



# delve<sup>MRL</sup>

DECEMBER 2020 **V9**

**"We Were Born For This"**  
Exploration of Resiliency  
In Design

Top Library Trends  
In 2020

MRL Features Design  
Educators:  
Stephanie Sickler,  
Florida State University

# Making the Next Year Your Best Yet

Exploring Resilience and Efficiency  
in the Workplace.



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## DEC 2020 V.9

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TO OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTERS.**



### WE WERE BORN FOR THIS: RESILIENCE

Susan Mulholland discusses how designers were born to tackle problems and a year like 2020 is right in line with their inherent skills.



### WHAT PUSHING MYSELF PHYSICALLY DID FOR ME MENTALLY

Ryan Menke from OFS discusses how he's grown his mental resilience and strength through physical challenges he's committed to.



### MAKING 2021 THE BEST YEAR EVER

Ashley Blevins from GMi Companies discusses efficiency strategies to help make 2021 your best year ever.

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## editor's note

Dear Reader,  
As this year comes to a close,  
we thought it was appropriate  
to take a look at resilience in its  
many forms across our industry.

From working from home to all  
sorts of pivots across the board,  
our industry has adapted on  
the fly throughout the year.  
This tenacity and resilience has  
been absolutely inspiring to  
watch and has made us even  
more proud to play a small sup-  
porting role to all of our partners  
and users.

In this issue we cover stories  
from and about designers, ed-  
ucators, manufacturers and  
more!

We are also releasing our Top  
Library Trends of 2020! Check  
this list out to see what bind-  
ers have been most popular on  
MRL this year, as well as sever-  
al other trends including most  
popular search terms.

Enjoy!

*industrynews@myresourcelibrary.com.*



**THE  
MY RESOURCE LIBRARY  
FAMILY**



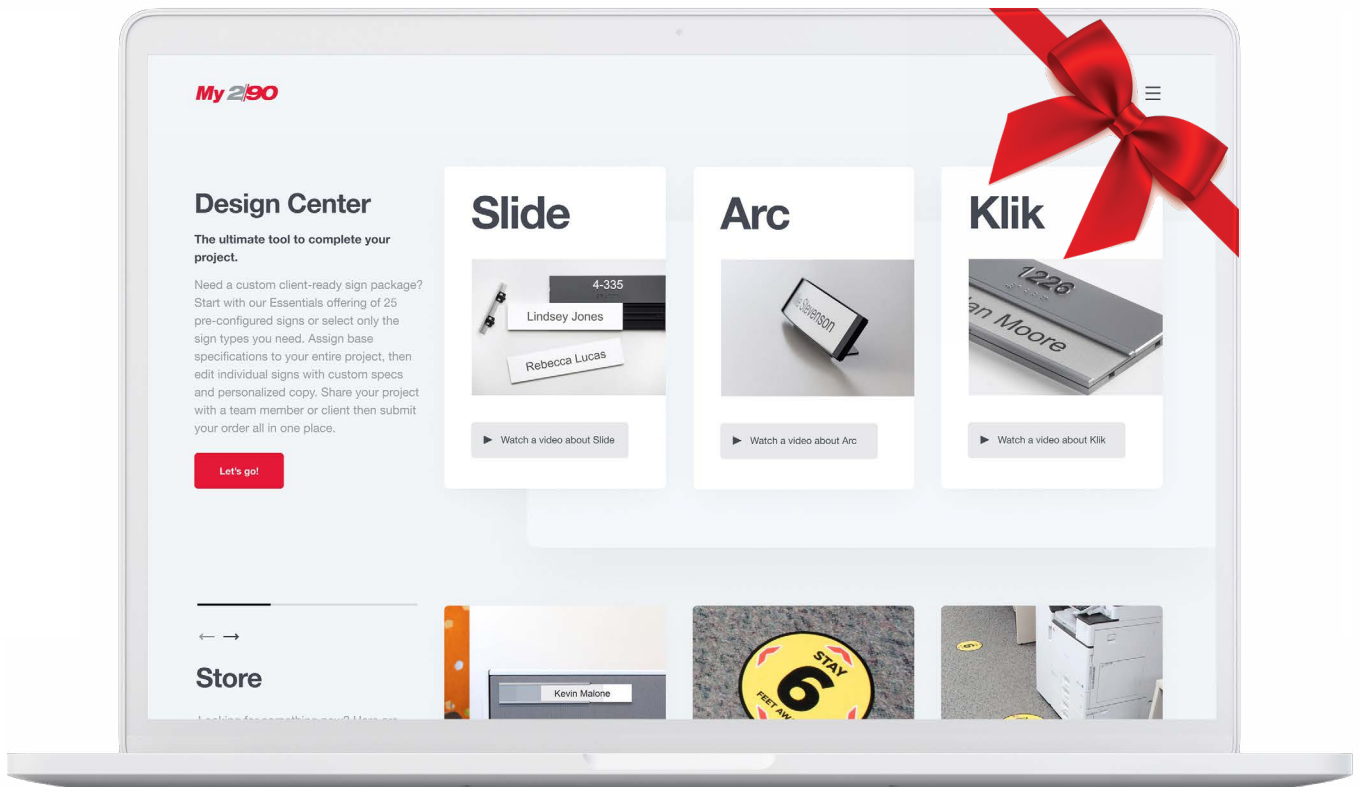
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# We Were Born For This

## Tenacity + Resilience + Interior Design

*This year has been full of uncertainty and unwelcome surprises. However, for interior designers, the ability to adapt and pivot is literally built into their job description. Expert designer, Susan Mulholland discusses why designers were built for this type of environment, and will play an important role in our return to the workplace.*

The interior design profession for both commercial and residential designers is all about challenges. I am not just talking about difficult projects or clients; I am talking about making this your chosen profession. Designers these days have to adjust to various changes coming from all sorts of different sources, not just world events or economic downturns, but actual threats to the existence of our industry—our profession in and of itself are the best example of resilience.

For example, let's start with the residential part of our profession—most notably would be the onset of the do-it-yourself design shows and websites that started in the mid to late 1990s. Residential designers were the first to face adversity and the possible threat of extinction when HGTV and other traditionally trade-only resources began to open up to the general public—suddenly, everyone was a designer!

It didn't matter if the person calling themselves a "designer" was trained or had any real experience. To be clear; I am not talking about decorators. Decorators are people who "think" they can do what decorators and designers do because it looks so easy on TV. Imagine if you were working in a residential design studio in 1997 and you were told by a client that what you do is easy and that they can do it themselves because they just saw it on TV!

