

Interior Design as a Profession

To be involved in the interior design profession requires learning much more than the use of color and how to arrange furniture. The body of knowledge and skills needed by professionals is extensive, and the work of the interior designer—regardless of specialty—is demanding as well as exciting. The professional interior designer's solutions have to meet functional needs of the client, as well as result in a pleasing environment. Of course, there are many other design, business, and professional issues that are part of the performance of the professional interior designer.

The profession of interior design is also a business. The management and efficient operations of a business are critical to the successful, ongoing life of an interior design practice. Thus, the professional practice of interior design requires attention to the business procedures, strategies, and protocols that any business must use for the business to be successful, profitable, and long lasting.

This chapter, to use a design metaphor, is a foundation of information important to the overall study of the profession and how it functions as a business.

After completing this chapter you should be able to:

- Discuss why the study of professional practices is important to any entry-level designer.
- Explain how interior design is different from decorating as if you were talking to a client.
- Identify the characteristics of a profession.
- Explain how these characteristics relate to the practice of interior design.
- How would you define the interior design profession?
- Understand the history of the profession in order to learn about the professional practice of interior design.
- Explain how the Great Depression of 1929 affected the interior design professional.

- Name the organizations that became the American Society of Interior Designers and International Interior Design Association.
- Identify key changes that led to the increasing professionalism of interior design.
- Compare the practices of residential interior design and commercial interior design.
- Explain how the section on the business of interior design affects your understanding of the profession as a whole.
- Discuss how interior design provides value to a residential client and a small business owner.
- Explain why professional and social responsibility activities are important to the interior designer and the profession.
- Name three ways in which you will give back to the profession after you begin practice.
- Discuss why an interior designer should consider public service through pro bono work or other contributions.

WHY STUDY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE?

Clients are very savvy today. They expect the designer to be knowledgeable and have the experience to do the job right. This savvy client expects more from practitioners than those who basically have a flair for color.

Of course, creativity is important as most projects involve creative problem solving. A successful interior design practitioner must combine creativity with his or her own business knowledge to lead to or continue success within the profession.

Knowledge and application of business practice concepts are essential. A designer who is bad at business subconsciously hints to clients that they can take advantage of the designer by arguing and second-guessing the designer's decisions. Furthermore, if the firm is not successful as a business, if it does not sustain profitability, it makes no difference how creative the practitioners might be: The poorly run business is likely to fail.

Interior design is much more than a way to express creativity. It is an endeavor that must recognize the importance of ethical conduct. It is about being socially responsible and realizing that, in today's world, the interior design profession has a global reach. It's not just about "us" in the United States, it's about all of "us" on this planet. It is not a hobby; it is not the quick, do-it-yourself situation portrayed on cable TV.

Studying and applying business practices to the management of the firm helps the owner have a greater chance of achieving a profit. If the business owner is to allow his company to grow to the extent that he would like it to grow, the owner must understand all the aspects of professional practice.

As an employee, you will be held accountable for the ongoing success of an interior design firm. You have a responsibility to work productively and bill those hours. You also must work professionally and effectively to complete any assigned job tasks. You need to have some awareness of the expense it takes to operate a practice so that you do not waste company resources.

Students must master a basic understanding of business practices. Although a business practices class may come late in the curriculum, that placement does not make it any less important. I believe it is one of the two most important classes in a student's curriculum, even if it's not the most

important to you individually. Without an understanding of the professional practice of interior design, as a student, emerging professional, or employee, your success will be limited.

Finally, many topics in this book are topics important to curriculum accreditation, certification granting organizations, licensing regulations, and professional associations. These groups recognize that business practices knowledge is critical to the overall education and training of an interior designer.

An interior design firm owner once told me that he wants to hire individuals who want his job. That doesn't happen without knowing how to run a business.

WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

A profession is much more than the words in a definition provided by interested groups. According to one dictionary, a *profession* is "a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification."¹ Johnson writes, "As defined by sociologists, a profession is an occupation that is based on theoretical and practical knowledge and training in a particular field. ... Professions tend to be credentialed and regulated in relation to certain standards of performance and ethics, which makes them more autonomous and independent than other occupations."²

Some argue that interior design is not really a profession. This has often occurred when discussions with state legislatures concerning regulation of interior design or use of the title "interior designer" take place. Yet, the interior design profession meets the standards set for defining a profession.

If the measure of a profession involves the criteria offered by the preceding material, then interior design is a profession that has evolved and continues to evolve. Gordon Marshall writes, "A profession includes some central regulatory body to ensure the standard of performance of individual members; a code of conduct; careful management of knowledge in relation to the expertise which constitutes the basis of the profession's activities; and lastly, control of number, selection, and training of new entrants."³

A professional does not emerge merely as a consequence of learning the technical principles required in the profession. Becoming a professional also requires an attitude of dedicated commitment to the work one does and to the advancement of the profession. Understanding what it takes to organize and maintain an interior design practice follows an understanding of the roots and contemporary concerns of the profession. In the 21st century, having talent as a designer is not enough to survive the ups and downs of the economic roller coaster.

