

# Ten Things You Should Know About Potential Clients

Excerpted and adapted from *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition

Revised November 2006

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## SUMMARY

The 10 items listed below are suggestions an architect might want to consider when evaluating a potential client.

## KNOW THY CLIENT

If all clients are different—and they are—then how can a firm possibly know all it needs to know about all potential clients? The answer is it cannot. However, a firm can and should gain a basic knowledge of its clients before it has even discussed working with them.

**Industry.** What is the general state of the client's industry or commercial sector? What are the major concerns, conditions, and situations within the industry?

**Company.** How is the client's company performing within the industry? Are there any peculiarities or specific issues facing the company?

**Position.** How much authority does your client, or the person who represents the client company, have? How secure is the client's position in the company? How new or tenured is the client within the company? How much trust and confidence in the client does the client's supervisor demonstrate?

**Contracts.** What is the tone of the client company's contract or procurement procedures? What authority, duties, and responsibilities are assigned to the client company by the terms of agreement? Are the contract terms and allocation of responsibilities equitable?

**Project.** How visible and important is the project in the client's organization? How will the project influence your client's career advancement? How much interest does the public and/or the press have in the project? Are there any controversial issues?

**Experience.** How often has your client been involved personally in a design or building project?

What were the results? How much or how little does your client know about this particular building project?

**Other responsibilities.** What other projects, duties, and/or responsibilities must your client control in addition to working with you on this project? Where does this project rank in order of importance to your client?

**Staff.** What support does your client have? How experienced and/or capable is the client's staff in design and construction in general, and this project type in particular?

**Available time.** How much time can your client devote to this project? How will the time be used?

**Personal characteristics.** After considering all of the above, give some thought to your client's personal character traits, interests, and preferences, and how they might affect the outcome of the project.

## RESOURCES

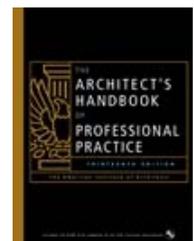
### More Best Practices

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

- 05.02.01 The Go/No-Go Decision From a Risk Management Perspective
- 05.02.04 Market Your Strengths But Don't Oversell
- 05.02.07 Marketing Intelligence

### For More Information on This Topic

See also "Identifying Target Markets," by Kevin W.C. Green, *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 4, page 37.



See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at [bookstore@aia.org](mailto:bookstore@aia.org).



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### **Keywords**

- Practice
- Project Administration
- Project Communications
- Project Correspondence
- Client Correspondence