

Inside Style
Mary Cotter
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Summary by Gabby Siciliano

Interior design is an area of the fashion industry that is exploding, especially after the pandemic. Mary Cotter, a 2017 University of Rhode Island TMD graduate, discussed how the world of interior design has shifted since her graduation. As a project manager for Inside Style in Wakefield, Rhode Island, Cotter has experienced the interior design industry and the current home styling trends firsthand. Cotter covered everything in her industry: her career at Inside Style and the growth of the business, to opportunities within the interior design industry, and current design trends.

Cotter began working for Inside Style as an intern during her sophomore year in college. After experimenting in the retail segment, she realized she had a passion for interior design. She continued to climb the corporate ladder at Inside Style, eventually becoming a project manager. Cotter manages every aspect of the design project. She begins with an in-home consultation to get a sense of the space before creating a design project plan for what her client is looking for. After these steps, clients elect whether they want to hire a designer-on-call or a full-service designer. The designer-on-call service bills hourly and only helps with advice or simple questions, letting the customer select all of their pieces. The full-service designer is the complete opposite and follows more of a typical business model, which can be billed hourly or by room.

Through her time at Inside Style, Cotter has been able to see the company and the interior design industry grow. She explained how Inside Style transitioned from a typical furniture showroom to offering a full range of design services to their customers. This transition has allowed Inside Style to cater to all available consumers in the market, while also building relationships with clients in the retail and design sectors.

Next, Cotter described her typical day as a project manager. She said she usually has one or two client meetings a day. These client meetings consist of presentations on designs, sourcing of products, and updates for potential and current clients of Inside Style. In addition, Cotter makes the workweek schedules for herself, any construction personnel, and other aid she might need during an installation day. Cotter discussed that the scheduling is the most crucial element to each design project, so Inside Style can stay on track with their projects. Lastly, Cotter completes the invoicing and estimating for her projects so Cotter, Inside Style, and their contractors are being compensated for all their hard work.

In addition to her job, Cotter discussed all the opportunities within the interior design industry. There are many components needed so the individual designers are able to execute their work. Cotter discussed the importance of the sales, business to business, design, and construction side of the interior design industry. All of these aspects allow Inside Style to have products from different brands in their showroom and in the homes they design.

Lastly, Cotter shared some current interior design trends. She discussed tone-on-tone and texture, which is having a lot of neutral, natural, and light elements in the room, playing with colors and patterns, and brass fixtures and accents. Cotter said that these trends typically do not affect what interior designers do with a space; however, some clients want to implement aspects of popular design trends in their homes. Overall, the interior design industry will continue to expand in a post-pandemic world.