

# MARKETER

## BD TRENDS & PREDICTIONS

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SETTING A BASELINE TO  
MEASURE TRENDS

EYES ON THE FUTURE:  
MAKING BIG MOVES



# Eyes on the Future

# Making Big Moves

By Marjanne Pearson and Brien McDaniel



Former *Marketer* contributing editor MARJANNE PEARSON is the founder of Talentstar, Inc., in San Francisco, CA. She's recognized as an industry pioneer in talent, leadership, and business strategies. Contact her at 510.541.3252 or [mp@talentstar.com](mailto:mp@talentstar.com).



BRIEN MCDANIEL's expertise is in communications, marketing, writing/editing and online identity for architectural practices, higher education, and cultural institutions. He's based in New York City. Contact him at 917.601.0042 or [brie1967@gmail.com](mailto:brie1967@gmail.com).

## What comes to mind when you think of 2020?

When asked by *Marketer* to write a trends article for this issue, our crystal balls didn't show much beyond the U.S. presidential election.

This year has given us many unexpected twists, including a five-time whammy of health, economic, environmental, social, and cultural disruptions. But once we put pen to paper, we realized there were also lots of positive things happening. In the A/E/C arena, people were thinking differently and seizing opportunities. Some ideas had been initiated and catapulted into action, and some were responses to new challenges.

According to Rita McGrath, professor of strategy at Columbia University and author of *Seeing Around Corners*,

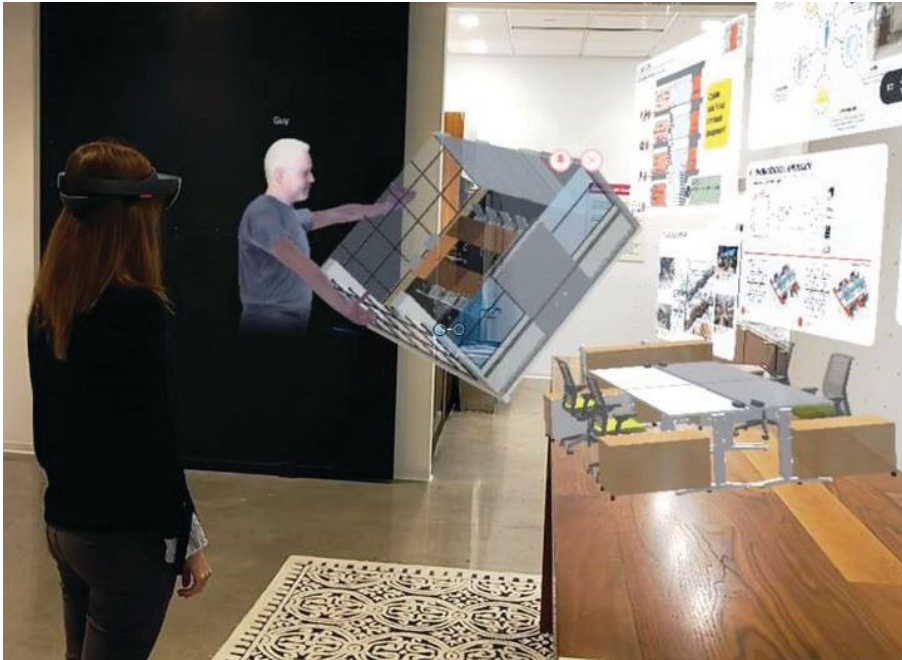
"... positive crises like these can release enormous creativity. When one path forward is blocked, perhaps that's the incentive to find a new path."

In our role as pathfinders, marketers help our companies find new ways to advance our goals and aspirations, whether big or small.

Here we shine a spotlight on a few of the people and firms making big moves—to give us all hope that we can turn challenging events into good fortune. As it says in the first spotlight below, on IA Interior Architects, we all look forward to a "braver new world."



# Design Intelligence: IA Interior Architects



IA XR (Extended Reality) was developed to create and deliver a highly branded and customized XR experience. Courtesy IA Interior Architects.

Since its beginning in 1984, IA Interior Architects has organized around its clients, focused exclusively on interior architecture. The firm sits at the forefront of workplace, acting as change agents, and committed to creativity, innovation, growth, and community.