Interior Design Divisions

The interior design profession has changed in many ways since it was first thought of as a profession. Not the least of those changes is whether there remain two classic divisions. It has always been thought that *residential interior designers* design private residences, especially single-family dwellings, while *commercial interior designers* focus on one or more types of spaces used for business and government, such as offices, stores, hotels, restaurants, schools, airports, hospitals, and so on.

For the most part, those two classic divisions do still exist. However, the line between residential and commercial interior design as "divisions" of the profession has blurred due to changes in lifestyle and work style throughout the world." Many of those who think of themselves as residential designers occasionally do some small

offices or other types of commercial spaces. Of course, those who are primarily commercial designers also occasionally design a client's residence.

Another topic that continues to blur the distinctions is the term *contract design*. The term originally came from the fact that commercial projects more frequently were executed based on contracts for services. Today, both those who design residences as well as those who do commercial projects utilize contracts with clients.

In the 21st century, it is not as important to define a division as it is to define the profession. The definition of interior design provided below does not differentiate any particular number or types of divisions of interior design. Perhaps it is time to recognize that neither is a less or more important part of the profession.

*Martin and Guerin, 2006, p. 90.

DEFINING THE PROFESSION

Compared to many other professions, such as teaching and medicine, interior design is relatively young. The use of the term interior design did not appear in general usage until after World War II, and the profession defined by any term did not really exist much before the 1900s. Individuals and organizations involved in the interior design profession work tirelessly to help the profession gain recognition in the minds of the public, as well as among practitioners and allied professionals.

What constitutes interior design has been debated and nurtured for many decades. Much of the public believes that “people who decorate interiors are interior decorators.” They often do not understand that there is a difference between decoration and design. The words of an article by Charlotte S. Jensen, FASID, then president of the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) board, still ring true: “Interior design is not the same as decoration. ... Decoration is the furnishing or adorning a space with fashionable or beautiful things. Decoration, although a valuable and important element of an interior, is not solely concerned with human interaction or human behavior. Interior design is all about human behavior and human interaction.”⁴ And much more, many would say.

The most commonly quoted and utilized definition of interior design comes from the Council for Interior Design Qualification (CIDQ). The abbreviated version of the definition from CIDQ is offered here. The complete version is presented in the appendix. The definitions are acknowledged and supported by the interior design professional associations:

“Interior design encompasses the analysis, planning, design, documentation, and management of interior non-structural/non-seismic construction and alteration projects in compliance with applicable building design and construction, fire, life-safety, and energy codes, standards, regulations, and guidelines for the purpose of obtaining a building permit, as allowed by law. Qualified by means of education, experience, and examination, interior designers have a moral and ethical responsibility to protect consumers and occupants through the design of code-compliant, accessible, and inclusive interior environments that address well-being, while considering the complex physical, mental, and emotional needs of people.”⁵

Another excellent definition comes from outside the profession. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, interior designers “plan, design and furnish interiors of residential, commercial or industrial buildings. Formulate design which is practical, aesthetic, and conducive to

intended purposes, such as raising productivity, selling merchandise, or improving life style.”⁶

As you can see from these, interior design is much more than the stereotypical idea of picking out colors and fabrics. The responsibilities and skills required also go beyond those of the individual who has a flair for decorating.

PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The services of an interior designer have an impact on facilities of all kinds, from private residences to the wide variety of commercial and public spaces. As a professional, interior designers through designs and specifications impact the environment and the economy both at home and even abroad. Our designs create interior environments that can excite the users of a space, soothe individuals, create a pleasing home environment, establish productive work environments, and satisfy other goals presented by the client and project.

Professional responsibility means that a designer understands the consequences of his or her designs and specifications. For example, removing and disposing of carpeting that still has some useful life is a poor choice if there is a place in your community that can utilize this material.

Professional responsibility also implies a consideration for designing spaces using proper codes and building standards. Adhering to an ethical standard is also critical to professional responsibility. Being committed to solving the problems presented by the client in such a way to satisfy the client rather than the designer’s own ego is also a professional responsibility.

A professional also needs to keep him or herself current on important topics and professional practices that can impact work with clients. Issues of sustainable design, designing for aging in place, universal design, and the impact of cultural influences are only some of the contexts that involve the profession today.

Professional responsibility also means social responsibility. It is important to understand that designers need to give back to the profession, the community, and to some degree to humankind. As professionals we can affect the communities we live in, through volunteering services that use our skills and problem-solving ability. Service on community boards, such as design review boards, historic sites, community development boards, and many other city or county boards, can be a particularly good use of the designer’s volunteer time. Local government depends on volunteers to take part in these commissions to help city management make living in a city or town better for the whole of the community.

