

# Three Steps to Project Delivery for Small Firms

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## SUMMARY

As a small firm, Moore Architecture has found this simple three-step process the most effective way to proceed through project delivery.

### STEP 1: CLEARLY DEFINE THE PROJECT

Define the project to the client strictly in terms of schematic design, design development, and issued construction documents. Everyone benefits if it is clear that design development does not start until schematic design is complete and all design issues have been addressed and solutions identified. Owners who will likely hire an architect only once appreciate the sense of urgency and make decisions quicker. Business people also want to move quickly and will understand that your time is just as important as theirs.

### STEP 2: COLLECT A RETAINER

If the fee is less than five figures, collect a 50 percent retainer at the project's inception and the balance upon delivery of the construction documents. Explain fees and payment methods in a proposal before issuing AIA Contract Document B141, and state clearly that the payment terms are not negotiable. This is a fantastic tool for divining true intention out of a potential client. Those serious about building have thought through the potential fees in advance and are not surprised by such an arrangement.

### STEP 3: GET COMPENSATED

Never seal, sign, and date documents without receiving the balance for document services at the same meeting. If construction administration services are requested, outline those fees as a fourth phase in the proposal. Hold the drawings tightly until payment has been secured. There's no shame in insisting upon payment on delivery; it usually helps to make it clear that bigger firms can afford to "just bill you" because they charge considerably more.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Roger Alan Moore, AIA, is president of Moore Architecture in Houston. He has more than 16 years of experience in the architecture profession, including experience in construction, real estate development, and planning.

## RESOURCES

### More Best Practices

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

- 17.04.02 Strategies for Negotiating Fees
- 17.04.03 Tell Clients About Factors That Affect Your Fees
- 06.02.03 Taming the Bull of Business Communication

### For More Information on This Topic

See also "Architectural Services and Compensation" by Clark S. Davis, FAIA, *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 10, page 264.

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 delivery systems