



# Sheffield Student Postcard

*Sheffield students are out there in droves decorating clients' homes, serving as consultants in department stores, and re-designing everything from metropolitan penthouses to lakeshore cottages. If you've started your own business, if you've been hired by a decorating firm, or if you've achieved success in some other way in the field of interior design, we want to hear from you! [Click here](#) to let us know about the waves you're making!*

*If you missed earlier installments of this series, here's your chance to read more about the accomplishments of Sheffield students. Read our Student Postcards on Sheffield Students [Nika Stewart](#), [Lynlisa Jackson](#), or [Audrey Jones](#). And, Sheffield Student [John Snowberg](#) who is quick to remind you that your work is all about the client; make the client is happy, you will be successful.*

## Sheffield Student Postcard: Sue Morris

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If real estate depends on "location, location, location," then it could be said that running your own interior design business depends on "communication, communication, communication." For Sheffield graduate Sue Morris, her communication abilities have meant she's been able to start her own design business and get it off the ground and running without buying any advertising — it's all done by word of mouth.

"Since opening Instinct Interiors Ink, LLC's doors in September 2004, I have not spent one dime in advertising," Morris said. "I've signed contracts with clients all by word-of-mouth referrals in one of the country's fastest growing counties, Loudoun County, Virginia."

It doesn't hurt that not only is Morris a great communicator, but also her own home serves as a showcase for the work of the contractors she hires for her interior design business.

"Clients are most often acquired after they have visited my home which serves as a portfolio for many design ideas and incorporates the skills of my contractors," she said.

And Morris also knows the importance of networking in establishing and growing an interior design business. She recently joined a networking group, and has been accepted into the Interior Design Society (IDS) as an affiliate member, focusing primarily on residential interior design.

"As a member of these two networking groups, I stay current on the latest in business and interior design trends," she said.



Morris' ability to network her way into a successful interior design business isn't surprising, because to her, a large part of the job of an interior designer is communicating not only with the client, but also with the many contractors she hires. This emphasis on communication was one of the things she learned in her studies at Sheffield.

"I have utilized many of the skills I learned at Sheffield, such as how to properly interview prospective clients, draw floor plans to arrange furniture and select the elements for the chosen design's function, mood and harmony," she said.

But it's getting a crystal-clear idea of what the client wants that makes everyone happy when each job is completed.

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Before redesign

© Sheffield Graduate Sue Morris



After redesign

"I also incorporated much information from the Course to design a "client worksheet" which I bring to all my initial consultations. This worksheet helps the client organize their own 'home journal' so that when we begin working on a design, much of the information such as fabric likes and dislikes and ranges of paint colors is outlined. From there, we focus on how the design can create the space that reflects their lifestyle," she said.

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Morris found that the Sheffield Course gave her the education she needed to run her interior design business along with the flexibility of being able to study at home.

"I chose the Sheffield School of Interior Design for its quality of education for a home-study correspondence program," she said. "I wanted a course that I could complete at home on my time and schedule. Sheffield's curriculum also provided

the tools and information necessary to assist in the launch of my home-based interior design business, Instinct Interiors Ink, LLC. Sheffield's Course fulfilled all my requirements!"

Running her own interior design business certainly keeps Morris hopping these days. As sole owner of Instinct Interiors Ink, LLC, she consults with clients and then puts it all together with Class C contractors including painters, faux artists, carpenters, and electricians. Right now, she's working on

several projects, including designing a 13,000 square foot new construction home, updating a six-year-old 7,000 square foot home, and renovating a master bedroom and bath in a smaller home.

Being in charge of all this is not without its challenges, Morris said. The toughest part is "when custom ordered products arrive damaged, wrong or late. In other words, it's the events outside of my control which ultimately affect the client-designer relationship. As an interior designer friend of mine once said, 'An interior designer is only as good as his or her resources!'

© Sheffield Graduate Sue Morris



Before redesign

© Sheffield Graduate Sue Morris



After redesign

But despite the challenges, Morris is very glad she's doing something she loves.

"There are many aspects to running an interior design business which I find enjoyable," she said. "The first is the diversity of projects. I could be selecting only lighting and paint for one client while designing an entire flow of paint, lighting, granite, window treatments, and accessories on the main floor of another. Choosing the perfect fabrics for window treatments styles and then coordinating paint or faux art to accentuate the look can be a challenge but the rewards are priceless when the client is happy!"

Not surprisingly, she also likes meeting and getting to know the clients.

"Another aspect I find enjoyable is meeting the diversity of people. Each of their lifestyles will reflect how I approach their particular design. It's truly a very diverse, creative, enjoyable field that keeps me very motivated to move from one client to the next."

Morris has learned that running her own interior design business involves taking on a tremendous responsibility, but it's a responsibility that's fun and exciting.

"In addition to the design aspects taught through Sheffield, I would like to suggest to current and future students the importance of open communication with your clients, meeting with an attorney for contract review, checking your state's licensing and insurance requirements, etc. and carefully selecting the contractors you use to implement your design. Above all, you must be able to sell you, the interior designer!"

You'll be able to see more of Morris' work at her Web site, [www.InstinctInteriorsInk.com](http://www.InstinctInteriorsInk.com) which she will be launching this summer.

–Sarah Van Arsdale

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211 East 43rd St. New York, NY 10017

(212) 661-7270 Fax: (800) 822-0023

Email: [info@sheffield.edu](mailto:info@sheffield.edu)