



***“Where interior designers learn to earn what they deserve”***

Date November, 2019  
To: Valued Edge Member  
From: David Shepherd  
Subj: Monthly Edge Newsletter

### **Calendar of Events**

**\*\*\*No Monthly Coaching Call in November due to IDEAS 2019 Conference**

**November 14-15**, IDEAS 2019 Conference Online (Members automatically registered.)  
**November 15**, Edge Newsletter in your mailbox  
**December 5**, special Member year-end coaching call  
**December 15**, special year-end edition of the Edge Newsletter

***More Groups Forming Soon***  
***[designingprofits.com/groups](http://designingprofits.com/groups)***

### **Those Aren't My Shoes!**

You've heard it a million times: *“Walk a mile in my shoes. . .”*

Or, in a more contemporary marketing context, *“Put yourself in your customer's shoes.”* Whatever the context, no one can deny that there is value to be had by trying to understand at the deepest possible level what your customer is feeling and thinking before, during and after their project is completed.

I've mentioned over the past few months that I bought a new house and in a somewhat ironic twist to my own career, suddenly needed the help of an interior designer. I knew instantly that truly finding myself on the other side of that coin was going to lead to some very unexpected insights—insights that might give me some perspective which could help you.

The first such insight I've encountered has to do with the realization that the designer is not in my shoes, and you should probably be aware of that, too. I previously posed the question of whether, due to my intimate knowledge of how design firms work, I would be the dream customer or the nightmare customer, and after just a month of some preliminary conversations, I'm still not sure. I don't think my designer is, either.

But here is what I am sure of. Here are the shoes I am wearing. Here is what I know that my designer just might not fully understand:

***It's my house and it's my money!***

For years I have heard your stories, many of them told with absolute incredulity.

- *"I couldn't believe it! By the time I got back out to the house the next week they had already painted the living room. . . in the color I happened to mention in my first visit!"*
- *"I couldn't believe it! After I gave them the specs for their bedroom furniture, right down to the area rug and artwork. . . they went online and ordered it themselves! And everything they ordered was cheaper than what I wanted for them!"*
- *"I couldn't believe it! I brought my favorite general contractor out for two hours and he worked for hours more to put together the bid for a new kitchen. . . and then they took those ideas to a local design/build kitchen showroom and hired them to do the work. And they still wanted me to choose the countertop colors!"*
- *"I couldn't believe it!"* [Go ahead and fill in your most irritating *"I couldn't believe it!"* here. I know you have some.

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## What Am I Paying For?

As an interior design client, I'm a little confused as to what I am paying for. Put yourself in my shoes when my designer says, *"You know, if you removed that wall between the den and breakfast room, you'd actually have room to extend the existing counter, creating an island that people could sit at, all without having to do a complete kitchen renovation."*

Great idea! I really like it. And I paid her \$250 for the initial consultation. So, whose idea is that? **Did I pay for it? Do I have any obligation to her to be the one who draws it up?** To use her GC and have her manage the construction? If I'm considering new floors, do I have to wait until after that project is done and, if so, does that mean I am now dependent on my interior designer for other links in the chain? Is she now in charge of the floors, too?

You see, my house is a *"tweener."* I love it. . . a mostly one-story ranch style in a fabulous neighborhood on a 1.2 acre lot. One block over, many of the homeowners have stables for horses and cows for grazing. But my home is not what others are building; they're building McMansions. In fact I low-balled my offer so that it was very close to what someone else might have paid who planned to tear the house down.

Thus the *"tweener."* I'm caught between doing a fabulous upgrade (say, including the \$100k kitchen job) and never getting that money back, or doing the quick & dirty and knowing that it won't appreciate like others and might be hard to sell. (The small kitchen in big house problem.)

So, maybe. . . just maybe. . . because I have a brother-in-law who runs a construction company (though sort of low-end) I can just have him knock that wall down and build that island on the cheap, knowing that my designer probably won't like it.

But do I owe her an explanation? Do I need her permission? Do I owe her any more money if I move forward on my own? Can I tell her what I'm doing and still offer to pay her for another hour to get the right countertop specification? Or to call out the stools?

Or do I have to pay 2x or 3x more and wait a month or two longer to use her GC who doesn't even want to do that project until we have made all of the decisions on cabinets, flooring, lighting, etc.

Do I have to wait a week or two for his whole-house, six-figure estimate to get started on *anything*, or can I just have my brother-in-law send some guys over to knock this little project out in three days?

And if I do that, am I making a big mistake? Is the GC right that the "order in which we load the train" is critical and doing B before A is going to cost me more in the long run? (Are you nodding your head?)

And why am I paying \$3,500 for new tile around the edge of the pool? Because the existing tile is, uh, "dated?" And the house needs all new hardware for doors and cabinets? Why, exactly?

Speaking of why, let's think about who. Who thinks that this or that is "dated?" If I don't care whether the existing brass and porcelain door handles are "dated," why would I change them? It's not that I like them or don't like them. . . *I just don't give a damn!* So when, like "Fronk" (the wedding planner in *Father of the Bride*, played incredibly by Martin Short) the designer turns to the GC and says, blithely, "*Of course all the hardware will need to be replaced. . .*" I understand that she is most definitely not in my shoes, and it becomes very clear to me:



*"Of course all the hardware will have to be replaced,"* says the designer. But what if I, the homeowner, don't care? Who am I replacing it for?

***It's my house and it's my money!***

And I have no idea whether her throw-off statement, "Of course all the hardware will need to be replaced," just cost me \$2,000 or \$20,000! The extent to which she doesn't seem to care, raises my financial antennae.

In the end, I have decided that I will do what I want, when I want. Yet I still want her advice, especially on colors and surfaces. But

I'm confused. I don't want to be unethical and I **do** want to pay her for 100% of her rightful fee, I'm just not clear where the lines are. Are you?

## Going Deeper Into Your Ideal Client

I have written a thousand times about how complex your business is, and now for the first time I'm getting to see that complexity from the view of a client. I'm passing that on to you here as best I can. And by the way, my designer does a fabulous job of providing the step-by-step stages of a design project, both in conversation and in writing. Her LOA is very simple. She provides print-outs of the process in a nice folder.

But that is looking at things through *her* lens (shoes) and not mine. For my money, she should have spent less time on rushing to get whole-house renovation budgets together, and spent more time on me, on my personal goals and ambitions for the home. On whether or not I might want to do this in stages. On whether or not we should go ahead and move in, or get all the work done first. On whether or not I'm comfortable spending this much money, especially knowing that I've never taken on anything like this before.

All of this reminded me of a book that has become somewhat of a classic, one written by the great "BS" guru, Dan Kennedy. It's called "*The Ultimate Sales Letter*" and it's worth reading for lots of reasons.

One of the most valuable parts of the book is that Dan forces you to really, *REALLY* get into the head (yeah, shoes again!) of your clients and prospective clients. I've referenced this before when talking about direct mail by saying the headline on your mail piece must, "*enter the conversation already going on in your prospect's mind.*"

But what is that "*conversation?*" **If you don't really, REALLY know the mind of your client, you can't possibly guess.** For a kitchen remodel, the "*conversation*" within one prospect's mind might be about the joy of cooking, while another is about increasing the value of a home she wants to flip, while another wants to impress others at their regular dinner parties.

Sure, there's bait for every critter, but you have to really know what that critter likes to eat.

## Entering the Conversation in Their Mind

Here are some powerful questions that "*The Ultimate Sales Letter*" asks you to ask about your ideal prospective client. I promise (based on experience as an interior design client) that the deeper you can get in nailing this information, the more you truly will be able to "*walk*

a mile in your clients' shoes." In each of these cases, I suggest you focus on the questions as they relate to a design project only.

- 1) **What keeps them awake at night regarding their design project?** Is it the cost? The fear of making a design mistake? Ego? Overruns?
- 2) What are they afraid of?
- 3) What are they upset about? Who are they upset at?
- 4) What are their top three frustrations?
- 5) What trends are occurring that might concern them?
- 6) What do they secretly, ardently desire most?
- 7) Is there a built-in bias to the way they make decisions? (Example, emotional? Financial? Architectural?)
- 8) Do they have their own "language?"
- 9) Who else might they use, or how else might they approach this project?
- 10) Have they tried doing something similar in the past and how did that effort fare?

## Show Me The Money

To these questions, I would only add that no matter how wealthy a prospective client *appears*, I (speaking as a designer now) would spend more time determining what their **spending tranches** are. One doesn't get to use the word "*tranche*" much so I wanted to throw it in, but it fits. It's a word that essentially means "*layers*," which came into the business vernacular during the 2008 real estate meltdown as *tranche* after *tranche* of mortgage loan holdings began to default.

