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Talent Drives Success

Talent Intelligence Report
October 2026

UNITED STATES · INTERIOR DESIGN TALENT MARKET

The pool is large. The senior bench is not.

Who interior designers are, where they work, who is competing for them, what the market pays, and how A&D firms can hire senior design talent in a market where leadership roles rarely get posted.

63,124
Interior design professionals in US A&D, design and construction firms

1 in 36
Job posts per senior designer, vs. 1 in 99 for designers

1.4 yrs
Median tenure, the point when designers are most likely to move

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A big pool, a thin top

Interior design doesn't have a headcount problem. It has a seniority problem. The pool is flat, entry-level titles are the only ones growing, and the senior designers and interiors leaders firms compete for are already employed and rarely see a job post.

Top 5 insights

01 **A large pool that isn't growing.** LinkedIn counts 63,124 interior design professionals across US architecture, design services and construction firms. The pool grew just 0.2% in a year, and 698 open posts work out to one for every 90 professionals.

02 **The shortage is senior.** There is one post for every 36 Senior Interior Designers and one for every 33 Interior Architects, against one per 99 Interior Designers. Junior and associate titles grew 5%; senior, principal and director titles grew 0%.

03 **Architecture firms drive demand.** Architecture & Planning holds 40% of the industry-classified pool but 70% of the industry-tagged job posts, with a "very high" demand rating. Design Services, the largest industry, is rated "low."

04 **Senior designers benchmark at $95K.** The blended median at A&D firms is $70K for designers, $95K for senior and project designers, and $120K for directors and principals of interiors, well above LinkedIn's $61.6K all-designer average.

05 **Talent moves fast.** Median tenure is 1.4 years, and annual attrition runs 14–16% at HOK, DLR Group, Rockwell Group and Corgan.

Strategic imperatives
Search for seniors, don't post for them. Principal roles had zero posts and director roles had seven; leadership hires happen through conversations. **Price to the A&D market,** not the national median. **Compete with studios and retail,** not just peer firms. **Build the bench you can't buy,** by growing juniors into seniors. **Retain from day one,** because 1.4 years comes quickly.

The message is clear: there are plenty of designers. There aren't enough senior ones.

THE TALENT POOL

Concentrated on the coasts, tightest where pay is highest

The ten largest metros hold 43% of the pool. Demand is tightest in San Francisco, Chicago and Boston, while Los Angeles, Atlanta and Denver have more talent than local demand: the strongest markets for remote or relocation hires.

63,124
Interior design professionals in the US A&D pool

698
Open job posts (LinkedIn)

+0.2%
One-year growth in the pool

Where interior design talent is located

MARKET AREA	PROFESSIONALS	1-YR CHANGE	JOB POSTS	PEOPLE PER POST	HIRING DEMAND
New York City Metro	6,665	0%	93	72	Very high
Los Angeles Metro	4,556	0%	37	123	Low
Miami–Fort Lauderdale	2,413	-1%	16	151	High
San Francisco Bay Area	**2,403**	**0%**	**70**	**34**	**Very high**
Greater Chicago	2,093	+1%	38	55	Very high
Atlanta Metro	2,072	0%	21	99	Moderate
Dallas–Fort Worth	1,921	+1%	24	80	Very high
Washington DC–Baltimore	1,875	0%	18	104	Very high
Greater Boston	1,811	0%	32	57	High
Greater Seattle	1,460	+1%	19	77	High

Hidden-gem markets (supply high relative to demand): Los Angeles, Atlanta, Denver (1,254 professionals).

New York's net talent flow, last 12 months

GAINED FROM	NET	LOST TO	NET
Greater Philadelphia	+5	Greater Chicago	-3
Atlanta Metro	+5	Greater Boston	-2
Los Angeles Metro	+2	Washington DC	-2
San Francisco Bay	+2	London, UK	-2

CRITICAL FINDING

Movement between metros runs in the single digits, even in New York.
Relocation won't fill a seat. Every senior hire is someone a local competitor already employs.

ROLES AND SKILLS

Growth at the bottom. Scarcity at the top.

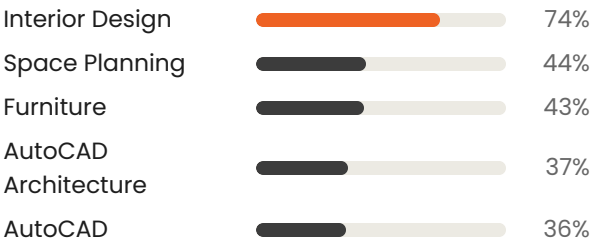
Entry-level titles are the only ones growing. Senior Interior Designers and Interior Architects are the tightest hires, and leadership titles barely appear in job posts at all.

