

Re-defining the Practice of Architecture in 2010

by Daniel J. Marinaro, AIA, NCARB

It seems like only yesterday I was drawing on my plywood drafting table my father made me, dreaming about being an architect; dreaming about “making buildings,” really cool buildings. That was 37 years ago.

After completing my architectural studies and my internship, I was ready to become a licensed architect. By this point I realized that architecture was a much more complicated profession and that as an architect, I would not literally be “making buildings” but I was certainly doing so in a figurative way.

What I was not prepared for was the myriad of tangible skills I had not learned in college; marketing, cash flow projections, public relations, and business operations, to name a few. Over time, given the right opportunities, we gain these skills, and hopefully master them like we did spatial programming, design, and detailing.

Fast forward from hand drawing to the introduction of basic two-dimensional CAD, then into basic three-dimensional computer modeling, and now Building Information Modeling (BIM). Our tools have continuously changed, as they do in every profession. We adapt to the use of new tools, master the techniques, and begin to appreciate the value added to our product by using the state of the art.

Thirty years later, we are current with technology, working smarter, faster, and hopefully more efficiently than ever before. What next? Well, the United States Army says “Be All You Can Be.” What a great motto.

As architects, we are exposed to and have the opportunity to be involved in many related industries that touch architecture and the art of construction every day. The essence to survival in a competitive profession, during difficult economic times is to add value, to innovate and to think outside the box.

The design build project delivery method is an attempt at adding value by providing internal coordination, operations, management and communication to bridge the gap between the architect, owner and contractor. Etymologically, architect derives from the Latin *architectus*, itself derived from the Greek *arkhitekton* (*arkhi-*, chief + *tekton*, builder), i.e. chief builder.

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Expanding the traditional services we offer as architects is another meaningful way to add value. The process of leading a successful architectural project starts long before any floor plans are drawn. As architects, we can bring great value to our clients by performing due diligence and detailed site selection analysis. We can help analyze what the “highest and best use” of a site truly is. A building that is exquisitely architecturally designed on the wrong site, in the wrong location is destined to be considered a failure.

This is an exciting time for architects. A time to embrace the evolution of our profession with passion, remain flexible, open minded and take action by focusing on delivering quality services that are diverse and exceed the expectations of our clients in breadth and quality. We can do this by looking outside the traditional box of services and not just follow in new directions, but blaze the trail to help lead our clients to success in new ways. By directly providing expanded services we historically were only “involved in”, architects will become more involved in the overall building process, and by virtue, add value.

“Syndication,” for example, is a word most often found in the investment arena. However, as architects we can bring together and create a dynamic team of end users and investors who may never cross paths. It is becoming more common than ever for architects to help facilitate the development of a project.

With many markets flooded with vacant buildings, architects find themselves looking beyond the façade and intuitively pondering the question: “what can that building be used for”? Adaptive re-use studies and existing building condition evaluations are tools that offer a comprehensive analysis to building owners and potential investors, to assist in the decision-making process.

Performing pro-forma analysis on investment properties, seeking out tax credits, designing green buildings and pursuing other types of state and federal incentives for various types of commercial and residential projects is now an area of understanding and comprehension many architects have in their tool box.

Collaboration has become a common method for architects to bring the best of the best together to provide a full-service-minded, well integrated, and

manifestation of refining and revisiting that idea until the puzzle has been solved. ■

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comprehensive team of professionals together on behalf of their clients. Remaining flexible and open-minded to work in synergetic relationships with other innovators will be the future for our industry.

Architects will always adapt to change. Design, by virtue, is the process of developing an idea through the