markets, potential projects, competition, and just about anything else design professionals want to know. A well-constructed and actively used network can significantly improve a firm's efforts to get additional projects.

Networking usually comes to mind as a means of obtaining leads, but it can be used for much more. Networking allows design professionals to

- *Trade reliable information on new projects.*

- *Generate project teams or partnerships.*

- *Implement market research.*

- *Get information about competitors.*

- *Confirm or discount rumors.*

- *Uncover hidden relationships, or real decision makers.*

- *Alert others to changes within your firm.*

- *Obtain postinterview feedback.*

- *Save a lot of time (and a lot of money) because the firm won't be chasing jobs that are not real or for which the firm is not qualified.*

Every design professional already has a network. The "law of 250" says that everyone interacts with at least 250 people on a relatively constant basis. Part of this network is friends, family, and fellow employees. Part is a professional network of brokers, consultants, contractors, and professional peers. In this professional context, associations and societies can be very useful, and the most useful are those made up of potential clients, such as the International Facility Management Association (IFMA), the International Association of Corporate Real Estate Executives (NACORE), the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties (NAIOP), the Urban Land Institute (ULI), and the American Society of Hospital Engineers (ASHE). Other helpful associations are professional societies such as the American Society of Interior Design (ASID), the International Interior Design Association (IIDA), and the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Designers can also network productively with civic and government groups such as boards of major institutions and chambers of commerce, as well as suppliers of products.

The design professional's goal should be not simply getting the project, but establishing a long-term relationship. This relationship is created not through marketing the project, but through marketing the client.