IA has grown organically, by developing talent and entrepreneurial attitudes, all supported by a one-firm philosophy. In preparing for the future, leaders from across the firm revisited the vision, values, traits, and aspirations of the firm. They also reviewed its culture and practices, including the acceleration of digital transformation. They agreed that “IA should remain IA,” by continuing its legacy of entrepreneurialism and independence.

In 2012, IA transitioned to an employee-owned firm with more than 70% of the employees as participants. In 2016, founder David Mourning retired, and longtime managing principals David Bourke and Tom Powers assumed the dual role of co-president/CEO—a model that aligns with the firm’s culture and collaborative approach to leadership.

## Embracing Design Intelligence

As the firm transitioned to BIM and design became more data-driven, the leaders understood that listening and responding to end-user needs creates opportunities

to push and adopt new technologies and add value. They created a new department called Design Intelligence that researches, adapts, and develops new technologies for its clients—with IA and design teams implementing the project and managing change.

Prior to the pandemic, IA had been developing a proprietary approach to digital space planning in collaboration with Saltmine, a client-centered, data-driven programming tool that creates efficiencies in the design process (see next spotlight). Bourke comments, “Saltmine solved a problem that needed to be solved for programming and planning,” providing a single source of information without replicating it repeatedly.

In May 2020, IA announced its COVID-19 Workplace Recovery Team. It launched The Revived Workplace as an all-in-one solution to address every aspect of the workplace experience as organizations prepare to return to the office. The firm also announced Quanta™ (powered by Saltmine), transforming a time-consuming planning process into a

rapid, real-time collaboration. “What’s so important about how Quanta fits into The Revived Workplace effort is that we’ve built in social distancing parameters and compliance algorithms,” writes Guy Messick, IA director of design intelligence, “so all parties are immediately aware of how small changes impact the overall workplace readiness plan.”

## What’s Next: IA XR

IA is also pursuing immersive technologies, with its Extended Reality (XR) Practice. This was developed to create and deliver a highly branded and customized XR experience—bespoke environments that combine the real and virtual, allowing IA’s clients to augment their physical space, bring together distributed teams, and support the user experience. And it allows for casual collision—those moments in real life when you meet someone you didn’t plan on meeting.

## Driving Change

As a creative firm, IA encourages employees to be part of the firm; passionate about design; and participate actively in marketing, client services, technology, and talent development. Bourke affirms, “As an employee-owned firm, IA is truly invested in its people. In these times, with a dispersed workforce, there’s been a heightened focus on communication and connection.”

IA views challenges as an opportunity to explore the unknown and to question the status quo. They’re all looking forward to a “braver new world” with resiliency, wellness, and environmental heroism. ■

# Transforming Workplace Experience: Saltmine

Saltmine is a cloud-based platform that empowers companies to create exceptional employee workplace experiences.

It's a single source of data, from strategy and design to execution, including furniture, fixtures, and equipment budgeting. Saltmine enables users to make smart predictions on how to evolve their space, resulting in highly adaptive workspaces that communicate the company's identity while empowering employees to be more productive, innovative, and engaged.

## An Entrepreneurial Mindset

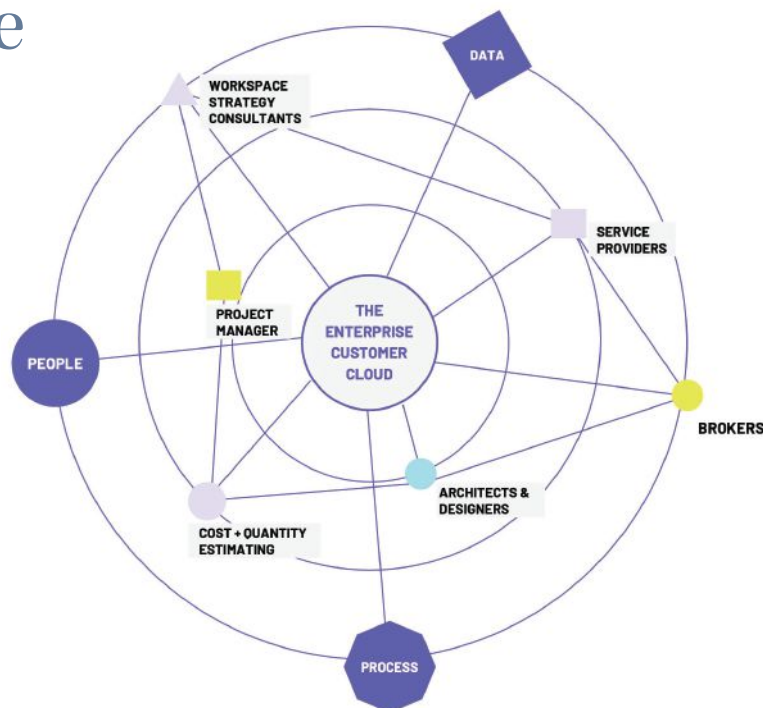
Saltmine's entrepreneurial founder, Shagufta Anurag (Shagu) founded Space Matrix in 2001 as her architectural practice in Singapore. Today, as a design/build company, it's the fastest-growing workplace interior design firm in Asia, ranking seventh globally. In 2015, she co-founded Livspace, an e-commerce marketplace for the residential market, connecting the consumer, interior designer, and product suppliers. Listed by *Fast Company* as one of India's Most Innovative Companies, this year it completed its Series D funding of \$90 million.

