



Better Building Through Relationships – Improving the Building Experience Through Stronger Relationships Between Architects and Contractors

AGC OF WISCONSIN & AIA WISCONSIN JOINT PANEL DISCUSSION
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The Architect's Journey to Specification

Improving the built environment through stronger relationships
between architects and contractors

2022

In collaboration with:

Deltek.

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About the Study

The Architects Journey to Specification

- ▶ 2022 study by AIA (American Institute of Architects) conducted with colleagues at AGC (Associated General Contractors of America)
- ▶ Respondents:
 - ▶ Architects: 286
 - ▶ Contractors: 209





Chapter 1

Key Learnings & Recommendations

- ▶ More collaborative ways of working together are popular with both architects and contractors
- ▶ The working relationship would benefit from mutual understanding and alignment about client advocacy and the purpose of substitutions
- ▶ Expressing and following design intent is challenging because written communication between both parties lacks clarity
- ▶ Transparency and communication are key to building more trusted working relationships for the benefit of all parties and the built environment





Chapter 2

Collaboration and Project Success

- ▶ A significant majority of architects and contractors want to collaborate earlier and more closely on projects
- ▶ Architects and contractors align on their responsibilities, except in the area of client advocacy
- ▶ Contractors see client advocacy as an equally shared responsibility and are more likely to see themselves as responsible for the client budget
- ▶ Contractors want closer collaboration early in the project, while architects seek more collaboration at the end of projects
- ▶ Client satisfaction is the leading indicator of project success for architects and contractors
- ▶ A shared vision of the project's end goal is the most important trait of a successful project team, especially through the eyes of architects

A photograph of a construction worker from the side, wearing an orange hard hat and a yellow safety vest. He is looking towards a building under construction with scaffolding and safety cables in the background.

Chapter 3

Meeting the Needs of Contractors

- ▶ Contractors want architects to submit timely responses and complete drawings that clearly express design intent
- ▶ Architects underestimate the importance to contractors of clearly expressed design intent
- ▶ Architects fall short of expectations in the most important areas for contractors
- ▶ How do architects perceive contractor satisfaction?
- ▶ Contractors want complete specs and drawings, a “team-player” mentality, and realism about budget constraints from architects
- ▶ Contractors would like to see more realism and pragmatism from architects when it comes to project constraints and documents
- ▶ Contractors are keen to develop closer partnerships through earlier and more trusted collaboration rather than an “us-versus-them” mentality
- ▶ Clearer and more responsive communication would improve relations between contractors and architects





Chapter 4

What Architects Want from Contractors

- ▶ Architects want contractors to act in the client's interests when proposing substitutions, follow design intent, and manage client expectations
- ▶ Contractors underestimate the architect's focus on skilled labor availability and overestimate the focus on being up to date on code
- ▶ Architects are not convinced that contractors propose substitutions with the client's best interests in mind but are content with most other areas
- ▶ Attitude toward product substitutions is the biggest gap between actual and perceived satisfaction with contractors
- ▶ Architects want to work as trusted teams with earlier collaboration and less of a "cost-first" mindset throughout the project
- ▶ Architects want closer cooperation at earlier stages of the project and more alignment on the level of detail required from drawings and CD's
- ▶ Value-engineering can be a point of contention when project teams are less integrated or when communication breaks down



Chapter 5

The Architect-Contractor Relationship

- ▶ Working relationship assessments reflect a market where both sides usually encounter both positive and negative project relationships
- ▶ Trust, communication, and approach to collaboration mostly determine how working relationships are viewed
- ▶ Long-term relationships are a source of revenue growth and client retention, but some project delivery types stress the relationship
- ▶ Earlier collaboration and more clarity around design intent is likely to set projects up for success for all parties
- ▶ Architects are concerned about willingness to follow design intent, while contractors worry about lack of responsiveness and incomplete docs
- ▶ Architects see product substitutions as self-interested, while contractors sometimes consider architects overly defensive of their design



Melinda Pogwizd, AIA

Associate Principal, Designer, Planner – Kahler Slater (Madison)

Melinda cares deeply for the communities she serves. She works closely with our clients to build upon their unique legacies, history, and populations. Melinda is passionate about Women's and Children's healthcare experiences and outcomes, as well as achieving an equitable practice within the architecture profession. She was recently recognized by In Business Madison in their 2020 class of 40 Under 40.



Steve Holzhauer, AIA

Retired Principal – EUA, Founder of Holzhauer Partners LLC

Steve Holzhauer, AIA has designed hundreds of buildings over 35 years while a principal at Eppstein Uhen Architects. Involved in both large and small projects as a designer, a project manager, or client executive, Steve's career spans the technology evolution from hand drawing to fax machines to emails and BIM.

Serving his fourth term as Board Member of AIA WI, Steve is working to enhance project delivery and collaboration between owners, architects and builders.

Steve retired from EUA in 2021 and founded his own firm, Holzhauer Partners, where he focuses on custom project design and owner representation.



Josh Pearson

Vice President Preconstruction & Estimating – JP Cullen

Josh has been with Cullen for 18 years. Over those 18 years, he has gained experience in many roles including estimating, engineering, project management and preconstruction. Josh has had the privilege of working on some of Cullen's most interesting projects including the The Fiserv Forum and Milwaukee Bucks Training Facility, various renovations and additions to Camp Randall Stadium, and Epic Systems sprawling Verona campus. He stated the most challenging and rewarding thing about his career thus far has been navigating the recent economic hurdles such as hyperinflation and supply chain disruptions, and finding innovative ways to deliver projects within budgets and on schedule for his clients.



Jonathan Koch, LEED AP

Vice President of Project Management – Stevens Construction Corp.

Jon has a combined 25+ years of experience serving clients and markets that include commercial/office, multi-family residential, student housing, senior living, healthcare, hospitality, and municipal projects. Jon's areas of expertise include construction project management, project estimating and project / business development.





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