Professional residential designers who heard this knew that to survive,



### By Susan Mulholland

*Susan Mulholland studied interior design at Northern Arizona University and is an NCIDQ certificate holder. She has 30 years of interior design experience in commercial design. Her experience in the industry covers a large variety of projects that focus on workplace, healthcare, and hospitality. Her design studio Mulholland Art & Design Commercial Interiors is in Tucson, Arizona, where she has been helping clients for the past 20 years. [Connect with Susan Mulholland on her website.](#)*

they would need to have the tenacity to move forward and reject clients who maybe were just "shopping" them for ideas. The residential interior design industry has persevered, and the designers who were determined have thrived. These designers did this by reinventing how the profession of interior design was perceived, marketing their services differently, and being persistent. Those who were not able to reinvent themselves simply left the profession. This tenacity and ability to adapt cannot be taught or learned; it is built into the very essence of who we are as designers. We are problem solvers at our core, which lends itself beautifully to the pivotal nature of 2020.

Right now, commercial interior designers are facing our own threat. The pandemic has limited the work available to commercial design firms specializing in hospitality, restaurant design, and office or workplace design. Non-residential projects have been on the decline for both architects and interior designers since late June 2020. With much of the commercial real estate buildings still empty because of companies keeping their employees at home instead of at the office, many design firms are now rethinking how they will move forward in 2021.

However, this is not the first-time commercial design has faced a crisis. The great recession of 2007/2008 took many firms out of the market. Many firms were either bought out or joined together to survive. The pandemic has put the importance of design back at the top of the priority list as many agree that good design is critical to our sustainable return to the workplace. Our profession will need to be resourceful, assertive, and determined to leap from our current situation to the future. We will need to show our clients and the world how important design is to the success of every type of industry- from transportation to retail design; interior designers will need to have innovative solutions to make these environments safe and healthy.

Therefore, I say that perseverance, tenacity, and resilience are part of a designer's genetic make-up. Those of us who have been in this profession for any length of time have known that you need to draw on these traits to be a success in this business, no matter the circumstance.

The challenges that I have faced since becoming an interior designer are too many to mention here. Still, I can tell you that I have gained valuable wisdom and experience with every challenge I have faced. Many young designers who enter this profession without a mentor's guidance may find it too difficult; the pressure placed on them from the beginning is too overwhelming, or the real world was nothing like what they thought it would be when they were in school. Truth be told, this profession can be quite mentally draining. We have lost many members of our tribe simply because they were burned out. The long hours, lack of appreciation, and less than expected income have forced many talented designers to leave the profession. This is a feast or famine industry, and those who know this upfront are more prepared than those who don't.

Interior designers are born to be great visionaries. In our mind's eye, we see what possibilities there are before we can even articulate them to anyone else. We can use both sides of our brain. Our right brain is devoted to creativity and finding beauty in everything we see, and we use our left brain to find practical solutions that meet the demands of the project objectives. The interior environment and all that goes in it is our domain, and we know that if we have the skills, experience, and creativity, we can make any interior space look and work perfectly.

So here we are, almost at the end of one of the most challenging years in our history. The pandemic, for all its uncertainty, has given us one more mountain to climb. Nobody could have predicted what 2020 would be like. The events of the last twenty years seem to keep testing our resolve. As interior designers, contract furniture dealers, and manufacturers, we must re-adjust, rethink, and even reinvent ourselves to survive the ever-changing world we live in. Now more than ever, we need to redefine what it means to work, not only in our homes but what it will take to start working outside of them again. We need to rethink what it means to be in a hospital, a restaurant, a hotel, and even a school.

Every type of built environment will require a severe overhaul as we move forward, and this means that skilled interior designers will be more important than ever. This trend alone could save our industry and our livelihoods after the uncertainty of 2020.

Our entire interior design profession's success, for both residential and commercial designers, will be determined by those of us who believe we can make that difference. We will need to keep pushing our ideas and our vision for the future to persevere and be successful regardless of what happens in the upcoming year and beyond. Interior design is a tenacious, resilient profession that believes that perseverance is necessary for success and that innovation comes from facing challenges head-on.

All design is about tenacity, resilience, perseverance, and boldness to think outside of the box and come up with something new. Professional interior designers with the knowledge and expertise understand that there is indeed power in design. We use our talent and creativity to help clients around the world live and work better. So, my advice to all who are reading this column is to remember that we will persevere, just like we have done in the past. Our ideas will continue to flow, and our determination to make them a reality will be stronger than the pandemic in the end. 2021 will be just the beginning - we are ready and willing to take on these challenges head on and help the rest of the world progress past the challenges of this year. Our world will be a better, safer place because of our willingness to be who we are-it's part of our DNA.

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# 6 MRL FAVORITE PRODUCTS FROM ACROSS THE LIBRARY

The following products represent 6 of our favorite products currently on My Resource Library. The products are listed in no particular order. Can you guess the theme?

## **PALMS I CHAIR**

VIOSKI

The Palms I Chair is an instant classic. It combines the comfort of the highest quality materials and craftsmanship with this chair's sophisticated, updated mid-century style. An eye-catching chair for any room.



## **FREERIDE**

WYATT SEATING

Whether it be at the office or plummeting down a ski slope in the middle of the night, you need to be able to adapt to changing circumstances. That's why we've developed the Freeride.



## **AVERIO CHAIR**

DAUPHIN

Dauphin combines elegant design and utmost comfort with Averio. This lightweight and modern lounge chair and companion table provide a versatile solution for a wide range of interiors - from relaxed, casual spaces all the way to prestigious executive offices.



## **BLOG COLLECTION**

THONET

Blog is ideal for community spaces where people work or meet. In a variety of colors and fabrics, its organic shaped seats and backs provide a unique design element to any space. Plus, Blog's tall back version provides site line obstruction, creating private, quiet space even in busy environments.



## **FILE IT**

PARAGON

The file pedestal on casters is ideal for your mobile storage requirements. The box/box/file design is available in cheerful, bold colors to match and/or add a burst of color to any area. Top drawer includes a organizing pencil tray.

## **ELLE BENCH**

CUMBERLAND

The continuous line of the Elle Collection was inspired by the motion and energy of skateboarding. The geometry is softened, offering in this bench and ottoman a counterpoint of comfort for any environment.