Interior design titles in the pool

TITLE	PROFESSIONALS	% OF POOL	1-YR GROWTH	JOB POSTS	PEOPLE PER POST
Interior Designer	45,484	72%	0%	460	99
Senior Interior Designer	**4,868**	**8%**	**0%**	**135**	**36**
Principal Interior Designer	1,927	3%	0%	0	—
Junior Interior Designer	1,599	3%	+5%	19	84
Freelance Interior Designer	1,196	2%	—	0	—
Interior Design Intern	1,160	2%	+4%	0	—
Director of Interior Design	935	1%	0%	7	134
Interior Architect	**791**	**1%**	**0%**	**24**	**33**
Associate Interior Designer	758	1%	+5%	2	379
Assistant Interior Designer	324	<1%	+3%	0	—

Excluded from title analysis: Interior Design Specialist (3,654) and Interior Design Consultant (1,997), 9% of the pool and largely showroom and retail roles.

Most common skills



Share of the pool listing each skill. Revit is not in the top five, so designers who pair design with Revit production are a narrower pool than the headline count suggests.

One-year growth by career stage

STAGE	TITLES	GROWTH
Entry	Junior, Associate, Intern, Assistant	+3 to +5%
Mid	Interior Designer	0%
Senior	Senior Designer, Interior Architect	0%
Leadership	Principal, Director	0%

The pipeline is filling at the bottom while the senior bench stands still.

WHAT FIRMS SHOULD DO

Stop waiting for applicants for senior roles. Principal and director titles had seven posts between them across the country, so the people you want aren't looking at job boards. Go to them directly, and show juniors a visible path to senior so you grow the bench the market can't supply.

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

A&D firms compete with studios and retail

The market is highly fragmented: the ten largest A&D employers hold just 2.4% of the pool. Most interior designers sit in small teams across thousands of firms, and furniture retail is a louder recruiter than most design firms.

Top A&D employers of interior design talent

EMPLOYER	PEOPLE	1-YR	JOB POSTS	ATTRITION
Gensler	460	+7%	41	9%
Perkins&Will	224	+19%	18	10%
HOK	**209**	**+2%**	**29**	**16%**
DLR Group	**159**	**+7%**	**11**	**16%**
Corgan	87	+5%	6	14%
Populous	81	+8%	0	13%
Rockwell Group	79	+14%	0	15%
SmithGroup	78	-9%	1	12%
HDR	76	+15%	18	4%
HKS	76	+10%	5	7%

*Share of the industry-classified pool. Retail note: RH employs 205 people in this pool and had 77 open interior design posts, more than any A&D firm, with 26% attrition.

Industries employing interior design talent

INDUSTRY	PEOPLE	SHARE*	POSTS	DEMAND
Design Services	27,031	50%	89	Low
Architecture & Planning	**21,804**	**40%**	**353**	**Very high**
Construction	3,616	7%	22	Low
Building Construction	1,282	2%	8	Moderate
Specialty Trade	439	1%	9	Moderate
Civil Engineering	393	1%	26	High

Design Services net talent flow

COUNTERPART	NET
Interior Design studios	+35
Architecture & Planning	+31
Retail	+10
Higher Education	+9
Furniture Mfg.	-3

CRITICAL FINDING

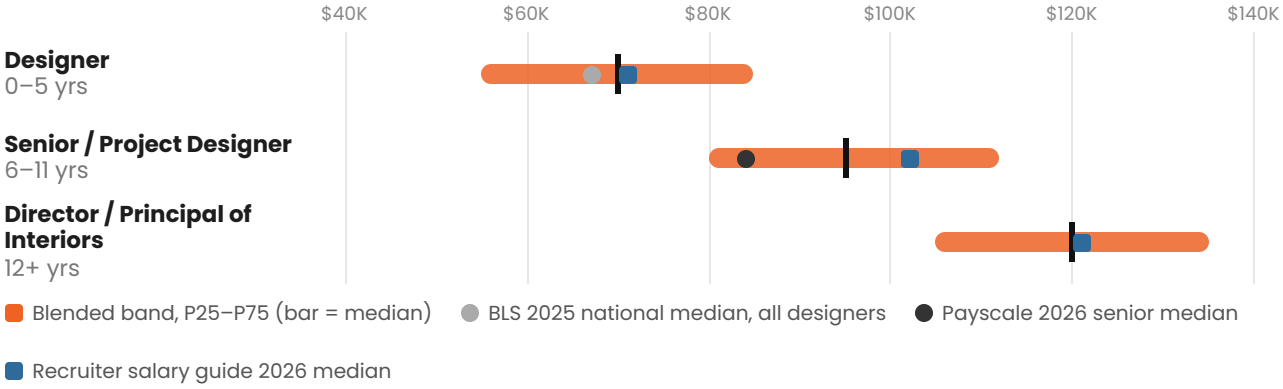
Architecture firms post 70% of the industry-tagged jobs, yet they lost a net 31 designers to design-services firms last year. **A&D firms are hiring hardest because they are losing people to dedicated design studios.**

COMPENSATION BENCHMARK

What interior design talent costs

A senior or project designer at an A&D firm now earns a blended median base of **$95,000**, about 36% more than a designer. The national median of $67,190 covers every kind of designer, and it understates what A&D firms actually pay for experienced talent.

