

13

Investment in Knowledge: Commitment to Learning/ Applying/ Creating

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Many designers share a common frustration: they feel undervalued by their clients and marginalized by other professionals. This perception (and probable reality) stems from designers' failure to recognize the importance of knowledge in design practice. This knowledge is two-fold: (1) knowledge about the process and possibilities of design—not simply the output, but the outcome—and (2) knowledge about the client and the context of any design project. With this knowledge, designers can demonstrate that their services are more than a commodity and genuinely *add value*. They will also be better able to set, manage, and meet the expectations of clients and peer professionals.

The acquisition of knowledge, in and of itself, is not the answer, but a commitment to life-long learning may be. The “magic” is not in information itself, but rather in knowing what to do with it. Learning is a way of approaching problems and projects that improves both the process and the outcome. Learning can prepare designers to better understand the conflicts clients face in providing a more effective place to work or a satisfying place to live within constraints related to the project. Through increased awareness and knowledge of the client's world, designers are better prepared to identify their client's motivations and needs and thereby develop effective solutions.

THE PRACTICE

Design is a process of applying a body of knowledge and the ability to create toward the realization of an outcome. Interior design, more specifically, occurs in the arena of the interior environment. Examining each of these elements—“a process,” “a body of knowledge,” “the ability to create,” and “the realization of an outcome”—in the context of interior environments places the challenges and opportunities facing the profession into sharp focus.