

## Forming a New Publication: *Chicago Architect*

Contributed by AIA Chicago

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### SUMMARY

In response to a 2005 AIA Chicago member survey, the Component updated its communication mediums in 2007 adding a new eNews tool and updating its magazine. The magazine *Focus* was halted, and a new magazine, aptly titled ***Chicago Architect***, was born. The new magazine is a glossy bi-monthly publication published by McGraw Hill Construction and edited and written by AIA Chicago staff and members.

### LOOKING FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE

In a 2005 member survey to find ways to better meet member needs, AIA Chicago members listed “Communications” and the former publication “*Focus*” as two of the top three priorities for improvement. To accurately assess the Component’s current communication needs and set a direction for the future, a Communications Committee was created, consisting of three staff members and nine AIA members, representing a cross-section of the membership. After a year of meetings, the Communications Committee concluded it was time to say good-bye to *Focus* and create a new publication better suited to member interests and needs.

AIA Chicago members wanted a full-color, professionally designed and published magazine that focused on Chicago’s architects. As a first priority the editorial staff and contributing editors determined what aspects of *Focus* could carry over to the new publication, what should be omitted, and what could be communicated via different mediums. For example, the People and Projects section was well-read and should thus remain in the new magazine. To disseminate information about programs and events the Component decided to create an AIA Chicago eNews publication. The Communications Committee also determined more information about the practice and business operations of architecture should be included in the new publication.

Naming the new publication was simple: in addition to architecture, the magazine should shine a spotlight on Chicago’s architects; therefore, ***Chicago Architect*** was born. The magazine debuted at the

annual Design Excellence Awards event in October 2007.

### DETAILS OF THE REVISED PUBLICATION

***Chicago Architect*** is published bi-monthly through a partnership with McGraw-Hill Construction. McGraw-Hill Construction provides staff for the Chief Editor position, advertisement sales, and design and production of the magazine. This relieves AIA Chicago’s Communications staff from those tasks, allowing the one-person staff more time to develop content, conduct interviews, write, edit and proofread the expanded content.

AIA Chicago created a reader-friendly format that offers a variety of story lengths and topics. The magazine has a conversational tone and common formula for article length (small, medium, large). Regularly featured departments include:

- Letters to the Editor
- Façade section that contains short stories, a two-month highlights calendar, Chapter Reports, People + Projects, and Interior Solutions
- Feature stories – three to five features per issue
- The Practice – the business of architecture
- The Spec Sheet – technological issues, e.g., BIM and wind turbines
- Answers to Zurich (A2Z) – Zurich Esposito, Executive VP of AIA Chicago, interviews architects and other members of the architectural community

### THE RESULTS ARE IN

Based on response from members’ and the architectural community, ***Chicago Architect*** has quickly become a valuable resource for architects and the design community. The magazine successfully represents the role of AIA Chicago and its members, the publication keeps readers informed of innovations, trends, and current projects meeting its intended goals. Member provided content has increased, especially in the project and people section.

***Chicago Architect*** helps position AIA Chicago as approachable, and its existence has increased dialogue between AIA Chicago and its members. This increased dialogue provides insight into

member firm's work and what's important to them, which in turn helps AIA Chicago strengthen its programs, communications, member services, and events accordingly.

## **RESOURCES**

### **More Best Practices**

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 22.01.04 Communicating with Members Through Component Web Sites
- 22.01.03 Steps to Creating Successful Newsletters
- 22.05.01 Membership Recruitment Strategies

### **Feedback**

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact [bestpractices@aia.org](mailto:bestpractices@aia.org).

### **Key Terms**

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Communications
- Magazines