

ACAI NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Choosing Your Architect: Twenty Questions to Ask Your Architect Twenty Questions to Ask Yourself

Fort Lauderdale, FL (September 2007) -- If you've never before worked with an architect, you likely have questions. To help optimize the experience -- not to mention your project budget and sanity -- ACAI Associates provides here a checklist of questions to ask a prospective architect ... and yourself.

A talented, experienced architect -- particularly one whose practice is multi-disciplined and set up to resolve planning, design and construction issues through a collaborative, team-based approach -- can be an owner's best friend. A project-tested architect can make all the difference in the world in obtaining an attractive, functional, responsible design and an effective construction effort that is delivered on time and on budget. Is all of that achievable with your project? You bet! The alternative to not securing the right architect's services? Disappointment on more levels than there are angles on a blueprint.

While going from concept to move-in can be an incredibly daunting path, association with a registered architect can assure that your project is a winner on virtually every level of evaluation. Good design truly does make a difference, but a first-rate architect should bring so much more to the proverbial table. After all, the design, engineering and construction process ultimately should be a rewarding one for the owner. Amongst all construction-oriented disciplines, your best advocate, the one who can deliver the goods and keep everyone involved on the same page, is your architect.

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In many respects, you're gearing up to conduct a job interview -- for a major job and a major outlay of your time and capital. As in any interview process, you're going to want to learn about the architect's past work. Is anything in that experience akin to the work you envision? You'll certainly want to ask for references. Is the architect detail-oriented in his/her approach or is he/she elusive during your interview? You're looking for an optimum return on your investment, so you'd better be comfortable communicating with your prospective architect. So, does your prospective architect appear to be a good listener? Without question, his/her ability to maintain clear and timely communication between members of his/her team and with you is the only way to ensure the success of your project. Keep in mind that people make buildings. Even more importantly, people live and work in them. Your architect knows this better than anyone.

With thanks and apologies, ACAI appreciatively credits the [American Institute of Architects](#) with the creation of these lists. "Thanks," because the concept for these lists and, indeed, many of the following questions, came from the venerable institution. "Apologies," because, based on our principals' extensive experience, ACAI has tweaked a few of the queries in an effort to strengthen your line of questioning and, hence, further raise your comfort level that you have selected the very best architect for your particular project.

Good luck to you! Don't hesitate to contact ACAI if we can be of any service whatever.

Two final points: 1) With regard to both of the following lists of questions, keep in mind that the more detailed information that is provided -- by you and the prospective architect -- the easier it will be for you to make your selection and for your architect to address your needs; and 2) Start off on the right foot -- select only architects who are members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to oversee your project.

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20 Questions to Ask Your Architect

1. What does the architect see as important issues or considerations in your project? What are the challenges of the project?
2. How will the architect approach your project?
3. How will the architect gather information about your needs, goals, etc.?
4. How will the architect establish priorities and make decisions?
5. With whom from the architecture firm will you be directly dealing? Is that the same person who will be designing the project? Who will be designing your project?
6. How interested is the architect in this project?
7. How busy is the architect?
8. What sets this architect apart from his/her industry peers?
9. How does the architect establish fees?
10. What would the architect expect the fee to be for this project? What is included in the fee?
11. What are the steps in the architect's design process?
12. How does the architect organize the process?
13. What does the architect expect you to provide?
14. What is the architect's design philosophy?
15. What is the architect's experience/track record with cost estimating?
16. What will the architect show you along the way to explain the project? Will you see models, drawings, computer animations, sketches and renderings? What else?
17. If the scope of the project changes later in the project, will there be additional fees? How will these fees be justified?
18. What services does the architect provide during construction?
19. How disruptive will construction be? How long does the architect expect it to take to complete your project?
20. Does the architect have a list of past clients whom you can contact?

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20 Questions to Ask Yourself

1. Can you describe your project? If you have in mind revision of a current space, what do you currently like about it? What's missing? What don't you like?
2. Do you want to build a new building or renovate/remodel?
3. How much disruption to your business and facility can you tolerate in order to add on to or renovate your facility while it's in operation?
4. If you are contemplating constructing a new building, do you have a site selected?
5. Will your immediate surrounding locale affect your envisioned space or facility? Will the work impact your neighbors or vice versa? What about transportation factors such as delivery requirements, traffic flow, parking, access, egress, etc.?
6. Why do you want to build a new building or add to or renovate your existing space? Do you need more room?
7. If planning on a new facility, what do you envision in it that you do not have now?
8. Is your corporate lifestyle changing? What is your corporate lifestyle?
9. If you are thinking of adding on, what functions, equipment or activities will be housed in a new space?
10. Do you have any special requirements that could affect design such as soundproofing, vibration, etc.?
11. What do you want versus what do you need?
12. What do you think the addition, renovation or new facility should look like? What's your vision?
13. Do you have strong ideas about design styles? What are your design preferences?
14. Will this be a sustainable, environment-friendly facility? Why not?
15. How much can you realistically afford to spend?
16. How much time and energy are you willing to invest to maintain your facility? What are the outstanding maintenance and hardships issues?

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20 Questions to Ask Yourself (cont.)

17. How soon would you like to be settled into your new space? Are there rigid time constraints?
18. Who will be the primary contact with the architect, contractor and others involved in designing and building your project? (It is good to have one point of contact to avoid confusion and mixed messages.)
19. To what degree do you want yourself to be involved in the design and construction process?
20. Do you plan to do any of the work yourself?

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ACAI is an award-winning, full-service architecture firm with offices in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties. Founded in 1985, ACAI's project-tested architects, engineers and construction professionals consistently deliver innovative, functional, sustainable and cost-effective design solutions. A minority-business enterprise, ACAI has built a longstanding reputation for excellence in the planning and design of universities, schools, local and state government buildings, healthcare facilities, industrial and commercial businesses, and private and public corporations. To learn more, contact Sandra Smerkers, LEED AP, ACAI's director of marketing, at 954-484-4000, ext. 38, or ssmerkers@acaiworld.com.