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BUSINESS

JULY 2011

TENANTS, ANYONE?

COMMERCIAL REAL
ESTATE LOOKS TO
BOUNCE BACK

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Plants *to* Products

NatureWorks

is replacing
petroleum-based
plastics with
eco-friendly
alternatives

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NatureWorks' Steve
Davies and the natural
plastic that's changing
how we manufacture
consumer goods.



Interview with David Shea

The renowned designer/architect discusses his successful business philosophy.

BY STEVEN SCHUSSLER

DAVID SHEA IS THE OWNER AND CEO OF SHEA, INC., and perhaps one of the best-known designers and architects in the country. He founded Shea in 1978 with a perspective other firms were lacking: a focus on full integration of interior design and architecture. His clients are impressive, from the Chambers Hotel in Minneapolis, to projects for Macy's, Target, Marriott and Nike Town. The list ranges from highly recognizable retail spaces to famous restaurants and more.

His philosophy is to approach each project fresh, listen carefully and respond with appropriate design and business solutions. He believes the team approach between designer and client is the foundation for establishing long-standing relationships and creating successful outcomes. He concentrates on strategic partnerships with clients, bringing people together to find and create the right uses for space, land, and business. Another priority is how connections can create new business opportunities; he has never been focused solely on the design component.

As the principal creative director for Shea, David has been directly involved in the design of more than 400 retail, corporate and hospitality projects in his firm's 33-year history.

SS: You started Shea in 1978. Can you share with our readers your approach to clients and design?

DS: I founded the company with an entrepreneurial spirit and I had the mission of taking a unique consumer-based approach to every new opportunity. The key is that Shea focuses on our client's entire brand, not just the physical space.

SS: You see branding as important as architectural design. How do you share those strengths with your clients? **DS:** We help our clients develop or strengthen their brands by focusing on every touchpoint their brand has with their customers and capitalizing on those opportunities. For example, when we design a restaurant, it is not just about building some walls and choosing fabrics and finishes, it's establishing a brand and personality and all that comes with it: name, logo, storefront, menus, tabletop design, website, service model, etc. It's important that all touchpoints are consistent with the brand.


SS: Is this consistent with how you apply consumer-based design to one of your corporate office design projects? **DS:** In a corporate setting, the "consumers" are



clients, guests, visitors and employees, and the office environment makes a big impression and speaks highly of a company's brand. You still need to think about every point in which the brand comes into contact with "consumers." The lobby, reception area, conference areas, workspaces all say something about your company. What does your office "say" to people who walk through the front door? Is it fun? Is it stodgy? Or does it give a lot of mixed messages? How does the workspace fit the culture and workstyles of the brand and the employees? Through design, we can articulate a look and feel, give it a "personality" and add perks and amenities that raise morale, incite creativity and collaboration, and increase productivity.

SS: We've talked a lot about brands today. What should business leaders be thinking about?

DS: Are your messages clear? Are you different from the competition? Are you still relevant? Do you offer value? Do your customers think of you the way you want them to think of you? Are all your touchpoints aligned and consistent?

SS: What words of advice and inspiration do you have for entrepreneurs, business professionals and students? **DS:** Don't ever lose focus on staying fresh and learning and applying new ideas. As an entrepreneur, it is your role to question the practices and traditions that are currently in place, keep them relevant and to never become complacent. I personally feel that through travel and observation of all that surrounds us, our horizons expand and we are able to apply a more global view to our work. The key to success is seeing the big picture. Be open to new ideas, and don't get stuck in the same old rut. It is also important to share ideas and to encourage open communication with others. Everyone benefits and you just might learn something new. 

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