

enthusiastic, you may be taken on as an apprentice.

You can approach an established firm

i When they advertise for a vacancy in their firm,

or

ii You just meet them to make them create a vacancy. Now situation i is infrequent, so you have to resort to tactic ii.

Finding out the Established Ones

How do you know who is well-established? Very simple. During your educative years you would have heard a few names frequently—your lecturers and your class mates eulogising them. Then some of them might be known to you as visiting lecturers. Or ask your teachers. A directory of architects and designers might help you in your search.

Meeting the Established Ones

It is sensible to visit the office with your portfolio, and meet the top people who can take decisions. In case you are unable to meet any such people, do not meet the juniors, but take an appointment for the future. Some of your lecturers might be a class-mate of one of the big names in the profession and still maintaining relations with him. So it would not be a bad idea to take a letter of introduction from him. It would certainly help.

Advantages/Disadvantages of Working in an Established Firm

In an established concern, you will not be able to get good salary in the beginning if you start as an

apprentice. Likewise, your responsibility also will be less, you will not have to work hard, and chances of getting lazy are very much there. Then an established firm has many departments and you might get the experience only in one field. Limited to your department. But you will have a regular 9 to 5 job enabling you to attend seminars, see exhibits, visit showrooms, read in the library or at home, and write if you like.

2 Joining a Small Firm

A small firm is usually a proprietary concern, dominated, of course, by the proprietor; in some cases not a designer or architect, and offering a so-so scale of salary. So joining such a firm would not be such a hot idea. But do not think in terms of only monetary gain.

Advantages of Working in a Small Firm

In small firms, at one time or the other, you have to do almost everything connected with your profession, from peon's work to the designer's to the boss's. This gives you a very wide and valuable experience. As you are given responsibility, you have to work hard, and to be on your toes, all the time. If you have a good boss, he might guide you like a teacher and make you understand the finer points of the profession, how to assess people and situations, how to run the office/business and how to go about the execution of a project. During the course of business, you meet many clients who might be your potential clients. You come to know various contractors, materials/service/labour suppliers and consultants on intimate terms which

The Ways of Practice

On completion of education, many people think of only two openings: employment or private practice. But there are other options too. Let us discuss all of them.

1 Joining an Established Firm

Easier said than done. An established firm requires employees with experience, and you need employment to gain experience. It is a vicious circle. Then the lure of big names is tremendous. Everyone wants to work in a famous company, so the competition is tough. But do not lose heart. If you are outstanding, you will be noticed and appreciated, and given a responsible job in the company. If you are not so good, but highly

works as a base for you in future. So an experience of a few years in a small firm is recommended for a successful career and a must for private practice. The years spent there should be counted.

3 Joining a Showroom

Nowadays, interior design is in the air and showrooms catering to this trend are mushrooming. Showrooms basically sell what they have got, so you have to tailor your concept, design and layout according to available items of furniture and accessories. It is like buying a horse-carriage considering the specifications of the whip.

Advantages/Disadvantages of Working in a Showroom

The showrooms operate on an extremely practical level, the keyword being "business". So you have to please both your boss and the client, and ultimately you become a mere manipulator, an excellent salesman. Whatever you dreamt about in your college days, is drained away.

But do not get disheartened. Before taking up a job in a showroom, find out the type of the proprietor or partner/s of the showroom, and the type of clients frequenting it. If you find them with taste and reasonable in their attitude, it might turn out to be worthwhile ultimately providing you some invaluable experience.

4 Freelance Work

This is for modest but adventurous designers. There are innumerable possibilities limited only by the designer's efforts. If your spouse is also a designer or architect, and if you have a comfortable residence preferably with a telephone, you have ideal working conditions, and there are quite a few designers engaged in such practice. You can freelance for an individual, a company, an architect/firm, interior design firm, a showroom, or a contractor.

Advantages/Disadvantages of Working as a Freelancer

Freelance work affords a designer great experience in designing, design presentation quantity estimate, working drawings and client dealing, though it does not give you experience of execution. Freelancing is like running private practice without the glamorous paraphernalia, and many a freelancer has graduated to successful private practice.

5 Private Practice

There is a whole chapter on this. But it will be relevant to give a few points here: Struggle, patience, hard work sum up the life of a private practitioner. But the fruit can be very sweet at the end. You need a lot of contacts and if your practice is slack, indulge in participating in contests or writing for journals or appear in discussions on TV or club meets.

6 Partnership

Forming a partnership with a designer or non-designer is the second best thing to forming an associateship. When individuals pool their resources, they have better chance of doing well and coping with the professional vicissitudes.

Advantages of a Non-Designer as Partner

It is sometimes better if you have a non-designer as your partner. He will fetch you work and make contacts, help in office management and will not interfere in your work. It is still better if you have a sleeping partner—a person who will finance you and share profits, but will not interfere in your work or office matters. Cooperation and trust are the watchwords for such ventures, and for a successful partnership, it is essential to confide in each other before any step is taken.

7 Associateship

Perhaps this form is the best, and for that reason, the most prevalent way of practice. Five to six people belonging to the same profession band

together to form an associateship.

They pool their resources to purchase an office on outright/rental/hire purchase basis. They can work together on a project giving a larger percentage of fee to the associate fetching the job. Or an associate can work on a project individually necessitating him to use his individual, and not associateship, stationery. All the expenses incurred are shared equally.

Advantages of Associateship

This form of practice offers a beginner greatest economy, greatest range of designing work, team-confidence, emotional and financial security of a group, the widest range of contacts and great experience, though it lacks the secrecy of design.