

INTERIOR DESIGN

By Richard Gacek, Gacek Design Group

Adapting to the New Norm

Let's be honest, we've had a rough few weeks. The coronavirus has impacted every single one of us; Death tolls are breaking news, cities are locked down, non-essential businesses are temporarily closed, people are losing their jobs, social distancing and working from home is the new norm. We are experiencing a change in the way we live each day.



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Obviously, the design industry is not exempt from this story. Interior design firms are experiencing slowdowns, especially when it comes to consumer spending. Residential clients are cutting back or delaying projects. For commercial clients, production has come to a halt, creating delayed construction timelines. Trade partners and manufacturers have experienced shortages of materials and backorders on goods, working with skeleton staffing.

"I am optimistic", says Bernie Markstein, a Washington based economist and consul-

tant to American Society of Interior Designers, (ASID). His projection for interior design is positive despite the coronavirus outbreak. In terms of a long term economic impact, Markstein projects growth in both the commercial and residential sectors throughout 2020 and 2021 and he has this advice for designers: "Now is the time to dig in and make your firm more resilient—reassuring existing clients, shoring up your network, and identifying ways to grow your business. It will hurt for a little bit," he said, "but we will get out of this."

The American Society of

Interior Designers (ASID), agrees. The report, 2020 Outlook and State of Interior Design, recently published and offers insight on the economic outlook, cultural trends and includes knowledge and support needed for those practicing design. "Design is central to our lives and affects us every day," comments Randy Fiser, ASID CEO. "By examining micro and macro-trends, we encourage designers to understand how extraneous factors, such as the impact of coronavirus on the global economy, can have a profound effect on their practice."

The report focuses on the

economy as well as the construction industry and talks about key indicators that will impact interior design. Even though a slowdown is anticipated in 2020, experts believe the design industry will operate at sustainable levels. Tariffs on products have significantly impacted the supply chain and will continue to cause disruption. The housing market will remain generally healthy, however still faces a number of challenges in 2020 - construction activity and spending is anticipated to increase for the following sectors: single family construction, residential improvements, and educational facilities. The report also looks at global trends, especially those that relate to lifestyle. Trends include the following:

- Organizations are focusing more and more on the human experience and turning to designers for solutions. Biophilic design plays a role in accomplishing this.

- Designers learn to better understand how and why we react to nature elements in built spaces.

- Wellness is a way of life.

- Living style choices are transcending generations, and creating an experience is a key strategy.

- New materials and technology are improving productivity, management and experience.

Time to Adapt. The takeaway is to provide flexible and innovative solutions in response to the challenging social climate. By nature, designers are creative problem solvers. We have the advantage of being predisposed to thinking outside the box, and using our skill set to create an outcome that is experiential, more functional and makes life easier. From a business perspective, it's about navigating the business differently, focusing on systems, general processes and improving how the business can adapt to this new normalcy. With the help of modern technology, the interior design industry has been set up to adapt to changes. Those that have embraced technology have found that most of what designers do can be done digitally, working from a computer. Client presentations through pdf files or Powerpoint presentations, with Zoom, Skype and Go To Meetings. Fabric swatches and paint samples can be mailed.

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Adaptable Design



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SPRING PREVIEW

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Measuring and assessing a space can initially be developed via CAD drawings of floor plans as well as photographs. Phone, email and texting. Virtual walking tour with FaceTime.

One final comment to think about. Life is unfolding at home. Interior design is not just about the furniture and paint color in a room. It's about evoking an emotion, how you

feel when you enter a room. This is the value of an interior designer. We may not be able to fix the uncertainty we are facing today but we can make your experience at home feel better. Being forced to work and live at home, there is never a better time to think about what HOME means.

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Moving Forward: Finding Opportunity in Today's "New" Energy . . .

continued from page 14C practices. We recommend having your building janitors coordinate with the security crew to walk through the building and turn off all lighting and plug load equipment that was inadvertently left on. If the building is virtually vacant, have the cleaning crew clean during the daytime so all lights are off during the evening.

3. Quick but Meaningful Measures

- Use shades and blinds to control direct sun through windows to prevent or encourage heat gain. In cooler weather, open all shades and blinds to allow sunlight to enter. In warmer weather, reverse the process and close all shades and blinds.

- Make sure that areas in

front of vents are clear of obstructions such as furniture, equipment, etc. 25% more energy is required to distribute air if your vents are blocked.

- Maintain a minimum 3-inch airgap between the back of refrigerators, water coolers, ice machines, etc. and the wall. Keep the condenser coils of these appliances clean.

Considering the unique challenges COVID-19 brings to our customers and the buildings in which they are operating, we hope these tips can reduce the financial strain in some small way. If you are interested in learning more additional cost-saving efficiency practices, contact the Evolution Energy Team.

Robert Holdsworth is the vice president of Evolution Energy Partners. ■