

Design practitioners contribute to and strengthen the profession when they expand the body of knowledge that defines interior design. These knowledge areas can include such “soft” areas as human behavior or ethnography ...

We debate the appropriate balance between personal responsibility and government intervention and support.

On the level of commerce, every enterprise, from health care to retail to corporate America, is grappling with the e-phenomenon and the uneasy feeling that the rules have changed in ways we do not yet understand. New businesses are springing up to combine commodity purchases across multiple corporations and capitalize on massive buying power, while other companies are replacing the intermediary with direct channels of access. In the field of interior design, clients are seemingly at once both more knowledgeable and less well equipped to address their own issues. And they expect designers to deliver solutions that are more dynamic, contextual, and intelligent than ever before.

Coping with these phenomena (let alone contending with them successfully) requires that designers respond at three interrelated levels—personally, in their business decisions, and with societal interests in mind. If the design profession employs the design process in the service of effective environments (or experiences) at all three of these levels, it can truly be part of the solution to the problems clients are beginning to sense they now face. Getting there requires understanding the ideas described above—the process of the activity, creative ability, the application and integration of knowledge, and the goal of an outcome. Understanding in all of these areas is strengthened and nourished by learning.

THE VALUE OF LEARNING

Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* is the classic business text for advocating the value and characteristics of learning organizations. This book is extremely valuable for a number of reasons; it serves as a wonderful example of valuable knowledge outside of the design profession; it clearly demonstrates the benefit of an attitude or practice of life-long learning for the individual, the practitioner or member of an enterprise, and the profession; and it provides a practical road map for developing such a practice.