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# What Pushing Myself Physically Did For Me Mentally

*Originally published by OFS*

**BY RYAN MENKE**

**P**icture yourself climbing a mountain in a cold, driving snowstorm; running a marathon in the blistering summer heat, or putting in an all-nighter to hit a client deadline. Now ask yourself, 'what do all of these situations have in common?'

They all take perseverance. They all require you to dig deeper and push through the mental and physical limits that we put on ourselves. It takes vulnerability to put yourself in these situations, but it is grit and determination that allow us to push past these boundaries to achieve our goals.

Let me start by saying that I don't think of myself as tough. Even though I played a plethora of contact sports even at the collegiate level, my younger brother could always kick my butt and to this day, I'm sure he still can. Although I was bigger than he was, he had a fire in his belly that could overcome the physical mismatch. In Finland, they call this "Sisu [see-soo]."

While its origins are Finnish, sisu really describes the ability of humans to persevere through incredibly trying circumstances by tapping into an innate character that is buried deep inside all of us. Sisu reveals itself only when we are pushed to our per-

ceived limits. It is in these moments that we find a new depth of strength and energy that allows us to continue forward towards our goal.

Many would argue that some people are born with sisu and some are not, but I don't agree. I think it is all shaped by experience. My good friend, Shannon Rusch, really opened my eyes to what the mind and body can overcome if conditioned for it. When you open up your mind, admit your current limitations, envision a path for forward, and fully commit to that direction, anything is possible. Anything else that gets in your way is just an excuse. Believe me, if anyone had an excuse, he did. His childhood was riddled with one tragedy after another, but he made a conscious decision to push past these setbacks and joined one of the most elite fighting forces in the world, the US Navy SEALs.

The first step is accepting that you are going to be really, really uncomfortable. The journey is going to test you, but how do you know your boundaries until you explore them? I'm not talking about engaging in high-risk behaviors that keep your mom up at night. While they may have physical elements to them, the boundaries I'm talking about are of the mental variety.

## EDUCATION DESIGN FEATURE

In a world that is changing as rapidly as our own, being comfortable with being uncomfortable is a prerequisite for success. But how do you build the calloused mind that David Goggins talks about in his book, *Can't Hurt Me*? You eliminate excuses and preconceived notions, take ownership of your current situation, and move forward in a new direction. Both David and Shannon talk about the importance of setting a goal, throwing it way out into the future, and then focusing intently on the incremental task at hand. Willpower can only take you so far. Presence, truly being in the moment, is key to success. It allows you to slow down time, clearly and calmly assess the situation and respond accordingly to your environment. Of all things, spearfishing taught me the most about being in the moment...yes spearfishing.

First, I love to sportfish. The physical and tactical challenge of reeling in a big fish and savoring your day's work over fresh sashimi on the back of the boat was something that I loved to do...until I tried spearfishing.

Spearfishing completely flips the script and puts predator and prey in the water together [to this day I'm still not sure which is which]. For a boy from the midwest that is terrified of sharks, jumping into that water was about as uncomfortable a thing as I could imagine. You are truly swimming in their world now and are vulnerable from all directions. The water might look calm riding in the boat while sipping a Corona and waiting for a strike, but beneath the water's surface is a completely different story.

It is both physically challenging [swimming all day, while holding your breath and free diving as deep as you can go] and mentally challenging [your senses need to be on extra high alert as your eyes are constantly scanning in every direction looking for what lurks just beyond your visible range]. But what you learn is that after a while, you become comfortable in this new environment. Your muscles relax, you begin to enjoy the ebb and flow

of the waves and the way the fish dance with the current, but at no point has your awareness dropped. You've merely gotten comfortable in an uncomfortable environment. You've become present.

The pursuit of *sisu* is a never-ending journey and a reminder that no matter how hard you push yourself, there is always someone out there somewhere that is pushing themselves even further. In his hilarious and motivating book, *Living with a SEAL*,

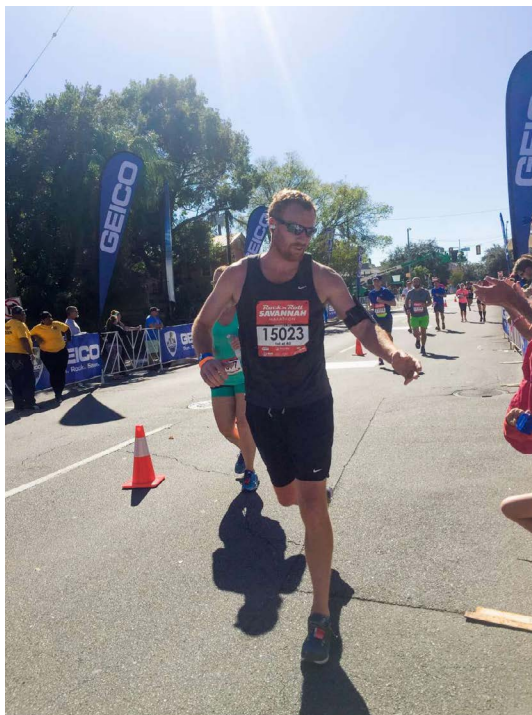
Jesse Itzler shares what it is like to have one of the toughest men in the world, David Goggins, move in with him and his family to train him for 30 days. One quote that will stay with me forever is that "when the mind wants to quit, we are only at about 40% of our body's true capacity." Think about that statistic the next time you are ready to quit. It will help you push through that discomfort because you know you have twice as much left in the tank.

Developing mental toughness and taking ownership of your situation is critical to success. You must push yourself to take on new challenges and test your physical, mental, and emotional elasticity. Exercising and testing these dimensions will give you perspective, context, and confidence that you need to be present in every situation and win in an uncomfortable world. If you don't fully commit to challenging yourself and choose to stay on the sidelines,

you will always be an observer and change will happen to you, not for you.

Where I want to be, and where I think you should be, is in the action. It is in the flow of the game of life where opportunities are truly discovered and that is where you can realize the change you want to see in the world. If there is one thing that training for my first marathon at age 40 taught me about life, it is that every uphill has a downhill and if you just keep putting one foot in front of the other and failing forward you will discover your *sisu* and always reach your goals.

Now, on to challenging my next preconceived, self-imposed limit!



### **RYAN MENKE**

*Ryan Menke is the SVP Sales and Marketing at OFS. He has a multi-disciplinary background and is passionate about the Contract Design Industry.*

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MOST OPENED BINDER OF 2020

Congratulations to Global! They are the number one most opened binder of 2020!  
*(39,260 Total Opens)*



# My Resource Library Presents **Top Library Trends of 2020**

My Resource Library is thrilled to reveal our top library trends of 2020! As we all know, this year has been a unique one! We have seen an explosion of working from home across all industries, and the Contract Design industry is no exception. At MRL, we specialize in making it easy to work from anywhere, and we have been honored to help the many people within our industry transition to an at-home work environment quickly and seamlessly. They have been able to make that transition and still have access to all of the resources they need to keep their work moving along without skipping a beat.

