

Architecture DC Magazine: Producing a Popular Resource

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Excerpted from a 2002 Component Award-winning entry

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SUMMARY

Mary Fitch describes how AIA/DC began producing a magazine that, even with a small staff, allows the component to have a big impact on interested consumers in the Washington, D.C., market.

HISTORY

In fall 1999, AIA/DC began publishing a magazine to showcase the chapter with Dawson Publications Inc., publishers of the component's directory. Because AIA/DC already had a well-received newsletter for its members, it positioned the magazine as a user-friendly introduction of architecture and architects to the public. Many of the early issues repackaged material from the newsletter and awards program. In the first two years, one issue per year was published.

THINGS REALLY GET ROLLING

In 2001, the magazine went quarterly, offering the opportunity to produce original reporting. The second issue in 2001 was called "Architecture@home" and included original material of interest to the public about working with an architect. The idea of doing an issue solely on residential design was in response to member complaints that *The Washington Post's* "Home" section no longer covered architecture regularly. The issue was written by local architects and staff members. AIA/DC wrote to all the area bookstores and home-furnishings stores about the free publication and gave each one 50 copies when it came off the press.

AND SUDDENLY WE'RE A HIT!

Response to the issue was nothing short of phenomenal. Borders, Barnes & Noble, and Franz Bader bookstores quickly ran out and called for an additional 100 copies. Borders displayed a poster in the window of its downtown Washington store. A small mention in the *Post's* "Home" section led to more than 100 inquiries from members of the public throughout the region. Since the publication's first release, traffic in the component's Architect Client Resource Center has been up, as have calls for

referrals—so many calls, in fact, that copies of the magazine ran out.

The follow-up issue on Architecture Week received even wider distribution. Because it received so many calls from the suburbs, AIA/DC supplied magazines to Arlington, Va., and Prince George's and Montgomery counties in Maryland. The component had five window displays: two in empty storefronts downtown; one at Apartment Zero, a downtown home-furnishing store; one in a Georgetown storefront; and another at Borders. All of the displays directed interested people to places nearby where they could get the magazine. Nearly 4,000 magazines were distributed, and the public subscription list now includes 500 people.

The magazine has been an extremely successful vehicle to show the public that their local AIA chapter is a resource for them as well as for members. Even with a small staff, this magazine allows the chapter to have a big impact on interested consumers in the Washington market.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

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

- 22.07.03 How to Gain Publicity and Architectural Awareness
- 22.07.04 *The Daily Reporter*: Partnering with Your Local Business Newspaper
- 22.07.05 Creating an Effective Component Communications and Public Affairs Program

Feedback

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

Key Terms

- Leadership

- Associations
- Architecture associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA Components