The Art of Travel by Butterfield & Robinson

An “A” on Function and Style for W Hotels

The Emotional Side of Medical Carts
Kellogg Dean Dipak Jain on Design

Dean of Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management, Dr. Dipak C. Jain has long been a proponent of educating business students about the importance of good design. Here he talks with Peter Lawrence, chairman of Corporate Design Foundation.

What kinds of challenges are companies encountering today that didn’t exist before?

For one, globalization and technology have changed the rules of the game in the marketplace. Competition now comes from everywhere, with technological advances enabling more products to be introduced every day. Given all of these choices, consumers are more demanding and better informed than ever. At the same time, however, the quality differences between competing brands are diminishing because companies have access to the same technology. All the laptops seem similar, for example; variations are slight. So the problem that companies face is how to create a meaningful differentiation in the minds of these sophisticated customers with products and services that are becoming less and less differentiated.

How does a company create brand distinction with products becoming more alike?

More companies are using design to differentiate their products and services. By design, I don’t mean just the aesthetics of the product, but the total customer experience. On the product side, it’s creating a user-friendly experience with consideration to human factors, ergonomics, and so on. On the service side, it is the complete process — designing a system where the customer feels welcomed, is able to interact with you, and wants to return or recommend it to others.

Drawing attention to your product is one thing, building customer loyalty is another. How do you develop loyalty?

One way is to reduce the customer’s “cost of thinking” and increase the customer’s “cost of switching.” That’s where you gain loyalty. If a product is too complicated to use, if the instruction manual is unclear, that raises the cost of thinking. When my wife goes to her favorite store, she knows the layout, which aisle to go to for what she wants. Her cost of thinking has been reduced and her cost of switching is higher. Good design factors in the cost of thinking. The product, the operating manual, the retail environment are all part of the design. The execution, the display of the content is important.

What is the biggest misconception that business students and executives hold about design?

They think that you can outsource it. They think, “Oh, you can give it to someone, and they will design it and show us the product, so I don’t have to get personally involved.” They don’t realize how important it is for the executive to be a part of the process. The
same misconception existed about marketing 10-20 years ago. When asked the definition of marketing, students and executives used to say, “Marketing is creative advertising.” They didn’t understand how they should go about talking to customers, understanding their needs, and then trying to anticipate those needs. But that is changing. Now we must change the mindset about design.

Can companies facilitate the design process by providing a context for the product?

I think companies need to spend time doing ethnographic research. They need to see for themselves what is happening out there, how customers actually use the product, what difficulties they have with it. Their observations may show them the points of differentiation. In essence, this lets you make customers the co-creators of your product by having them tell you what they are willing to buy.

How does ethnographic market research work?

I am not an expert in this area, but basically you create scenarios for customers, enter their world to note their behavior and reactions. These scenarios help you to anticipate what the market would look like, how the customer needs might evolve.

Can’t you get the same information from consumer surveys?

Not really. There’s a disconnect between what people say and what they do. In my market research course, I use the phrase “buyers are liars.” Ask people what channel they watch on TV, and they will tell you PBS. But, in reality, 60% of the time they are watching World Wide Wrestling. With traditional consumer surveys, people tell you what they think you want to hear. Ethnographic research, combined with consumer surveys, will be more useful.

Do you think that designers should be involved in ethnographic observation?

Absolutely! The ethnographic observation process should be a team approach, with a designer, a psychologist, and a marketing person watching the videotapes to see what is happening.

Are any companies applying the concept of customers as co-creators?

Look at a company like Dell Computer. It lets customers configure the product that’s right for them. If you make the customer tell you what he or she is looking for, that to me is differentiation.

Are you applying any co-creator concepts at Kellogg?

I want to make sure that our incoming students are co-creators of knowledge. If they just sit and listen to their professors, that’s one-way traffic. I would like to make students get involved in creating knowledge, so they can write cases, work on research projects, or work on books. While they are at Kellogg, they should not think that they are here just to take 20 or 24 courses and get an MBA.

To what extent is the design of the place of education important?

If you ask me, that makes or breaks an experience. The design of the physical space creates a sense of community. Graduates take away from Kellogg not just an MBA degree, but the friendships they create with people.

What is the reason for publishing student research?

We believe in continuous innovation, so we keep updating our curriculum. Our MBA students can be viewed as products in which we add value to make them more attractive to the corporate sector; i.e., customers. My predecessor Don Jacobs (dean for 26 years) invested in the James L. Allen Center Executive Education Program to create products and customers simultaneously. He felt that if executives learned new critical-thinking and analytical skills from Kellogg professors in one to three hour sessions, they could imagine how much an MBA student could learn over a two-year period. Also, when executives come to the Allen Center, they tell us the issues they are facing. We expose students to these issues through research projects. It becomes a continuous feedback loop.

