

Client Needs and Design Quality

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SUMMARY

Six questions can help provoke quality architect-client conversations.

FOSTER A DIALOGUE

As much as some architects might like, it is not possible to draw a ring around “design” and then “manage” it unless architects and clients agree on design quality, have reasonable expectations of one another, and understand the other’s expectations. As the party providing the service, it is incumbent upon the architect to facilitate a dialogue that fosters consensus.

Six basic questions can foster a revealing discussion:

- What do we **hope** we can achieve together?
- What **must** we achieve at a minimum?
- What is it **possible** to achieve?
- What are the **boundary limits** of “difficult,” “improbable,” and “impossible”?
- What are the **most to least** important of the variables affecting the project?
- What **really** gets us excited—in both the positive and negative sense?

LISTEN—AGAIN AND AGAIN

The discussion is most productive when the client is allowed to begin the dialogue. Truly successful design managers will repeat “design dialogue sessions” frequently—before work on the project begins and at key points throughout the design development process, continually refining the balance between expectations and agreements.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR

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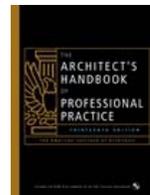
More Best Practices

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

- 01.02.02 The Art of Listening
- 05.02.01 Educating the Client
- 05.02.02 A Client Education Checklist

For More Information on This Topic

See also “Meeting Client Needs” by Kevin W.C. Green, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 5, page 49. The *Handbook* can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending e-mail to bookstore@aia.org.



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Keywords

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