

Carrier Johnson: A Commitment to IDP

Contributed by Carrier Johnson. Excerpted and adapted from a 2008 IDP Outstanding Firm award-winning entry. May 2008

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SUMMARY

Carrier Johnson is a California-based multi-disciplinary architecture firm and the recipient of a 2008 IDP Outstanding Firm Award. The award recognizes their commitment to leadership and intern development and sets them apart in the architecture community.

IDP AT CARRIER JOHNSON

In 2006 Carrier Johnson created an Intern Development Program (IDP) task force to enhance the intern experience. At inception it was charged with developing a structured and opportunistic intern program to fit individual needs with the goal of producing well-rounded architects. Currently the task force consists of:

- Two interns currently enrolled in IDP/CIDP
- Four employees who are more than five years past graduation but still on the licensure path
- Two recently licensed architects
- Two principals

FIRM CULTURE

The task force provides support and guidance for emerging professionals and communicates IDP requirements to all supervisors, mentors, and senior level staff, since they are responsible for providing interns with learning opportunities. The firm created a new position, the IDP Auxiliary Coordinator, to act as a liaison between interns and the rest of the staff to regularly monitor the provision of appropriate learning opportunities.

All learning opportunities are published and updated on the firm's "Intern Opportunities Calendar" available via an intranet Web site. The Carrier Johnson intranet has a dedicated page for IDP candidates with links to relevant external Web sites and interoffice forums for online discussion. The calendar identifies internal continuing education units lectures, lunch and learns, jobsite visits, meetings with construction managers, project interview rehearsals, job-shadowing opportunities,

and AIA, as well as other professional organizations', learning events. Each event listing has a brief description and includes a color-coded tracking system for all sixteen IDP credit categories so interns can easily track their progress.

PURSUING EXCELLENCE

Carrier Johnson has high expectations of each of its employees that are communicated at new employee orientation. All interns are required to enroll in the IDP and are urged to take the Architecture Registration Exam (ARE) to become licensed architects.

Interns are required to meet with their supervisor and mentor(s) on a quarterly basis to discuss their training progress. Routine interaction monitors the performance of the intern, documents training progress, and ensures that the intern has a voice in the projects they are assigned. Quarterly reviews also serve to better prepare interns for their annual performance evaluations. The annual evaluations allow human resources representatives to gauge each intern's progress and accomplishments throughout the year and when appropriate reward the intern appropriately, perhaps with a promotion. If gaps exist in the intern's progress they offer further support for completing the IDP program and achieving licensure.

Firm Resources

The Carrier Johnson intranet hosts forum space for ARE study and acts as a virtual meeting place: It is a convenient venue for idea-sharing, study, and support. The firm uses the intranet to manage an extensive electronic resource library for both technical and design resources; while simultaneously maintaining a physical resource library primarily consisting of material samples and reference books. The intranet also links to the most current state and federal building codes as well as:

- Study materials for the Architecture Registration Examination (ARE) and Leadership in Education and Environmental Design (LEED) tests

- Product resources
- National and international design publications
- Reference images

Another valuable resource at Carrier Johnson are senior level staff members deemed as experts in a particular area. Experts share their knowledge of building codes and regulations, quality assurance, specifications, and BIM with emerging professionals. They regularly send emails to staff, hold lunchtime seminars, and work with staff members individually to maintain a high level of transparency and knowledge sharing.

Financial Support

Carrier Johnson grants financial support for professional development: A true sign of commitment. The annual professional development budget provides funds for

- Staff member attendance at conferences, seminars, and tradeshows
- Professional accreditation test fees
- Paid time off for approved events such as licensing exams
- Relevant software/hardware
- Professional organization dues, if the staff member participates in the organization at a leadership level

Flexible work schedules help to accommodate the time demands of participation in such activities. The firm sponsors AIA and other professional organization's events, making them available to the local/regional architecture community.

Outreach

The principals of Carrier Johnson believe outreach is an important component of personal and professional growth. The firm as a whole is very active in the local community. Interns are encouraged to join experienced staff members involved in outreach endeavors like teaching in local underprivileged schools, judging local and regional architecture school charrettes, and administering California Supplemental Exams.

As further evidence of its commitment to the IDP program, Carrier Johnson has taken an active role in promoting their IDP program to the local architecture community by sponsoring, "What is IDP?". At the inaugural seminar, held December 2006 at the Carrier Johnson office, two representatives of the California Architects Board gave an informative presentation on IDP and Comprehensive IDP (a

California specific program). Carrier Johnson promoted the event through the local AIA component: It was well attended by local design professionals and architecture students.

The leadership's commitment to the profession and enthusiasm for emerging professionals trickles down to the rest of the staff and helps characterize the intern program. With a solid foundation to build on and clear procedures established, the firm hopes the program gains momentum.

RESOURCES

For More Information on This Topic

See "Team Building for Architects," by William C. Ronco, Ph.D., *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 14th edition, Chapter 4, page 128. *The Handbook* can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending an e-mail to bookstore@aia.org.



More Best Practices

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

- 09.03.32 Fostering Talent in an Architecture Firm
- 09.03.35 JH+Ps Intern Development Program
- 09.03.36 NBBJ: Success in Leadership Development

Feedback

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Key Terms

- Practice
- Employment
- Staff development
- Intern development