If you have an interest in a particular type of nonprofit organization, your public service will provide you with enriching opportunities to help your community and beyond. Not only are you helping out these nonprofits but you are also going to have the opportunity to meet many new people you might otherwise never meet. Just as you are encouraged to join and participate in a professional association, it is beneficial for you to participate in some sort of public service role.

You may have heard the term *pro bono*, which means providing something at no charge. Interior designers often provide their services at no charge to a community, church group, or nonprofit organization such as Habitat for Humanity. Pro bono work can be personally rewarding, in addition to helping these groups obtain top-notch design services for little or no expense.

Another part of giving back comes in the form of working with students. As a student, you want to hear from working professionals. Not to challenge

your professors, but to see how the academic meshes with the world of interior design. Lectures, guest critiques, tours of the designer's office facilities, and helping to arrange tours of significant design projects in the area are all examples of this important type of service.

The practice of interior design is a continually growing and changing profession. Our professional and social responsibility in this complex world will test both the individual entering the profession and the experienced professional. These challenges should be embraced, not shunned, as professional interior designers continue to lead the way in the design of exciting and satisfying interiors. Involvement in the interior design profession is in itself very rewarding. That satisfaction grows immensely.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

It is important for the reader to have an understanding of the history of the interior design profession as well as the history of furniture, architecture, and furnishings. This brief section provides some context for the history of the profession.

Before the 20th century, interior decoration was the responsibility of artisans, craftsmen, painters, sculptors, and early architects. Shopkeepers were called *ensembliers* or *ateliers* in Europe. According to John Pile, Charles Percier (1764–1838) and Pierre-François-Léonard Fontaine (1762–1853) are thought by many to be the first professional interior designers. “Percier and Fontaine conceived of interior spaces developed under their full control in the manner of modern interior designers.”⁷

Elsie de Wolfe (1865–1950) was among the first individuals to bring the concept of professionalism to interior decoration in the United States. It was approximately during her career that the term interior decoration began to be used. Born in New York City and a member of the upper class, de Wolfe began her career as a professional interior decorator in 1904, when she was 39 years old. Her first commission, in 1905, was for the design of the Colony Club in New York City. Among de Wolfe's clients were such notable figures as Henry C. Frick and Anne Pierpont Morgan. Because these early decorators often had a wealthy clientele, the term society decorator was often associated with them.

De Wolfe also wrote one of the earliest books about interior decoration, *The House in Good Taste*, in which she related her philosophy of decoration for homes. This book, which was republished in 2004, gives a fascinating glimpse into early interior decoration. She also is credited with being responsible for another milestone in the profession: receiving a fee for her design services rather than a commission on the sale of furniture.⁸ De Wolfe's success inspired other women to enter the profession. It was one of the few acceptable professions for women at the turn of the century.

In approximately 1904, formal educational preparation was offered at the New York School of Applied and Fine Arts—founded as the Chase School. (This school is now known as Parsons, The New School for Design, located in New York City.) A few courses were offered in art or home economics programs in other schools, but formal training in interior decoration was not easy to obtain. Individuals who could not avail themselves of formal courses generally learned from magazines of the time, such as *House Beautiful* or *House & Garden*.

Postwar prosperity after World War I saw an increased interest in, and employment of, the interior decoration professional. In 1924, Eleanor McMillen opened McMillen Inc., claiming to be the first full-service interior decorating firm in the United States.⁹ This postwar prosperity led to an increasing number of professionals with specialized knowledge in different types of interiors

beyond residential interior decoration. By the late 1920s, many local “Decorators’ Clubs” had been started in various parts of the country. The Decorators Club located in New York is credited with being one of the first, if not the first, such organization.¹⁰

Furniture manufacturers in the 1920s were producing fine-quality furniture in places such as Grand Rapids, Michigan, and High Point, North Carolina. Department stores used a display technique called a *vignette* to help the middle-class consumer visualize a room of furniture and thus encouraged consumers to utilize better-quality design in their homes.¹¹ (Vignette, as used in the interior design profession, means a display of furniture and furnishings that simulates an actual room.) Magazines continued to be used by the masses of consumers to appreciate quality interior decoration done by professionals and primarily available only to the wealthy.

The Great Depression of the 1930s had a profound influence on the furniture industry and thus the interiors profession. It had a disastrous effect on the ability of the middle class to purchase furniture. Yet, the leading society decorators remained relatively unaffected by the depression, as their wealthy clients could still afford to purchase quality goods. The society decorators, however, were purchasing goods from Europe rather than using American-made goods. This had a further, and decidedly negative, impact on American manufacturers.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, was the site of one of the earliest and largest to-the-trade-only semiannual furniture markets. At the time, Grand Rapids was one of the largest manufacturing centers in the United States. The Grand Rapids Furniture Exposition, as it was officially called, was first held in December 1878.¹² The market was held in January and June for 87 years. Local manufacturers displayed their products, educational programs were held, and manufacturers from other locations rented storefronts to show their goods.

