



AIA Best Practices: Ten things you should know about potential clients

Excerpted and adapted from The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice, 13th edition

Summary

Architects seeking to evaluate potential clients would do well to consider these 10 suggestions.

Know thy client

If all clients are different — and they are — then how can a firm possibly know all it needs to know about potential clients? The answer: It cannot. However, a firm can and should gain a basic knowledge of its clients before it has even discussed working with them.

Industry. What is the general state of the client's industry or commercial sector? What are the major concerns, conditions, and situations within the industry?

Company. How is the client's company performing within the industry? Are there any peculiarities or specific issues facing the company?

Position. How much authority does your client, or the person who represents the client company, have? How secure is the client's position in the company? How new or experienced is he or she within the company? How much trust and confidence in the client does his or her supervisor demonstrate?

Contracts. What is the tone of the client company's contract or procurement procedures? What authority, duties, and responsibilities are assigned to the client company by the terms of agreement? Are the contract terms and allocation of responsibilities equitable?

Project. How visible and important is the project in the client's organization? How will the project influence your client's career advancement? How much interest does the public and/or the press have in the project? Are there any controversial issues?

Experience. How often has your client been involved personally in a design or building project? What were the results? How much or how little does your client know about this particular project?

Other responsibilities. What other projects, duties, and/or responsibilities must your client control in addition to working with you on this project? Where does this project rank in order of importance to your client?

Staff. What support does your client have? How experienced and/or capable is the client's staff in design and construction in general, and this project type in particular?

Available time. How much time can your client devote to this project? How will the time be used?

Personal characteristics. After considering all of the above, give some thought to your client's personal character traits, interests, and preferences. How might they affect the outcome of the project?

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About AIA Best Practices

AIA Best Practices is a collection of relevant, experience-based knowledge and expert advice on firm management, project delivery, contracts and more, aligned with the *Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice, 15th edition*. See the full AIA Best Practices collection at aia.org/aia-best-practices.

This article corresponds to:

Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice, 15th edition Unit 1 – The Profession
Chapter 06 – Marketing and Business Development
Section 01 – Marketing Architectural Services