

Specialty practices related to the interior design profession are numerous, and new practice areas are developing each year. Designers have traveled widely divergent career paths as they seek, or perhaps stumble upon, their optimum professional role in one or more specialty practice areas. To that end, each category below will highlight real-life examples of interior design professionals who have enjoyed professional growth and experiences in providing specialty practices, outside the core services of interior design, to identify not only what sort of work specialty practices entail, but also the types of personal characteristics that make specialty practitioners successful. For the purposes of this chapter, three broad categories of specialty practices will be addressed: facility management, workplace consulting, and short-term design. Within each of these broad headings, the most prevalent specialty areas will be addressed. Additionally, because the interior design professionals providing these services often work on-site with the client, or may be hired on a contractual basis, a focus on outsourcing will be included in this chapter.

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Facility management, as defined by the International Facility Management Association (IFMA), is “the practice of coordinating the physical workplace with the people and work of the organization. It integrates the principles of business administration, architecture and the behavioral and engineering sciences.” Because many clients of interior designers are facility managers, it is only natural that designers have developed specialty practices in interior design in response to the needs of the facility management profession. As interior designers observe, study, and listen to their clients who are facility managers, they have identified particular needs that require special attention and focus. For some designers, such as those who provide computer-aided facility management (CAFM), specific training is required. Often, the facility manager does not have the time, resources (whether staff, equipment, or funding), expertise, or desire to provide the necessary services in-house. Thus, several specialty practice areas related to facility management have emerged that logically may be provided by interior designers. The four most prevalent areas are churn work, relocation services, CAFM, and owner’s representation.

Churn Work

“Churn” in the workplace is simply defined as the movement of workers. Churn is inevitable, and is regarded as a necessary characteristic of a growing and dynamic business. Typically, churn occurs as a department increases or decreases its staff as a natural course of business. For example, a facility manager may receive a call from a department requesting additional workstations or offices to accommodate five additional staff members. Sometimes such a request is easily accommodated—for example, if the neighboring department happens to have five vacant workplaces. More often than not, however, even such a small request can result in a domino effect, requiring that the facility manager not only move people but also reconfigure systems furniture (workstations), demolish full-height partitions, and construct new ones. This “churn work” becomes a subset of interior design, requiring space-planning skills as well as furniture inventory, specification, and construction documentation services.

A facility manager often has in-house staff that is responsible for answering the churn requests in the company. However, he or she may also contract these services on the outside, usually with an “on-call” arrangement, by which an interiors firm may have an agreement to provide churn work as needed, based on an hourly rate or otherwise negotiated fee. Churn requests can be so common in a corporation that it can easily keep one or more persons busy on a full-time basis.

Corporate decisions cause churn to occur. Corporations are constantly adding people, rightsizing, downsizing, reorganizing, merging, acquiring, selling off divisions, creating new divisions, or changing for the sake of change. Elizabeth Seidel, an in-house interior designer and facilities services specialist with the Black & Decker Corporation, defines churn as “the constant movement of people.” She cites many reasons why churn occurs, including the obvious, such as hiring people or moving a department. Yet any change at all to an employee’s status often involves churn, such as a promotion, which may involve moving to another location in the company or to a private office, or an internal job transfer.

Naoto Oka, a design manager with the World Bank, is involved with churn on a daily basis. He says, “Churn work is like washing clothes in a washer. The size of the container remains the same but what is inside changes locations. If you use the right detergent, it gets cleaner. If you don’t, things just