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Michael Barnett, owner of Romp n' Roll, had a clear idea for the design of his two Romp n' Roll stores.

“Since we are a children’s recreational facility, my overall direction to the designer was to create an environment that would help spark the imagination of young minds,” he said. “We focused on colorful, whimsical design elements that would differentiate Romp n’ Roll from competitive facilities.”

Barnett chose his designers carefully, interviewing three different firms before making his final decision.

“For the first location on Broad Street, I hired Starch Design,” he said. “I chose them because they had imaginative ways of stretching my budget, which was particularly important on our first location.”

One of Starch Design’s cost-saving suggestions was to buy light fixtures from IKEA. Another designer had proposed a similar fixture from a traditional supplier, but it would have been much more expensive.

“Our Virginia Center Marketplace location was designed by Watershed,” Barnett said. “I chose them based on referrals.”

Barnett says he was heavily involved in the design process, which started by providing the designers with a brief that outlined what he wanted — and didn’t want — in the facility’s design.

“We only had a couple of weeks to design the first location, but we started with a solid vision of what we wanted the final product to look like, so I think it expedited the process,” Barnett said. “For our second location, we knew a lot more, so we spent more time thinking through all of the little things we wound up not liking about the first location.”

Overall, Barnett says that that he found it helps the design process and the outcome if the designer, architect and contractor work closely together. “There were many times that the designer had an idea that I couldn’t afford. But with the contractor’s input, we found a more cost-effective way to achieve a similar result.”

Ultimately, he says, design should reinforce your company’s brand. “In our case, the design is a key part of the brand. If your brand is a fun children’s business, the walls shouldn’t be beige. Beyond that, the design should be functional, not just creative.”



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