Blended base-pay bands by level



LEVEL	TYPICAL TITLES	EXPERIENCE	P25	MEDIAN	P75	HOURLY AT MEDIAN
Designer	Junior, Associate, Interior Designer	0–5 yrs	$55,000	**$70,000**	$85,000	$33.65
Senior / Project Designer	**Senior Interior Designer, Project Designer, Interior Architect**	**6–11 yrs**	**$80,000**	**$95,000**	**$112,000**	**$45.67**
Director / Principal	Director of Interiors, Principal Interior Designer, Studio Leader	12+ yrs	$105,000	**$120,000**	$135,000	$57.69

CRITICAL FINDING

The median senior designer earns about $25K more than the median designer, and the step to director adds another $25K. **Firms benchmarking against the $67K national median are pricing themselves out of every senior search.**

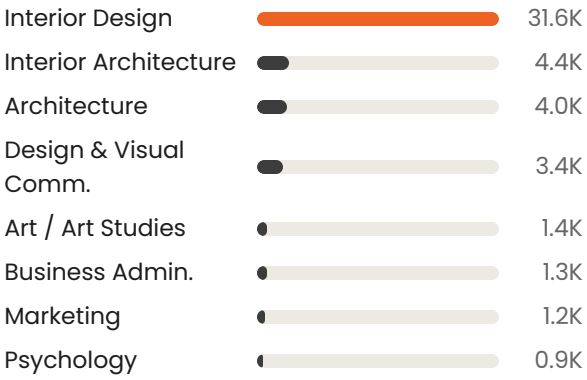
Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics OEWS, May 2025 (Interior Designers, SOC 27-1025: P25 $51,840, median $67,190, P75 $85,740); Payscale 2026; Bespoke Careers 2026 US salary guide; LinkedIn Talent Insights, October 2026. Blended bands by Snipebridge; base salary only, excluding bonus and benefits.

EDUCATION AND BACKGROUND

Trained in design schools, hired by architecture firms

Interior design is the dominant path into the field, followed by interior architecture and architecture. A bachelor's degree is the norm, but master's degrees are rising among recent graduates.

Top fields of study



Highest degree attained

DEGREE	ALL PROFESSIONALS	RECENT GRADS
Bachelor's	76%	73%
Master's	**15%**	**18%**
Associate's	7%	7%
MBA	2%	2%
PhD	0%	0%

Gender



Schools producing interior design talent

SCHOOL	PEOPLE	RECENT GRADS
New York School of Interior Design	862	153
Parsons School of Design	857	144
Savannah College of Art and Design	**814**	**208**
Fashion Institute of Technology	723	85
Pratt Institute	539	84

SCHOOL	PEOPLE	RECENT GRADS
Florida State University	466	60
Academy of Art University	460	71
Arizona State University	410	84
Kansas State University	407	94
FIDM	367	14

WHAT FIRMS SHOULD DO

Build the junior pipeline where graduates are coming from now. SCAD produces the most recent graduates, and Kansas State and Arizona State outpace several better-known coastal names. Graduates of business, marketing and psychology programs are also in the pool, a sign of career changers firms can train into client-facing roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to win interior design talent in 2027

Here's the paradox. There are more than 63,000 interior designers working in A&D, design and construction firms, yet the senior designers who lead projects and win clients are as hard to hire as ever.

01 Search for senior talent, don't post for it

Principal roles had zero posts and director roles had seven across the US. **What to do:**

- Work with a recruiting partner who knows the interior design community and talks to passive senior designers every day.
- Lead every approach with the projects, the clients and the path to leadership, not the job description.

02 Price to the A&D market

The $67K national median includes every kind of designer. **What to do:**

- Budget senior and project designers at $95K–$112K and interiors directors at $120K–$135K, the median to P75 of our benchmark.
- Benchmark each role against today's market before it goes live.

03 Compete with studios and retail, not just peer firms

Architecture firms lost a net 31 designers to design-services firms, and RH alone posted more interior design roles than any A&D firm. **What to do:** sell project typology, design authorship and the quality of the work, the things a studio or retailer can't match.

04 Build the bench you can't buy

Junior and associate titles grew 5% while senior titles stood still. **What to do:** map a clear path from junior to senior designer, invest in Revit and technical mentorship, and recruit early-career talent from SCAD, NYSID, Parsons, Kansas State and Arizona State.

05 Retain from day one

Median tenure is 1.4 years, and attrition runs 14–16% at several large A&D firms. **What to do:** put a growth conversation in the first 12 months, before a recruiter does it for you.

The question isn't whether you can find another interior designer. It's whether you can find the senior one who will lead your next project.

About Snipebridge

SNIPEBRIDGE is not a staffing company. We are an exclusive talent partner to clients and manage their hiring program through an extended team model. We work as an extension of your team, combining access to passive AEC talent, real market intelligence and predictable, subscription-based spend.

Hiring interior design talent?

Book a complimentary 30-minute Talent Strategy Review. We'll benchmark your open interiors roles against this data and map the passive talent you can reach.

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