I, like almost everyone in the world (even the super-wealthy) have a budget number in mind for what I'll spend on *Tranche I*, but my designer has never asked for that number. I know, I know. . . buyers are liars and will never give you good budget information, and can always be induced to spend more, but I'm a bit more disciplined than most and it would help her to know.

More importantly, it would help me because I think she could truly help me to set priorities if we knew where to draw the lines between *Tranche I*, *Tranche II*, and all future tranches.

As it is, I'm having to do that math myself and pretty soon, she's going to be very disappointed. Here's my math:

- Total Budget (Spending level I will not go beyond in *Tranche I*)
- Less "*infrastructure*" like new AC units, ceiling scraping, pool resurfacing, and some flooring
- Less furniture we have to have
- Equals balance left to do construction or other projects.

While I haven't seen the numbers for those projects from her GC as of this writing, I know enough about those costs to know that Tranche I will only green light about 20% of them. The rest will have to pause for a while as I do the same.

Maybe my designer will be just fine with that. Maybe she expects it. Or, maybe she'll be hurt and offended and add it to her, "I can't believe it!" list.

Maybe we should have been communicating on the "money level" more often and more openly. I did give her a number when we first met as the one I would draw the first line under, but she blew by that and easily tripled it. Maybe she's read what I write about "anchor pricing" and just wants to put some big numbers in my head before we start cutting. Then again, maybe she's oblivious. I really don't know.

## The Magic Penny

I suppose that I've spoken the phrase, "1% is HUGE" more than any other over the past two decades of working with small business owners in general and interior designers in particular.

There are many different contexts in which to apply the "1%" principle, but one of them is how numbers grow exponentially if left to compound. This is why Einstein called compound interest the "8th wonder of the world," and why Warren Buffet realized he would someday be a billionaire after discovering the principle. . . when he was in 8th grade!

**The problem with compounding is that it takes patience.** To give you the incentive to practice the discipline required of compounding, you really must understand that the so-called hockey-stick curve doesn't show up for a long long time. The "magic penny" story can help to prove that point. Here's how it goes:

Imagine that you were given a choice between taking \$3 million in cash this very instant, or a single penny that doubles in value every day for 31 days. Which would you choose? I'm not asking you to use your skepticism to anticipate the surprise ending here. I'm truly asking you to imagine what you would really do if someone walked into your office right now with a briefcase filled with \$3 million in one hand and a shiny penny in the other hand and said, "Choose!"

To make this more fun, let's say that you and a friend both got to choose and that you chose the cash while your friend chose the penny. Here's what happens:

- On day five, you're feeling smug because you have \$3 million and your friend only has sixteen cents.

- On day ten, your friend still only has \$5.12 while you're planning your European vacation.
- After 20 days, with only 11 days left for the penny to increase in value, your friend's value has increased to \$5,243.
- And then the magic of compound interest truly kicks in as by Day 29, your friend has almost pulled even with you, now having reached \$2.7 million.
- But it isn't until Day 30 that your friend actually pulls ahead of you with \$5.3 million;
- And on the last day, Day 31, your friend who took the single, shiny penny blows you out of the water with \$10,737,418.24 to your \$5 million!

**Makes you look at those pennies in your pocket or purse a little differently, doesn't it? Compounding takes patience.**

## **Welcome to 2021!**

Wait a second. . . didn't I skip a year? Aren't we all just working on business strategies and setting priorities for 2020? Yes, but. . .

An exercise I'll be asking you do go through during the IDEAS 2019 Online Conference November 14-15 is one that you can go ahead and get started on now. It's simple:

In your mind, go to one year from now, or to the 4th quarter of 2020 and look back. Look back at the entire year of 2020 and ask this one question: *How will your business and life look if you are able to say, "This was an incredibly successful year?"*

That's it. Very simple, but very powerful. What will be different a year from now? What will there be more of or less of?

## **The Power of Optimism**

Have you ever been in a ride at Disney World or some other theme park in which you feel like you're hurtling through space, twisting and turning and racing along?

The engineering "*trick*" that makes you feel that way is one that has been used in flight simulators for decades. It turns out that it only takes a small physical move (say, 5 degrees to the left) to get our inner ear and equilibrium convinced that momentum has been created.