The leaders of the Grand Rapids manufacturing center in the 1930s needed to bring the decorators to Grand Rapids so that they could see the quality of American-made furniture. With William R. Moore of Chicago, they put together a conference to organize a national professional organization. The conference was held during July 1931, in Grand Rapids, and speakers such as Frank Lloyd Wright were scheduled to appear in order to entice decorators to the conference. The decorators were invited to the various manufacturing plants and showrooms to see the furniture firsthand. By the end of the conference, the American Institute of Interior Decorators (AIID)—the precursor to the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)—had been founded, with William R. Moore as its first national president.

World War II led to new manufacturing techniques that changed furniture and design styles. The modernism of the Bauhaus school—originally located in Germany—greatly influenced the design of buildings and interiors in the United States. Consumers had larger disposable incomes and were willing to buy again. It was during the 1940s that the term decorator began to lose favor in the industry. It was also at this time that educational standards and the number of programs offered grew, as interest in the profession increased. Massive growth in industrialism after the war also boosted the building, furniture, and interiors industries.

After World War II, nonresidential design became an increasingly important aspect of the profession for many reasons. The evolution of giant corporations was one factor. Curtain wall construction, suspended ceilings, and changes in construction to allow for vast, open interior spaces in office buildings all affected the design-build industry. Changes in the philosophy of the workplace created new furniture concepts, such as that of the “office

landscape.” As companies embraced this planning philosophy, new specialists in space planning, lighting design, and acoustics became part of the profession.

Commercial interior design was making an impact on the profession from a business standpoint as well. Some refer to commercial interior design as nonresidential or contract interior design. The term contract design grew out of early commercial design from the fact that commercial projects more frequently were executed based on contracts for services. Of course, both residential and commercial projects are undertaken after a contract for services has been executed in today’s professional practice.

Women were making an impact on the commercial design industry as well. Dorothy Draper (1889–1969) is credited with being the first woman interior decorator who specialized in commercial interiors.¹³ Florence Knoll established the Knoll Planning Group in the 1940s. This design company’s focus was on commercial interior design.¹⁴

New design concepts, as well as other issues, created tension and arguments over educational requirements and admission to professional associations for interior designers. A renewed debate ensued over the words “decorator” versus “designer.” As educational programs developed, curriculums varied, resulting in uneven preparation. It was recognized that education needed to be more stringent, with formalized preparation that went beyond aesthetics. The growing complexity of the work of the interior designer led to professional associations formalizing requirements for membership.

Major impacts on the interior design profession have been the increased availability to technology and globalization of business to enhance the work of a design professional. The technology of the Internet has given professionals the opportunity to market their services on a global scale. Although large firms have had the opportunity to be multinational for many years, now a potential client in a foreign country can discover even a sole practitioner in another country.

Embracing technology gives any size design firm many advantages. Designers now have the opportunity to search out products outside their immediate market area. Technology also allows for rapid production of design documents, and easy communication throughout the world.

The profession thrives during economic booms and, like every industry, redefines itself when the economy is slow. Regardless of the impact of the economy, interior design professionals and students will be faced with continuous change in the profession. Finding one’s way by gaining education, experience, and competency to work as a professional interior designer in the 21st century includes achieving knowledge and skills in professional practice.

New pressures and responsibilities will continue to affect all practitioners, businesses, and even students of interior design. This short history provides a context for the development of the interior design profession and is meant to give readers an appreciation of the roots of the profession called interior design. Table 1-1 summarizes its chronological development. Additional history of the associations is presented later in Chapter 2.

INTERIOR DESIGN VALUE

“I don’t understand why you charge so much!”

Most interior designers have, at one time or another, heard this comment from clients. Many professionals are stumped as to how to respond to this statement. Professionals and the profession still must combat the undervaluing of interior design services.

TABLE 1-1.

