry-level and mid-level interior designers will assist in mundane tasks, such as drafting and product and materials research.
- ◆ Creative design decisions are made by senior designers.
- ◆ Working for a larger firm may bring prestige and more opportunity for internal mentoring.

The opportunities mentioned in this chapter only scratch the surface. There are all types of firms combined with design specialties that create many opportunities for those interested in commercial interior design. Sometimes the work is not as glamorous as the work done by colleagues designing private residences, and the publicity may not be as frequent; but there is great satisfaction in being part of the profession making an impact on how consumers of every kind and economic level keep the wheels of industry rolling along.

The following list suggests numerous other career options in interior design beyond a focus on commercial interiors.

- Sales representative for manufacturer
- Interior design manager
- Project manager
- Public relations
- Teacher
- Facility planner for corporations
- Product designer
- Specification writer
- Magazine writer
- Marketing specialist
- Museum curator
- Merchandising and exhibit designer
- Graphic designer
- Wayfinding designer
- Lighting designer
- Commercial kitchen designer
- Art consultant
- LEED-certified designer
- Codes specialist
- Textile designer
- Color consultant
- Set design
- Residential interior design specialties
- Retail sales associate

Professionalism

All interior designers must take professionalism very seriously. The complicated nature of commercial interior design requires designers to have the education, experience, and knowledge to provide safety in design for the owners of the property as well as the users of the property. This section briefly discusses those topics that enhance the professionalism of the designer, beginning with a discussion of professional competency examinations and certifications.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY

Many professions require an examination to test minimum competency for licensure, registration, or to recognize professionalism. An examination of competency should be no less a goal of the professional interior designer. Jurisdictions that have any type of interior design legislation require professional designers to take the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) examination administered by the Council for Interior Design Qualification (CIDQ). Passing the NCIDQ exam is also a requirement of The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), International Interior Design Association (IIDA), and Interior Designers of Canada (IDC) in order for members to be recognized at the highest professional level of these associations.

Passing the NCIDQ examination demonstrates to clients that the interior designer has the education, experience, knowledge, and skillset required by the profession. It is a personal achievement that interior designers should willingly pursue. Passing the NCIDQ examination provides the interior designer a certificate indicating successful completion of the examination. The NCIDQ certificate is a practice credential indicating an individual's demonstrated competence in the knowledge and skills required of today's professional interior designer. It is primarily applicable in the United States and Canada. Other countries may require a different competency examination.

Information about the exam, eligibility, and the other services that the CIDQ offers is available on their website.

There are other examinations and certifications a designer may want to pursue, according to his or her specialty and education. Interior designers may find certification programs for contractors, project managers, and other design-build trades appropriate based on their professional goals and experience. International designers will need to investigate the examinations and certifications that apply to the countries where they want to design interiors.

The groups listed in this section are the primary credential-granting organizations. Professional associations, which do not generally provide a credential but rather are organizations of like-minded professionals, are briefly described later in the chapter. Information about eligibility for any of the following credentials should be obtained from the sponsoring organization (web addresses are given at the end of the chapter).

■ *Architect Registration Examination (ARE)*: This examination tests the competency of individuals who want to practice architecture in the United States and Canada. Other countries may have different competency examinations to meet their needs. A side note is that the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) is the

organization that establishes the standards of licensing and credentialing of architects and architectural practice and administers the ARE.

■ *American Academy of Health Care Designers (AAHID)*: Designers who choose to specialize in healthcare interior design can seek certification from AAHID. These individuals have also achieved a credential from NCIDQ as part of their qualification for AAHID certification.

■ *Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)*: Designers interested in sustainable design may want to obtain an appropriate LEED certification. This program is administered by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). Separate certifications are available for commercial interiors and residences. Other certifications are available for other specialties in the design-build industry.

■ *Lighting Certified Professional (LC)*: The National Council on Qualifications for the Lighting Professions (NCQLP) administers and grants certification for designers specializing in lighting design, compliance, and principles.

■ *Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA)*: This organization is the primary provider of accreditation review and standards for interior design education in the United States and Canada.

■ *Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS)*: This is for a designer who wants to specialize in facilities for seniors. Administered through the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), a CAPS certification is primarily sought by individuals designing residences. However, this may also be of interest to those designing assisted-living and other senior living facilities.

LICENSING AND REGISTRATION

The licensing of interior design professionals remains an important though sometimes contentious issue. Why is licensing and registration important? The professional practice of interior design has become increasingly complicated. The responsibility for what is done to a commercial or residential interior to meet standards of safety is more complex, requiring greater knowledge of the systems and products used in interiors of all kinds.