Doesn’t Kellogg invite students to suggest programs?

Yes, we take a very “customer-centric” approach to running a business school. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and opening of Russia in 1989, students suggested that we start a Global Ventures program where a few of them would go to Russia, study the market conditions, and write a report on the challenges and business opportunities opening up there. They developed a ten-week course outcome, where different guest speakers came to Kellogg to lecture on Russia. Then during spring break, the students did field work in Russia under the direction of their professor. Since 1990, the course has expanded to include some 13-14 countries. About half of the business school participates every year.

Don’t you have a similar program in the technology sector?

Yes. It’s called the Tech Venture Program. Under the direction of two professors, students meet with Silicon Valley companies and write case studies. The ten top projects are then published in a book, “Kellogg on Tech Ventures.” After the first book came out, Bill Gates ordered a copy for every Microsoft employee. The success of that publishing effort led us to apply it to our Global Ventures program as well.

How do you go about bringing a multidisciplinary experience to Kellogg?

For one, we offer the Learning by Experience and Action Program (LEAP), where second-year students work on projects with actual companies. The project involves a design part, a pricing part, a market segmentation piece, and a finance part, so students do a full project for a company, just like a consulting assignment. The course becomes interdisciplinary because you have to apply everything that you have learned.

Is design taught to MBA students at Kellogg?

We have an integrated design course, of which five weeks are on industrial design and five on graphic design. Design is very much a part of the marketing curricula, and in the new products and services course, which I used to teach, we touch on design. Design is part of the Master of Manufacturing Management program, in which students from Northwestern engineering and Kellogg work together in a sequence of courses.

You’ve spent most of your career teaching marketing. What do you believe is the essence of successful marketing?

To me, it lies in clearly understanding your customers’ needs, not just existing ones, but future needs – or what I call “latent needs.” Successful organizations anticipate those needs better and go about creating the right customer values and sustaining them through innovation. Today no company, no matter how successful, can afford to be complacent. Even if you have 90%, 100% of market share, you still have to innovate continuously.

Kellogg is ranked by Business Week as the top U.S. business school, by a Wall Street Journal/Harris Interactive survey as one of the nation’s top five MBA schools and by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) as among the world’s best. What are you doing to sustain that?

I have been focusing on the Kellogg School “brand,” and what we stand for. We are continually innovating to find new sources of differentiation. One area that I am working on is moving from teamwork to this whole area of leadership. On the student side, I want to promote team leadership. On the faculty side, I want to promote thought leadership, fostering the nation’s thought leaders. On the corporate side, I want to focus on market leadership, how companies become the market leaders. At Kellogg, we strive for a culture of balanced excellence, one that equally appreciates rigor and relevance in all that we do.
Luxury biking and walking tour operator, Butterfield & Robinson, takes an unusual approach to travel catalogs. Through “mood” images and a personal “tone of voice,” it sells the experience of taking a B&R tour as much as the wonders of the destination itself.

You meet locals. They are anything but a bus tour.”

This is a point that B&R is eager to stress. “One of the problems we face is how do you sell a group tour when you are selling to people who don’t want to go on tours,” says Michael Liss, who has handled B&R’s marketing for the past ten years. “These are people who like being talked to on a personal level and not just herded along in a bus.”

B&R walking and biking tours, which go to popular non-urban locales, traverse ancient trails, country roads, mountain paths and open fields – and cost upwards of $5,000. “We are to active travel what the boutique hotel is to the hotel business. Our audience is a very sophisticated group,” explains Liss.

But convincing well-heeled travelers that they would enjoy an experience with B&R that they could not
acquire on their own is no easy task. The 1998 catalog tackled this issue straight-on with the headline, "I'd never go on a group tour," followed by an explanation of how B&R travelers are free to set their own pace, yet enjoy first-class accommodations and dining, specially arranged tours, and the luxury of having a B&R van sweeping over their route to offer refreshments, pick up purchases made along the way or just give weary travelers a lift to the next hotel where their luggage is waiting in their rooms.

“Our trips are crafted with special attention to details,” says Lisa. “We think about how the experience will unfold for you. Where it begins and ends. Which places you should see, and in what order. Where the highs are. Those are intangibles that we are selling. That stuff is so hard to explain in print. The difficulty is that a competitor can sell the same four hotels and get you to those places. On paper, it may look exactly the same and cost a third less money, and people are likely to say, ‘Wait a minute! What’s the difference?’ Through the design of our brochures, we can convey that B&R trips are really more special.”

Viva Dolan’s strategy has been to use visual variety in marketing materials to express the B&R brand.

“One of those key attributes,” says Viva, “is a love for the unexpected. People who take these trips want to be surprised and delighted with a one-of-a-kind travel experience. They feel the same way about the marketing materials.”