Highlighted chronology of the growth of the interior design profession

1878	First-of-its-kind semiannual furniture market. Held in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
1904	First real use of term interior decoration. First courses in interior decoration offered at the New York School of Applied and Fine Arts.
1905	Elsie de Wolfe obtains her first commission as an interior decorator. She is credited with being the first interior decorator.
1913	Elsie de Wolfe publishes the first true book on interior decoration, <i>The House in Good Taste</i> .
1920s	Greater effort is made by department stores to market home furnishings. Manufacturing centers of home furnishings begin to develop. Art Deco period creates greater interest in interior decoration of homes and offices. Dorothy Draper credited with being the first woman interior decorator to specialize in commercial interiors. Decorator clubs begin forming in larger cities. Design education strengthened in many parts of the country.
1931	Grand Rapids furniture show. Meeting to create a national professional organization. In July, American Institute of Interior Decorators (AIID) is founded; William R. Moore elected first national president of AIID.
1936	AIID's name changed to American Institute of Decorators (AID).
1940s	Post-World War II industrialism encourages new technologies in furniture manufacturing. Industrialism produces increased need for, and importance of, nonresidential interior design.
1950s	Development of open landscape planning concept in Germany by Quickborner Team.
1951	First time a state considers legislation to license interior design.
1957	National Society for Interior Designers (NSID) founded from a splinter group of the New York AID chapter.
1961	AID changes its name to American Institute of Interior Designers (AIID).
1963	National Office Furnishings Association (NOFA) creates NOFA-d (NOFA-designers), a professional group for interior designers who work for office furnishings dealers. Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC) founded to advance the needs of educators of interior design.
1967	NOFA and NOFA-d change names to NOPA and NOPA-d, respectively, when NOFA merges with stationery and supplies dealers to form National Office Products Association.
1968	Introduction of "Action Office," designed by Robert Probst for Herman Miller, Inc. First true open-office furniture product.
1969	Institute of Business Designers (IBD) incorporated. NOPA-d is parent organization.
1970	Charles Gelber elected first national president of IBD. Foundation for Interior Design Education Research (FIDER) is founded. Is responsible for reviewing and accrediting undergraduate and graduate interior design programs.
1972	CIDQ (Council for Interior Design Qualification) formed. It is responsible for the development of the NCIDQ examination.
1974	National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) incorporated. Charged with the development and administration of a common qualification examination. Louis Tregre, FAID, serves as first president of NCIDQ.
1975	American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) formed from the merger of AID and NSID. Norman deHaan is first national ASID president.
1976	The first Canadian provincial associations—Interior Designers of Ontario and the Interior Designers of British Columbia—were admitted as members of NCIDQ.
1982	Alabama becomes first state with title registration legislation for interior design.
1988	First major discussion of 1995 Hypotheses, the document that begins a discussion of unification of interior design professional associations.
1992	Passage of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which establishes accessibility standards for all public buildings.
1993	U.S. Green Building Council formed to promote sustainable design.

(Continued)

TABLE 1-1.*(Continued)*

1994	Unification of IBD, ISID, and CFID to form International Interior Design Association (IIDA). The existing code councils form the International Code Council (ICC) to develop a new universal standard of building codes.
1995	First International Code from the ICC is published.
1996	Federal government officially recognizes interior design as a profession.
1990s	Numerous states pass title, practice, or certification legislation.
2000	ASID and IIDA leadership begins discussions concerning potential merger. Talks discontinued in 2002.
2002	ASID and the Government Services Administration (GSA) sign an agreement to promote interior design excellence in federal buildings.
2003	InformDesign® is initiated as a Web site to locate and make available research on interior design practices.
2006	The Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) replaces FIDER as the accrediting group for interior design education.
2010	Update and revision of the Interior Design Body of Knowledge.
2011	Regulation and licensing continue to be sought after for the profession. IDCEC becomes an independent organization to coordinate continuing education offerings.
2017	NCIDQ examination begins being offered electronically.

Unfortunately, many clients still view interior design services as “fun” and “easy” and more “creative” than business. Because they see so many shows on television that seems to make doing interiors easy and fast, they lack appreciation for the profession. Added to this is the fact that designers do not communicate how interior design can be of value to clients so that the client questions the designer’s suggestions and fees.

To some degree it might be argued that we ourselves have been responsible for this misconception. Interior designers can be bad businesspeople: giving away design ideas at initial meetings; being unconcerned about costs in running a business; and (frankly) letting the designer’s ego get in the way of solving the client’s problem. These kinds of behavior do not identify good businesspeople. The media contribute to this undervaluing of design as well, too often portraying interior design as easy or frivolous. And with so many people offering design and decorating services—many for free—why should clients value interior design?

Part of the problem arises because interior design is an *intangible*: it doesn’t exist until after it is done. The only way that the clients can judge the quality of what they hope they will get is by seeing photos or drawings of work that the designer has done for someone else. They can feel a product; they can get comparisons online. Frequently the basis for judging the quality of what they will get from an interior designer is personal aesthetics—and that is very subjective.

As competition increases, designers have become more aware that they are not solely in the business of creating wonderfully aesthetic and functional interiors. Clients, including residential clients, are very interested in how the work of the interior designer will benefit them. Sometimes this is primarily a financial consideration. Sometimes this results in an interior that soothes the soul or creates a low carbon footprint, or provides a healthy place for the inhabitants. Interior designers can bring order out of chaos. They can bring psychological comfort to those traumatized by serious health issues. They can bring joy to children in a play area. And these do have value.

