

# *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice as a Training Guide*

Contributed by the AIA Knowledge Resources Staff

January 2007

---

*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**

*The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, is a practice manual for the architecture profession. Firms can use the *Handbook* as an in-house training tool. Tips on how to use the *Handbook* to design a comprehensive training program are included.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY**

The AIA has published the *Handbook* for more than 80 years to provide a comprehensive practice manual for the architecture profession. The *Handbook* is a composition of collected wisdom from within the profession, a source for guidance on matters that are relevant to the daily architecture practice.

## **THE HANDBOOK—CONTENT**

A member steering committee and an executive editor oversee the content of the *Handbook*, aiming to create one source for all practice-related issues. The *Handbook's* overview states, in part, that it

- Addresses business functions that are vital to the support and operation of an architecture practice
- Profiles a spectrum of core and expanded services with which architects can respond to a wide range of facility needs beyond the design and creation of physical space

## **THE HANDBOOK—FORMAT**

The *Handbook* is divided into four parts: client, business, delivery, and services. Each part consists of chapters about areas of practice such as firm planning, marketing and outreach, and financial operations. In turn, each chapter contains two or more topics that address specific aspects of that chapter's focus. For example, the Risk Management chapter includes topics on risk management strategies, insurance coverage, and managing disputes.

Some topics contain backgrounders that elaborate on some portion or aspect of the topic. For

example, the "Financial Systems" topic in the Financial Operations chapter contains a backgrounder on computerized financial systems.

The appendix section contains a list of useful information sources, including organizations relevant to the design and construction industry; a list of architectural practice terms and definitions; a finder for locating AIA contract documents; and several printed sample contract documents. The information in each of these sections has been updated.

A CD-ROM is included with the 13th edition that contains samples of all the AIA contract documents in PDF format. Users may print copies for reference purposes.

## **START A TRAINING PROGRAM**

If your office decides to introduce a new training program or add more business management topics to an existing program, the *Handbook* can be useful. It can serve as a curriculum guide and content source. Junior staff need not read the entire *Handbook*; the intended goal is to provide a comfortable familiarity with the topics presented in the *Handbook* and its format.

## **DESIGN THE COURSE**

**Make the big decisions.** The first step is to read through the *Handbook* and become familiar with the format. Then make the big decisions: Will it be a monthly program or an all-day seminar? Will classes be held during lunch or after work, and will they be voluntary or mandatory for interns?

**Identify presenters.** Next, you need to identify who will present what. The best approach is to ask experienced architects from within the firm to lead topic discussions. Those unwilling to lead can help by participating in the class and sharing personal experiences.

**Formalize the participants.** The training group may include licensed professionals, administrative staff, and most importantly, interns. Have everyone sign in at each session. Set up an e-mail

distribution list to keep the group advised on program sessions and key information.

**Assemble your presentation.** Read each chapter and put a presentation together that explains the core concepts of the chapter. Then decide whether the topic will be presented via PowerPoint, slides, or transparencies, and whether complementary material will be handed out. Invite senior practitioners to present their experiences and answer questions. This is the core of experience-based learning. Not all of the 18 chapters are appropriate for an hour-long discussion; for example, the first five chapters that make up “Part 1: Client” might work better when paired together or paired with other topics such as marketing.

**Schedule the sessions.** Set a date for the presentations and put them on the firm’s calendar. Send out notices and remind the attendees of the subject matter and meeting dates.

**Deliver the product.** Achieve your meeting dates and deliver. It helps to end each presentation by announcing the schedule of future sessions.

**EVALUATE THE PROGRAM**

As with all in-house training sessions, including a formal evaluation of the course material and presenter are useful.

**More Best Practices**

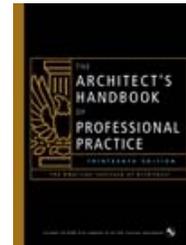
The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 03.02.04 Mentoring as a Team Sport
- 07.05.08 Sample Performance Evaluation Forms
- 07.05.04 Types of Training Programs

**RESOURCES**

**For More Information on This Topic**

See also “Staff Development” by Laurie Dreyer-Hadley and Kathleen C. Maurel, Assoc. AIA, in *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 9, page 242.



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).



**Feedback**

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

**Keywords**

- Practice
- Personnel management
- Employment
- Professional development