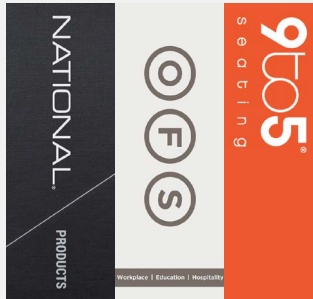
This increased work from home trend has also meant that our

partner manufacturers have been able to get in front of their established clients as well as potential new clients even under these restricted times. Through our special event libraries, to our industry-based newsletters, we have provided innovative solutions that connect our industry virtually.

With so many things up in the air in 2020, we are grateful that we could play a small part in the normalization of workflow for our industry. These trends have also meant an unprecedented amount of traffic to the libraries on MRL. With that, we invite you to take a look at some of most interesting trends we've seen emerge this year on MRL. Enjoy!

# ADDITIONAL MOST OPENED BINDERS OF 2020

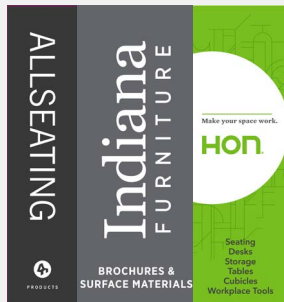
(IN ORDER)



- 2. NATIONAL
- 3. OFS
- 4. 9tO5 Seating



- 5. Arcadia
- 6. SitOnIt Seating
- 7. Safco



- 8. Allseating
- 9. Indiana Furniture
- 10. HON



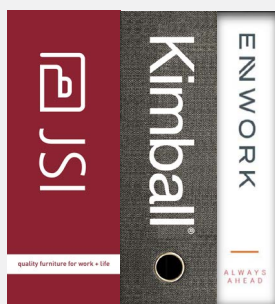
- 11. ERG International
- 12. Hightower
- 13. ESI



- 14. Groupe Lacasse
- 15. Haworth
- 16. AIS



- 17. Via Seating
- 18. Humanscale
- 19. Darran

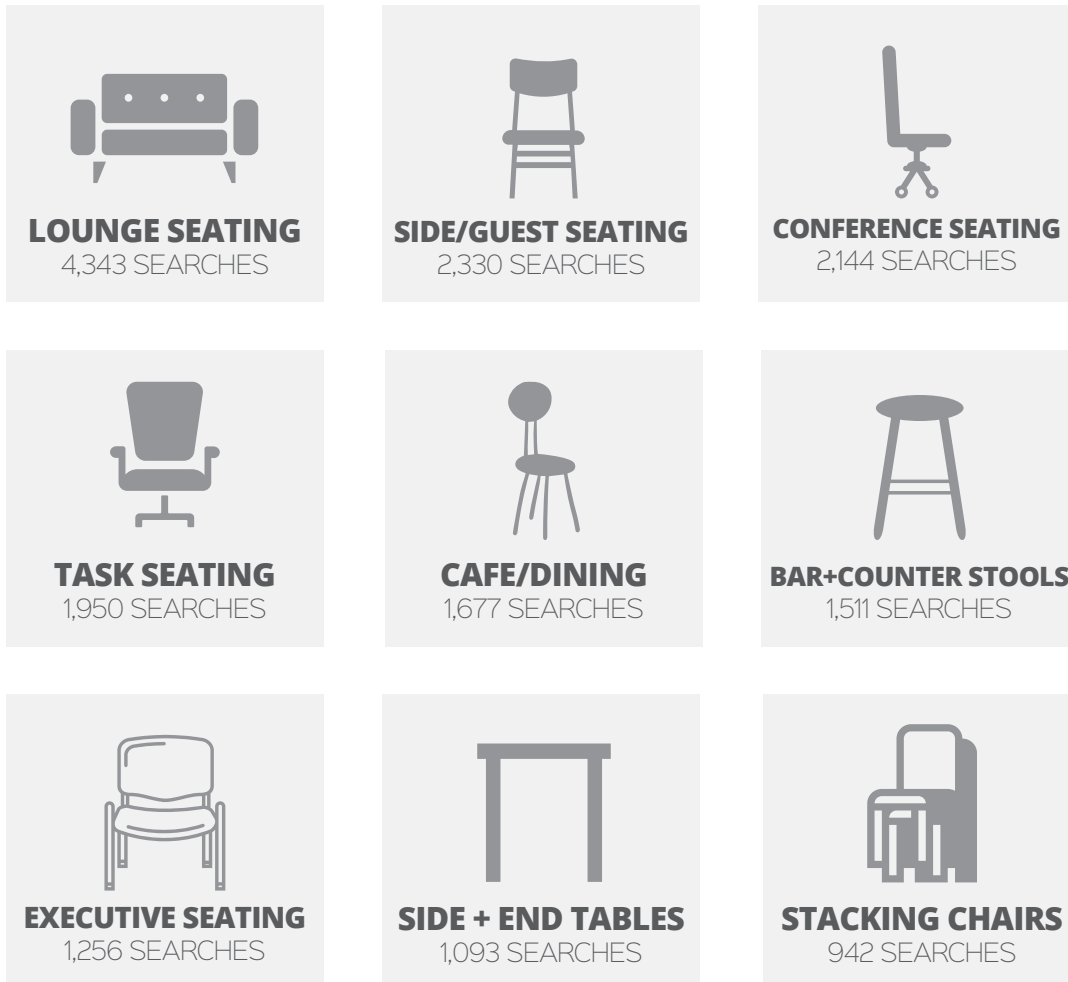


- 20. JSI
- 21. Kimball
- 22. Enwork



- 23. Allermuir
- 24. Davis
- 25. 2/90 Sign Systems

# TRENDING SUBCATEGORIES IN NOVEMBER 2020



PLATFORM STATISTICS

160K+  
SEARCHES PER  
MONTH.

6K+  
DAILY VISITS  
(NOT UNIQUE)

1.9M  
ITEMS VIEWED  
PER MONTH

29%  
INCREASE IN PRO  
DESIGN ACCOUNTS.

13%  
INCREASE IN PRO  
DEALER ACCOUNTS.