Thus, the interior designer must communicate his or her value and worth to a project on the basis of factors beyond how nice it will look at the end and the discount the client will get on furniture. The designer brings value because of his or her professional education, knowledge of how to make a space work better, be healthier, improve the users' comfort in the space, and, yes, look better.

The value of interior design also increases in the minds of clients as they see that the design community is committed to community service. Providing their problem-solving skills to nonprofit organizations like the Ronald McDonald House shows the community that interior designers are not just interested in making money by selling expensive furniture. It shows the community that interior designers are interested in the community at large.

It is hard to argue the fact that most individuals who choose interior design as a profession do so to apply their creative and aesthetic skills and talents to interior spaces. Consequently, those projects arguably improve the aesthetics of residences and various commercial facilities. Nevertheless, the true value of interior design goes way beyond these traditional views. As interior designers know well, the colors chosen for an interior can create excitement or calm. The fabric chosen can reduce maintenance issues or explode them. The products themselves, if not chosen wisely, can sabotage basic safety in an emergency or emit poisonous and harmful fumes.

An individual I once worked with, at an office furnishings dealership, introduced the design department to a client by saying "and this is the icing on the cake—the design department." Interior design is much more than icing, regardless of the space. The designer brings value to the client through his or her knowledge, experience, and skills gained through educational training and work experience. As you will read in depth in Chapter 2, these elements are critical keys to the advancement of the individual and the profession.

THE BUSINESS OF INTERIOR DESIGN

Not all designers get to work on multimillion-dollar residences, mega-hotels, or the latest celebrity chef's restaurant. The vast majority of interior designers work on smaller projects of various kinds. They help a family get a new home ready for occupancy and enjoyment. They remodel a franchise motel/hotel along the freeway. They give new life to a restaurant that needs a fresh look. They help seniors adjust their home environment to be more ergonomically friendly. Quite honestly, they might also simply specify new wall treatments, a few pieces of furniture, and stage a house for resale.

Interior design is all of these things and many more. It touches people in all walks of life and all economic positions. Also, it is a global profession: Interiors play a significant part in helping businesses succeed and people to feel comfortable in their homes throughout the world. Designers also increasingly seek out work in countries other than the United States. Many other countries desire the look of design that resides here. The amount of work done out of the United States by the largest firms continues to grow.¹⁵

International design work is not something to seek without thought and planning. Even when it is a rather simple incursion due to an international client finding a designer's Web site and making a contact, saying a quick "yes" may not be the right answer. The designer must understand the business consequences of working internationally. When that client wants the designer to travel to the foreign country, the designer must have a good understanding of what it will mean to work out of the country. Chapter 3 will discuss many issues related to working internationally.

It is important for the student and emerging professional interior designer to understand what it is like in the real world. This section presents some basic yet very important information to help readers understand that interior design is a business as well as a creative opportunity.

For a business to exist and (we hope) succeed, it must have at least three elements. First, it has to have people who are committed to operating and participating in the business. Second, it must have customers or clients who will purchase whatever the business provides in terms of services and possibly products. Third, it must have adequate financial resources for operation.

People

An interior design business starts with the owner committed to doing design work the way she thinks is right. The owner should have experience in the field before opening the doors. Many students think that once they have graduated from a program, they are automatically ready to open their own offices. Some do. Many fail and end up working for someone else.

When you read Chapter 19 and the other chapters dealing with creating a design business, you will gain a deeper appreciation for what it is to be the owner of a design firm—even one whose only employee is the owner. There is a lot more to it than having a diploma, passing a licensing exam, and setting up an office.

There is risk involved in opening a business: financial risk, legal risk, and even risk in hiring employees. Employees—the people of the firm—must work as a team and must work in accordance with the rules the owner has set up. If you work for a sole practitioner or any small design firm, your willingness and ability to be a team player are crucial. Each individual in the company has a role on the team. Sometimes that role is not very glamorous. Not everything about interior design is glamorous.

As an employee, you need to remember that the firm does not belong to you. The owner, not you, makes decisions concerning how to go about doing a design project. The owners may veto work that you have spent hours doing with a wave of the hand. Guess what? It's their prerogative to do so, because it's their names on the door. Their risk is paramount to yours.

As the new person in the office, it is wise for you to keep your eyes and ears open; listen and observe what is going on. Each office has its way of doing things, and you need to learn those processes. Become a team player, and your experience opportunities will grow, just as your experience as a professional interior designer will grow.

Clients

You will read in the chapters concerning marketing, strategies and methods that the business must utilize to attract new business. Your boss will spend a great deal of time cultivating business and projects for the firm. Certainly some client opportunities walk in the door because of a referral or something the client saw on the Internet or in a magazine. Those are part of the strategies and methods that the owner must use to cultivate clients.