Then, the combined sensory overload of video, sound, wind, and other effects can keep our minds convinced that the momentum is continuing to 30 degrees, 45 degrees and more. . . even though our bodies have still been physically moved only that initial 5 degrees.

I believe that this same effect happens all the time in the real world, and the simple names for the ends of the spectrum are pessimism and optimism. We could, for example, wake up one morning to find a single negative email (contract cancelled, sink doesn't fit, colors are all wrong, etc.) and let that one email become the equivalent of our "5 percent" and allow it to trick our minds into all sorts of negative "what ifs?" that send us spiraling out of control.

The human mind has been proven to fear loss more than it craves gain, and everything from Milton's *Paradise Lost* to the latest political campaign ads remind us that the negative (literally Satan in Milton's case) are far more powerful and compelling forces than our better angels. ***In other words, the tendency to let that 5% negative momentum spiral out of control and ruin our day is strong!***

But you can take control and not only right the ship, but move it 5% of the way back to the optimistic side of things. Here's how:

- Write down a list of five things that have gone very well for you the past few months or years;
- Write down a few examples of why key clients will never leave you and keep coming back to you.
- Remind yourself how long you've been running your practice and remind yourself that you have been through worse and survived.
- Remind yourself of the 3-4 things that you are most excited about in the months and years ahead, even if these are speculative like winning the next big job.
- Remind yourself that you can and will and have fixed negative reactions by clients before, and that life goes on just fine!

What's wonderful about this formula is that you can use it as often as you want without change. I keep mine written on a legal pad that is always near. If I have a technical glitch or something doesn't work right, I just read my bullet points, right my rocket ship, and then do one more thing:

**Not only do I correct the momentum, but I commit to doing at least one thing that very day to accelerate the momentum toward the optimistic extreme.** This way, I won't just ingest the negative occurrence and neutralize it, rather, I will use it as a force to end that day in a better position and better state of mind than before I was even aware of it!

It's amazing how quickly and easily you can overcome negative input with this simple formula. I hope you'll try it.

## **A Successful Succession Plan**

I realize that only about 25% of Edge members are eyeing the exit door (generally age 55 and older) but what I'm about to share is just as

important for the 30-year-old member, even if simply filed away for future reference.

Before describing a successful succession strategy I've recently come across, I need to set the table with why so few of these efforts succeed. I have worked for many years with some of the most savvy and successful design-entrepreneurs in America to create succession plans. . . and most have failed spectacularly.

There are many reasons for why it is hard to sell a small service company of any sort, especially one in which the primary asset whose name is often on the letterhead (that would be you) is, by definition getting ready to depart! In fact, almost all of the assets are intangible, meaning they exist, if they exist at all, in such amorphous areas as "brand," "good will," and "reputation."

The most obvious buyer for a design business is a senior designer who has worked side-by-side with the principal for some number of years, usually more than five. Perhaps 20 years younger than the principal, this person knows the business inside and out. Some clients have even learned to ask for them by name, bypassing the principal! (That's a good thing at this stage.)

With the clients I've worked with, countless hours have been spent grooming this individual to take over, with careful attention paid to compensation, non-compete agreements, and an agreement by the principal to remain available for some time on a consulting basis.

You can just imagine the time it would save this senior designer compared to opening his or her own firm! There are already clients, a great portfolio, website, software licenses, business structure (LLC, S-Corp, etc.) and perhaps even a fully finished office and some employees!

What's not to like?

### **Left At The Alter**

**What's not to like is the risk of ownership.** Where I have seen the most carefully crafted transitions break down is when it is finally time for the buyer (senior designer) to put his or her name on the credit cards, on the office lease, on the paychecks, and on the corporate documents. In other words, to take the risk of ownership, the risk of entrepreneurship. (The word entrepreneur means "*willingness to bear risk*" in French.)

That's when they get cold feet. **That's when they literally bolt out the door, or leave the principal at the alter.** Even if they go to hang out their own shingle (the common result) they don't see that as

nearly as risky as taking on the "big firm" problems and potentially, a slew of unknown unknowns.

The principal now must not only maintain the business and complete the projects in house, but must do so without a key employee, one who possibly causes some tension on the way out, such as by wanting to use portfolio pictures for a new website of their own! Things can get cross-wise in a hurry. If they take clients with them—&%\$!!\*(&^!