After building these companies, Shagu returned to the world of corporate real estate to transform the way the Global 2000 companies design, build, and manage their workplaces—not just as real estate assets, but as people and spaces.

## Changing the Workplace, With Employee Experience at the Center

Pre-pandemic, physical workspaces had become an important part of a company's soul and identity, and employee experience essential to the company's success. With Saltmine, companies can build and evolve their physical workplace to best reflect their company culture.

# Saltmine Cloud



The Saltmine Design Cloud sits in the center of your ecosystem, connecting your data, people, and processes.

As a paradigm shift in the way built space is created, Saltmine applies machine learning, integrating the organization's people, culture, data, and processes. It utilizes a step-by-step process that transforms assets digitally and connects the dots into one framework. This, in turn, empowers more fluid and data-informed design decisions and project delivery.

The user team can work smarter, conceptualizing the experience of people in the space—viewing, assessing, and optimizing the impact of the design on employee workflows, while evaluating a budget and schedule. The instant visualization and execution of all changes not only accelerates the design process but ensures an effective workplace, responsive to changing needs.

## Adapting for a Post-Pandemic World

COVID-19 has forced companies to reevaluate their facilities and make plans for reentry. Saltmine has taken this challenge head-on, creating a special module that enables companies to run automated scenarios taking physical distancing and other health and safety measures into account.

One client recently completed 8-million square feet of reentry planning over a

three-month period, "from standstill to done." All of their protocols are operationalized in digital floor plans, stored in the cloud, and accessible remotely by their global team. If the protocols are revised (e.g., a change in social distancing or increased occupancy), it will be easy to rerun the scenarios and calculations, review and visualize the 3D plans with the stakeholders, and make effective decisions.

## What's Next

At three years old, Saltmine is just getting started. The corporate real estate market needed a product aimed at digitizing the workflow, which had been largely based on analog design methods and point-based solutions. These siloed tools didn't necessarily talk to each other, requiring the workplace team to access different platforms at different stages of the process.

As David Bourke of IA Interior Architects says, "What was missing was having everything connect together." Saltmine solves that problem, ensuring that the workplace is a living entity that becomes more effective over time—always focused on how people think, work, and collaborate with each other. ■

# Residential Reinvention: Frame Home



Conceptual rendering of Frame 283, Brooklyn, NY. Courtesy Frame Home.

**Recognizing the next trend, innovation, or client need in order to stay ahead of the curve (or your competition) is a constant in the A/E/C industries.**

As a marketer, you're tasked with looking ahead and projecting the future of various markets and directions of your firm. But how can you move your marketing and business plan from the printed page into action and innovation?

"It's easy to do easy. It's not easy to do hard," says Joanne Wilson, entrepreneur, angel investor and co-founder of Frame Home. And that's exactly what she has done—pushed herself and global companies to keep changing and evolving. Whether a flourishing economy or a recession, it's this attitude and forward thinking (and doing), that's fueled her many careers.

## Sustainability Is Key

In 2007, Wilson left the corporate world and reinvented herself as an angel investor. Since then, she started Frame Home, a real estate development firm, with her husband. Frame Home was created from the ground up to be nimble and meet the needs of the time, now and later. This meant developing projects that invested in New York City, particularly Brooklyn, that were more creative and lower risk, with long-term positive impacts on the city and the environment. By using sustainable materials and processes, and state-of-the art, eco-friendly

technologies, Frame Home embraces integrated health and wellness, and a carbon-neutral way of living that empowers the most efficient lifestyles.