To elicit such a response, “each catalog must outdo the last, taking a creative approach that inspires people to keep it on their coffee tables and share it with friends,” says Viva. Often, the imagery conveys a sense of a bygone era when the pace of travel was more leisurely, less crowded and less commercialized. Dreamy and exotic in mood, the pictures suggest wide-open spaces that appeal to adventurous spirits. The inclusion of casual photographs of recent B&R travelers communicates an intimate feeling that separates B&R trips from large, impersonal tours. In fact, most B&R tours average 17 people, with private groups, made up of family and friends, comprising the fastest-growing customer segment. Pictures of fellow travelers, trip guides and local people met along the way help to recreate some of the warmth and charm of a vacation “memory book.”

The mood of the design is reinforced by the evocative tone of the accompanying text. Doug Dolan, who wrote fiction before going into partnership with Frank Viva ten years ago, brings the descriptive voice of a travel writer to the text. “It’s a fiction writer’s instinct to try to get in the precise physical details that set up a moment that everybody can relate to. It’s not a marketing voice, but a sense of a real traveler talking,” Dolan says.

That level of detail also helps people imagine whether a B&R trip is right for them. “People want to understand what it is like to be on this trip,” says Dolan. “Who are the guides? What are their back-grounds? How does B&R move bikes from location to location? What happens if you get a flat, if you get thirsty while you’re riding?”

This type of information was barely covered in B&R catalogs before Viva Dolan came on. The early catalogs were organized to “sell the region, not so much the products,” Viva recalls. “It wasn’t doing a good job of conveying the fact that it was a biking or walking trip. I realized that the biggest barrier to new people buying into B&R was understanding what it’s like being on a trip.”

To do that, Viva Dolan has divided the main catalog into two sections: 1) an opening marketing section that talks about the advantages of B&R trips and features originally commissioned photographs and illustrations and 2) destination-specific “trip pages” relying heavily on stock images. A daunting amount of essential information needs to go on each trip page. Viva Dolan is charged with including roughly 14 levels of hierarchic information and presenting
The creative team, Viva Dolan, takes an entirely fresh and original approach to Butterfield & Robinson’s annual trip guide. Each catalog is given its own unique character and style, consistently executed throughout the book.

Return Mail Cards
Perforated postcards at the back of the guide carry on in the same voice and design style as the rest of the book.

"You’ve got to slow down to see the world."

Motto
This is B&R’s motto for its walking and hiking tours.

Action Adventure
A photo of B&R travelers on a rafting expedition helps to communicate the different levels of activity and range of locales offered by the company.

Meeting the Locals
This photo suggests the chance to meet local people and experience the culture first-hand.

Varied Interests
Reassuring travelers that they can pursue their personal interest is an important message.

Close Contact
Antique

Color Palette
The color palette introduced on the book’s cover is used on every spread.

Traveler’s Voice
Written like a traveler’s journal, copy conveys a sense of the experience and what the customer will see.

This informal photo of B&R’s European staff dispels concerns about an impersonal kind of trip.
them in an attractive, easy-to-use format. "We need to tell them how many days and nights, where the trip starts and finishes, the activity level, whether it's strenuous or light, the price, single supplement, departure dates, a day-by-day itinerary, an overall description of the trip, a photo with caption and a map. It has always been pretty relentless," admits Viva. "The design problem was in organizing the information so the hierarchy was clear, from the biggest to smallest, making sure that we direct people's eyes to the information."

Another problem was taking into account that few people read a tour catalog from start to finish. "Our theory is that people who receive B&R's catalogs fall into three groups; flippers, skimmers and readers," says Dolan. To make sure that some information reaches all of them, Dolan says he writes the copy "so that anyone can touch down and read it."

A hallmark of B&R trip guides is the maps, which change in design each and every year - not necessarily by choice. "At the beginning, we thought let's do digital maps in Illustrator and just update the information as needed," explains Viva, who started his career doing illustrations for such publications as The New York Times and Boston Globe. "But invariably some trip would swing up north of where our map was last year and it would eventually fall apart. Because the routes changed so much we had to redo them, it wasn't that much more work to rethink them again."

Changing the look of the maps each year has made it easier to develop a fresh and dramatically different design. If the overall mood is painterly and pastel, the maps will match. If the mood is sepia-toned and historical, the maps will complement that look too. "The maps become the hinge," says Liss. "If you add too many elements, you start losing it. It has to be cohesive. The whole thing has to work with the map."

One of the reasons that B&R marketing materials hang together so well is because there is never a disconnect between the design and the copy. As often as not, Viva comes up with the headline, although both he and Dolan reveal that they are so used to working together that they think as one. "When I am putting photography on a page, I start thinking of imaginary headlines. Suddenly I can see connections between photographs and headlines. It sets up a kind of premise for the whole spread," says Viva.

