The real subject of interior design is enclosed space— *that is, the* settings *within buildings that house human activity. First and foremost, interior designers are concerned with how people* experience *these settings . . .*

In trying to define professionalism, Maister lists the following distinguishing traits:

- *Taking pride in your work (and being committed to its quality)*

- *Taking responsibility and showing initiative*

- *Being eager to learn*

- *Listening to and anticipating the needs of others*

- *Being a team player*

- *Being trustworthy, honest, loyal*

- *Welcoming constructive criticism*[2]

His point is that professionalism is not just education, training, a certificate or license, and other credentials. In saying that these things are *not* the *sine qua non* of professionalism, Maister is really arguing for a *client-responsive* professionalism—as opposed to one that uses its credentials and presumed expertise as an excuse for ignoring or even bullying the client.

Arrogance is an issue in the design professions. Too many designers regard their clients as patrons, not partners. Design commissions become opportunities to further personal ambition rather than meet the client's goals and needs. The implication is that design is self-expression, that the creative process is largely if not exclusively the province of the designer alone.

Although there is inevitably an aspect of self-expression in the design process, its creative power is enhanced, not diminished, by collaboration. In collaboration, we become partners in a larger enterprise, and that gives our work its energy and spark. In arguing for "professionals who care," Maister is drawing attention to the collaborative nature of their relationships with their clients. It is a partnership to which both parties contribute their expertise. Formally, professionals act as the agents of their clients. As professionals, they have other obligations that affect this relationship—obligations that are intended, among other things, to protect clients from themselves. However, designers who assume they "know better" than their clients miss the opportunity to get into their clients' heads and understand their world. They need that knowledge to connect their work to their clients'