

One outstanding example is Gensler, Inc. In 1965, Arthur Gensler began his eponymous company in San Francisco, with \$200 and two colleagues. The company initially provided space-planning services to business clients. Since then, Gensler's focus has expanded from space planning and office interior design to comprehensive architectural services; the company has grown from one office to 23 around the world, with more than 2,000 employees. Today, Gensler is acknowledged by its peers as the most respected and best-managed interior architecture firm in the United States.

THE INTERIOR DESIGNER JOINS THE MANAGEMENT TEAM: 1970 TO 1980

The volatile cultural climate of the 1960s and early 1970s may or may not have contributed directly to the ascendancy of the open office. Nevertheless, it was in the 1970s that major American corporations, including General Electric, began looking to Peter Drucker for management consulting expertise. Drucker, who coined the term “management by objectives,” was one of the first to see the information economy developing and with it a new type of employee—the “knowledge worker.” Drucker also insisted that decentralization should be the model of a company's corporate structure, and many companies took Drucker at his word and extended decentralization to real estate.

Until the 1970s, office buildings and particularly corporate headquarters were located primarily in major cities. The obvious advantages were access to business services and transportation. But high rental costs, combined with the competitive advantage of new and rapidly changing technology, escalated the cost of new construction and maintaining existing structures. It became expensive if not prohibitive for a large company to relocate to another downtown building that offered up-to-date infrastructure, the required technology, and other amenities. Soon, companies began to move their headquarters from the city to the suburbs, with its abundant land and low-cost spaces. The workforce followed, continuing the boom in suburban and exurban housing developments and shopping malls that began after World War II.

These trends, in turn, led to the speculative office building. In response to the exodus of businesses from the city, real estate developers created an entirely new type of office complex. Suburban buildings were no longer created in the image of their corporate tenants, like the Seagram Building or the CBS headquarters in New York City. Instead, developers created anonymous groups of buildings on cheap and vast expanses of land, much of it unused farmland. The model of a low-profile, meticulously maintained corporate campus replaced the intense, vertical office tower. In keeping with its emphasis on cost control, the speculative office building was basically a shell that required the most efficient, most cost-effective use of space. This requirement demanded an entirely new type of professional: the space planner.

In the space-planning process, the first step is programming. The space planner interviews the client and, through questionnaires and face-to-face meetings with workers and their supervisors, determines the amount of space required for various functions. Projected growth or shrinkage are factored in, and the collected data help the planner determine the amount of space needed for each function or employee. The end result establishes the square footage the client requires. Armed with this information, the real estate broker can shop the various spaces or buildings on the market, looking for the most favorable lease option. If the client is considering more than one building, the design firm rejoins the team to organize the program information into a space plan showing locations of partitions, doors, and furnishings. This allows the client to visualize how the organization will fit into space in one or more buildings.

Many large interior design firms were formed during this time, with several created for the sole purpose of offering space-planning services. Between 1974 and 1984, the number of jobs in the United States, many of them occupied for the first time by women, increased by approximately 24 percent. Commercial interior designers became increasingly competitive, positioning real estate brokers as intermediaries between their firms and their clients.

For the industry, this situation was a double-edged sword. Interior design professionals entered the decision-making process earlier than ever before, which gave them an opportunity to expand their role and increase their influence. Many interior design firms became expert at analyzing building options and expanded their services to include a full range of pre-lease services. This