insists, for instance, on informing everyone–from the CEO to the IT staff to the maintenance crew–about move-in dates and scheduling. "Moving can be a scary process," she says, but fear can be minimized by awareness and knowledge of what to expect and when to expect it.

Communicate not only about practical matters of timing, furniture delivery, and flooring installation, but about "ideas and concepts," says Todd Davis, who has found that such dialogue is a major contributor to a successful outcome. Unfortunately, "intelligent discussion back and forth is what's so often missing from the process," he says.

Be Flexible and Expect Surprises

The design process has a certain improvisational quality. Thus, serendipity and surprise are inherent aspects of the medium. With few exceptions, projects need to be planned up-front, off-site, and in the mind. Major financial and emotional resources are at stake. It is impossible to envision exactly how the final product will gel, despite renderings, models, and computer drawings approximating the results. Nor will mock-ups or prototypes capture the experience of walking through the completed space. There are no dress rehearsals in design; raw materials are gathered, and the process unfolds in waves of effort. Although any artistic process requires a gestation period to let ideas take hold, interior designers generally do not have the luxury of much more than refining an idea once the construction process moves forward; few clients have the budget (or the patience) to scrap a completed project and start over again when the desired outcome is not achieved. Successful design results from managing surprises and overcoming impediments along the way. Because of the amount and nature of anxiety this process breeds, gaining client trust is paramount.

Mutual Respect Is Key

Interior designers should respect their clients and their clients' needs and demands. But practitioners in the field should cultivate respect by upholding professional standards and ethical conduct. Clients should respect the designer's talent, experience, education, instincts, and vision, and the designer should likewise defer to the client as "the executive decision maker," says Todd Davis. "We tailor very much to the individual client. It's our job," he says, "to collaborate"–not dictate. The designer's *modus operandi* is one of inter-

pretation, of translating the client's verbalized goals into a physical, three-dimensional result.

Interior design is a profession, not just an art form. A client who calls that into question hinders the design. Moreover, designers should know where to draw the line–when to challenge clients beyond their comfort range (and when not to), how to lead them to inspired, even progressive, results. The commitment and faith of the client is of utmost importance. But nurturing a successful relationship with a client entails upholding a measure of professional distance, says Davis, "not about becoming best friends with the client." He considers if a potential client is someone "we could work with from a professional standpoint. There are a lot of people who don't have the proper boundaries when it comes to their homes," who are too controlling, who take the job too personally. "We are public servants," says Tony Chi. Nonetheless, designers are hired for their strategic opinions, and should not compromise their professional integrity by bowing to the client's every whim.

Be Realistic, but Don't Let Pragmatism Inhibit Creative Thinking

Maintaining a logical outlook concerning practical matters and economic limitations is paramount. But when it comes to the ideation processes, designers should think outside the box, and should not be afraid to challenge the client in innovative directions, says Chi. "After all, what do you have to lose?" The worst thing that can happen, he says, is that a client vetoes an idea that requires too much of a leap of faith. Oller, however, tells a cautionary tale. He cites a presentation that he and his partner labored over on behalf of a client who initially expressed the desire to explore a bold new direction. After many brainstorming sessions, significant market research, and reviewing the final concepts with scores of peers, "we thought we nailed it. But when we presented the proposal, the client freaked out because it was such a departure," laments Oller, who realized that the client was not committed to moving forward, but was actually looking for reassurance that their current image and look sufficed. The proposal was shelved and the client opted for small gestures instead, drastically reducing the scope of the project. Oller demurs, however, that if he had read all the cues, he probably would have discerned the client's hesitancy from the very beginning.

Davis issues the following warning to clients: "I may present concepts that will stretch your mind." It is better to offer innovation up front, "even if it's