25%  
INCREASE IN  
MANUFACTURER  
BINDER OPENS

46%  
DESIGNERS

33%  
DEALERS

16% SCHOOLS  
5% OTHERS

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**PICTURED**  
*Stephanie Sickler + Students at High Point Market*



## **MRL Features Design Educators: Stephanie Sickler**

**Assistant Professor and Foundations  
Coordinator at Florida State University**

**By Vera Reinke**

**W**e virtually sat down and spoke with Stephanie Sickler, Assistant Professor and Foundations Coordinator at Florida State University and published author. Stephanie shares some thoughtful advice and insights into relationships and communication, balancing learning new technologies and life, and how FSU uses MRL to boost collaboration between her students on projects.

Stephanie earned her MFA in interior design from FSU and taught at the University of Alabama for about seven years before returning to Tallahassee with her family. Nearly a year later,

she joined the faculty at her alma mater and has been at FSU ever since. Stephanie has a passion for soft goods and, in 2019, published her first book, "Soft Goods Guidebook for Interiors" with Fairchild Books. This text is designed to assist students and practitioners in interfacing with workrooms and fabricators when designing, executing, and installing soft goods. She is married, has two children, one new puppy, and together they live in a fixer-upper home. Life is pretty chaotic, but they have a lot of fun with their chaos!

## EDUCATOR FEATURE HIGHLIGHT

**Stephanie, what moment in life influenced you to pursue interior design?** My first love was costume design. I was completing an internship in costume design with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival as an undergrad when the moment hit me to switch to interiors. I remember I was standing in the costume shop working on head-wear for King Lear's upcoming production, surrounded by some of the world's most renowned costume designers, and I looked up to realize that the head designers were cutting patterns. As much as I loved costume design, at that moment, I realized I simply did not have the passion for all aspects of the job as they did. When I thought about the aspects of the field that I love, I landed on interiors.

**What area of interior design do you prefer to focus on with your work?** I prefer to work in residential interiors because I love to connect with people. I love to help those who cannot verbalize their vision or style and bring it to fruition, in spite of their insecurities. It's very rewarding to help someone fall more in love with their home spaces.

**Tell me about a favorite project you've worked on.** One of my favorite projects was a home renovation I did about six years ago. It was a total transformation of the main level of a split-level home, adding an accessible half bath for guests as well as a gas fireplace on the main level. The project was challenging, and there were times when the client second-guessed our decisions because the space looked much smaller when there were no walls. In the end, it came together just as we had planned, and it was stunning. The client put a ton of faith in me, and it paid off. That's what makes a project special to me and worthy of noting in my portfolio.

**What makes you happiest and most effective when working with others?** I love when a client says, "I love it- how did you know this is what I wanted?" It's such a rewarding feeling to know you were able to help them realize their vision.

**What advice do you wish you had at the beginning of your journey?** To take time for extra internships in the areas of design you don't think you want to practice. You never know what you will discover about yourself!

**What do you do to keep up with the changes in technology?** With limited time to take on new tasks and so many new technologies to choose from, I look for the most relevant changes to the

classes I teach and the design jobs I take on. That way, I'm current with those technologies in my immediate orbit and don't get bogged down in the newest version of everything. It allows me to remain relevant in my classes and in my design work but doesn't consume all of my free time.

**How has MRL helped you in your position, past or present?**

I teach Materials and Methods at FSU, and our course is dedicated to the topic of materials and specifications. MRL has been instrumental in curating resources that I can share with students while exposing them to the way designers work with materials in practice. This lends so much validity to what and how we teach because students can see the application of course topics.

**How is MRL being used at FSU?** This semester, students in my course have worked both in groups and as individuals to source and specify materials for several projects in my class. They have created project pages to keep and share their work and have loved the collaborative ease of the MRL software. It has really streamlined the way they collaborate on projects!

**What advice do you want your students to take away?** Design

is all about interpersonal communication. If you can learn to communicate effectively and truly listen to your clients, your colleagues, your boss- you will set yourself up for success early on.

**What was the last thing you really geeked out about?** Writing my book! I just love all things soft goods. I would NEVER have enjoyed writing a book on any other topic! "Soft Goods Guidebook for Interiors" with Fairchild Books.

**What book has changed your life?** I'm a sucker for a good mystery, so when time permits, I love to steal some time for a good read. (It's a great break from design and work!) "The Dead Key" by D.M. Pulley was a gamechanger for me. It ignited a passion for reading that I had been stifling since my children were born.

**Favorite Instagram account?** I love to follow my friend, Grant Trick, on Instagram. He is the owner/operator of the best fabrication workroom there is. Check out his page: [https://www.instagram.com/grant\\_trick/](https://www.instagram.com/grant_trick/).

## WHAT ADVICE DO YOU WISH YOU HAD AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR JOURNEY?

*"To take time for extra internships in the areas of design you don't think you want to practice. You never know what you will discover about yourself!"*

**EDUCATOR FEATURE  
HIGHLIGHT**

*Stephanie Sickler + Her Book, "Soft Goods Guidebook for Interiors"*



**FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**INTERIOR DESIGN PROGRAM**

The Department of Interior Architecture and Design, housed in the College of Fine Arts, offers two CIDA-accredited bachelor's degrees, a one-year Master of Science (M.S.) degree with two separate tracks, and a 2-year Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree. A fast-track option for qualified bachelor's degree students can also provide a combined bachelor's and Master of Science (M.S) degree in 5 years.

Students engage with design theory, history, technical skills and participate in studio classes addressing residential and commercial spaces, including health care, retail, office environments, hospitality, furniture design, and specialized projects for children, seniors, and others in need of supportive spaces. The curriculum prepares students to work in interior design firms, as interior designers in architectural firms or in many other design-related settings.



**FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY**

*The Department of Interior Architecture and Design offers Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts degrees. A fast-track option for qualified bachelor's degree students can also provide a combined bachelor's and master of science (M.S) degree in 5 years.*

[The Undergraduate Program](#)

[The Graduate Program](#)



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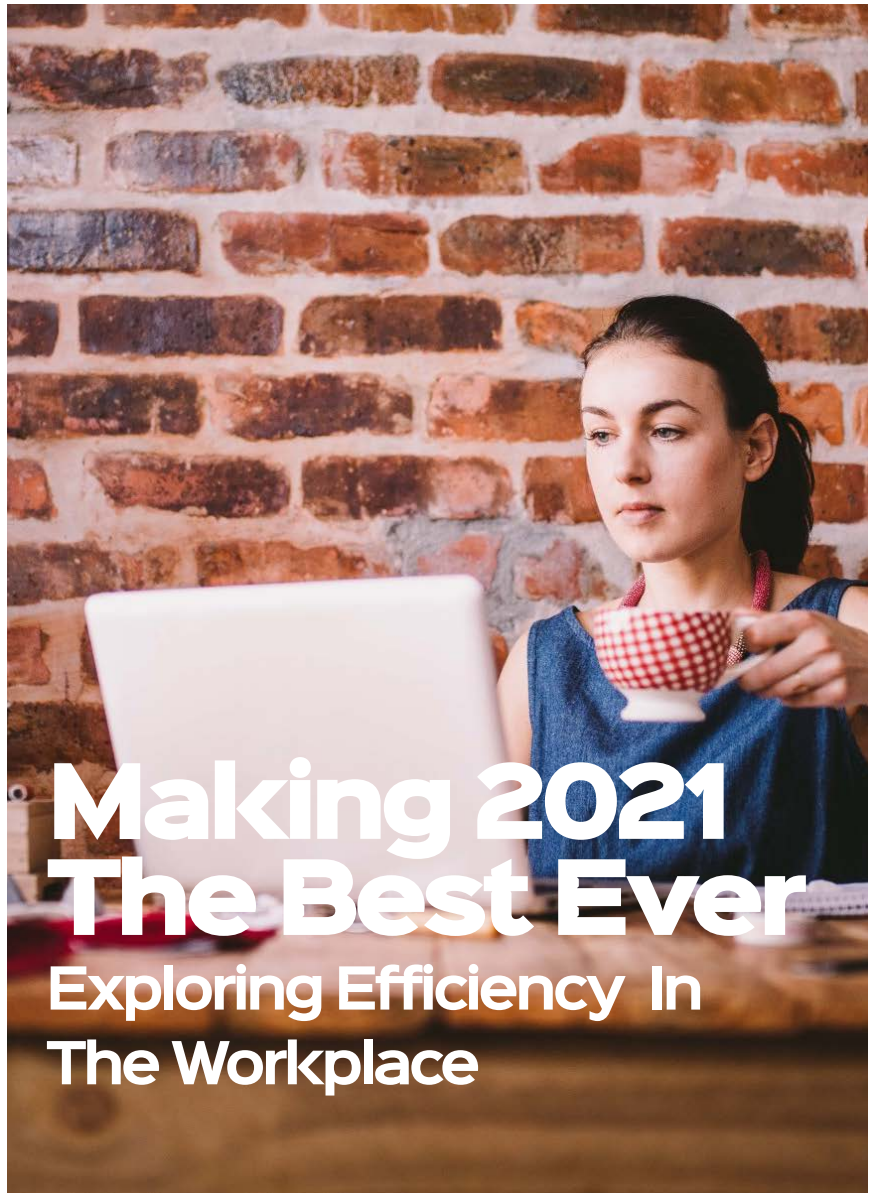
**By Ashley Blevins**

*Ashley Blevins is the Director of Sales for GMi Companies who is a manufacturer of the brands Ghent, Waddell, and Vividboard. After spending over a decade in marketing, specializing in dealer relations, Ashley has been responsible for expanding the national sales footprint for the GMi family of brands.*

*Ashley is a certified presenter of CEU's and travels the nation providing presentations that train and educate dealers, architects, and designers on skills to educate their clients and close the sale*

*Ashley has found her passion in serving customers by providing value, earning trust, and turning customers into partners. Her philosophy for marketing and sales revolves around embracing change, trial and error, thinking strategically and using data to drive your next move. I*

*In her free time, you can find her enjoying the country air with her family or waving her Terrible Towel on Sundays.*

