

# Covering the Issues

**Design Business...** *Harvard Business Review* offers a couple of articles that may help to enhance your bottom line. In “Design Thinking” (June 2008), Ideo chief Tim Brown explains the team-based iterative process that designers typically employ and suggests ways for designers to involve clients and users along the way. Venturing into less familiar territory, Harvard Business School professor Frances X. Frei explains “Four Things a Service Business Must Get Right” (April 2008). Working from the premise that service businesses (such as architecture) differ from product-based companies, Frei argues that different tools are needed. Success depends, for example, on finding creative ways to fund time-intensive research, hiring for aptitude and attitude, effectively managing clients, and even deciding which services *not* to do well — sometimes excelling in one area means not competing in another, such as price. At first glance, the specific examples of Progressive Insurance or Cleveland Clinic may seem to belong to a different world, but listen to Frei’s larger message and let the ideas percolate. You may see your business in a new light.

**Good medicine...** Most medical clinics, doctors’ offices, and hospital rooms feel “like a Hyatt [hotel] from the early ’80s” laments Virginia Postrel in *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 2008). In “The Art of Healing,” Postrel points out that good medicine doesn’t need to come with bad design. Even though the big bucks fund the high-tech equipment and salaries for first-rate medical talent, paying attention to relatively low-cost, small-scale design elements such as materials or room orientation can have enormous influence on the quality of patient care and rate of recovery, too. Postrel cites the 2006 AIA “guidelines” that call for single rooms, for

example, as a positive step. The evidence is out there. Patients with views of trees or in rooms with natural light suffer less anxiety, request less pain medication, and enjoy shorter hospital stays. And then there’s also the Starbucks effect, which shouldn’t go unnoticed in competitive medical markets: add better interior design to excellent service and more customers will come.

**Forget green. Go orange...** If you, too, are growing weary of all the green-washing out there, skip those colored covers and turn to *Wired*’s fluorescent orange one instead (June 2008). “Screw Organic. Go Nuclear. Live Urban. Crank the A/C.” write the editors, in their cover story on “Inconvenient Truths” about climate change. All that really matters is dramatically reducing our carbon footprint. You may not agree with every directive here — Alex Steffen certainly doesn’t in his companion piece, “It’s Not Just the Carbon, Stupid” — though they’ll definitely get you thinking. For instance, is it really better to heat (as we New Englanders do) from zero degrees to 70, than to cool (as those in Phoenix do) from 110? After all, they only have 40 degrees to change...

**Designing minds...** *Seed* takes a very different tack as it, too, explores relationships between design and science in its Design Issue (March/April 2008). Coinciding with the “Design and the Elastic Mind” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, the issue springs from discussions among scientists, architects, curators, and designers at MoMA as they developed the show over an 18-month period. Features include a conversation between curator Paola Antonelli and mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot, while a series of short spots highlight innovative thinking, forms, and products that come from science/architecture collaborations.



**Dubai, Dubai, Dubai...** If you (like me) are one of the few Boston designers not working in Dubai right now, and even more importantly, if you are, check out Joe Saddy, Karim Sabbagh, and Richard Shediak’s cover story on the new “Oasis Economies” in *Strategy+Business* (Spring 2008). Our news headlines, with their focus on political tensions, largely ignore the extraordinary economic shift and subsequent physical transformation underway in the Middle East. As Dubai’s manmade Palm Islands rise from the sea and Abu Dhabi plans for \$200 billion in construction over the next decade, the authors ask: “Is this a fertile, sustainable oasis — or the deceitful promise of a mirage?” As they explain, they clearly believe that the Middle East’s transformation is real, stable, exciting, and very much here to stay.

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