### **The Solution?**

One solution that I've been following carefully (though those involved are not active clients of mine) is a case where the principal has been willing to retain the risk for as long as necessary for the designer (buyer) to get comfortable with truly running the business.

The website is still Gloria Peters Design Group. (Not the real name.) And when you go to that site, you see the GPDG logo and portfolio of beautiful work from years past. You see a history of the firm in the form of a bio. **You are filled with trust and a sense of stability.**

What you don't see is Gloria. You see the designer who has actually bought the firm from Gloria (after working for her for eight years) as the "principal designer." Beth (not her real name) is the only one you contact, the one who comes to see your space on the initial consultation, the one who does your budget estimates, drawings, and the one who makes all of the selection.

Beth is very much a sole practitioner running her own business, but under the umbrella of a 30-year company and all of their credibility. Her structure is still the LLC of Gloria Peters Design Group, which means that LLC and not Beth is taking any legal risk such as being sued.

Gloria Peters Design Group is still on the lease and the bank account, even though Beth handles them and makes all the payments. Gloria herself is available to Beth on a consulting basis, but I've been told that months go by with no communications; the company truly belongs to Beth who did make a payment up front to "buy" this arrangement from Gloria.

After some period of years, when Beth is fully comfortable with the risk of ownership, she will formally take over the LLC, or form a new one, as well as inheriting all other financial obligations.

Based on everything I've seen over the years, and how many small firms have been in this position (principal ready to retire and at least one long-term employee interested in taking over) this gradual transition to ownership, one that minimizes the white-knuckled panic of taking risks, may be a path that many can travel.

One last point about succession planning: It's impossible to start too early! As one business broker told me, "***The moment to start thinking about succession planning is the moment the thought first crosses your mind!***"

## Why Firms Fail

Everyone has heard the grim statistics about how many small business fail after 1 year (20%) 2 years (30%) or 5 years (50%), but not everyone understands why. I found the results of some research into the actual reasons in *Forbes Magazine*, and I'm going to present them with my own spin thrown in. Then, I'll add a few more that I see that are more unique to interior design.

- 1) **No Vision** – The very word "*vision*" can be confusing because people often substitute words like "*mission*," "*passion*," and "*purpose*," which may or may not be the right terms. What's really at stake here is the belief that you have something to offer and that alone drives you through the tough times and the un-fun parts of what is necessary to run a business.
- 2) **No Niche** – This is an area I have written about often and have challenged interior designers to "*keep on niching!*" It's not a niche to say you deal with "*high end residential*," or "*boutique hotels*" or "*kitchens and baths*." If you live in a major city, there could be hundreds of thousands, or even millions of "*kitchens and baths*." You need to define your niche so narrowly that your ideal prospect base is closer to 1,000! Only then can you afford to reach them with directed marketing campaigns.
- 3) **No Business Plan** – Here again, the mere term "*business plan*" not only means different things to different people, but has taken on different definitions over time. The last thing you need is an old-fashioned 80-page document projecting out five years. But you do need a way to commit your overarching strategy (what makes you different) into words so that you can memorize it and easily share it with employees, partners, spouses, and others who need to know.
- 4) **No Marketing Plan** – And to this I would add that all too often, interior designers have no marketing *budget*! They may spend some money when business is slow or the urge strikes them, but all too few make a consistent monthly investment in dedicated and focused marketing campaigns. (Think of the "*magic penny*.")
- 5) **No Action** – I would simply amend this to say, "*No Prioritized Actions*." **Surely you think you are taking actions all day everyday, but are they the right actions? Have you prioritized?** Do you know which actions will have the greatest direct impact on your goals? If not, you're likely working on the trivial many instead of the critical few.
- 6) **No Commitment to Learning** – Remember that I'm pulling this from *Forbes*, so my apologies to all Edge members who have clearly made a

commitment to learning! Having said that, and having asked Edge members to dedicate at least one hour a week to business skills training, you can do more if you want, and the most profitable interior designers I have ever known definitely do more! A lot more. They buy the latest books, go to every conference, join groups, ask questions and get involved.

