



# FUTUREvision

## U.S. Designers' Predictions for 2017

Research & Report by Deb Barrett & Susan Schultz



GRACE McNAMARA INC.

© 2007 Grace McNamara Inc.

## Introduction

*More than 400 designers from across the country were asked to gaze into the crystal ball and envision what and how they would be designing a decade from now. Three industry issues were up for discussion—changes in the home and lifestyles, client communications and presentations, and product sampling. Through a series of **charrettes** design professionals brainstormed on the potential challenges and possible outcomes; this report summarizes these predictions.*

The French word *charrette* means "cart" and is often used to describe the final, intense work effort expended by art and architecture students to meet a project deadline. This use of the term is said to originate from the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris during the 19th century, where proctors circulated a cart to collect final drawings while students frantically put finishing touches on their work.

Today charrette is typically used to describe collaborative sessions in which a group draft solutions to complex problems; a modern charrette is a fast-paced work session for team brainstorming. Its value lies in its ability to bring together disparate information from multiple viewpoints and a structure that requires consensual decisionmaking, this process reduces redundancies and the probability of unanticipated results, increasing the likelihood of the project's success. The charrette's success is based on the ability of the team to work together toward goals determined by all participants.

By involving all interested parties from the beginning, all participants are in a position to both understand and support the project's rationale. For designers a charrette can be an ideal scenario for problem solving—quickly generating a set of potential solutions while integrating the aptitudes and interests of a diverse group of people. It is this emphasis on multiple viewpoints that presents the opportunity for true creativity and innovation often yielding extraordinary results.

# The Design Intelligence Charettes

More than 400 designers from across the country were asked to gaze into the crystal ball and envision what and how they would be designing a decade from now. Take a look at the futures they predicted and identify your next new business idea!

## **The Home of the Near Future**

Our industry and the economy is rapidly changing; innovative products and services are coming to the marketplace at an increasingly fast pace. So, put your future glasses on and ask yourself: What room in the house will change the most in the next 10 years (2017)?

## **Marketing in the Design Economy**

You own Design Dimensions, a design business providing furniture, window coverings, wall coverings, and some color consultation to your clients. You have just discovered that an unlikely competitor is moving in and will be selling the same products and services. The competitor is Apple! Noted for their loyal customer base, great design and spot-on marketing, this will adversely affect your operation. It will be essential to develop new marketing strategies. Your efforts will include a creative consumer marketing event designed to combat the competition. Lucky for you, the sky's the limit as a major corporate sponsor has underwritten your event.

What's the event? Where is it held? What's the message/main theme? What elements will help combat the competition?

## **Next Generation Presentations**

As the principal in the same firm, Design Dimensions, look into the future and ask yourself: How will you present your designs and projects to your clients in 2017 and what role does sampling play? What will your sampling look like in 2017? How will you access/update/store/show your samples? How will you communicate your ideas & designs to your clients and your suppliers?

Other questions to consider: How do other industries, i.e., travel and automotive, present products to their customers? What products might you be selling that don't exist or that you don't sell now? How does sampling educate the customer? Have you ever thought how a designer explained the first Silhouette or vertical blind to their customer?

# The Home of The Near Future #1

*No matter what region of the country the participants hailed from, these were common themes in this charrette:*

- *A refocus and commitment to family resulting in intergenerational living.*
- *Light plays an integral role.*
- *Multi-tasking, multi-purpose & multi-function are extensions of our multiple personalities.*
- *Smaller housing footprints create more innovative solutions to storage, furnishings and organization.*
- *An underlying nervousness & concerns for the future drove designs with protection, refuge, safety as repeating themes.*
- *Windows still need to be decorated—though windows and building materials have moved into the future; existing categories were used to decorate the window.*
- *Eco, green and other environmental concerns move to the forefront.*

Several of the teams tackled the challenges that will face the sandwich generation in the coming decade. As we live longer a new set of problems arise—What is the definition of a family unit? What do I do with my aging parents? What do I do with my adult children that are moving home? How do I rekindle the bonds of all the generations within our “family” unit? As a designer how do I meet the challenge with my clients?

## **Intergenerational Living Compound**

Multi-generation living comes back into vogue, with homes designed to accommodate 3 and 4 generations of a family. With people living longer and children returning, the home will become an intergenerational nest with the living and common spaces changing the most. Built around an open floor plan, but with zones to define each generation’s living space, or perhaps generational wings separated by a courtyard. Smart house technology controls the climate, lighting and environment separately for each of the zones with a built-in communication system allowing the Elders to call for their children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren upon request! The house footprint is smaller; so furnishings and appliances are concealed and movable. Motorized window coverings; and renewable eco furnishings are used. Because the extended family covers all life phases, universal design concepts and techniques are employed.

The Elder Wing is:

- On one floor and ADA compatible
- A complete living space with a small kitchen, private baths, etc.
- Integrated voice activated system for lights, security and entertainment.

Playing to the baby boomer generation, the Elder Wing interiors would retain many of our current favorites: soft upholstery, simple lines for a warm, cocoon-like feel, with vibrant, rich but not pushy colors.

