accountability feasible and to influence the entire project experience without being truly liable for others in the Project Circle:

- **Be vigilant in reporting.** *Although the designer may not create the work schedule for all parties involved in a project, the designer likely will assemble a project timeline for the client by drawing upon input from many sources. The designer is not the author of the schedule, but rather the reporter. Yet if problems arise in the timeline, the designer may be implicated by mere association with any inaccuracies. The designer must be attentive and proactive in reviewing the details that come in from all parties, to make certain that the schedule represents the best estimates of those who are responsible for the activities.*

- **Probe for details.** *Particularly in the early stages of a project, the client (and to some extent even the designer) may be content to deal with vague information. Although the client may not want to be bothered with minutiae, engineers and contractors live in a world of facts, where details help them make safe judgments. The designer can influence a positive project experience for all parties by serving as a detail-minded strategist:*

  1. *Educating the client about the value of detailed specifications so all providers can make fact-based decisions.*

  2. *Alerting the client that the need for details will come—and when.*

  3. *Helping the client assemble details that are meaningful to the other players in the Project Circle.*

- **Manage information.** *Even the smallest projects involve volumes of information. Regardless of project size, the interior designer must exercise careful judgment in handling all specifications and data. The designer's task is to get the appropriate information at the appropriate time from the appropriate source. Then, he or she must deliver it in a suitable format to the appropriate users when and where they need it.*

In a now-famous interview with Charles Eames in 1972, interviewer Madame L. Amic asked if Eames had ever compromised. He replied, "No, but I have willingly accepted constraints." A thorough understanding of relevant con-

straints and details shapes the attributes of a design solution. Vigilance in understanding the need creates a more intelligent response—one that may solve more problems than are presented by the client or are apparent upon engagement or preliminary review.

This thorough understanding does not mean that designers step outside their field of expertise, just that they understand how their field works in connection with other fields contributing to the project. Speaking metaphorically, the interior designer is the conductor of a large orchestra working to ensure that all the players come in at the right time and play their parts with technical accuracy. None of the actions described above will take the designer outside the scope of the designer's responsibility, yet actions such as these will allow the designer to exert an appropriate measure of influence on the project process as a whole.

JUST DESIGNER AND CLIENT

It is difficult to conceive of the interior designer's relationship with a client in isolation from the rest of the Project Circle; the relationships are numerous and intertwined. However, if it is important to recognize the complex web of players involved in an overall project, it is just as important to understand the client/designer relationship. The interior designer may have limited control over the experience of the Project Circle as a whole, but the interior design team members have complete responsibility for the client's experience with their own service and outcomes. In fact, the way a designer manages a client relationship has a sizable impact on how the client will evaluate the designer's contribution to the business situation. This section of the chapter describes how interior designers can work to achieve total client satisfaction through effective business practices: building and supporting the core team, communicating effectively, and becoming a business consultant.

Build Support and the Core Team

Generally, the client expects to deal with a consistent team of a few talented, capable individuals who are attuned to the client's challenges, goals, and constraints. Typically, the design team might include a director, project manager,