Frame 283, their flagship rental apartment building in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, comes to market at the end of this year, and it's unlike any other project in the city due to its unprecedented features. These technologies include:

- Passive house design to create energy efficiencies
- Highly efficient electric cooling and heating
- Triple-pane windows and doors
- Insulated concrete (exterior)
- Cross Laminated Timber
- Solar arrays
- Connection to New York City's energy grid for resiliency
- Private keyed elevators that open directly into each unit

## Flipping the Script

The building has two commercial spaces in its base. Instead of finding tenants for these spaces, Frame Home decided to turn them into 26 workspaces—8' x 8' pods (each equipped with bipolar ionization in the ducts) that can be rented month to month.

Frame 283 sets a precedent for sustainable building practices to move expediently through the city's

regulatory bodies, enabling more sustainable building of this kind. The building has a move-in date of January 2021 and the next Frame Home is planned for 118 Waverly Place, also in Brooklyn.

Wilson says, "So much has changed since COVID-19. What it really did was accelerate the direction Frame Home is heading. We've realized that back-end technology in every single vertical project is essential, now more than ever. We can't run smart businesses without it." She acknowledges the pandemic has opened her eyes wider when it comes to the climate and has helped with the price of real estate in New York City. She notes, "We need housing desperately, particularly in cities, so there is more equality in creating better and smarter communities."

Wilson believes she has a pulse on the future, and so can you. She acknowledges we're never returning to the way things were, and while many of us will continue to work at home, others will still need a main office or headquarters. She says, "We need to be thinking differently now more than ever."

She gives this final advice to marketers, "The best way to be ahead of the curve is to invest in and/or direct where you believe things are going. Think forward. Do forward ... If you have a great idea, go do it. If not now, then when?" ■



# Positive Disruptions: Cassette



Modular housing in Gayang, Malaysia. Courtesy of POSCO A&C and Cassette.

**How did housing affordability become one of the greatest crises in the United States? While many macro-factors drive housing costs upwards, one that's received enormous attention is the lack of innovation and efficiency gains in construction since the 1970s.**

In 2018, a group of colleagues devoted themselves to uncovering obstacles preventing true construction innovation in the hopes of improving the affordable housing situation. Their detailed findings led to the creation of intelligent modular construction systems, packaged with complete implementation plans and crews to ensure success. In short, they founded Cassette.

"Cassette opened in stealth-mode in May 2019, which gave us time to engineer our systems and test our assumptions before opening more publicly in early 2020," says Dafna Kaplan, founder and CEO. The company set out to provide shelter for a transitional homeless person for every 100 housing modules sold in any given city.

## Pivoting To Find the Positive

Opening a new business in 2020 was exciting, but then came the pandemic. Kaplan explains, "We knew right away that COVID-19 was going to have a huge impact, so we pivoted. Instead of raising capital at the worst time in recent history, we doubled down on our product and process development and hired out the team for modular feasibility studies to pay the bills. It was the best change we never planned, and we're a stronger company as a result."

Kaplan's career has crossed product, technology, architecture, and construction industries. This diverse background has given her a keen ability to sense trends and future states on a macro scale. She credits the broadness of her experience with her ability to help see patterns and metaphors. When asked about COVID-19, Kaplan says, "There's always something that disrupts the path that you're on, whether it's your business, industry, or career ... I believe those are the moments of greatest opportunity, if one pauses and takes the time to ask questions."

She suggests starting with questions such as:

- Why did this happen? (root cause analysis)
- Is there a historical metaphor?
- Are there broader issues at play?
- What were my assumptions before, and should they change now?
- What's my new opportunity, given my new reality?

## Staying Relevant

What's Kaplan's advice for marketers? She suggests that instead of asking what potential clients think, ask yourself why your products and services exist in the world. This will help you articulate the 'soul of your brand,' and why it's relevant.