Design firms work very hard to create an image that they hope will appeal to potential clients. That image is commonly referred to as the company's brand. A design firm's *brand* is the combination of images and encounters that the customer perceives, accepts, and experiences with a company providing services and (depending on the company) selling products. You and your work express that brand to clients.

Clients have an impression of what it is like to work with an interior designer. That impression has been fostered by what clients see in the media,

movies, and previous experiences with designers or others in the design-build industry. For many, the reality of working with you or others in the studio will be different from what their reference impression is. That is why your boss, your professors, and this textbook stress the importance of professionalism. The more professional you are in your interactions with clients, coworkers, vendors, and others who come in contact with the firm, the stronger the firm's brand will grow.

Financial Resources

Marketing brings in clients with projects. Those projects bring in the funds to pay salaries and operate the business. Our industry and profession have suffered through recessions as well as exceptional economic times. But the financial resources needed to operate the practice are never easy to obtain and retain. When your boss is concerned about someone in the office using the telephone or Internet for personal use, she is probably remembering that those personal calls cost the company—not the user—money.

A firm makes money by charging design fees for services and perhaps by selling merchandise to clients. Design services have a cost to the company, as well as representing revenue. The biggest cost to the firm for providing design services is the salary of the designer. As you will read in Chapter 29, salary is not the only part of the employee cost of providing design services.

There are other costs involved in those services. The company has to pay utility bills, buy supplies like pens and ink for the printer, and pay monthly Web fees. These operating expenses are deducted from the revenue that is obtained from clients. Only after the expenses are paid does the firm make a potential profit. And when there is no profit, there are no funds for the owner to provide benefits to employees.

You might not think it's important to understand accounting, but it is. Chapter 28 on basic accounting and money management will not teach you how to be an accountant or how to keep the financial records, but it will help you understand the important point that revenue and profit are not the same thing. Just because the company has sold a sofa or charged a design fee does not mean it has made a profit and can now give you a raise.

Profit only results after all the expenses of the company are subtracted from revenue. So, when it costs your boss more to operate the company than the amount of revenue the company brings in, a loss occurs. Too many months of operating at a loss means the owner might have to let you go and even close the doors.

As a final note, the business of interior design, which is the professional practice of interior design, goes way beyond just design. It is important for the student, the emerging professional, and the experienced interior designer to understand ethics, legal issues, contract creation, and appropriate ways to be compensated for work. It is also critical to be a good project manager, as any project (regardless of size) has many components to be controlled. It is also important for anyone in the interior design profession to understand basic accounting, marketing strategies, and how to organize a practice, operate that business, and hire and manage employees. All of these topics and more are presented in this textbook.

The "real world" of interior design is at times glamorous. Yet, it is also many hours of paperwork to create specifications, prepare drawings, resolve problems with vendors, track missing furniture, and more problems that you probably don't want to read about right now! Mostly, it is an opportunity to create places for people to come home and be safe and comfortable, to encourage recovery from illness, to enjoy a special event or vacation, and so on. It is a great way to work and make a living. Very few interior designers who have worked for several years would say differently in good times—or bad!

Interior Design Economic Snapshot

The vast majority of interior design businesses are sole owners or very small companies with five or fewer employees. Because of this, the economic impact of interior design is hard to judge. These businesses stay under the radar of most agencies that gather information on industry. Like many businesses, interior design booms when construction and the general economy boom and falls when a recession hits.

The economic impact of the profession can be discovered, by research on the Internet and contacts with professional organizations. One place to find the impact of interior design related to the general economy in the United States is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). It publishes a report on occupational outlook that pinpoints various occupations, including interior design. It is referred to as SOC Code 27-1025.

The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* on the BLS Web site (www.bls.gov/ooh/arts-and-design) gives information on overall job outlook for the next 10 years. It provides other information such as median pay, job outlook in the future, and other important general information. It also provides general information on the interior design profession for anyone looking at interior design as a career.

Although this is an annual report, the information is likely to be one year behind the year you search (i.e., 2019 will show 2018 figures). The BLS suggests that interior design employment will grow over the next several years; it reports that in 2016, the number of those employed as interior designers was 66,500 and that the number is expected to increase by approximately 4 percent by 2026.* The median wage in 2017 was reported as \$51,500.** Additional information on salaries in interior design is provided in Chapter 29.

Median wage information on many cities can be accessed from the U.S. Department of Labor site www.careeronestop.org. This site allows you to compare wage information by state. You need to click the tab “Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media” to find the information on interior design. There is other information on that site related to job search.

A useful report is published by ASID is titled: *The Interior Design Outlook and State of the Industry*. There is a charge for this report for nonmembers, but it is well worth the cost. It provides information on economic outlook, employment, design specialties, and other interesting information. Readers may also want to check with the International Interior Design Association or other professional associations for additional reports on economic and demographic topics. This report can be found on the ASID Web site www.asid.org under the tab research.

