futurevision

U.S. Designers' Predictions for 2017

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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.

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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 atest 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.

A recent survey done by Research and Markets polled 10,000 consumers and includes data on lifestyles, kitchen product shopping, purchasing patterns, market segments and trends in consumer preferences. Here are some of their findings that bear out these charrette conclusions.

While the kitchen certainly remains the hub of the American home, it continues to evolve. Almost 1/3 of American consumers now see their kitchen as a place where many activities take place, including socializing, household management, pet care, etc.

They describe their ideal kitchen as organized, comfortable, open, warm, family, light, happy and homey—key words to use in designing products and marketing them.

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Back to the Family

The kitchen of the future will take on many charecteristics, inspired by our overly hectic schedules. We'll realize how much we miss personal time with our families, but we'll still need to multi-task; so we'll entertain, cook, bake and look to skill sets of the past for inspiration. The living and kitchen area will merge into a gathering room, perhaps looking like this:

- A round, window walled room sited in the East or West corners of the house to take advantage of the light.
- Solar shades will control light and glare and give privacy.
- Banquettes surround the circumference. Multitasking furniture fills the room; ottomans becoming tables for example.
- Teak floors, a kitchen island with sink and stove is in the center further define the space. A saltwater aquarium divides the room from the rest of the house.
- This is a TV-free zone—no entertainment electronics are allowed. The room is a place for conversation and connecting to family and friends.

Modern Zen Kitchen

Combines natural materials and designs with the latest technology for a space that works well and feels right.

- Counters programmed to cool or warm certain areas based on food prep usage. Touch-screen recipes embedded into the counters or cabinets for easy access.
- Solar powered, energy efficient appliances are standard.
- The complete design is 100% current ADA standards (and more).
- Screen and monitors allow parent to check in on children and see what their doing in their rooms, on their computers, etc. and intervene if necessary.
- Don't forget the built-in wine cabinets!
- Overall a zen/green/eco feeling to the space-very natural/homey and non-industrial.

Busy lifestyles prevent the vast majority of people from preparing all of their meals at home every day. Only a third of Americans fix breakfast at home every day. Yet nearly three quarters frequently prepare dinner at home (5+ times a week).

Innovative technologies are becoming more popular but the most advanced technologies have a much stronger appeal among men than women.

Most kitchen remodels or improvements (59%) cost less than $2,500. About a third spend between $2,500 and $15,000 on their kitchen remodel (referred to as Main Market remodelers in this report) and one in ten spend more than $15,000 on their remodel (referred to as High-End remodelers in this report).

High-Tech Prep Room

Inspired by the separate outhouse kitchens of the past, some designers felt that the kitchen would morph into separate zones, "hiding" the prep work and allowing you to keep the kitchen picture perfect for guests.

This high-tech prep room might look like this:

- A voice-activated door separates the prep kitchen from the "real" kitchen.
- Granite countertops, long enough to contain all the necessary tools in plain sight.
- Natural, easy-to-clean flooring that is both supportive/comfortable and resists staining, chipping, cracking, etc.
- Little used tools would be in pop-up section of the counter.
- A large skylight plus windows would admit plenty of natural light.
- Motorized panels are voice activated to move into any position to control glare.
- Multiple sinks appropriate for specific uses: vegetables, bar prep, big pots & pans, glassware, etc.
- A flat screen, not only for entertainment but education, such as the recipe box, and how-tos etc.
- Compost and recycling areas would be seamlessly integrated in the workflow. Water would be recycled through reverse osmosis in order to cut-down on waste.
- The pantry in this space would be equipped with scanning software that automatically updates your shopping list, informs you which items you've had the shelf the longest, what you'd need to purchase for the recipie you just reviewed on screen, etc.

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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 radient 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!

Futurustic 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.

From a carpet industry survey conducted by Grant Design Collaborative in 2003/2004.

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?