The “younger generation” space is:

- Trendy and cutting edge
- The latest technology
- Eco-conscious design and materials

## The Home of The Near Future #2

*Just as certain themes were touched on by various teams, it was clear that certain rooms are in for major makeovers. These are the top five spaces cited by most of the teams:*

- 1. Kitchens*
- 2. Living/Great/Family rooms*
- 3. Home Office*
- 4. Bath*
- 5. Safe/Panic rooms*

### **Jetson Geodesic**

Another team envisioned a 2,400 -3,000 square foot geodesic dome built on 4 pillars. Advanced technology creates the inner walls when and where they are needed, providing privacy and room functionality on demand to creating truly customized spaces. A trough around the foundation holds window treatments, because while the dome has no straight walls, there are windows in the dome and they still need to be treated. These treatments would rise and adjust on demand from the trough, disappearing completely when not required. Fixtures and furnishings are hydraulic, to complement the flexibility of the “light walls”. A no cooking kitchen is a feature, where food storage and preparation takes place separately from presentation and meals. Heat and cooling sources can be directed with pinpoint accuracy. Green materials are used almost exclusively for both building materials and furnishings.

Though this might seem right out of Sci Fi novel; some of these technologies exist today and are being used in other industries. Think of the many cellphones, mp3 players and even cars that currently feature voice activation for example, or screens that stream weather and other information. Ford Edge features voice activation GPS, music and weather for example.

*Main Market and High-End remodelers relate to their kitchens somewhat differently and have differing opinions on a number of kitchen-remodeling concepts. Main Market remodelers see their kitchens as more functional places and more describe their ideal kitchen as warm and calming. High-End remodelers are more likely to see their kitchens as centers of entertainment and describe their ideal kitchen as gourmet.*

*Designers or architects play a role in about one in five kitchen remodeling projects. As income increases, so does the likelihood of using a designer or architect for a kitchen remodeling project.*

## **In & Out Kitchen**

Kitchen/Living/Family rooms combine with the outdoors to create a multipurpose room to bring the family closer together. Designed and decorated in traditional style, the room still takes advantage of cutting edge technology and materials.

- Finishes and materials are eco friendly and include a mix of leathers and natural woods. Walls are made of non carcinogenetic materials, dropping down into pockets and screens popping up to take their place to merge the indoors and outdoors into one, while the floors and ceilings feature radiant heat.
- Windows are of climate controlled glass that darken and lighten like Transition lenses. Window treatments are motorized and solar controlled. Decorated traditionally and with swags and cascade de rigueur in the Midwest; they'll be used in the room. The 21st century take is top treatments that become shades and are hidden in ceiling pockets.
- Oh, the pool area comes complete with cabana boy!

## **Futuristic Kitchen**

Because everyone eats and everyone always will, the kitchen is a place of safety, community and gathering.

- A multi-tasking space with counters/cabinets and tables that raise and lower depending on the necessary use.
- Self healing floors and counters. Floors would be warm in the winter and cool in the summer and comfortable for lengthy standing.
- Halogen-based cooking for ultra-fast, low-power usage.
- Plenty of windows, all light sensitive, with integrated window treatments that would be remotely operated.
- Natural/eco-sensitive design elements are essential.
- A container garden for growing your own produce, in cooperation with neighbors. You grow the lettuce, someone else grows the tomatoes, etc. inspired our need for community and the WWII victory gardens.

## Next Generation Presentations

*75% of designers cite sampling as the most frustrating part of the design process.*

*Designers evenly divided over which is worse—the timeframe it takes to get them or the sample books themselves.*

*Manufacturers spend an average 8% of yearly revenues on sampling.*

*Manufacturer's costs range from \$100 - \$500 per sample.*

*50% of designers request up to five samples for each project*

*Designers have little use for samples that do not accurately represent real world colors and patterns.*

*It is common practice for designers to tear swatches out of a sample books.*

Remember the presentation challenge? As the principal in the same firm, Design Dimensions, look into the future and ask yourself: How will you present your designs and projects to your clients in 2017 and what role does sampling play? What will your sampling look like in 2017? How will you access/update/store/show your samples? How will you communicate your ideas & designs to your clients and your suppliers?

Other questions to consider: How do other industries, i.e., travel and automotive, present products to their customers? What products might you be selling that don't exist or that you don't sell now? How does sampling educate the customer? Have you ever thought how a designer explained the first Silhouette or vertical blind to their customer?

When we posed the question, “What will your sampling look like in the year 2017?” it inspired five fabulous ideas. The common threads through all were using state-of-the-art technology to create samples; co-branding amongst the industry's manufacturers, and curating and customizing sample books.

Take a look at the issues and concerns listed in the sidebar. Sound familiar? Though these statistics are from the carpet industry; they could easily be discussing fabric and window covering sampling. The issues are all the same; cost, packaging, timeliness and accuracy. Now factor in customers' growing insistence on greater pattern variety and faster-than-ever turnarounds...it will become more and more difficult to represent your design vision with the current state of sampling. That's where the following ideas come in...



## INTERIORS design intelligence

Charrette Recap/MindMap

Legend

Core Issue

Current Concerns

Possible Future Solutions