- 7) **No Follow-up** – By and large, I find interior designers pretty good at following up with active clients, but not so great at following up with former clients and future clients, that is to say, prospects. The reason for this is that careful follow up really can't be done without a CRM system (customer relationship management) yet many of these like Salesforce or Infusionsoft are simply too complex to make sense for small firms. I've found some simpler ones and will be adding a tutorial to your Archives soon.
- 8) **No Consistency** – **I always ask consulting clients this question: "What is your timeframe?"** Their answer changes everything, because, for example, if we're talking about, well, implementing a CRM system and you are only willing to give it a month or two, that limits the options. If you are willing to give it three years and hire someone to manage it, well, that's a different answer. Both short-term initiatives or long-term initiatives have their place. Just know which is which and be consistent within that framework.

## **I Wish More Firms Did Fail!**

I said above that I would add some insights as to why interior design firms fail and not just rely on the generic list from *Forbes*. **But the more I think about it, the more I realize that the greater tragedy is firms that don't fail. . . but that probably should.** In other words, the firms (and yes, I'm talking to you, too, sole practitioners!) that just "hang on" for year after year. The firms in which the principals have created a hard-working job for themselves, but not created a business with the leverage and efficiency to allow them to earn what they deserve. Or to stop working themselves to death!

**Failure is not necessarily a bad thing.** When entrepreneurs fail, they are forced to ask "Why?" instead of burying their heads in the sand for another year of survival by their fingernails. In fact, we are fortunate to live in a country in which taking the risk of business ownership, and then failing, is often the first step to a truly greater resurrection!

## **What Would You Do Differently?**

I've never recommended this before, but I think it has the potential to be a powerful exercise.

***Imagine that your firm has failed. That it's over. The lights are out, there's no website or social media and no phones to ring. You now have six months to redesign your next design business. What's it going to look like? What will it do***

***differently than before? Better than before? What software will you choose? Will you have employees? An office? What level of sales and earnings will you aspire to, and where will your first client come from?***

### **One Foot in Each Boat?**

You've heard the expression about trying to change a tire on a car. . . while it's traveling 80 mph down the highway?

That's what making major changes to your business model can feel like, and the mere thought of doing so is enough to cause paralysis of inaction.

But when challenged on this question once in a Conference (*Business of Design* 2013 at the Wynn Encore in Las Vegas) I was forced to spontaneously come up with an answer that I think has been proven out over time.

**My answer about how to make radical changes to a business that is metaphorically traveling 80 mph, was to start a parallel business from scratch. A shadow firm. An alternate reality.**

Yeah, this could get complicated, but what I proposed was to keep one foot in your current "boat," while gradually putting the other foot into another "boat," the new more leveraged and more efficient boat. At some point, you could theoretically shift all of your weight into the new boat and let the old one go.

How does this work? Well, as I said, it's complicated in its entirety, but here are a few examples to get your brain working on the challenge:

- Suppose you're frustrated by your procurement software tool. I'm not making specific recommendations here, but suppose you've been using XYZ Designer, but have been hearing that ABC cloud-based software is really easy.
  - Fine: Don't make the commitment to switch, just make the commitment to run your next project in the new ABC software. Invest the time to learn it. Make it a small project. Run it in both systems if you're nervous, but check it out. Put one foot in the other boat but don't put too much weight on it. . . yet.
- Suppose you're frustrated with your website or your whole brand including logo, headshot photo, etc.
  - Fine: Go to an online website tool like [wix.com](http://wix.com) and find a template for interior design that you like. Get help from a (cheap) designer on [fiverr.com](http://fiverr.com) if you need help. Pay \$150 for a new headshot. Pay \$300 at [logoguru.com](http://logoguru.com) to have 30-40 graphics designers compete for your new logo.

- Put it all together with no risk at all; it's completely parallel with your existing model. Then, if and when you like it better than what you have, you just "flip a switch" and change sites.
- Suppose you've lost track of your "Rolodex" or way to keep track of everyone who has been a client, or even made an inquiry via phone or website. You have some in Outlook, some in QuickBooks, some in your phone apps and some in paper files. You want a way to organize them and reach out on a consistent basis for future business and word-of-mouth.
  - Fine: Get a very simple CRM that is either free or bills monthly to remove all risk. Then grab all those other sources and start putting them into your CRM. Even if you begin with only ten names, you'll learn enough to see if it's worth making a longer term commitment. ([OnePageCRM.com](http://OnePageCRM.com) is one that I recommend.)
  - Create a campaign of some sort. Tag the contacts such as with "Former Client," "Current Client," "Website Inquiry," "Phone Inquiry," etc. As you gain confidence, you can add multiple tags such as "Budget Category = High, Low, or Medium." Or, Specific Interest = "Whole House" or "K&B," etc.
  - If you like it, if it all makes sense, then you make a commitment and grow that tool to hundreds or thousands of contacts, while letting your old tools go.