"What it says and how it looks - we don't even think what the discussion is at the moment. Those two vectors converge in trying to make it fun, apropos and also the right line length," Dolan says. He also admits that he takes a "perverse pride" in not just writing to fit, but writing so there is not a single hyphen in the book. "It becomes an insane way of writing. I keep trying to find things that have a proper cadence to them and are compelling to read and also end exactly where you want them to end." The payoff is evident in the design, which demands sharp editing to achieve such perfectly balanced layouts.

That obsession is carried through in all the other collateral pieces that Viva Dolan produces for B&R. Along with the big annual trip guide, Viva Dolan develops smaller brochures for specialized programs such as B&R Expeditions and Family Trips and single-event offerings such as the Millennium trip and the 35th Anniversary Grand Tour. In addition, Viva Dolan creates calendars, posters, newsletter updates, campaign-based stationery and traveler materials. Each is stylistically different, but part of B&R's strategy for keeping its brand fresh and interesting. "People who know the brand will encounter a new marketing piece and say, 'That's so B&R,'" says Viva. At the same time, he hopes that prospective customers discovering B&R for the first time will say, "What a cool company; we should find out more." The brand message is the joy of discovery.

Because B&R trip routes change from year-to-year, Viva Dolan found that they had to create new maps with each new catalog. This gave them the opportunity to match the style and format of the maps to the overall design theme of the book.
Typecast

Like some Hollywood actors, some typefaces are "typecast." From the look of a certain typeface, we may think of wedding invitations. Or Paris in the 1920s. Or the Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s. The typeface itself is part of the vernacular and, at times, can be used as visual shorthand to convey the subject's mood or purpose. Don't believe us? Try matching each character in this alphabet to the description below that best suits it.

- Nuptial: Heavy-Duty
- Wild West: Circus
- Art Nouveau: Medieval Monks
- '50s Diner: Varsity
- High Finance: Whimsical
- Newsroom: Credit Card
- Gen-X: Highway Sign
- Roaring '20s: '60s Psychedelic
- Home Grown: Heavy Metal
- Dick-and-Jane: Kinetic
- Digital Age: Elegant Fashion
- Top-Hat Formal: High-Tech
- Campground: Shipping Crates
Modo Moves Medicine

Modo knows that there's more to medical technology carts than four wheels and a platform. Well-designed medical carts can build confidence in the technology they hold, reassure nervous patients and provide ergonomic comfort to caregivers.

Modo CEO Bob Marchant relates a story he heard years ago about the time a medical technology company surveyed customers on the graphical interface of its product. The questionnaire left a space for "other comments," in which 50% of the respondents wrote "we don't like your cart!" That surprised the product manager since the cart wasn't even mentioned or considered part of the technology.

But the response didn't surprise Marchant, who describes medical carts as a form of three-dimensional branding. "If you put a $30,000 medical device on a cart that squeaks, is difficult to maneuver or is too large, the OEM's [original equipment manufacturer] customer is going to associate that deficiency with the technology of its brand," he says. "On the other hand, if the cart is simple, reliable and easy-to-use, those attributes will be ascribed to the brand too."

The latter has been Modo's goal for more than a decade. Noting how technology was becoming pervasive in medicine, in the mid-1990s Modo turned from creating carts for the general technology market to focusing exclusively on the health care industry. Since then, it has been designing and manufacturing award-winning technology carts for the world's leading medical device makers including Allergan, Philips, GE Medical Systems, Medtronic, Shimadzu and others.

When Modo first entered the field, Marchant recalls, OEMs had to design their own cart to hold the medical device because "no one else was doing it." The OEM would form a design/engineering team to come up with a cart for the device. As soon as the product was introduced, the team would be disbanded. The result was an absence of cumulative expertise and deep knowledge about hospital protocol and manufacturing sourcing related to carts.

By specializing in medical technology carts, Modo has proven itself invaluable to medical device makers and their in-house or outside product design teams. Modo is often consulted early-on before the design of the medical device gets underway. "We inform the design process with clinical information," says Marchant. "We explain the human factors in carts and the cost implications. We explain such things as the difference between maneuvering and transporting. When in the patient room, you are micropositioning or maneuvering. When moving from room to room, you are transporting."

*The Rich-Mar ultrasound retrofit cart was nicknamed Rosie because it reminded people of the silent film heroine.
Glenn Polinsky, Modo design director, adds, "One of the first questions we ask is 'Is the cart going into an operating room (OR) or a clinic setting?' If the cart is going into an OR, it has to be robust. You don't want it to be too cute. In an OR, we are trying to reduce visual clutter. Companies are inventing new technologies that require it to be within arm's reach of the surgeon. It has to be compact so it won't get in the way and still easy to access. Footprint is a very big deal. But now medical companies are also doing a lot of cosmetic and aesthetic procedures in an almost spa-type setting, so those carts have to have a spa look."