Interior designers have sought to be licensed since the 1950s. The first state to pass legislation to license or register interior design professionals was Alabama in 1982. As of 2015, more than half of the states have some form of licensing, certification, or registration legislation that defines who may practice interior design or use the title “interior designer.” Other states continue to seek to regulate the work of the interior design profession. As of this writing, all of the Canadian provinces have enacted licensing laws in some form.

Before continuing, here are a few key terms that are important to understand:

■ *Licensing*: This term means that a party, such as the legislature, has given permission to others, such as interior design professionals, the right to use a term or practice certain activities.

■ *Building permitting privileges*: The design professional has the right to submit his or her construction drawings to a building code official to obtain a building permit for the project.

■ *Title act*: Legislation that limits the use of a specific title, such as interior designer, certified interior designer, or registered interior designer, to those who meet the requirements established by the jurisdiction. Title acts do not require the designer to become licensed to practice interior design and do not prohibit nonregistered individuals from providing interior design services.

■ *Practice act*: Acts that limit who may engage in or practice a profession; legislation that strictly limits who may provide interior design services in any manner as those services are defined by the jurisdiction.

Interior designers are held responsible for providing safe environments for their clients and for the users of commercial (and residential) interiors. Technology in the construction of interiors continues to evolve and become more complex. Building and life safety codes demand critical decisions concerning space planning and product specification to ensure the safety and health of occupants of commercial interiors. Sustainable design knowledge and criteria are necessary to reduce the harm to our environment and to avoid harming continuous users of commercial spaces. Security issues will continue to impact the interior design of all types of commercial facilities. These are critical issues for any interior designer.

Licensing or registration ensures consumers that the interior designers they hire for their commercial projects have the education, experience, and competence to provide interior design services. Jurisdictions that have legislation concerning the practice of interior design require intensive educational preparation related to the knowledge base and skillset required during the phases of a design project. They also require passage of a competency examination, the minimum requirements to sit for which focus on education in interior design and work experience.

ETHICS

Adherence to ethical standards dictates how an interior designer interacts with clients, vendors, contractors, and other designers. Those with whom a designer interacts expect the designer to conduct herself in an ethical manner. Of course, the designer expects others to conduct themselves in an ethical manner, too. But it doesn't always happen that way. For example, a client may come to you with a set of drawings for a gift shop obviously drawn by a designer or architect, and ask you to sell the products to the client after making some "minor changes" to the plans. Would it be ethical for you to do so? Is it ethical for you to design any type of project so that the budget for the finishing and furnishings far exceeds the original client budget?

Ethical behavior in interior design means conducting oneself in a manner that is considered right by and for those practicing the interior design profession. Ethical standards have been established by the professional associations and serve as a guide to those who choose to affiliate with an association. Ethical standards might also be, in some way, part of the qualifications for licensing/registration.

If you join a professional association, you will be expected to conduct yourself and your business in accordance with the ethical standards of that association. Conversely, the fact that an interior designer is not a member of an association does not give him or

her free rein to behave unethically. Unethical behavior and the business conduct of one designer can tarnish the reputation of everyone in the profession.

Ethical behavior is not hard, it is not overly time-consuming, and it is not inconvenient. Conducting oneself in an ethical manner is simply one more standard for judging oneself as a professional and allowing the consumer to see the value the interior designer places on his or her obligations to clients and the profession. We expect professionals in law, accountancy, medicine, and real estate, for example, to behave ethically when we deal with them as clients and patients. They, too, should expect ethical behavior from the interior designers they hire to design their offices, medical suites, hotel rooms, stores, and myriad other commercial spaces. Ethical behavior is a responsibility of all interior designers, as well as means toward guaranteeing the professional image and standing of interior design.

You can obtain copies of the codes of ethics of the professional associations by visiting the websites of ASID, IIDA, and IDC.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Obtaining an education in interior design, taking the professional competency examination, and completing other requirements toward licensure or registration are all important milestones in the professional growth of a commercial interior designer. Many designers also become members of a professional association such as ASID, IIDA, or IDC. There are numerous other professional associations that may be of interest to you. Additional associations are listed in the appendix at the end of this book. Some of the other associations most affiliated with interior design include:

- *International Facility Management Association (IFMA)*: For those who design corporate office facilities.
- *Institute of Store Planners (ISP)*: An association specifically for those who design retail stores and shopping centers.
- *American Institute of Architects (AIA)*: Interior designers may be eligible to become affiliated members of this association.
- *International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI)*: A worldwide group of interior designers.
- *International Design Alliance (IDA)*: A global group of interior designers and others in the design-build industry.

