

What Is an AIA Best Practice and How Do I Submit One?

Contributed by the AIA Best Practice Committee

January 2011

The AIA collects and disseminates Best Practices as a service to AIA members without endorsement or recommendation. Appropriate use of the information provided is the responsibility of the reader.

SUMMARY

One way that the AIA shares professional practice knowledge is through its collection and dissemination of individual Best Practice articles. This article will address what a Best Practice is, and how to write and submit a Best Practice article for review and consideration.

WHAT ARE AIA BEST PRACTICES?

The AIA Best Practices can be found at <http://www.aia.org/practicing/bestpractices/>. As the website states, AIA Best Practices represent the collective wisdom of AIA members and related professionals. As a group, they are

- A compendium of relevant knowledge gained from experience
- Immediately applicable to a task at hand
- Distilled to their essentials
- Usable information
- Linked to related resources
- Kept relevant and up-to-date by inviting feedback from practicing professionals.

Best Practices are freely contributed articles written by practicing professionals, allied professionals, strategic partners, and industry consultants. The Best Practices are an opportunity for AIA members and other allied professionals to contribute to the advancement of the practice of architecture and the profession. As noted above, the intent is that they be kept relevant and up-to-date. In other words, each article should be viewed as a living document, and additional, timely and relevant articles are constantly needed.

HOW ARE THEY ORGANIZED?

In the first quarter of 2011, the *Best Practices* will be reorganized to better align with *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*. There are a few minor modifications to the Best Practices that include renaming three chapters and the addition of a chapter on Sustainability. The organization is as follows (the items in red are the differences between the Best Practices chapter structure and that of the *Handbook*).

Part 1 – The Profession

- Professional Life
- Legal Dimensions of Practice
- Professional Development

Part 2 – The Firm

- Firm Development
- Marketing, Business Development, and Outreach
- Client Relations
- Human Resources
- Firm Financial Management
- Risk Management
- Firm Operations

Part 3 – The Project

- Project Services
- Project Delivery
- Project Management
- Quality Management
- Building Codes and Regulations
- Sustainability

Part 4 – Contracts and Agreements

- Types of Agreements
- AIA Contract Documents

Within each of these chapters there may be some subchapters to further organize the various Best Practices.

WHO MANAGES THE BEST PRACTICES?

A volunteer AIA Best Practices Committee has primary responsibility for the Best Practices. Oversight is provided by the Advisory Group of the Practice Management Knowledge Community. Participation and support also are provided by AIA staff that manages the website and provides final editing. If you want to know more about, or would be interested in participating in the Best Practices Committee's efforts, please contact: bestpractices@aia.org.

WHAT ARE APPROPRIATE TOPICS?

The committee is always looking for relevant shared knowledge addressing the profession, the firm or the project. The chapter titles above should serve as a guide. The only criteria are that submissions consist of knowledge gained from experience, and immediately applicable to a task at hand. Articles should be technical and specific. We are also looking for Best Practices to be more than just verbiage; articles may include attachments in the

form of templates, checklists, forms, or other interactive tools that can benefit AIA members.

WHAT FORMAT IS USED FOR BEST PRACTICES?

AIA *Best Practices* articles are generally two to four pages (600 to 2,000 words) in length of text excluding graphs, tables, and other attachments. This Best Practice illustrates the font, spacing, two column, title, etc. formatting for Best Practices. The Best Practices committee can format the article into the appropriate template. It will be possible to view each article on the AIA's Best Practices' website, as well as to print or save in PDF format. For Best Practices that include attachments such as templates or checklists, the attachments need to be in formats permitting and encouraging easy use.

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SAMPLE BEST PRACTICE OUTLINE

Title. Make this explanatory, so people scanning the list of *Best Practices* on the AIA Website will clearly understand your topic (e.g., "*A Process for Improving Government Planning, Design, and Construction Practices*").

Summary. This brief paragraph can be written in a variety of ways but should serve to engage the reader and keep him or her reading.

Description of the practice, program, or effort. This is the body of your *Best Practice*.

Conclusion. Wrap up by explaining how others might adapt and utilize your practice or program under similar (rather than identical) circumstances.

FEEDBACK

Encouraging feedback and continually expanding, revising and updated the Best Practices is critical to the objectives of keeping them relevant and updated. Criticism and commentary is encouraged. Each Best Practice should be held to a high standard and revised or replace as appropriate.

REFERENCES

In addition to Best Practices being filed in an organized chapter system there are potentially three other potential ways each Best Practice can reference or be referenced:

- Cross-referencing to related Best Practices
- Keywords that can be referenced in the Best Practices search engine
- Referencing other materials

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Key Terms

- Leadership
- Practice
- Practice management
- Best practices
- The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice