

# The Best Advice Might Be Free

Contributed by AIA Knowledge Resources Staff

Revised November 2006

*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

Solid business start-up advice does not have to cost a fortune. Free or low-cost counsel and information exist for the resourceful entrepreneur. Several government agencies and some public/private partnerships produce free online publications that provide building design entrepreneurs with useful information and business advice.

## AN UNLIKELY ALLY: THE GOVERNMENT

Starting a business is often one's first close encounter with the breadth and depth of government regulation and taxation. It is often said that starting a business will do more to convert young liberals into old conservatives than anything else. But big government also has its benefits. Many federal and state government agencies (particularly in California) produce and distribute excellent information resources at no cost via the Internet—many offer direct interest and value to the building design and construction industry.

## OTHER SOURCES

For little or no cost, private/public partnerships, such as the Collaborative for High Performance Schools, or nonprofit research and education organizations, such as the U.S. Green Building Council, offer rich sources of building design and construction information.

## A LITTLE-KNOWN SECRET

Many publishers of "strategic business information"—companies that charge hundreds of dollars for statistical, technical, or business publications—obtain some or all of their information from publicly available government sources. If you know where to look, you can have access to the same information that bigger and more established competitors pay big bucks to acquire. Unencumbered by an entrenched business or organizational structure, small firms are ideally equipped to take advantage of these resources to gain a competitive edge in the marketplace. A few of the best examples are shown below.

### 1. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[www.osha-slc.gov](http://www.osha-slc.gov)

Incredibly, OSHA gives away a desktop software application called The Asbestos Advisor, an interactive compliance assistance tool ([www.osha-slc.gov/dts/osta/oshasoft/asbestos/](http://www.osha-slc.gov/dts/osta/oshasoft/asbestos/)).

### 2. Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, U.S. Department of Energy

EERE produces useful publications too numerous to list individually, including *Energy Design Guidelines for High Performance*

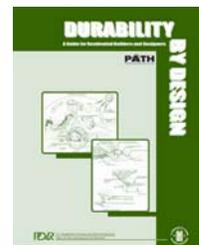


*Schools* and the *National Best Practices Manual for Building High Performance Schools* ([www.energysmartschools.gov](http://www.energysmartschools.gov)).  
<http://www.eere.energy.gov>

[.gov](http://www.eere.energy.gov)

### 3. Office of Policy Development and Research, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

OPD&R publishes excellent technical manuals related to single-family and multifamily residential construction, such as *Residential Steel Framing: Fire and Acoustic Details* ([www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/residential\\_steel\\_framing.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/residential_steel_framing.pdf)) and *Durability by Design: A Guide for Residential Builders and Designers*

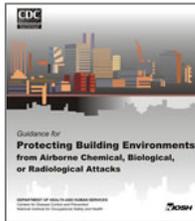


<http://www.huduser.org>

([http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/durability\\_by\\_design.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/durability_by_design.pdf)).

**4. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

NIOSH publishes *Guidance for Protecting Building Environments from Airborne Chemical, Biological, or Radiological Attacks*

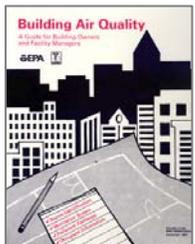


([www.cdc.gov/niosh/bldvent/2002-139.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/bldvent/2002-139.html)), which offers recommendations on the physical security of ventilation systems,

airflow and filtration systems, and systems maintenance and training. [www.cdc.gov/niosh](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh)

**5. Indoor Environments Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

EPA is another federal agency whose free publications related to building design and construction are too numerous to list. The many useful titles include *Building Air Quality: A Guide*

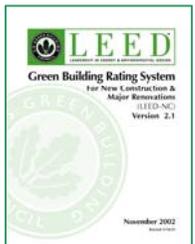


for Building Owners and Facility Managers ([www.epa.gov/iaq/largebldgs/baqtoc.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/largebldgs/baqtoc.html)) and *Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings* ([www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/remediation.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/remediation.html)).

<http://www.epa.gov/iaq>

**6. U.S. Green Building Council**

The U.S. Green Building Council is the nation's foremost coalition of leaders from across the building industry to promote buildings that are environmentally responsible, profitable, and



healthy places to live and work. The Council promulgates the LEED Green Building Rating System™, a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for

developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. The LEED Rating System™ can be downloaded at no cost by visiting the USGBC Web site [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) ([www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED\\_main.asp](http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/LEED_main.asp)).

**7. Collaborative for High Performance Schools**

CHPS aims to facilitate the design of school environments in California that are not only energy-efficient but also healthy, comfortable, well lit, and inclusive of the amenities needed for a high-quality education. The three-volume CHPS *Best Practices Manual* can be downloaded at no cost by visiting the CHPS Web site

([www.chps.net/manual/index.htm#vol1](http://www.chps.net/manual/index.htm#vol1)). [www.chps.net](http://www.chps.net)

**RESOURCES**

**More Best Practices**

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

- 06.06.01 Starting a Firm: Essential Resources of Expertise
- 08.03.02 Calculating Billable Ratios
- 06.06.06 Practice Made Simple

**For More Information on This Topic**

See “Starting a Firm,” by Elena Marcheso Moreno, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 6, page 115. 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](mailto:bookstore@aia.org).



**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)

**Keywords**

- Leadership
- Publications