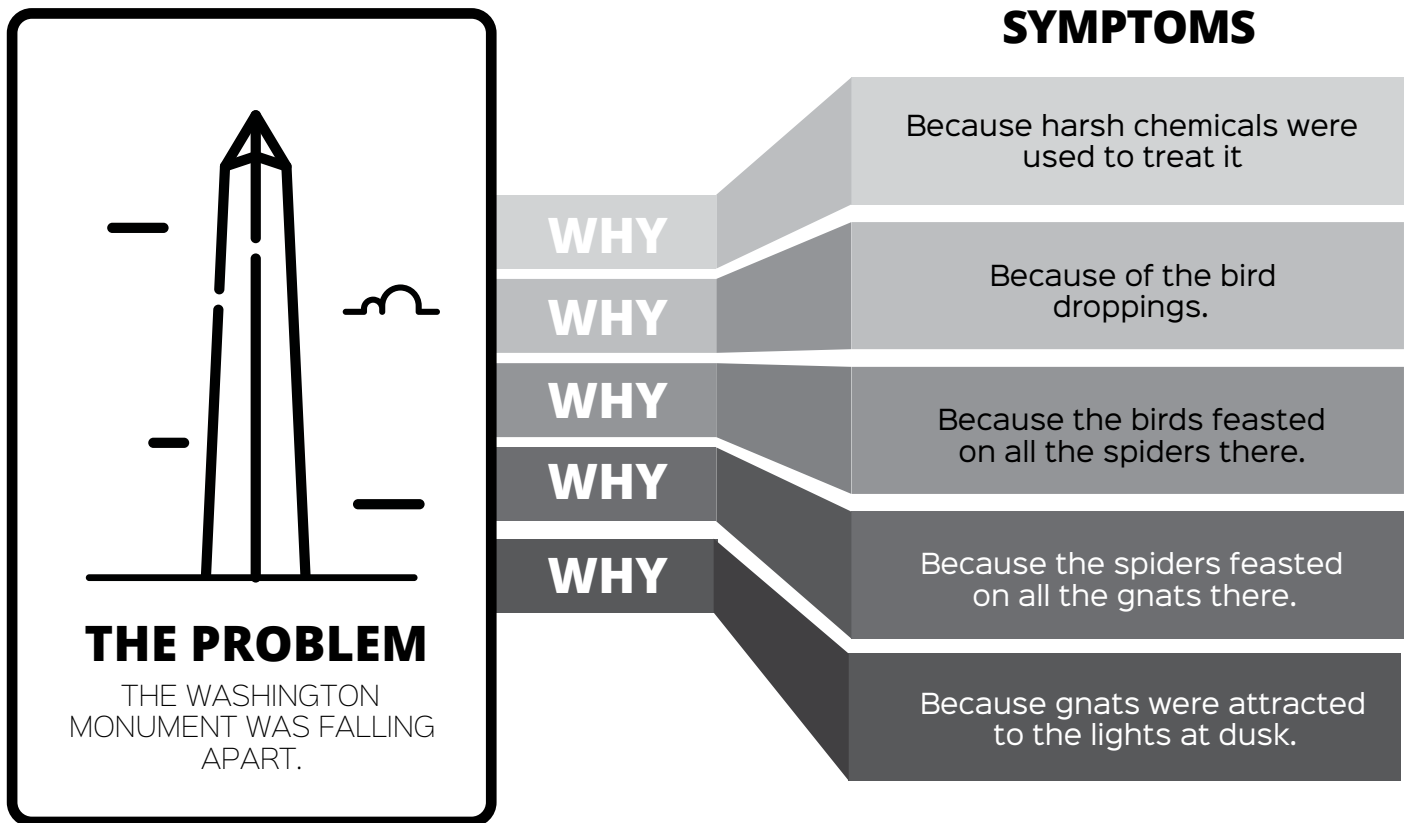


# Making 2021 The Best Ever

## Exploring Efficiency In The Workplace

**A**s an individual, I've always been a curious person. I graduated with a graphic design degree, and quickly morphed my career to focus on the business side within marketing and sales. I really enjoy using the analytical side of my brain in conjunction with the creative side. Being curious, I'm always asking WHY. And while some people may cringe when asked, it's more about finding out the root cause on WHY we do things the way we do. I'm curious about finding a missing piece of the puzzle; what processes are we currently doing and how can we improve them? In today's fast pace world with technology enhancements being made daily, we must constantly evaluate our current state and work towards making improvements. In a changing climate now is the time to think differently, if not now, when?

For many people change is hard, we cannot downplay that. Ever heard of the phrase "If it's not broke, why fix it?" As leaders, it is our job to help those who do not look at things in this same outlook. Let's face it, if we all thought the same way, it would be a pretty bland world. Nevertheless, people tend to shy away from change. The reason we dislike change is because many of us have a hard time looking past anything other than how that change will impact US. It's a natural reaction, fight or flight is embedded in our DNA and similarly, change has a fear factor associated with it.



**THE SOLUTION**  
The monument was the first to turn its lights on at dusk. They decided to turn on the lights 20 minutes later.

## THE FIVE WHYS

Since change can be a challenge, the first thing to do, is to examine why the change is needed. Your job title, where you work, or what part of our industry you fall under doesn't matter. This article is meant to help you think differently about current processes and change in general. In order to kick-start the curiosity and enable you to challenge your teams, organizations, and yourself, let me introduce you to 'The Five Whys'.

'The Five Whys' analysis pushes people beyond the surface value of the problem. It also enforces you to think through the problem versus being satisfied with a superficial solution that will help in the short-term, not the long-term. As leaders

we are consistently firefighting symptoms versus addressing the root cause. 'The Five Whys' is effective because it is a structured approach that forces everyone involved to think deeper. Let's start with a common example of The Five Whys above. As you can see, if you just asked Why once, the solution would have been very different than if you kept going to get to root cause. For example, if we would have stopped at the first why, the team tasked with this solution would have suggested to start using chemicals that were not as strong and/or harsh. Not truly solving the long-term solution. So how can you benefit from walking through this exercise? Let's dive in.

## **STEP ONE**

### IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITY

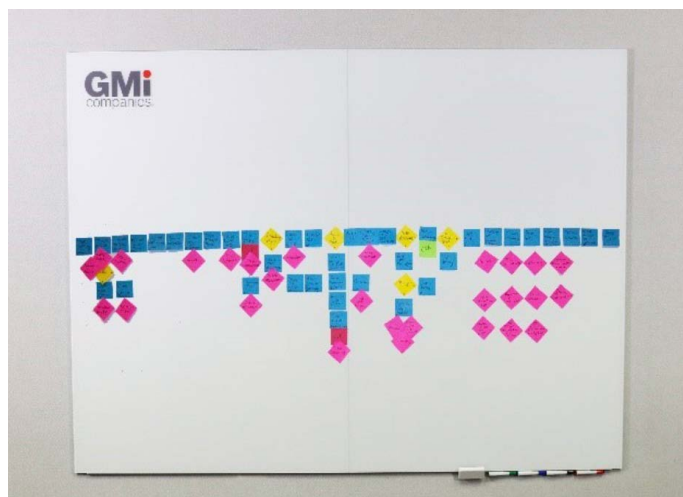
The first thing we need to do is figure out the area we want to tackle. Start with the Rule of Three. Think of friction points, areas that cause overwhelm or times where steps are missed, or commitments are dropped. The rule of three is simple, if it has caused pain at least three times, it is more than likely going to continue.

As you are collaborating and finding areas for improvement, use a whiteboard and/or sticky notes to help showcase which areas have the most votes for priority. For example, after putting all the ideas on the whiteboard, have everyone vote. Move the ideas with the most votes to the front. You can then prioritize based on speed to implement improvements. If this exercise is a first for you or your organization, make sure to have a good mix of items to work on; those that are easy to implement and those that are harder but have a larger ROI. If you can do a few quick wins, you will gain buy in from the group to continue working and executing solutions for the more difficult ones.

Once you pick your first opportunity lets identify ways to locate trigger points. If you are trying to capture a holistic view of the process, which may encompass multiple problems, pinch points, dependencies, interdependencies, delays and

other wastes, a process mapping exercising will help. ***Process mapping equals end to end process.***

Process mapping typically uses sticky notes or now in today's virtual world, software like Mira to determine every step in the process. This phase is incredibly important to understand where the gaps or pain points in the process are located so you can then begin 'The Five Why' exercise.



## **STEP TWO**

### ASK THE FIRST WHY

A reminder to people going through this exercise for the first time; if you have experts in the room, they may not believe there are gaps and will have a hard time finding friction points. Asking Why along with open-ended questions will continue to help them think differently.

Try asking questions that don't start with Why. In this exercise, 'why' is used as an example, but sometimes can have a negative impact. This takes practice but will continue to ensure the team that there are no wrong answers. I'd be fooling you if I said I was a pro at this, but it's a skill we all need to master as we continue to lead teams through challenging times.

## **STEP THREE**

### ASK WHY FOUR MORE TIMES

The whole premise of the Five Why's is to keep asking people questions until they are uncomfortable and get to the point where they throw their hands up and say, "I don't know, we've always done it that way." If you hear this, you hit a gold mine. This will be uncomfortable, so keep asking open-ended questions that do not end with a Yes or No answer. Ask the group if this process could be automated or if technology could improve it; seek idea generation.