Professional associations provide members with many benefits that enhance professional growth. Networking opportunities at local chapter meetings help to broaden an interior designer's contacts in the industry. Attendance at national meetings moves that networking opportunity to a national and even an international level.

Certainly, join a professional association for the newsletters, member meetings, and other benefits it offers. However, the old saying that you get back what you put in is important. Become active by volunteering for a committee. This is an excellent opportunity for the entry-level interior designer in particular to gain greater insights into group dynamics and leadership characteristics. Members also gain valuable experience and have fun while helping to organize chapter events and programs. Later

on, election to a chapter's board or office enlarges a designer's skills and knowledge through the training that is offered for board members. Chapter officers expand their network of contacts and friends through training conducted for chapter officers by national association offices. Active participation in an association is a great way to gain confidence in speaking and writing—important communication skills for any interior designer.

Successful professionals find numerous ways to continue to grow and add value to the work they produce. Another way to further professional growth is through continuing education. Education does not stop when one receives a diploma at the end of an interior design program. Professionals should seek additional information at seminars, workshops, and training programs that offer continuing education unit (CEU) credit. In fact, many jurisdictions with licensing or registration legislation require CEU credits to maintain the license or registration. Professional associations may also require continuing education for their members.

Continuing education seminars provide up-to-date information on a wide variety of topics in the profession. These seminars and workshops are short, most taking from one hour to one day. Numerous CEU options are available as webinars or by correspondence. These programs are available through online providers, professional associations, at meetings, and at trade conferences and shows.

Your expertise is likely valuable to others. Perhaps you can give seminars related to your specialty to your peers and students. Academic programs seek out professionals to speak to students, critique their work, and provide internship locations. Seminars and CEU programs are primarily offered by experienced professionals who share their expertise.

Many designers know that they can also grow professionally by being active in their communities. The knowledge and skills possessed by interior designers can add much to their local communities through participation in city/town governance by volunteering to serve on committees, such as a historic sites committee. Perhaps they can be involved in a design committee at their church or school—providing, of course, they did not originally bid on the design! Designers who specialize in sustainable design are displaying social responsibility beyond their office through lectures to citizen groups and to classes. These are only a few suggestions on how a designer can include “social responsibility activities” to his or her work in the profession.

Whether your professional growth and involvement beyond your firm means participating in an association, performing community service, attending—and giving—seminars, or being involved in any other activity, you will gain immeasurably from those endeavors. For more information about continuing education courses, visit the Interior Design Continuing Education Council (IDCEC) website.

Summary

Regardless of the specialty, working in commercial interior design is exciting. The opportunity to design highly creative interiors may not come often to everyone; however, the possibility is always on the horizon. The opportunity to help client firms become more effective businesses is also satisfying. Think of how wonderful it would feel to be involved in the design of offices for a major corporation in Manhattan or a

new pediatrics wing for a hospital. One day, maybe you will be the project manager for a new mega resort/casino or a bed and breakfast that continually wins hospitality industry awards. Of course, your design for a small accounting office or a neighborhood restaurant is also important. The opportunities in commercial interior design are endless.

This chapter provided a snapshot of what it is like to work in commercial interior design. A brief historical overview revealed the roots of this branch of the profession. The chapter then discussed the importance of understanding a client's business, which is critical to the successful interior designer in a commercial specialty. The work environments of commercial interior design and the challenges of the field were also considered.

In this edition, Chapters 2 through 4 discuss topics that shape the work of the commercial interior designer. Chapters 5 through 12 provide information on important functional and design criteria for key types of commercial interior design specialties. Each chapter will help you understand the nature of the business of the business, as well as provide a foundation for design decisions.

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INTERNET RESOURCES

- American Academy of Health Care Designers (AAHID): www.AAHID.org
- American Institute of Architects (AIA): www.aiaonline.org
- American Society of Interior Designers (ASID): www.asid.org

Architect Registration Examination (ARE): www.ncarb.org/ARE.aspx
Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS): www.nahb.org
Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA): www.accredit-id.org
Council for Interior Design Qualification (CIDQ): www.ncidqexam.org
Interior Design Continuing Education Council (IDCEC): www.idcec.org
Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC): www.idec.org
International Design Alliance (IDA): www.icsid.org
International Facility Management Association (IFMA): www.ifma.org
International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI): www.ifeworld.org
International Interior Design Association (IIDA): www.iida.org
Institute of Store Planners (ISP): www.isp.org
Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED): www.usgbc.org
Lighting Certified Professional (LC): www.ncqlp.org
National Council for Interior Design Qualification: www.ncidqexam.org
National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB): www.ncarb.org/ARE.aspx
U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC): www.usgbc.org