

Designing by Committee? What You Should Know First

Being able to take part in the interior design of a facility can be an exciting journey for all involved, but it can also be quite challenging. Choosing finishes, as well as furnishings can be overwhelming because the outcome is a work in progress. By having a committee work with the interior designer on decisions, the end result will be something everyone can enjoy.

Putting together a team of people to aid in the decision making process is a great starting point. Typically, the director of the facility is the first person to join the team, along with the interior designer. If selections are eventually going to be presented to a Board of Trustees, it is wise to have someone from the Board on the committee as well. This person will act as the spokesperson for the Board, as well as the community based on prior discussions about the overall look of the facility and what the community wants. Including staff on the team is also very important, since they are the ones who will be using the space on a daily basis. Staff can provide insight that others cannot on what is functional. While many may express interest in joining the committee, the best committees are the ones consisting of four to six people willing to share their likes and dislikes. The more people on the team, the more room for conflict, which may delay decisions from being made. Keep in mind that if there is a point where a decision cannot be mutually agreed upon, there needs to be someone who is designated to give the final say.

Once the committee is formed, the designer and team will meet to start the interiors finish selections. Try to visit other facilities, newly built or remodeled. Look at everything in the space, the flooring, wall colors, lighting, plastic laminates, tile, fabrics and furniture. Have everyone take notes on what they found appealing in the space, as well as what they didn't like. Was it a particular color scheme or floor pattern? Was there any furniture that was interesting? What made the space more inviting than others? Talk about these issues when you meet with the designer. By visiting these facilities it will help you know what you like and dislike as well as help the committee to see how everything comes together.

The designer will pull together the various schemes to present. Preparing these schemes helps everyone to understand the overall look of the building, as well as giving the team a selection of choices. Usually, all the finishes for the building are selected first. Building finishes are stationary; they won't be changed until the next remodel, which is why it is important to have these selected first. On the other hand, colors for furniture have the potential to change over the years.

The designer will usually select a few options for flooring (carpet, tiles, etc.) first and work from those for the schemes since flooring covers the most area and can potentially have the most impact. The flooring selection gives a starting point for all other selections within the building. Determining

paint colors, whether a neutral color or an accent color, becomes the second most important selection. The floors and wall take up the highest percentage in the building, so selecting colors on all other finishes comes after that.



When the final selections are being selected, try not to choose based on your personal taste. What may look great in your home may not be what is best suited for the job. Keep focused on how everything looks as a whole, rather than each piece individually. Selecting one scheme will give the interiors a complete look. If you try to change too many components of the design scheme, the interior will start to look pieced together. While all of this may be hard for everyone to visualize, the choices being made are based on what works best with the architecture and interior of the building. It is the designer's goal to help everyone gain as much understanding of the building as possible. That's not to say that if there are certain items the committee is strongly opposed to that they can't be changes, however the more decisions made as a whole, the easier and less confusing it will be on everyone involved.

Make the best out of the experience of working on a design committee. Share your ideas and opinions with the team to create an interior the public will be pleased to visit. Chances are, this opportunity will not occur again for a long time.

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