

**Fohlio**

• EXECUTIVE BRIEF • 2025

The Hidden Cost of **Manual Design & Procurement** Operations

What we've learned after benchmarking commercial interior design and FF&E procurement teams.

The biggest bottleneck isn't design.
It's everything that happens after every revision.

The firms delivering projects faster aren't necessarily **better designers** — they're simply spending less time coordinating documentation, specifications, procurement, and communication. Across dozens of conversations with commercial design firms, the same operational patterns continue to appear. The gap between high-performing firms and the rest isn't talent. **It's operational efficiency.**

SECTION 01

The 7 Operational Bottlenecks

01



Every Revision Creates Duplicate Work

Design updates trigger manual changes across specifications, spreadsheets, budgets, vendor quotes, purchase orders, and client communication.

IMPACT

- Lost billable design hours
- Documentation errors
- Slower project delivery

02



Senior Designers Spend Too Much Time on Administration

Highly paid designers spend hours updating spreadsheets instead of designing.

IMPACT

- Lower utilization
- Reduced profitability
- Less design capacity

03



Procurement Lives Across Too Many Systems

Information is spread across email, Google Drive, PDFs, accounting software, and spreadsheets.

IMPACT

- Lost information
- Slow coordination
- No single source of truth

04



Vendor Quoting Moves Too Slowly

Manual quote collection and comparison create unnecessary delays that compound across every project.

IMPACT

- Longer purchasing cycles
- Missed savings
- Manual follow-up

05



Every Project Starts From Scratch

Completed projects contain valuable knowledge that rarely gets reused efficiently.

IMPACT

- Duplicate work
- Inconsistent standards
- Longer specification cycles

06



Leadership Has Limited Visibility

Project status depends on meetings and email instead of real-time information.

IMPACT

- Delayed decisions
- Hidden risks
- Reactive management

07

Growth Creates Operational Complexity

As firms grow, administrative work grows faster than revenue.

IMPACT

- More meetings
- More spreadsheets
- More coordination

SECTION 02

Design Operations Maturity Score™



Where does your firm operate today?

The fastest-scaling firms aren't hiring more.

The distance between levels is operational, not

Most firms we speak with identify themselves between Level 1 and Level 2.

They're eliminating unnecessary coordination at every level of the project lifecycle.

creative.

Moving from Level 2 to Level 4 doesn't require better designers — it requires better systems.

SECTION 03

Design Operations Health Check



Designers update spreadsheets after every revision



Procurement is managed across multiple disconnected systems



Vendor quotes are collected manually via email



Project information lives across email and shared drives



Teams constantly ask for project status updates



Specifications are recreated from scratch instead of reused



Budget visibility is limited or delayed



Clients, builders, vendors, and designers work from different information



If you checked **3 or more**, your biggest opportunity probably isn't improving design — it's improving operations. Every unchecked box represents recoverable time, margin, and capacity that's currently being absorbed by coordination.

EXECUTIVE INSIGHT



The highest-performing firms aren't completing more projects because they work harder. They're completing more projects

because they spend **dramatically less time coordinating work** — and that difference compounds across every project, every quarter, every year.

Complimentary **Design Operations Assessment**

If you're curious where your firm sits on the Design Operations Maturity Score™, we'd be happy to benchmark your current workflow. In a 30-minute assessment we'll identify exactly where time and margin are being lost.

- ✓ Documentation bottlenecks slowing project delivery
- ✓ Procurement inefficiencies eroding project margins
- ✓ Duplicate work across teams and projects
- ✓ Opportunities to recover designer time at scale
- ✓ Quick wins to improve operational efficiency immediately

No software demo. No obligation. Just practical recommendations based on what we're seeing across the industry.

Book My Complimentary Design Operations Assessment →



Designed for commercial interior design, FF&E procurement, and specification teams managing complex commercial and residential projects.