Get the point? If you're thinking about moving out of your home, get a month-to-month executive suite to see if that feels right. Or, if you currently have an office but dream of working more remotely, do what one Edge member did and test converting every key function from desktop PCs to tablets. (Even Sketchup.) Then, she started spending days, and then weeks out of the office, finally letting it go.

In other words, she started gradually shifting her weight from one foot and one boat, to the other, before letting her original vessel sail away.

**Decisions don't have to be earth-shattering; they can often be tested in small increments and allowed to prove themselves. Happy sailing!**

## Time Flies

It was "only" in 1980 that Steve Jobs distributed this memo to all employees of Apple:

***"EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY!! NO MORE TYPEWRITERS  
ARE TO BE PURCHASED, LEASED, ETC.***

*Apple is an innovative company. We must believe and lead in all areas. If word processing is so neat, then let's all use it! Goal: by 1-1-81, NO*

*typewriters at Apple... We believe the typewriter is obsolete. Let's prove it inside before we try and convince our customers."*

Are you walking your talk? Or has something that you're still doing or using become obsolete? Perhaps years ago? What commitment should you make to the "interior design office of the future" that you're ready to pronounce today? When you have an answer, be sure and share it with me!

And while on the subject of Steve Jobs, he once said that this was the most important question he could ever ask of himself or of his employees: "**How many times did you say 'No' today?**"

## **Time to Mail Formal Invitations**

You know the type I'm talking about. Invitations to fancy weddings, balls, and galas. They reek of expense. They have real calligraphy on the front along with a real postage stamp, carefully selected for its design.

Inside, they're like a puzzle with layers of tissue paper, confetti glitter, the invitation itself and the RSVP card and envelope, also with real stamps.

Just receiving such an invitation gets the heart beating of those who want to belong! Who want to be someone! Who want an excuse to dress up and eat great food and taste fine wine. Or perhaps to hear a band, or a speaker, or see a work of art.

They want to mingle with others like themselves and perhaps make a bid at the silent auction. Perhaps it's even a formal affair. Or perhaps it's a rodeo.

**All I know is that people WILL RSVP to this invitation. They WILL show up, some of them. Plenty of them. Enough of them.** (They'll even add you to *their* next invitation list!) And who are these people? Your ideal prospects and most important influencers, of course.

And what, exactly, does the invitation invite them to?

Well, that's for you to decide. Truth is, it probably doesn't matter all that much now that the full psychology of "**inclusion marketing**" has been deployed!

Enjoy your event where you'll impress your next wave of whales, and don't forget to invite ME! (First class airfare included, of course.)

## I Know Where You Live! (Or Do You?)

Interior design websites have made several discrete transitions over the past few years. For a while many of them looked like postage stamp collections with all sorts of boxes and links and badges splashed all over them.

More recently, the dominant form (and a good one) has been to show a single and spectacularly beautiful full-screen image of a design you've done. (Secret: A Lot of designers are using exterior shots of a home for which they've designed the interior, letting the client *assume* in the first three seconds that the interior is equally spectacular!) And yes, most retain a fairly quick fade through 4-6 other images so that the first-time visitor is even more likely to fall in love with something.

But it occurs to me that with all the talk over the years about trying to identify and dominate a specific geographic area (like a wealthy zip code) it's rare that a visitor to your website will immediately know what that zip code is.

In other words, while we've spent years and sweated blood to have a visitor say, "Ooooooh, I like that!" we've invested little effort to have them say, "Ah, they work with my friends and neighbors!"

One other group of professional trying to dominate a neighborhood are of course, realtors. And one giant developer of real estate websites points out the importance of providing specific neighborhood profiles. This includes talking about values in that neighborhood, and what people are doing to improve and increase the value of their homes. (Like great design!)

Studies show that you have mere seconds to create a positive impression with visitors to your website, and to the extent you can combine, "I like that!" with "And it's in my 'hood!" the better off you will be.

Look at your own website today. **Is it clear to a visitor not just how you do business, but WHERE you do business?** If not, you might want to consider some tweaks as there is no greater bar to clear than that of trust, and we often trust our neighbors more than strangers.

That's it for now, so **go earn what you deserve!**



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