

ultimately positioned designers as consultants who offered valuable advice that would have a strategic and economic impact on their clients' businesses. The downside, however, was that, as real estate brokers became more involved and aggressive at the planning phase of office design, clients expected to pay lower professional fees for basic design services.

In addition, interior design firms that provided only space-planning services contributed to the confusion about what a professional interior designer actually does. Traditionally, a new tenant's landlord had paid for space planning. The fee for this service was extremely low, averaging five cents per square foot. Full-service interior design fees, meanwhile, averaged three dollars a square foot. Many clients did not understand the differences between space planning and comprehensive interior design services, which include much more than programming alone. A contract interior designer has expertise in conceptual design, design development, contract documentation and administration, and furniture specification. In addition, qualified interior designers have the technical knowledge to integrate architecture and construction and the ability to create interiors that are not only efficient, cost-effective, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing, but that make workers more productive.

On a parallel track during the 1970s, as large interior design firms grew to accommodate the increasingly specialized needs of their corporate clients, residential interiors were created by practitioners associated with small or frequently solo design firms that offered a much more abstract product—good taste. Beginning in the late 1950s, Mies van der Rohe created landmark apartment buildings in Chicago whose interiors were in spirit if not in fact made for Bauhaus furniture. In the 1970s, European and especially Italian furniture design, notably from the Memphis group, contributed to the creation of innovative residences. For the most part, however, especially in America, homes that were professionally decorated recalled scaled-down versions of traditional British or Continental interiors. Following their training, as well as public perception, residential specialists were recognized experts at furniture, finishings, and overall visual presentation. They were not considered—nor did they consider themselves to be—strategists or planners. The public perception of “interior design” had solidified early in the twentieth century. In the intervening century, particularly in corporate America during the decades following World War II, the definition changed but the perception did not.

The widespread misunderstanding about their expertise put interior designers on the defensive. Since clients who were knowledgeable about design were the exception rather than the rule, designers were forced to explain and justify the value of design. The situation was exacerbated for designers in the late 1970s with the beginning of the country's first post-World War II recession.

The 1970s were a wake-up call for corporate America. Not only was the economy shaky, but “Japan, Inc.” offered formidable competition. The corporate hierarchy was by now on the endangered list. W. Edwards Deming, an independent business consultant, had been an advisor to the Japanese after World War II. His concept of the learning organization, which he developed in the 1950s, had helped Japan achieve its own postwar business recovery. Deming believed that insights into the system and useful ideas for changing it should find their way upward from the bottom of the organization, not be handed down from above. He encouraged companies to foster their employees' intrinsic motivation and insisted that no one is better equipped to resolve systemic problems than the people who work with the system daily and who know it best. A true visionary, Deming foresaw the transformation of the American economy from goods to services and steered companies toward an emphasis on quality and customer satisfaction. He is popularly known for his concepts of “total quality management (TQM)” and “quality circles.”

Globalization signaled the beginning of the end for the bureaucratic mindset, particularly when it came to corporate design. The days of rigid design standardization were clearly over. As they acknowledged global influence and competition, corporations knew that developing new business approaches was part of the deal.

THE COMPUTER JOINS THE WORKFORCE: 1980 TO 1990

By the early 1980s, global competition had forced America to completely rethink the way it did business; in addition, advances in computer technology had reached critical mass. The resulting profound change for organizations, the workplace, and individual workers created a host of euphemisms for the word *lay-off—reengineer, downsize, and rightsize* among them. Just as