The Modo design team spends a lot of time inside hospitals studying the setting in which their products will be used. Visits point out needs and sometimes inspire solutions. Marchant mentions the time the team was conducting research for an electrosurgery product and noticed that a nurse had taped a coat hanger to a cart to manage cables and keep them from interfering with the surgical procedure. "We took a photograph of it, spoke to her about it, and designed it into the next generation of carts." On another visit to a neonatal monitoring facility, the team noticed how charts were hung on the incubators, causing a clutter that disturbed the preemies' rest each time records were checked. This prompted them to make sure their new cart design kept the chart book separate from the incubator.

Modo also helps its OEM customers understand who the user is. "So often people think that the user is the doctor, nurse or technician, but the user is also the patient and patient's family," Marchant says. "They may not physically interact with the device but they are passive visual users. So, if the product has a lot of visible cords, cables or exposed probes, patients may get a sense of impending doom. If an alarm sounds, it is going to disturb them. If a hospital has a 15,000 monitoring device sitting on a broken office chair, it impacts the hospital's image and credibility."

The right cart design sometimes goes a long way in alleviating a patient's apprehension. Polinsky cites as an example a breast biopsy device that uses a six-inch long needle. "The caregiver may want the needle prominently displayed for easy access, but the patient may not want to see it," he explains. "We have to meld those two needs - make it easily accessible but nonvisible so it doesn't freak the patient out."

Modo recognized that as technology moves to the bedside, point-of-care computing was becoming more important. This prompted Modo to partner with EMS Wireless to co-develop its first product. A critical design challenge was fitting a fully networked, wireless PC workstation into a footprint the size of a meal tray.

**Evolution of a Cart**
What would a wireless point-of-care computing system look like? Early sketches (fig. 1-2) allowed for an IV bag and monitor. Then added a stand for a removable touch-screen (fig. 3) and later a flat-screen with a trackball keyboard (fig. 4) and a height-adjustable table (fig. 5). Finally, (fig. 6) incorporated a keyboard tray, broader base, chart pocket, and height-adjustable capability from the pocket upwards.

**Hidden Cables**
Cables are routed through the body of the cart to eliminate visual clutter, reinforce the idea of "wireless computing," and make the device look less intimidating.

**Dimensions**
CAD drawings showing the top, side, front, and bottom view of the cart allow designers and manufacturers to evaluate finished dimensions and proportions. This cart includes parts that are cast, injection-molded, extruded, laser cut, and punch cut.

**Flat Panel Tilt**
The flat panel display tilts for user comfort and changes in ambient lighting. It mounts to a universal bracket so users can upgrade the display over time.

**Fingertip Adjustment**
A Santospine grip, placed to let fingertips find it naturally, is just above a gas-spring lever (not visible) that lets users adjust the work surface for use from a standing or sitting position.

**Chart Pocket**
The elliptical-shaped pocket allows caregivers easy access to patient records and keeps the visual mass of the cart slender.

**Batteries at the Base**
Locating batteries (which provide enough power for a 6-8 hour shift of wireless computing) at the base improves the cart's stability and handling. The bulge along the base creates a comfortable foot rest.
For similar reasons, Modo has moved away from "sky hooks," a vertical element designed to keep cables off the floor and out of the way. Patients found them imposing and ominous. "We are still managing the cable, but keeping it at a lower level within the overall mass of the cart," says Polinsky.

Moving the cable in second-generation products has made an incredible difference, says Marchant. "The physical perception of the product went from being an intimidating 6'8" man in a dark suit to being a child holding flowers. The whole personality of the product was transformed."

Marchant emphasizes that there is more to good design than meets the eye. "People tend to think of the product in purely visual terms, but non-visual attributes are critical," he says. "For instance, noise—any rattle or vibration gives the sense it is unstable or not well-made. Temperature—if it's cold to the touch, it seems less friendly and approachable. If you jacket a handle in a warmer material [medical-grade Santoprene], customers will give the product a higher rating in focus groups."

Modo is sensitive to cultural superstitions as well. The color black is avoided because it symbolizes death to people in the West. "Probably the safest colors are white, off-white or light gray," says Polinsky. "White implies cleanliness, but an all-white product could be seen as too sterile. So if it is going into a clinical setting, we may introduce an accent color to warm it up."

Modo accommodates cultural biases too. For instance, operating rooms in Europe require the use of conductive casters, a tradition that harkens back to the days when volatile ether could send a charge through the floor. Even though ether hasn't been used in decades, Marchant says, "if your cast doesn't have conductive casters, it won't be accepted. There's a sense you are selling an inferior product."

Perception also drives the use of certain materials in Japan. "Aluminum has an almost semi-precious character in energy-dependent Japan because it is a very energy-intensive material to produce," Marchant explains. "Even if you can make the same part in steel, aluminum is perceived to be so much more valuable."

