



ERICKSON STRUCTURAL
CONSULTING ENGINEERS, PC

Tips for Hiring & Retaining Design Professionals

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Five ways to help secure in-demand architects and engineers for your project in today's booming economy



You've planned and prepared for a building project, and you're ready to start. Now what? For most projects, the answer is to hire a design team comprised of an architect and engineers to develop the plans and specifications for your project. Easy enough, right? During the Great Recession, and for a couple of years afterwards, architects and engineers would have been falling all over themselves to take your project. Today? Well, everyone is busy – very busy. Local design professionals are enjoying a backlog of work of well over one month to as many as nine months (meaning they are booked solid until spring 2016!). To accept new projects within that timeframe, an architect or engineer must hire more staff, work longer hours or somehow rearrange previous commitments.

It's no surprise that some project owners are reporting difficulty hiring and retaining architects and engineers for their projects, at least in a timely manner.

To improve your chances of getting your project onto the schedule of your preferred architect and engineers, consider these five suggestions:

1. Plan ahead and be flexible

Anticipate your future project needs early and "reserve" time with your preferred design professionals. If you can accept a longer schedule, volunteer that information. An architect or engineer may be willing to accept a project with a soft schedule if they can allocate resources to your project at their convenience over a longer period of time. Sometimes unexpected project delays create openings in a design professional's schedule. If you are willing to submit your project on a "standby" basis, chances are your project will get attention sooner.

2. Offer multiple projects when possible

Do you have another project or two that can be bundled with your current project? Or, are you able to commit future projects to a design professional if your current project can be expedited? Such approaches could entice a design professional to make the resource adjustments needed to accommodate your project on a timelier basis.

3. Be ready!

Now is not the time to “kick the tires” when you first contact a design professional. With a heavy and demanding workload, most design professionals will be slow to react to an unfamiliar, prospective client that is only contemplating a project. To get your project on the boards, be decisive, committed and ready to move.

4. Select based on qualifications, not fees

Choosing a design professional based upon qualifications, not fees, is always a wise practice no matter the economy, but holds true especially now. Technical competency and experience is critical in a fast-paced construction environment; now is not the time to task engineers and architects with projects outside their normal expertise and scope of services. A project owner can still expect a fair and reasonable fee in today's marketplace, but design professionals, like doctors and attorneys, should not be selected based upon low fees. Reliable and experienced design professionals don't need to compete for projects based upon fee, especially now, and it's best to avoid those who do.

5. Do your part

Once your project is on the boards, keep it there by living up to your contractual obligations, including payment of invoices on a timely manner and making decisions on schedule.

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