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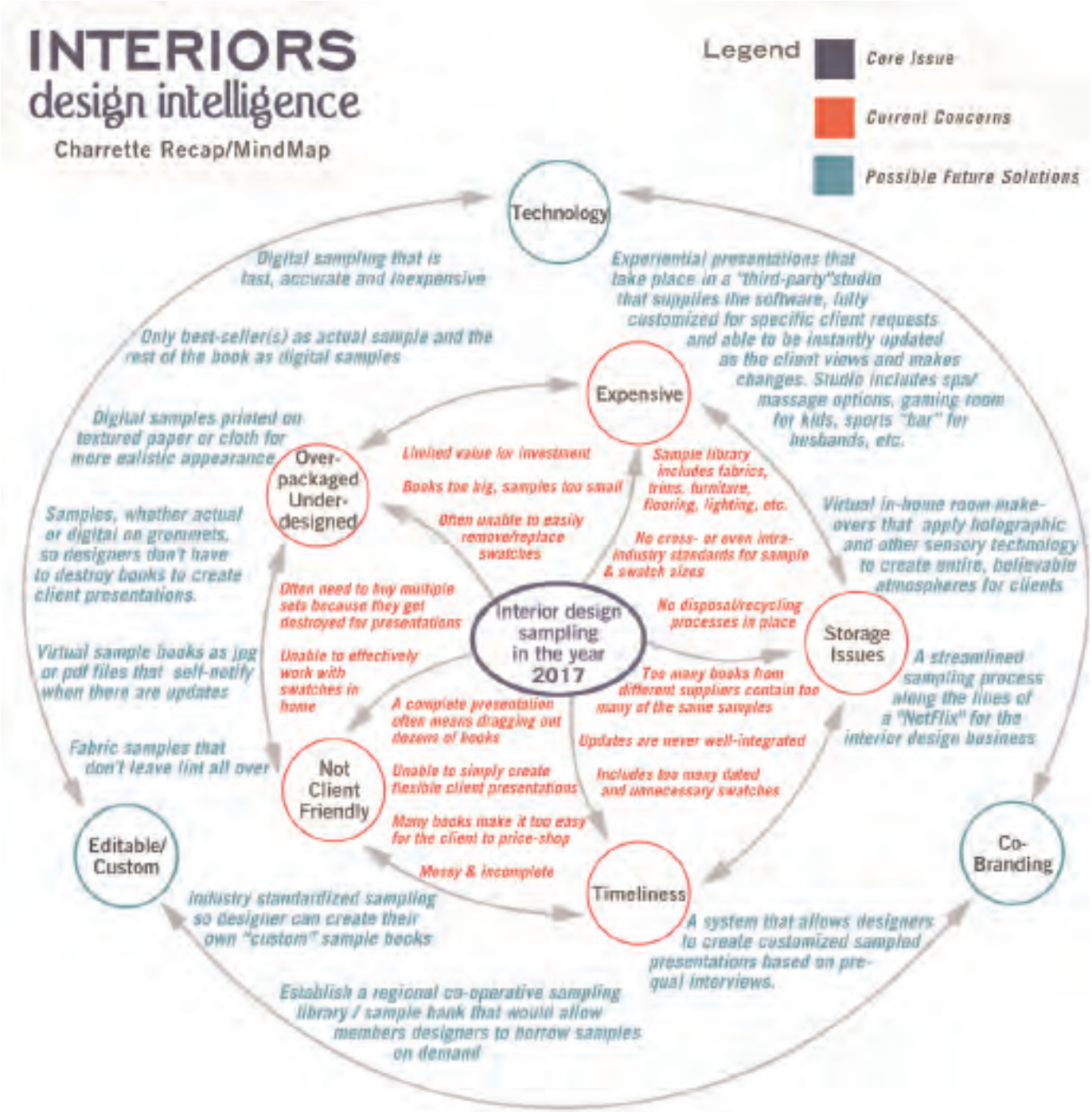
When we posed the question, "What will your sampling look like in the year 2017?" it inspired five fabulous ideas. The common threads through all were using state-of-the-art technology to create samples; co-branding amongst the industry's manufacturers, and curating and customizing sample books.

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
Technology
Digital sampling that is fast, accurate and inexpensive
Experiential presentations that take place in a "third-party"studio that supplies the software, fully customized for specific client requests and able to be instantly updated as the client views and makes changes. Studio includes spa/ massage options, gaming room for kids, sports "bar" for husbands, etc.
Only best-seller(s) as actual sample and the rest of the book as digital samples
Expensive
Digital samples printed on textured paper or cloth for more realistic appearance
Over-packaged Under-designed
Limited value for investment
Books too big, samples too small
Often unable to easily remove/replace swatches
Sample library includes fabrics, trims, furniture, flooring, lighting, etc.
No cross- or even intra-industry standards for sample & swatch sizes
Virtual in-home room make-overs that apply holographic and other sensory technology to create entire, believable atmospheres for clients
Samples, whether actual or digital on grommets, so designers don't have to destroy books to create client presentations.
Often need to buy multiple sets because they get destroyed for presentations
Interior design sampling in the year 2017
No disposal/recycling processes in place
Storage Issues
Virtual sample books as jpg or pdf files that self-notify when there are updates
Unable to effectively work with swatches in home
Too many books from different suppliers contain too many of the same samples
A streamlined sampling process along the lines of a "NetFlix" for the interior design business
A complete presentation often means dragging out dozens of books
Updates are never well-integrated
Fabric samples that don't leave lint all over
Not Client Friendly
Unable to simply create flexible client presentations
Includes too many dated and unnecessary swatches
Many books make it too easy for the client to price-shop
Editable/ Custom
Co-Branding
Messy & incomplete
Timeliness
Industry standardized sampling so designer can create their own "custom" sample books
A system that allows designers to create customized sampled presentations based on pre-qual interviews.
Establish a regional co-operative sampling library / sample bank that would allow members designers to borrow samples on demand