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Lloyd Princeton, BSB/M '03
Founder, iMatch Design •
New York City, New York



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STYLE BROKER


By Lori K. Baker
Photos by Bruce Racine

This designing alumnus has made his mark on both coasts by pairing style seekers with their perfect design match.

Fifteen years ago, Lloyd Princeton didn't have a clue that he'd one day land a starring role in a reality television series pilot—about his life. He also couldn't predict he'd ink a book deal, travel the world on international speaking gigs or be featured on the pages of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.



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Back then, the future looked anything but promising. He’d just lost a job without another in sight, so finally he created one. In 1999, he launched Design Management Co. (DMC), which offers design professionals sound business advice on contract negotiation, pricing, marketing, staffing, product licensing and distribution—all to help designers better manage and grow their businesses.

Entrepreneurship was a real game changer for Princeton. “I’m not saying it was easy,” says the 44-year-old who now divides his time between homes in West Hollywood, California, and New York City, “but forming my own company has been one of the best things for me.”

A who’s who of clients

Today, DMC’s client list includes American Express, Design Within Reach, Williams-Sonoma, High Point Market Authority and numerous design and architectural firms throughout North America. Princeton is a


sought-after speaker who strikes a chord with designers through timely talks on how to succeed in a do-it-yourself world. From DIY tips on YouTube and Pinterest to TV shows on DIY Network, “consumers are mired in messaging related to the do-it-yourself market right now,” Princeton says.

Still, designers are as essential today as ever, he says, especially when consumers realize a DIY project isn’t as easy or inexpensive as advertised. Princeton also shares his know-how with designers in his book, *Marketing Interior Design*, now in its second edition.

Twelve years after launching DMC, he became a professional matchmaker who set out to revolutionize the way designers and potential clients meet. In 2011, he created iMatchDesigners (imatchdesigners.com), a concierge-style matchmaking service that pairs clients with designers who are the best fit for their projects, based on scope, budget, timeline, style and temperament.

Providing a glimpse into his world as principal of iMatchDesigners, Princeton created and appeared in a television series pilot, *Matched by Design*, which aired on Style Network (owned by E Entertainment Television Inc.) in August 2013. The show follows Princeton as he introduces his clients, Grammy Award-winning producer Tricky Stewart and his wife, to three interior designers who must compete to be hired to do a makeover of the clients’ guest bedroom and bathroom. The three designers each present their concepts to the homeowners, who then decide which designer best captures their style and personality. Next, viewers watch as the transformation takes place—and see the complete makeover as the grand finale.

In a real-life dramatic twist, *Matched by Design* was about to be picked up by Style Network until NBCUniversal Cable Entertainment Group scrapped the plan when it rebranded Style as the Esquire Network. “That’s not the end of the saga




5 ways to meet your (professional) match

Lloyd Princeton, principal of iMatchDesigners, has an uncanny sense of how to perfectly pair clients and design professionals. We asked for his words of wisdom on how to not only hire a professional designer, but any consultant whose expertise you might need. Here's his advice:

- 1 | Look for industry-specific know-how. "I've seen many of my clients stymied by people who have general knowledge of what they need, but not industry-specific knowledge—and that's a problem."
- 2 | Hire someone who fits within your budget, and don't forget to factor in the realistic length of the project.
- 3 | Check references and speak to former clients. "It's not so much about vetting a professional as learning an effective way to work with them." Ask questions such as: How did he or she deliver? Was it an enjoyable process? What recommendations would you have for me on how to work with the professional to get the best results?
- 4 | Define your deliverables. "Whatever problem you're trying to solve, you need to be super specific, not general, in your expectations."
- 5 | Gauge the consultant's enthusiasm for your project. "Hire someone who is enthusiastic about working with you."

because I just signed a contract with Relativity Media as my new producer," Princeton says. "They're going to possibly repackage and re-shop the show."

Winning the match

In retrospect, Princeton sees how the path to success can have many unexpected twists and turns. He'd dropped out of college multiple times before enrolling at University of Phoenix at age 33, earning a Bachelor of Science in Business degree in 2003. Before discovering his career's ultimate destination, he took detours into banking, real estate, human resources and trade associations. "I did completely different things until I finally saw a need in the design industry, jumped into it and created my own company," he says. "I've never looked back." 

Lori K. Baker is an award-winning journalist who specializes in human-interest profiles, business and health. Her articles have appeared in *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Family Circle*, *Arizona Highways* and *Johns Hopkins Health*.

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