She encourages marketers to become more entrenched in the fabric of our organizations and to "Stop thinking of yourself as marketers and understand yourselves as holistic business leaders." She advises us to find a company we believe is doing things right and using our gifts to help better articulate the firm's message, service, or product. She notes, "In A/E/C, your colleagues, rather than a product package, are the touchpoints of your brand in the world. If you can inspire and infuse them with a sense of the company's soul and mission, this will be your most pure and powerful form of marketing." ■

## Spotlight Contributors



**SPOTLIGHT #1**  
**David Bourke**  
Co-President/CEO  
IA Interior Architects



**SPOTLIGHT #2**  
**Shagufta Anurag**  
Chief Executive  
Officer/ Founder  
Saltmine



**SPOTLIGHT #3**  
**Joanne Wilson**  
Co-Founder  
Frame Home



**SPOTLIGHT #4**  
**Dafna Kaplan**  
Founder and Chief  
Executive Officer  
Cassette



*Second Lives | After Bottles* (plastic bottle pavilion), Troy, NY. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI): School of Architecture + Lydia Kallipoliti. © Ines Leong / L-INES Photo, l-ines.com. See Page 31 for the Story Behind the Picture.



### Featured Photographer

INES LEONG is an architectural photographer based in Brooklyn, NY. With over 15 years of experience as a photographer, Leong has collaborated with clients in the built environment locally and globally. Her motto of “creating the best-case scenario in reality” is in full display in her work, which has led her to be in publications such as *A+U*, *Architectural Record*, and *The New York Times*, just to name a few. Leong is a member of SMPS New York and often can be found in coffee shops when she’s not photographing. For more information and her work, please visit [www.l-ines.com](http://www.l-ines.com). Contact her at 347.422.7883 or [hello@l-ines.com](mailto:hello@l-ines.com).

**Story Behind the Picture** | Throughout *Marketer*, we feature the photographic work of an SMPS member. Photographs for each article are chosen with intention to highlight a concept in the article or to provide aesthetic value. We have added an icon to some of the photo credits to delve a bit into the story behind the picture. Look for this photographic insight on pages 1, 22, 31, 51.

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Santiago (address above)

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# MARKETER

## Editor

Christine Chirichella ([christine@smps.org](mailto:christine@smps.org))

## Contributing Editors

Mark Buckshon, CPSM ([buckshon@cnrgp.com](mailto:buckshon@cnrgp.com))

Ida Cheinman ([ida@substance151.com](mailto:ida@substance151.com))

Craig S. Galati, FAIA, FSMPS, CPSM ([cgalati@lgainc.com](mailto:cgalati@lgainc.com))

Matt Handal ([matt.handal@traunerconsulting.com](mailto:matt.handal@traunerconsulting.com))

Ed Hannan ([edhannan@gmail.com](mailto:edhannan@gmail.com))

Jen McGovern, CPSM ([jmcgovern@vhb.com](mailto:jmcgovern@vhb.com))

Michael J. Reilly, FSMPS ([mreilly@reillycommunications.com](mailto:mreilly@reillycommunications.com))

Nancy J. Usrey, FSMPS, CPSM ([nusrey@hntb.com](mailto:nusrey@hntb.com))

Jennifer Van Vleet, CPSM ([jennifer.vanvleet@stantec.com](mailto:jennifer.vanvleet@stantec.com))

Joy Woo, CPSM, LEED AP ([joy.woo@aecom.com](mailto:joy.woo@aecom.com))

## SMPS President

Doug Parker, FSMPS, CPSM ([doug@elevatemarketingadvisors.com](mailto:doug@elevatemarketingadvisors.com))

## Chief Executive Officer

Michael V. Geary, CAE ([michael@smps.org](mailto:michael@smps.org))

## Publisher

Marci D. Thompson, DES, Chief Growth Officer ([marci@smps.org](mailto:marci@smps.org))

## SMPS Marketing

Molly Dall'Erta, Awards Program Director ([molly@smps.org](mailto:molly@smps.org))

Josh Miles, Chief Marketing Officer ([josh@smps.org](mailto:josh@smps.org))

Michele Santiago, M.S., Director of Marketing ([michele@smps.org](mailto:michele@smps.org))

Linda Smolkin, Content Manager ([linda@smps.org](mailto:linda@smps.org))

Lauren Waldron, Associate Director of Marketing ([lauren@smps.org](mailto:lauren@smps.org))

## Design

TGD Communications ([tgdcom.com](http://tgdcom.com))

## Advertising Sales

Christine Chirichella, Manager, Professional Development and  
Partnerships ([christine@smps.org](mailto:christine@smps.org))

**smps**

Society for Marketing  
Professional Services

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TF: 703.549.6117 • [smps.org](http://smps.org)

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