



Emerging from lockdown webinar executive summary

Overview

Chaired by Daniel Hopwood, a panel of experts representing the interior design and design sector will discuss the effect of lockdown on the sectors and the lessons learned, the importance of connectivity and usage of marks of accreditation. The webinar took place on Thursday 4 March. It was part of a four-part series themed 'Innovation in Times of Crisis' from The Furniture Makers' Company, the City of London livery company and charity for the furnishing industry.

Chairman and panellists

- Daniel Hopwood, chairman of the webinar
- Lester Bennett, president of the British Institute of Interior Design
- Matthew Burt, award-winning designer-maker
- Rodney McMahon, Design Guild Mark chairman.

Headline points from webinar

- The panellists started the discussion by talking about how their various sectors in the design and interiors sector had fared during lockdown.
- Rodney said the contract sector – hotels, cruise ships, offices – accrued little or no revenue during COVID-19. Tough out there, many have lost 50% of business.
- Designers work for manufacturers, so the lockdown meant fewer commissions in lockdown.
- Residential sector, interior design – all projects put on hold so there has been an income 'black hole'. Furlough has been helpful and green shoots to be seen.
- Bespoke sector – floodgates opened, those in lockdown looked at their surroundings and many wanted to refurbish. Matthew said his team of 10 were at 'full hilt'.
- The conversations moved on to the comparison of the lockdown with other downturns.
- It is important to not give up! Seek help from friends, colleagues – having been through several crises (recessions) it enables a positive outlook. These things will pass.
- Keeping in touch with former clients – an opportunity to engage on any projects which need to be undertaken – client relationships need keeping alive.
- Social media – very useful to engage in especially for younger designers. Very important way of brand building. Instagram for low hanging fruit – very visual and user friendly for designers.
- No expense should be spared on the quality of visuals on websites.
- The power of personal relationships is critical to success.
- Marketing – designers need a clear strategy to encourage website visits – the Design Guild Mark is an important feeder.
- General lessons learned from lockdown – the importance of connectivity.
- Membership organisations – being a member of a professional organisation underpins credentials. A professional status is accepted by clients and peers. Connection and engagement is made more possible having a professional status
- The British Institute of Interior Design has a registered professional pathway – 20 recognised competencies. A continual professional development programme enables professional standards to be improved.
- Utilise credible and respected awards programmes to improve. Rodney – The Design Guild Marks are a fantastic opportunity to meet eminent judges and receive feedback. Rarely will designers have this opportunity for critical appraisal. Have a high value because they are not 'awards' which are often commercially based initiatives. Marks of excellence should never be underestimated.
- Daniel used lockdown to write a manual of the design process – what we do, what are the stages and asked the question "Do clients really understand the design process?" Effective communication with your client is king. Managing expectations is also important. Effective communication through a WhatsApp group

Panellist biographies



Daniel Hopwood

Daniel Hopwood established his own design studio over 27 years ago. The studio specialises in residential and commercial design, primarily in London and occasionally abroad. His work is frequently featured in the British press. Daniel has a degree in Architecture and is an alumni of the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture. He is a registered interior designer with the British Institute of Interior Design (BIID), where he was president for two years and advocated to improve professionalism in the design world. He is a liveryman of The Furniture Makers' Company and chairs the Bespoke Guild Mark committee. As a visiting tutor to design schools, he also encourages and mentors young designers in the industry. He has worked on several series with the BBC and Channel 4 which have been televised worldwide.



Lester Bennett, president, British Institute of Interior Design

Lester Bennett is an independent design consultant with 40 years of design experience. His career has included founding his own practice, working as a design director for a leading residential developer and as a founding partner of Folio Design LLP. Lester specialises in residential interior architecture and design, whilst also having a wide range of experience in commercial and retail design, industrial, exhibition and product design, with a client list including Mobil, Alliance and Leicester, Celador Productions, Morgan du toi, Elstree Studios, Taylor Walker Breweries and Handles and Fittings Ltd (HAF), with products still in production after nearly 30 years.



Matthew Burt FRSA, FSDC, Bsc Hons

Matthew Burt has, for 40 years, designed and created interior and exterior furniture for private homes, public spaces and major museums and galleries. From his south Wiltshire studio and workshop Matthew, along with his team of makers and apprentices, has developed a national reputation for originality of design and quality of craftsmanship. Matthew is holder of seven Bespoke Guild Marks awarded by The Furniture Makers' Company and in 2016 won the prestigious Christopher Claxton-Stephens Prize for Excellence. Matthew starts with and loves the sketch book; it is where he can dream in private, where he can explore the impossible, the foolish and uninhibitedly regard the unlikely, trying to tease out the possible, the feasible, the appropriate and the achievable.



Rodney McMahon, Design Guild Mark chairman

Rodney has a degree in Economics from Exeter University and is a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. His passion for manufacturing in the UK and his interest in interior design, led to the acquisition of Morgan in 1992. Rodney has developed and revitalised the company in the last 25 years from a company of eight employees to one totalling 80, unusually manufacturing in the UK, and with a major position as a leader in the contract furniture market. Rodney is finance director and past chairman of the BCFA, sits on the Council of the Furniture Industry Research Association and of the Advisory Council of Anti Copying in Design and is chairman of the Design Guild Mark. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and chairman of the trustees of the Edward Barnsley Educational Trust, a centre of excellence for training cabinetmakers.