

HOW TO HIRE A BUILDING DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

8 STEPS TO SUCCESS

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Building Design ❖ Interior Design ❖ Project Management

WELCOME

This guide was prepared after seeing so many people struggle with understanding the design and construction process. This process can seem like a complex and frightening road block for those who haven't been through it before. The first and most important step is to find and hire your building design professional.

You may be wondering: how do I find the right building design professional for my project? Do I really need to hire a building designer? How much are their fees? What about builders? And most importantly: what are the key, critical steps I need to take to ensure that I hire the building design professional that is the perfect match for my project?

In the following pages, you will discover the answers to these questions – and more.

We hope you enjoy this guide and look forward to your feedback on the contents.

Nothing is more exciting than creating a new building or space, whether it's your home or a commercial project, and nothing will affect the success of your project more than the right building design professional. They will determine the design and function of the project as well as the emotional toll and financial costs involved in its construction. Finding your perfect match in a building designer is not impossible and the following eight steps can guide you along the way. Use these to help analyse the personality, design strategy and communication skills of your candidates. Your goal is to find the right designer for your project, for your budget and for you.

01. FINDING A BUILDING DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

Like many other fields, word of mouth is the best way to look for a building designer. Ask family, friends and professional colleagues for referrals. Is there a particular project you admire?

A phone call or knock on the door can yield an introduction to your project's potential designer. Professional organisations, such as the Building Designers Association of Australia (BDAA) or Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) are also great sources to find architectural designers. Builders and other trade-related personnel would also be able to furnish some referrals. Be sure to visit web sites of your candidates. Look at their previous work. Get a feel for what is their design style and language – is it about blending in the neighbourhood, is it environmentally sound designs, or is it about making a big statement? Then, start a conversation. Make an appointment for a consultation. Meeting face to face will help you decide if it is a fit.

02. A BUILDING DESIGN PROFESSIONALS BIGGEST SUCCESS AND LARGEST OBSTACLE

How will the building designer approach your project? Let them know the most important aspects of your project and ask how they will be incorporated into a process. If you are doing a renovation or an addition, start with what aspects of your space you currently like and ask how they can be improved. Ask how will this be achieved. Even though the designer might have an attractive portfolio and good references you will still want to make sure their design process and approach is right for you and your project.

03. SIGNATURE STYLE: WHO'S GOT IT AND DO YOU WANT IT?

It is common for a building design professional to be known by a certain design style – or more broadly as traditional, modern, or transitional. Though most designers are able to adapt their signature style to what you want, think twice about hiring a designer with minimalist aesthetic if you love panelised cabinetry with lots of molding. Have plenty of examples of the look you want; these can be found from catalogues, magazines or the Internet.

Environmentally friendly, sustainable “green” designs and construction however can be applied to any style. Discuss the importance of these elements with your designer from the outset.

04. MEET YOUR PROJECT BUILDING DESIGNER

Signing a contract with a designer representing an architectural firm does not necessarily mean that person will be the building designer on your project. Actually, outside of single owned operator, this is common procedure. Be sure to meet the project designer before making any final decisions. Being able to communicate freely and openly with your project designer is vital to the success of your project. You should share a clear understanding of the project with your building designer and feel completely comfortable.

05. 3-D MODELING: DON'T BUILD YOUR PROJECT WITHOUT IT

Building designers understand how elevations and floor plans translate into actual buildings; their clients don't necessarily. A 3-D model is the best way to see how your new home or commercial project will look when built. Software today allows design reviewing from multiple angles and room walkthroughs. Being able to work in 3-D helps clients get better involved in the design process and they enjoy the viewing experience and “walking” through the space before it is built. Don't hesitate to ask for a 3-D model before the commencement of your project.

06. THE FULL-SERVICE ARCHITECTURE FIRM

Conceptual renderings and blueprints are not the only services architectural and planning firms provide. Ask about other services your candidate's firm offers. Ask about benefits of specific services to you and their corresponding costs. Ask your designer if there are any additional services offered and how they could be useful to you for your particular project. If a firm doesn't offer a requested service, they should be able to refer a firm that does.

Below is a glimpse into some additional services a typical architectural firm provides:

- **Project Feasibility Studies**
- **Programming**
- **Master Planning**
- **Evaluation of Potential Building**
- **Detailed Cost Estimates**
- **Custom Joinery Design**
- **Traditional and Computer Renderings**
- **3 Dimensional, Fly-Through, Virtual Reality**
- **Comprehensive Construction Documents**
- **Construction Administration**
- **Furniture, Furnishings & Equipment Specifications**

07. FIGURING OUT THE FEES

Typically, a building designer's fee is calculated as a percentage of the project's entire cost (minus the designer's fee of course). Depending on the services provided by the designer, the rate could range from 5 to 20 percent. However, when you first start the design process for your project, it is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately determine the final project cost. During this initial time period (before a good estimate of the final project cost is possible) the building designer may perform a

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Feasibility Study for a fee to determine costs, or charge an hourly fee or a retainer. These fees will typically be credited towards the total architectural fee once it has been determined. Billing monthly is the industry standard. Also, ask when payment is expected and the preferred method of payment, i.e. direct debit, credit card, etc. There are other types of fees, such as a flat fee, if the design scope of the project is fully understood. The most important thing about fees is complete transparency. Insist upon it.

08. HIRING A BUILDER

An experienced building designer should have a list of builders they like to work with. Your designer should be able to help you choose the best builder for your project. It is advisable to get multiple quotes on the construction of your project – even if you already have a builder. This is an industry standard and gives you better leverage at the bargaining table. Additionally, having a builder, or at least getting pricing, during the design process ensures you will not be building more than you can afford.

These tips are meant as a guide to choosing the best architectural designer for your project. You will be working very closely with your designer on what may be one of the biggest investments of your life. Not only are a designer's answers to your questions important, but how they are answered speaks volumes, too. Did they take time for details to clear up any confusion? Did you feel comfortable with them? Did they conduct business in a transparent manner? The creation process is exciting but can get intimidating at times, however choosing the right team can make it an enjoyable process. That team always starts with choosing the right architectural designer and we hope these tips will help you with that for your next project.

THE NEXT STEP

Congratulations! You now have the key information that will help you lay a successful foundation for understanding how to find and hire a building design professional.

Unfortunately, I can't include every important piece of information about this very important step in the design and construction process successfully in this guide.

Actually, that would be impossible because each project is unique and the requirements differ based on a multitude of factors. But with this guide, you have the critical information to help you hire an architectural designer that will ensure that your project is a success.

If you are in the process of looking for a building designer for your project, let's talk. I can help you wade through the necessary requirements and make sure you aren't overlooking a crucial factor that could doom your project to failure. I offer a custom **initial consultation** where I will provide a needs and options review and identify the specific requirements pertaining to your project and your available options.

Typically, the **initial consultation** saves my clients thousands of dollars and weeks of lost time, not to mention the stress and headache of getting something wrong.

To read more about the **initial consultation** as well as the price for this service and why it is critically important to your project's success visit my website. If you are ready to talk now, please give me a call.

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Best wishes for the success of your project!