Interior Design magazine annually provides interesting statistical information on very large (“giant”) interior design firms. This information gives a glimpse of the economic impact of the interior design profession. The January 2018 issue reported group earnings at \$4.1 billion in fees.*** This report also indicated median salary rates (\$75,000 for “designer”).

The *Interior Design* magazine report also provides information on the amount of fees earned by specialties, including residential and the largest firms that do foreign projects. Remember that salary rates in this report are for the 100 largest design firms participating in this annual report; they may not reflect salary rates in your area. Note also that these types of data reports lag approximately one year from when the data were obtained.

*U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Occupational Employment Statistics: 27-1025 Interior Designers” (as of January 2019). Available at www.bls.gov/oes

**U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Occupational Outlook Handbook.” Interior Designers. January 2019. Available at www.bls.gov/ooh

***Zimmerman, January 2018, pp. 103–120.

WEB SITES RELEVANT TO THIS CHAPTER

www.asid.org American Society of Interior Designers

www.cidq.org Council for Interior Design Qualification

www.idcec.org Interior Design Council for Continuing Education and, Inc
www.interiordesigncanada.org Interior Designers of Canada
www.iida.org International Interior Design Association
www.bls.gov U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
www.careeronestop.org CareerOneStop is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor
www.ncidq.org National Council for Interior Design Qualification

KEY TERMS

<i>ateliers</i>	Profession
Brand	Pro bono
Commercial interior design	Residential interior design
Contract design	Social responsibility
<i>Ensembliers</i>	Vignette
Interior design	

KEY NAMES

Elsie de Wolfe	Florence Knoll
Norman deHaan	Eleanor McMillen
Dorothy Draper	William R. Moore
Charles Gelber	Louis Tegre

ORGANIZATIONS

American Institute of Decorators (AID)
 American Institute of Interior Decorators (AIID)
 American Institute of Interior Designers (AID)
 American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)
 Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) (formerly FIDER)
 Institute of Business Designers (IBD)
 Interior Design Council for Continuing Education and, Inc (IDCEC)
 Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC)
 International Interior Design Association (IIDA)
 International Society of Interior Designers (ISID)
 Interior Designers of Ontario www.arido.ca
 Interior Designers of British Columbia www.idibc.org
 National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ)
 National Office Products Association (NOPA)
 National Society for Interior Designers (NSID)

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Each chapter concludes with several situations that may or may not involve ethical behavior or other professional choices and challenges. These scenarios

can be discussed individually or in groups. As you read these scenarios, consider ethics, good business practice, and overall professional conduct.

1. It came to Phyllis's attention that her boss was considering hiring a designer—Jane Doe. Phyllis knew Jane because they worked together at a different design firm a few years ago. Phyllis knew that Jane had been fired because the other employer discovered Jane falsifying several types of client documents in connection with projects. Jane found out this information from someone at that previous firm after Phyllis had left the firm. Phyllis was not sure what to do—keep quiet or report Jane's behavior to her supervisor.
2. Alex has been designing hospitality spaces in the East for six years. She has become increasingly interested in sustainable design and is planning to become LEED® certified. A former client, Robert Smith, has contacted her about the design of his second home in Wyoming. Because Alex started in design at a residential furniture store/studio, she feels very comfortable in doing the project.

Mr. Smith wants to use green products, but is concerned about the extra costs. He heard from a friend that “green stuff costs a lot of green.” The client wants Alex to do the interior planning and specification and to use green products if they do not cost too much. He is also reluctant to pay the fees that Alex plans to charge to cover her travel. He suddenly says, “Let's reduce your carbon footprint by not having you travel to the job site at all.”

3. Roberta owns a design studio and specializes in the design of high-end residential projects. She has recently lost two projects to a competitor where a former employee now works. One of those projects was for a former client couple, who are building a very large penthouse in Manhattan.

Roberta is quite upset about losing the project for the former clients. She thought they had gotten along very well and doesn't understand why the clients would go to someone else. She calls the former clients to ask why they went with a different designer. Feeling that she got an unsatisfactory answer, Roberta now plans to ask vendors about the designer who was given the contract by her former clients.

REFERENCES

1. *Concise Oxford American Dictionary*, 2006, p. 706.
2. Johnson, 1995, p. 216.
3. Marshall, 1998, p. 527.
4. Jensen, September 2001, p. 91.
5. Council for Interior Design Qualification, Inc. (CIDQ), 2019. www.cidq.org
6. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site, www.bls.gov
7. Pile, 2005, p. 180.
8. Campbell and Seebohm, 1992, p. 70.
9. Abercrombie, December 1999, p. 148.
10. Abercrombie, December 1999, p. 146.
11. Pile, 2005, p. 317.
12. Carron, 1998, p. 72.
13. Tate and Smith, 1986, p. 322.
14. Russell, 1992, p. 11.
15. Zimmerman, January 2018, pp. 103–120.