



# Marketing to Architects and Interior Designers



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Manufacturers of decorative products for commercial interiors, such as furniture and fixtures, must utilize creative ways to garner interest from prospective customers. The main targets are primarily interior designers and architects, who must evaluate both style and functionality of products. Other factors gaining importance include environmentally-friendly materials and manufacturing practices, as well as ergonomic features.

There are complexities with marketing commercial interior products. First, dual audiences or targets must be considered. Often, these types of products are specified by interior designers and, in many cases, architects. Information needs and media preferences may differ greatly for each target. Additionally, designers and architects are highly sought customers, constantly bombarded with an onslaught of marketing and product information. So how can manufacturers most effectively market? Following are several marketing imperatives, proven to deliver results.

## TOP MARKETING IMPERATIVES

First and foremost, brands marketed to interior designers or architects require an absolutely stellar, high design appeal. Applying brand names, logos, graphic identities, photography, brochures, websites and related applications requires high-quality execution. Positioning and messaging must deliver high concept, sophisticated ideas that appeal to both designers and architects who are educated, trend aware, and appreciate and understand the product's aesthetic features.

Often, the first experience designers and architects have with a product or brand is the result of an internet search based on an immediate requirement. Therefore, employing search engine optimization (SEO) techniques to drive users to your relevant website content is critical. Pay-per-click keyword ad buys are important, but even more vital is building search optimization into your

Top Marketing Imperatives (cont'd)

website to deliver “organic” results. Implementing techniques such as link directories, site maps and text links, title-tags and URL structure are basic, but often neglected, steps. Also, establishing content pages that relate to keywords and influential topics to both designers and architects will increase website traffic. Of course, the website itself should achieve aesthetic perfection.

Another imperative for marketing to designers is high-design literature, including specification catalogs and product brochures. Case studies, new project profiles and educational white papers should be used to meet more strategic communication needs. Of course, all content can be leveraged in both print and electronic applications, and purposed for publicity and other initiatives.

Increasingly important are literature and content for vertical applications. With application-specific content for such verticals as commercial office, education and healthcare environments, along with specification and reference data, designers and architects will not only consider products for current applications, but keep these pieces on file for future projects.

With increased environmental interest, a product’s “greenness” should be communicated with brochures and fact sheets that outline the green materials used in the product’s manufacture, as well as the green manufacturing processes used to make the product. By doing so, marketers of architectural products can provide useful ways to draw attention to a company and its products. Also, links to green organizations can be placed on the websites for more emphasis.

Another relatively untapped product feature is ergonomic design. Due to the aging baby boomer market, comfort is quickly becoming a very important feature of these products. Marketers must have content or materials regarding the technical aspects of their products’ comfort and ease of use. Additionally, these features can be emphasized on the websites with appropriate links to ergonomic materials as key information sources.

[Top Marketing Imperatives \(cont'd\)](#)

Last, but certainly not least, the use of product showrooms as a venue to present product lines remains an important strategy. Inviting designers, architects and even members of the press to showroom parties creates an excellent location to not only introduce new products, but to create focus on the manufacturer's entire product line—allowing a tactile and in person experience to get the “feel” of the products. In other words, create a captive audience. Trade shows and industry conferences like NeoCon remain important opportunities for reaching both designers and architects.

**A CASE STUDY EXAMPLE**

An example of effective marketing to designers and architects is FUSION's marketing campaign for architectural lighting brand, FC Lighting. FUSION started with an award-winning logo, a trend-relevant, sage-and-charcoal color palette, introduced with high concept advertising (“EyeCandy”), and followed up with a complete collateral system. Additionally, a designer email newsletter titled, “LightStyles™,” was implemented that featured high-profile projects, along with new product information. Finally, graphic themes were leveraged in showrooms and trade shows.

**ACHIEVING MARKETING AND SALES RESULTS**

Designers and architects are demanding customers who will dismiss poorly executed marketing faster than last year's color trends. High-aesthetic design must permeate all marketing, from search engine optimized websites, to deep literature libraries, product showroom environments and trade show exhibits. A growing need for more strategic content including case studies, white papers, and application-specific information must be considered for both print and internet applications, and repurposed for publicity initiatives. Finally, leveraging interest in environmental or green aspects of products and manufacturing processes, along with comfort and ergonomics, represents an opportunity for marketers to capture attention, and position your brand as a market leader.

*FUSION b2b is a full-service, strategic marketing and creative communications agency focused on business-to-business markets. Clients include USG Sheetrock, Panasonic, AMCOR packaging, OMRON electronics, Woodworking Machinery Industry Association (WMIA), ITW, Tyco Electronics, and others. For more information or press kit, contact Heather Hawes.*

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