



DESIGN IS GOOD BUSINESS

It doesn't just add value; it multiplies it.



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Your building can do much more than keep the rain off your business; it can advance your business plan. To capture the full value of your capital program, you will do well to engage your architect in a discussion of your business goals, with your business leaders.

Finding the Right Architect

The American Institute of Architects is the best place to begin your search for an architect. The AIA advocates for architecture on both federal and state levels, serving and supporting its membership in their work to create quality design in the built environment. AIA members must be licensed and in good standing, adhere to a strict code of ethics and standards, and are committed to continuing their professional education. You can rely on their professionalism and expertise to deliver a quality experience with outstanding outcomes.

The AIA's convenient, online Architect Finder makes it easy to identify architects in your locale who specialize in the building type you are interested in. An Architect Finder search can be complemented by additional sources such as referrals, reference to architecture awards programs, and architects'

Library

- [Savings by Design](#)
- [The Business Case for Green Building](#)
- [Green Schools Investment Guide](#)
- [The Technical Feasibility of Zero Net Energy Buildings in California](#)
- [The Dollars and Sense of Green Retrofits](#)

own websites.

"What fun it is to bask in the reflected glory of a successful building! If I were starting over, no search process would be as painstaking as mine for the right architect." - Spencer J. McCallie III

The Selection Process

To begin a project, reflect on what you bring to it: your knowledge, experience, needs, desires, aspirations, and personal preferences. What do you already know about the project, and what can an architect help you determine about it? What are your expectations? What are your resources?

The average American architectural firm is made up of nine or ten people; many are smaller, and there are some with a staff of a thousand. Some firms specialize in one or more facility or project types; others are generalists. Each firm and architect brings a different combination of skills, expertise, interests, and values to projects.

Unless you have a successful relationship with an architect already, interview several architects before making your selection, to identify the individual or team best able to realize your vision and meet your budget requirements. Ask to see projects that are of similar size and type and that have addressed issues similar to those your project will face. Ask the architect how he or she will approach your project-how many staff members will be assigned to it, how your interaction will be structured, how options will be presented for your consideration.

Ask what the architect expects of you-the information you will need to provide, the decisions you'll need to make, and when you'll need to make them. Ask for references from previous clients: you will want to know how well the architect's work stacked up against their expectations. The owner-architect relationship is also a business relationship; feel free to ask the architects how they conduct their business, how responsive they are to your management and decision styles, and how successful they have been with project budgets and timelines. Take advantage of the interview to assess the one issue that can't be covered in brochures and websites: the chemistry between the architect and you. Above all, look for a good listener.

Be frank. Tell the architect what you know and what you

expect. Ask for an explanation of anything you don't understand. From project inception, the more the architect knows about your expectations and resources, and the better you understand the architect's services and expectations, the better the chances for a successful project. Only when the project issues have been clearly outlined can the architect translate those issues to the project's budget, schedule, and design.

The Agreement

Once you choose an architect, the AIA recommends that you and the architect enter into a formal agreement that:

- Clearly defines all of the project requirements
- Describes project tasks and assigns roles and responsibilities
- Identifies timelines and schedule requirements, including target start and completion dates
- Provides a "reality check" that allows for enough decision making and redesign time
- Establishes the architect's compensation and method for computing that compensation based on the information contained in the agreement

This contract becomes a working document that helps identify estimated costs and associated fees, guides discussion, and helps prevent misunderstandings. The AIA's fair and balanced library of contract documents sets the industry standard and is the cost-effective option for the design and construction industry. The AIA can help you select from among the many items available to fit your project.

In Summary

"There are few things more satisfying than a successful project. The secret to success lies in the professional, business, and personal relationship between owner and architect." - "You and Your Architect," AIA, 1995

Selecting an architect for a project is an intensely personal experience. You and your architect must be able to communicate effectively, have a high level of mutual trust, and share the same vision of the completed project. Cost and fees will always be a factor; however, a successful working relationship will ensure the desired outcome, which is always the best return on investment.



2014 AIACC Merit Award for Architecture, Fresno City College, Historic Old Administration Building, ELS Architecture and Urban Design. Mothballed for 30 years, the 1916 National Landmark was the first permanent structure of the oldest college in California's Community College system. Saved by a 2002 local bond, the building reopened in 2011 after a major historic renovation, ready to meet contemporary teaching and learning demands.



AIACC
1303 J Street, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 448-9082
Fax: (916) 442-5346
Email: mail@aiacc.org

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The AIA California Council | 1303 J Street | Suite 200 | Sacramento | CA | 95814