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Saving Clara's Career as a Designer

The Client Crisis That Almost Ended Clara's Career (And How Richard's Design Thinking Process Helped Her Close The Deal)



Richard Kielbon

Richard is an architect with nearly fifty years of experience in design thinking, business creativity, and clarity architecture. He helps business owners and C-level management see the core problem and find new profit models. His process is structured, replicable, and has been applied across industries.

CLARA, THE SILENT DESIGNER

Clara had the technical mastery, the tools, and the brief to design a premier event center. But she hit a wall that stops many brilliant creatives: she couldn't explain the "why" of her design choices to the owner of the event center.

She couldn't lead the owner through her vision or close the deal. She could build the space, but she couldn't sell the soul of it. For Clara, this wasn't just a hurdle—it was a career-threatening crisis.

THE DESIGN THINKING PROCESS

In the context of Richard Kielbon's design thinking process, "the why" is the higher purpose of a project. It moves the conversation from technical specifications (the "what") to the intended human impact.

1. **Isolate the Real Question:** Instead of focusing on aesthetics, Richard asked Clara: "What must a guest feel the moment they arrive?"
2. **Reframe the Brief:** She stopped seeing a building and started seeing an orchestrated emotional journey from the parking lot to the point of rest.
3. **Build the Language:** By uncovering the deeper purpose, Clara gained the vocabulary to explain every choice in terms the owner actually cared about.



Fig 1. Richard's three-step questioning sequence applied to Laura's situation

The 6 Dimensions of Experience

Through this reframing, 6 critical design pillars emerged to guide the project:

1. **Arrival Experience:** Crafting the first impression.
2. **Transaction Cues:** Guide a guest's emotional state as they move from one physical environment to another.
3. **Sensory Orchestration:** Engaging more than just the eyes.
4. **Physical Elements:** Grounding the vision in reality.
5. **Serenity & Safety:** Ensuring the end user feels protected.
6. **Guest Perception:** Managing how the space is interpreted.

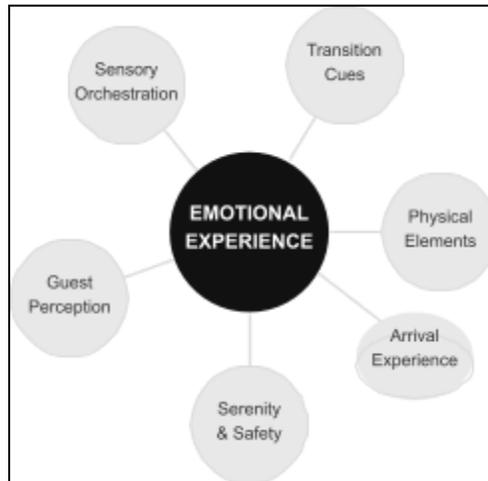


Fig 2. Mind map of the six design questions around the central insight

WHAT CHANGED

Clara didn't just deliver a design; she delivered a vision that was approved, paid for, and highly recommended.

<u>BEFORE RICHARD</u>	<u>AFTER RICHARD</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Design decisions based on aesthetics alone✗ No clear narrative to present to the owner✗ Could not justify choices under questioning✗ At risk of losing the project and her reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Every decision tied to the guest's emotional experience✓ A clear story from parking lot to interior✓ Could walk the owner through every choice with confidence✓ Delivered, approved, paid, and recommended

THE REFRAME

Exploration of higher purpose revealed something critical: the real design problem was never about spaces, textures, or shapes.

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"The higher purpose was to design a total emotional experience for the end user."

THE OUTCOME

"The end result is a designed space that exists at an experiential level that far exceeds what would have been accomplished with traditional means."

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The Forebears



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