Remember, you don't need to know all the answers to solve this today, but it will allow you to start thinking differently. I also want to mention, there is NO magic behind the 'Five'. Sometimes you can reach the root cause at 2 verses 5 while others take more. Stop whenever you reach the root cause.

## INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC EXAMPLE

Now, let's use an example that fits a little more in line with our industry. Let's face it, communicating exactly what the end user is after is a little bit like playing a game of telephone. Throw in communicating virtually and things can get a bit messy. Each team member perceives the information they are hearing differently and without clear outlines and project management skills, processes can begin breaking down rather fast. Let's walk through this example to see how they could use The Five Why's to implement a solution.

As you walk through this example, you can see how important inter-team communication is, however, much easier said than done when it comes to implementation. See how one dealer implemented solutions to the issue at hand:

1) First, they implemented "cool down" huddles following every client meeting that includes designers. These huddles help make sure that everyone heard what the client said and all departments were moving toward the same goals and timelines.

2) They created a design questionnaire for the account managers to ask better questions in the beginning of the process, questions many account managers were not used to asking up front previously.

3) They cut down on billable hours by allowing the account managers to specify loose furnishings which result in less design time.

4) And finally, the designers used "live design" when possible. Once the design was to a certain stage in the project, they found it more effective to get the client on a virtual call and make the small adjustments in real-time. This cut down on the back and forth and hours spent to complete the project.

Now that you have learned how the Five Why exercise works, I encourage you to take five minutes and think through how this can help you in your daily tasks, along with your team and organization. We have all been forced to flex and be agile coming out of this pandemic in our personal and work lives. Now is the time to innovate, reinvent, and explore possibilities. If not now, when?

### THE PROBLEM

Our designers are working too much and clocking too much overtime.

### SYMPTOMS

WHY

Our design hours have increased more than we can bill customers.

WHY

Designers are completing 3-4 revisions per project post-pandemic.

WHY

Designers are not given accurate information at the start of projects.

WHY

Account managers are responsible for communicating with designers.

WHY

The designers are no longer present during the kickoff mtg. due to understaffing.

### THE SOLUTION

What solutions can you think of?



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# Self-Lead Resilience

## Honoring Your Ability To Bounce Back

**“DO NOT JUDGE ME BY MY SUCCESS, JUDGE ME BY HOW MANY TIMES I FELL  
DOWN AND GOT BACK UP AGAIN.”**

**- NELSON MANDELA**

**BY AMY MOULIS**

Summing up 2020 in a single word is a challenge, but if I had to choose, it would be; resilience. Whether it is in our professional or personal life, being resilient is one characteristic we've all had to tap into this year. As we head into 2021 as a worldwide community, our continued perseverance and resilience start within us.

We will continue to strengthen our capacity to be more resilient. But after such a difficult and challenging year, with potentially little left in our individual, emotional reserves, where do we

begin to cultivate more resilience?

I have found resilience starts with acknowledging what has been challenging. This year has been a bit of a roller coaster for everyone, and while most of us have likely made it through one way or another, each of us has had particular issues that have caused us more stress than others.

Let's just say we have all had our moments this year! Moments when we have felt the pressure of 2020. Our different levels of reaction to these circumstances can be attributed to our

capacity for resilience when we experienced the particular catalyst to the stress. When asking a few people their definition of resilience, I realized we all have a slightly different interpretation, that is because we all view resilience through the lens of our own experiences.

For the sake of this article, resilience is defined as: the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Based on this definition, our resilience is built on our capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. The use of

**DEFINING  
SELF-LEADERSHIP**

the word quickly is interesting, at least to me, because I believe resilience doesn't have to be accomplished quickly. It doesn't make our resilience any less of a success if it took us a year to recover instead of a month. We are still cultivating resilience, even without a specific time frame in which to accomplish it.

Once we have acknowledged our challenges and how we have recovered, we gain perspective. With this new perspective, we can begin to look at the challenges we have faced with objectivity and potentially see a lesson we have learned from what we have endured. Recognizing a learning opportunity is a great way to remind ourselves of the challenging situations we were in and how we could grow from that experience.

Throughout this pandemic, we are confronted daily with resilience. We see it in businesses pivoting to keep moving forward. Every restaurant in the world has to be resilient if they remain open. Their leaders have had to approach new and ever-changing guidelines to support staff and guests safe. Employees in companies worldwide have had to evolve in their position, whether it's working from home full-time when they used to commute to an office or taking on new job responsibilities to help support others on their team. When we collectively do these things, we are all building our resilience to thrive during challenging times.

We continue to see from companies and colleagues, family, and friends that we build a deeper connection to the people we are enduring these challenges with. Even though we are still confronted with the pandemic daily, some good has come from this slower pace of life reflecting on the past nine months. Every day in conversations, I hear it, people freely sharing how this pandemic and its slower pace of life have given them more time to spend with their kids and spouse. Others have shared they have taken up a hobby they put aside because they were too busy before the pandemic. I know firsthand that my local Goodwill stopped taking donations for a little while because they were receiving so many donations they couldn't keep up. Looking for the good in these circumstances paves the way for more generosity in challenging times.

As the year comes to an end, cultivating more resilience as we head into 2021 is something we have already done because we have all lived through this challenging year. We have acknowledged these challenging times, and we have learned something about ourselves through this process. As a worldwide community, we have already found the good in supporting each other with encouragement in various ways, and we are onto appreciating how far we have come.



**AMY MOULIS**

*Amy Moulis is the founder of [The Modern Intuitive Life](#), a conscientious way of living and excelling in every aspect, from finance to food. Through her web-based platform, and utilizing her certification as a Leadership Development and Coaching Professional (CPC), Amy seeks to help support individuals who are curious about how they can listen to their own intuition and ask the questions to guide them to their unique answer.*

# Tapping Into Your Inner Leader

If you are interested in doing a resilience exercise here are a few steps to help with your outline. I suggest writing these steps out but of course do what is best for you.

**Step 1: Acknowledge the things that have been difficult or challenging for you this year.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

**Step 2: Recognize what you have learned from each of the above challenges.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

**Step 3: See the good that came out of the situation based off of what you learned.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

**Step 4: Appreciate how far you have come, what was the gift of that experience.**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

**Keep this exercise in mind as you end the year and begin the new year. Try doing this exercise a few times a year to see the evolution of your challenges.**



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