It has a jewel-like quality. We look for opportunities where we can expose an aluminum detail." To address such preferences without creating separate models for each culture, Modo "designs for the constraining region and imports it to other markets. The goal is to streamline the logistics so our OEM customer only has to have one part number for worldwide distribution, but the part anticipates cultural requirements."

While the health care industry worldwide places a premium on quality, it frowns on ostentation. "Products need to look well-designed but not opulent," says Marchant. "Caregivers are driven by altruistic motivation and are sensitive to what health care costs. Our goal is to be credible and sophisticated, but understated and appropriate. The visual purpose of design is to generate trust. That's a huge design value, and we do that through simplicity and integrating the cart with the device."

The need to integrate cart and device is becoming more important to OEMs whose cutting-edge innovation is increasingly in their proprietary software. "Without that cart, all it is is a PC, keyboard and monitor," says Polinsky. To give the OEM product brand distinction, "we try to pick up on the device's design language to give a sense that these two things were meant to go together. For instance, if a product has a lot of eclipses going on, we'll pick that up in the cart too."

One misnomer is that the equipment in the operating room does not have to be aesthetically pleasing since the patient is usually unconscious, but Modo has found that surgeons appreciate a cart for its beauty as well as its functionality. "Surgeons are human too," Polinsky says. "They get excited about and emotionally attached to things that are well-designed."

Still, Marchant understands that the cart should support the OEM product, not outshine it. "Our role from a design standpoint is to create a stage on which the technology is the hero," he says. "We are creating a product that is visible but unobtrusive. You walk up to it and use it in an almost unconscious manner. Our value-add is to make sure that the cart is not a barrier between the caregiver and the patient."
How Suite It Is!

W Hotels have carved out their own unique brand identity by combining the ultra-stylish surroundings of a boutique hotel with the functionality and business-oriented services of multinational chains. In so doing, they have proved that hip and comfortable aren’t self-canceling terms.

When Barry Sternlicht, the CEO of Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, set out to design a new hotel from scratch, he was determined to create one that fixed all of his “pet peeves.” He envisioned a hotel “that’s memorable, different, warm, no sacrifice to comfort,” and so impressive that even weary business travelers couldn’t resist calling home to say, “You’ve got to see this place!” Sternlicht and his wife listed the attributes they wanted it to convey: welcoming, wonderful, warm, witty, whimsical, wow, wired. As it happened, all the words started with W, hence the name.

With W, Sternlicht laid out a brand concept that combined the best of boutique hotels with the business-friendly services provided by more conventional chains.

“We’re trying to make it different but we’re trying to make it functional,” he says. “That was the big gap in what some of the previous boutique owners offered. Before it was art for art’s sake, but I wanted a guest to get a fax and be able to work in the room. I thought there would be an opportunity in the market to do a multinational brand that was more updated and unique. It was design with form and function in mind.”

Now in 18 locations, W reinvents itself with each new hotel. The properties range from remodeled historic landmarks to modern glass skyscrapers built from scratch. Sternlicht’s vision for the hotels has grown bolder since the launch of the first W almost five years ago. In New York, where the company has five hotels, the newest W Times Square has been described as a “lacquered bento box” of Zen-like textures and natural colors. The ground floor lobby offers a tranquil break from the urban chaos outside: a waterfall cascades over the elevator, casting rippling shadows on the floor. W San Diego, which opens in December, will have a rooftop beach bar with heated sand. W Mexico City, opening next year, has walk-in shower rooms, each equipped with its own hammock that is
"turned down" just like a bed. In Seoul, also opening next year, guests will be able to take a dip in the hotel's glass-bottom pool with sharks swimming below.

That commercial theatricality takes its cues from the retail world, says Theresa Fatino, Vice President, W Brand Design and Development. "Barry said, 'Why is it that there are so many hotels that don't look good and that have unsavory choices in their bedspreads, their furniture, their equipment? Why has the design approach, sensibilities and practicalities of retail design and merchandising not been applied to the hotel industry?" Fatino's design group collaborates with well-known architects, designers and retail specialists to create a new hotel aesthetic. They look at everything from bamboo forests to neon lights, from feathers and shells, to Warhol paintings. Where most hotels use marble and brass, W prefers wood resin and stainless steel, water and shapes and textures drawn from nature. The result is a fresh look, resembling anything but a business hotel.

Sternlicht says that from a service and hotel standpoint, he knew W could deliver the design, but he didn't know whether it could deliver the "cool" attitude that goes with it. "That's lighting, music, the smell of the space, and it's the service, the people," he says. As it turned out, it all came together. "I watch the general managers that we hire. They come in looking like they came out of prep school, and a year later, they're all in black with spiked hair. They evolve into the brand, it's very funny."

