

## INTERIOR MOTIVES

# On the matter of a fee — integrity is key



NAOMI STONE  
LEVY

Continued from last week.

The distasteful subject of remuneration demands attention. One is perfectly willing to pay a fee to an attorney or to a physician or an architect. What is different about an interior designer, who has trained for this work by virtue of a degree from a university or a certified design school? A prodigious amount of study has prepared them for their career, and your job.

In my own opinion there is that oft-heard phrase, "I can get that for you at 10 percent above cost," and a gullible client only thinks, "Oh, good, why should I pay more?" They lose track of the lack of knowledge, or the lack of taste of the offender. Worse than that is the lack of integrity of the 10 percent, who adds, "I think I have good taste, why pay any additional?" Sadly, they don't know what they don't know. How unfortunate for you. Keep in mind my repetitious phrase KNOWLEDGE and SKILL, and to which you must now add

### INTEGRITY.

There are many other ways to be compensated besides a fee. Some designers choose to work in the same manner as a shop would, the difference between wholesale and retail on all furnishings. As an example, a table on the showroom floor of a local store could cost them \$100 and the price tag reads \$195. The difference of \$95 is their profit. However they incur many, many expenses, such as rent, lighting, heat, salesperson's commission, and on and on.

Many others charge a flat percentage over cost, plus out-of-pocket expenses. Still others are paid by the hour, or some combination of the foregoing. You must conclude these factors before proceeding. You are entitled to investigate their financial reputation as well. Sadly, I have known clients to be defrauded of deposits, which are essential to conducting business. There must be an understanding between you that there cannot be cancellations after an order is placed and signed for.

If there are drawings involved, or other architectural plans submitted, of

course there are pre-explained charges. A preponderance of my design work is custom, planned and executed exclusively for this client, and thus there is nothing to compare it to in price. (Remember integrity?) I assure you it is "less expensive, more exclusive and much more exciting."

On occasion the client would like a rendering, a perspective illustration in color. This should eliminate any of their mental reservations. I attach actual clippings of the fabrics to be used to the board. The client without imagination thus knows exactly what is forthcoming. This is helpful on extensive jobs, especially commercial, when many of the upper echelon of the staff should be apprised of and included in decisions.

I trust that you are more cognizant of what is involved in the interchange between client and designer. You are embarking on many hours of pleasure while assembling all the wondrous components, and the joy of living in the fabulous interior you have created. It is a reflection of your personality!

Naomi Stone Levy, a Franklin resident, is an interior designer and a former secretary of the American Society of Interior Designers. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1837. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.

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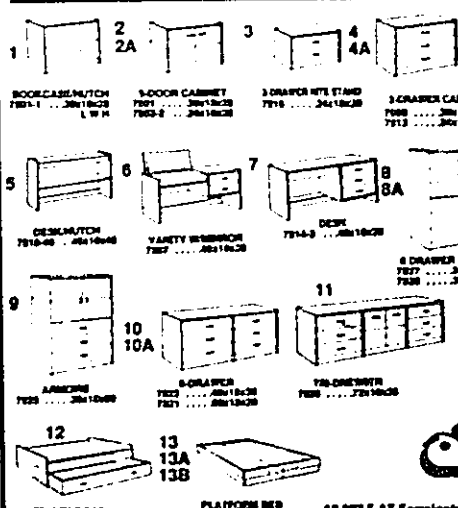
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