



All Interior Designers Are Created Equal... A Common Mistake!

From complete kitchens and bathrooms to wall coverings, door handles, lighting and even decorative wiring accessories, the influence of interior designers on brand and product specification is extensive.

Working alongside architects and design teams, interior designers are the tastemakers – the ones to engage with – and often the most powerful brand advocates.

Becoming a **preferred supplier** is high praise indeed, and a key strategy for gaining visibility and securing commissions on future projects — ultimately driving significant product sales.

“Well, I’m sold... let’s put a campaign together aimed at interior designers!”

And this is where it all starts to go very, very wrong.

Not all interior designers are created equal.

Just as there are many types of engineers – mechanical, electrical, civil, chemical, and building services, to name a few – there are just as many types of interior designers.

Some focus on hospitality, workplace, residential, or retail, while others specialise in education or marine design.

Within each of these sectors lie distinct specification opportunities. Yet, it’s crucial to recognise that this customer group values control over the product evaluation process – and they dislike the ‘hard sell.’

Here’s where our experience comes in.

With many hours invested in developing brand recognition and lead-generation programmes to reach and motivate interior designers, we understand this customer group inside out. Here are a few top-level observations we’re happy to share:

1. Know their area of expertise

The field of interior design covers a broad spectrum, but most designers are specialists within a particular sector or project type. Take the time to understand their focus – and tailor your approach accordingly.

2. Professional reputation is everything

Every time an interior designer specifies your brand or product, they're staking their professional credibility on it. Remember, you're asking them to trust that your product will perform and reflect well on their design decisions.

For new or first-time brands, this can be a real challenge – building that trust takes time, consistency, and proof that you deliver on your promises.

3. Share their enthusiasm

Interior designers are driven by creativity and curiosity. They're constantly looking for inspiration, fresh ideas, and innovative products to bring into their next project. Tap into that enthusiasm – it makes them naturally open to new suppliers and early adopters of new products.



4. Be their problem solver

Interior design is complex, balancing creativity, functionality, budget, and buildability. The best designers rely on the knowledge and expertise of their suppliers to help them solve design and specification challenges. Choose to collaborate with them – not just sell to them.



5. Don't underestimate their technical curiosity

Never assume interior designers are only interested in aesthetics. Many are highly engaged with the technical performance and functionality of the products they specify.

When we developed a BIID-accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course on smart lighting control, the depth of questioning and level of technical detail requested clearly showed that, for designers, function is every bit as important as form.

6. Interior designers are not entirely digitally driven

Macs, tablets, and smartphones are essential tools of the trade, but designers still consume both digital and print media. In fact, this is one of the few sectors where print remains as influential as online channels.

That said, print media can be expensive – so do your research and plan carefully. It's easy to blow a big chunk of your budget for very little return if you're not strategic.



7. The media is segmented by vertical markets

Hospitality, home décor and garden, kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms (KBB), and commercial offices each have their own dedicated media channels and audiences. A one-size-fits-all approach won't work – and can quickly become an expensive mistake.

8. Social media is key

Interior designers are avid consumers of visual content, and platforms like Instagram and Pinterest remain major channels for inspiration and product discovery. Always use high-quality, well-composed imagery – it speaks volumes about your brand and its attention to detail.



9. They love a trade show

Interior designers actively attend trade events, from general design showcases such as Clerkenwell Design Week (CDW), Decorex, Focus, and Surface Design Show, to sector-specific exhibitions like HIX, the Independent Hotel Show, KBB, and Retail Expo. Be selective about where you exhibit – and make sure you do it well.

Designers value the chance to experience products first-hand – to assess true colour, texture, weight, and form. At shows and private viewings, they'll often capture details on their phones or tablets as visual references for future projects.

10. Ethical sourcing matters

Sustainability and responsible sourcing are becoming standard requirements in project briefs. Trade shows are an ideal platform to showcase your ethical credentials – and to demonstrate transparency about areas you're actively working to improve.

11. Local sourcing of products

The move toward local sourcing continues to grow, particularly within public sector and government-funded projects. Supporting local supply chains isn't just about sustainability – it also helps to reduce lead times and improve supply reliability. It aligns with procurement requirements and community impact goals that many designers must now address.

12. Use product samples wisely

Samples are a vital part of the sourcing process and a powerful tool for building lasting relationships with designers. How you provide and present them can say as much about your brand as the product itself.

If you can't secure a face-to-face appointment, consider well-targeted direct mail – a thoughtful sample sent at the right time can make a lasting impression.



We've got plenty more to share

We know how tricky this audience can be to engage — it takes creativity, patience, and a genuine understanding of what makes designers tick.

If you'd like to explore how to connect more effectively with interior designers, we'd love to share more of our experience. Let's talk about your next campaign and how we can help you reach, inspire, and motivate this influential community. Just reach out: steve@oilthewheels.com

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Oil The Wheels — A Streetwise Approach to B2B Marketing

We're a seasoned marketing duo with big agency experience — without the big agency costs. At Oil The Wheels, we help challenger brands in the industrial sector outsmart the big fish with sharp strategy, bold creative ideas, and tactical thinking that punches above its weight.

From advertising and editorial to digital, direct response, and trade shows, we deliver focused, high-impact integrated campaigns that get noticed — and get results!