Sternlicht takes a personal interest in every aspect of W's design. His point of view has served as the initial basis for improvements to room functionality. "Barry's a busy business traveler who works long into the night," Fatino says. "What he discovered lacking from his experience of staying in other hotels is the need for oversized, long, deep desks, king beds, king pillows, a large TV and spacious bathrooms. So he fixed those deficiencies in his own hotels." W beds are a signature feature across the chain's diverse properties. W uses pillow-top mattresses with goose-down duvets rather than the usual polyester comforters.

Like Home, But Better
W rooms are designed to let guests enjoy the comforts of home, with a pillow-top mattress bed, cordless phone, large-screen TV and Internet access. They also avoid the usual kind of mass produced art found in other hotels. "I don't understand why art has to be ugly in hotels," Sternlicht says. "Scale and texture are two areas of design that are not explored enough, especially when you are trying to surprise people."

Branded CD
W created its own branded CD of mood music for listening on guestroom CD players.

Die-Cut Logo
Die-cuts are a distinctive feature of the W graphic identity and help to draw greater interest in the minimalist look of the W logo.

Designer Uniforms
Fashion designer Kenneth Cole created staff uniforms that reflect the cool trend-setting image of the hotel itself. Rather than the usual embroidered logo, a silver pin presents the company name.

Guestroom
Sternlicht made sure that every bed in the W Hotels had a cloud-like layering of mattress and feather bed, with a goose-down duvet just like the one he sleeps on at home.

Wireless Keyboard
Wireless keyboards in each room allow guests to check email and surf the Net from the TV screen.

Card Key
Images printed on room keys, brand and promote the hotel.

Guest Bathroom
Guestroom baths are as stylish and functional as the rest of the hotel, using contemporary finishes and fixtures.
Fatino's group researched vendors from China to Europe to learn about the best sewing and construction of down products. They specified that the down feathers be taken from the breast of the goose, because those are the smallest, lightest, warmest feathers. They put high-thread-count cotton protective covers over the pillows so they have a fresh, clean, cloud-like feeling.

To afford the beds, which cost twice the industry norm, W elected to forego the bulky armoire found in so many hotel rooms. As a result, the 27" TV is in plain sight, directly in front of the bed so guests don't have to assume contortionist-viewing positions.

In consideration of business travelers, W made desks big enough to spread out work and included a cordless phone and speakerphone. Three-way switch arrival, like joining a great party in full swing." They're laid out to create a lot of buzz; they're full of conversation nooks. The general decor, lighting, music, "botanicals," staff uniforms and DJs are carefully selected to create a stylish ambiance, she adds. "Living rooms" are set up to create moods that change throughout the day, moving from serene to social to sexy—providing a relaxing respite from the city outside by day, a lively lounge by night. "We use colored gels that alter the intensity as the day progresses to create just the right mood," says Fatino. "Candles and votives are lit every evening for a warm, cozy ambiance."

Sternlicht was behind the push to recreate the lobby concept in W hotels. "In my travels in Asia, the hotel was a meeting place. Many hotels had five restaurants

**Destination for Locals**

While many hotels create "generic" dining and entertainment experiences in an attempt to be "all things to all people," W has partnered with famous names to develop themed restaurants and bars that rival the best in town. Nightclub impresario Rande Gerber's trendy Whiskey Bars are located in W hotels from coast-to-coast, drawing a chic and glamorous crowd made up of both locals and hotel guests.

lighting shifts the mood of W rooms. Fitness centers are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. International magazines are sold in lobby newsstands and local microbrews are stocked in guestroom bars.

Showerheads are oversized—as big as local city ordinances allow. W's bathrooms are a feature of ongoing innovation. In the new W Mexico City, the bathroom is actually placed at the back wall of the guestroom near the window, so it isn't the first thing you see when you come in. Fatino explains, "The guest is expecting more from us and allowing us to be more adventurous with our space planning and the integration of the bathroom into the living room space. It can be a seamless, sexier space. That way when someone is shaving, putting on their makeup, whatever, they can see the TV, their significant other or the view from the room."

Another focus in W hotels are the lobbies, which Sternlicht likes to describe as "living rooms." Fatino says they are designed to provide "a true sense of

in them. They hold thousands of events, there's always action in the lobby. In the United States, they're roadway stops. You go in and out of a hotel as fast as you can. We needed to energize the lobby."

Integral to that effort are W bars and restaurants, which have become wildly popular destinations for locals as well as guests. W is partnered with nightclub impresario Rande Gerber in creating the hotel's Whiskey Bars. Restaurateurs like Todd English from Olives and Drew Nieporent of Nobu and Tribeca Grill have developed themed restaurants for W.

W has also expanded into retail, opening cutting-edge stores. The first one appeared last year with the debut of W's second Chicago location and sells everything from Fabien Baron snowboards, Givenchy handbags and Comme des Garçons leather products to the more mundane travelers' necessities. W stores exude the same modern sophistication as the rest of the hotels' interiors. W's Times Square location,
for instance, has a 540-square-foot store with white lacquered walls, bleached oak floors and ribbed mirror-glass shelves that flip to provide display options. More than a dozen retail outlets are on the drawing board. "Initially, we tiptoed into retail. We worked to show the interest was there. We tested the market very quietly, observed and learned," says Fatino. "We thought retail could further explain the various personalities of the brand, both its quirky side and its chic side."

W offers products through its branded catalogs as well. "We introduced the catalog as a service to our guests because we get so many requests. Guests want the pillow, the candle, the teddy bear they see in the hotel. Now they want the whole W lifestyle," Fatino says. "We also saw retail and merchandising the brand as a way of fulfilling our customers' needs as well as a marketing vehicle."

We created a brand behind a letter," says CEO Barry Sternlicht, who has extended the W Hotels concept to 18 locations worldwide. W’s boutique-business concept is a niche complement to Starwood’s larger chains, which include Westin and Sheraton hotels. Befitting W's hipper persona, the hotel offers business guests sensory-infused meeting rooms smelling of lemon grass or eucalyptus with decorative rocks carved with inspirational words like "Wisdom" and amusing "toys" for creative stimulation. For Sternlicht creating the W brand has allowed him to return to his childhood interest. His mother was an artist and Sternlicht continues to draw and paint. "I've always been interested in design. One of the reasons I went over to the hotel business was I got a chance to do something I always wanted to do, which was design properties -- the creative part of real estate. For me, I love the design side," says Sternlicht. "One of the most fun things about W was when I was assembling the assets that ultimately became the Ws, like the former Doral Inn, now W New York, or the Marquise that's now the W Atlanta, or the Days Inn in Chicago; they were pretty ugly boxes. So we were doing urban renewal at the same time. It was fun to take assets that looked like slag heaps in their original condition and really rev them up, contributing something to the community by making them happening, fun places for people who are happening and fun."

Reflecting on W's success, Sternlicht observes, "I was trying to design more 'class for mass,' but it wound up being a four-star brand, which was inadvertent." Still, he proudly cites a Market Metrix study that measures emotional scores for brands. W rated the highest luxury brand score in its industry, and number one for customer satisfaction too. "For good brands, design is a major portion of the brand. If you don't have a unique design, you have a commodity," he concludes.

Luggage
The W flip-flops not only expose the logo when the wearer is lounging by the pool, it is debossed so it leaves a "right-footing" imprint when wet.

Postcards
Oversized postcards show scenes from the hotel, quote rave reviews from major publications, and promote other W properties.

Promotional Materials
To market its properties, W produces a number of publications, including location-specific brochures that will fit into a No. 10 envelope and a stylish 128-page book with die-cut silver cover that tastefully showcases all of its hotels and services.

Cool Invitations
For the opening of W Chicago Lakeshore, GWhiz Design Group in New York produced a plastic see-through invitation with glittery blue water inside.

Trendy Ads
Created by GWhiz Design Group, advertisements for W Hotels appeal to a young, sophisticated and well-heeled crowd.
BUSINESS AND DESIGN CLASSIC: “I LOVE NY” LOGO

One of the most familiar cultural icons of the past half century, the “I Love NY” rebus, designed by the renowned Milton Glaser, almost didn’t happen. In 1975, the New York Commerce Commission asked Glaser to create a suitable logo for a public relations campaign aimed at countering New York City’s reputation for being a crime-ridden, dirty and hostile place to visit. Told the slogan was “I Love New York,” Glaser originally came up with a typographic solution—“two lozenge shapes containing the words ‘I love’ in one and ‘New York’ in the other,” he reveals. The design was quickly approved by the State Commerce Commission and on its way to being reproduced on everything from billboards to coffee mugs. That would have been the end of this pro bono assignment, but a week after the design was approved, Glaser says he happened to be “doodling in a cab and another idea suggested itself.”

He called Bill Doyle, the then-assistant commissioner of commerce, and told him, “I have a better idea.” As Glaser recalls it, Doyle said, “Oh please! Forget it. Do you know how complicated it would be to get everybody together to approve it again? But Glaser persisted, asking Doyle to just stop by to take a look. Doyle reluctantly came down to Glaser’s studio. Glaser remembers that he merely “nodded and took away the new sketch.” But shortly after, Doyle reconvened a meeting of the commerce commissioners and the now famous design was approved.

Since 1975, Glaser’s “second” logo has appeared on millions of items sold in New York. It’s become a favorite tourists’ memento of their trip to the Big Apple. Recently Glaser redid the famous logo for a third time. Shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attack, he created a version that inserted the word “still” and added a little smudge to the heart.

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