



THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE
OF ARCHITECT
Custom Residential Architects Network

CRAN CHRONICLE



Letter from the CRAN Chair

By Dawn Zuber, AIA

Your CRAN leadership team has been working hard to prepare this year's symposium, and I hope you'll consider attending. The event will take place at the Hyatt Vineyard Creek in Santa Rosa, California, in the heart of Sonoma County—Wine Country—from September 18 - 22, 2016. Our event begins with a welcome reception hosted by the local AIA chapter, AIA Redwood Empire, on Sunday night, followed by a day and a half of education sessions. The CRAN home tour takes place on Tuesday from late morning through afternoon. Wednesday and Thursday morning continue a day and a half of education sessions.

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**This event is currently sold out; you may sign up for on the waitlist*

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Project Profiles

Algoma Cottage

Searl Lamaster Howe Architects

The most common structures to be found in this area of northeast

Wisconsin are modest, efficient, functional wood-frame vacation cabins dating from the 1940s and 50s which were built as spots of respite for weary city dwellers. This new, clearly contemporary house shares much in common with these earlier structures. While lifestyles and building technologies have evolved, the desire to escape the everyday and appreciate the beauty of nature remains as strong today as ever. The painted lap siding and gabled form of the house harken to the local vernacular while subtle moves such as tweaks to the geometry of the house's volume...

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Mark Schepker Photography

Ashbury Residence

Searl Lamaster Howe Architects

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[Read more](#)



Tony Soluri Photography

Features

Architectural models for small firms

By Kevin Harris, FAIA

As architects, we are all familiar with the process and benefits of modeling our designs prior to construction. Models are an effective medium to study proposed creations and help communicate those concepts to our clients.

Constructing a model takes time however, it can give us an opportunity to take a break, reflect on new insights, and manipulate the parts until all seems right. Working with a model is a process that helps us elevate our plans from good to better.

[Read more](#)



The value in planning your financial future

By Ann Casso, Hon. AIA

Architects at all career stages need to assess their finances and plan accordingly

In order to be successful in your professional and personal life, you must understand how to manage money. Good financial management requires effective decision-making in order to accomplish the objectives of your firm and family; this includes raising and allocating funds, long-term budgeting, and allocation of short-term resources such as current liabilities.

[Read more](#)



No more starving artist

By Mark LePage, AIA

How to rewrite the story of our profession

With a twisted sense of pride, too many architects today accept the small firm stereotype of “starving artist”. Seeds planted in architecture school bloom into a full-on virus as professionals launch their own firms and find their way to small business. New firms are launched every day without proper planning, without an understanding of basic business fundamentals and often with an eager acceptance that life as an architect will be a difficult struggle.

I was born an entrepreneur. I learned from doing, working with my auto mechanic father as soon as I was old enough to lift a push broom. At the age of 13, I launched my own businesses detailing vehicles from the shop’s side lot and “flipping” American muscle cars, starting with my first purchase; a navy blue 1972 Camaro.

[Read more](#)



Social Business

How to find clients through social media

By Jeff Echols

If your firm uses social networking and digital marketing properly, there's work out there for the taking

During a conversation at a recent AIA Convention, right after my presentation on social media marketing, someone asked me if architects can actually find work through those channels.

This is a question I get a lot, not just from architects but all kinds of business owners: Can using social media actually bring more business through the door? The short answer is “yes.”



Read more

Social media primer, pt. 1

By Lora Teagarden

The background & the why that drives you

I wrote in my mentorship series on the importance of my digital network in helping create relationships, continuing to learn, and finding mentors. I'm still learning and feeling my way through the different platforms, but thanks to a lot of articles read on the subject and friends who specialize in AEC (Architecture Engineering Construction) marketing, I continue to make progress. I thought I'd spend this blog post (and the next four to follow) giving some background on what I've learned these last two years in the digital / social media world and sharing some tips and tricks for the different platforms. This week's social media primer: the background and the why that drives you.



Read more

Financial Resources

AIA Best Practices – financial management

What are AIA Best Practices?

AIA Best Practices are a collection of relevant, experience-based knowledge and expert advice on firm management, project delivery, contracts, and more, aligned with the *Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 15th edition. You'll find:

- essential knowledge based on deep experience
- expert advice that is immediately usable
- new content and recent updates to definitive articles

Best Practices are freely contributed articles written by practicing professionals, allied professionals, strategic partners, and industry consultants. The Best Practices are an opportunity for AIA members and other allied professionals to contribute to the advancement of the practice of architecture and the profession. Each article should be viewed as a living document, and new, relevant articles are actively desired.

[See the chapter](#) designated for Financial Management, which includes topics on accounting basics and developing budgets.

Historic tax credits can contribute to project financing

Contribution by Caitlin Kolb

Editorial Note: *There are many types of historical buildings, including single family houses. There are*

tax credit programs available which can assist a client by providing an additional funding source. The following links provide additional information on these programs. These links address national tax credit programs, note that state funding may also be available.

[Nolo.com](#) provides a basic overview of the historic credit programs. The National Park Service administers the program at the federal level.

[See the tax incentives](#) available for preserving historic properties.

Upcoming Events

Here + Now: 2016-2017 student design competition

A house for the 21st century

CRAN Knowledge Community is pleased to announce the *HERE+NOW: A House for the 21st Century* residential student design competition for the 2016-2017 academic year. Administered by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) and sponsored by AIA CRAN, this program is intended to provide architecture students, working individually or in teams, with a platform to explore residential architecture and residential architectural practice.

[Learn More](#)

Few spots remaining: Santa Rosa Symposium

9th Annual CRAN symposium

Please join the Custom Residential Architects Network (CRAN) at the Hyatt Vineyard Creek in Santa Rosa, California, for our annual symposium, Wine & Design: Regionalism, Modernity, and the Residential Context, in the heart of Sonoma County—Wine Country—from September 18 - 22, 2016.

*This event is currently sold out; you may sign up for on the waitlist

[Learn More](#)

Upcoming webinars

AIA Housing Awards and AIA / HUD Secretary's Awards

August 1, 2016 | 1:00 - 2:00pm ET | Earn 1.0 HSW | [Learn more](#) | [Register now](#)

Sponsored by: AIA Housing Knowledge Community

Registration fees: **Free**

How to Become a Contributor to Your Local Media Outlets

September 7, 2016 | 12:00 - 1:00pm ET | Earn 1.0 LU | [Learn more](#) | [Register now](#)

Sponsored by: AIA Media Relations

Registration fees: **Free**

CRAN AIAU Courses



Take the latest courses in residential architecture on AIAU. New courses include the best of the fall CRAN Symposium, firm strategies for sustainability, net zero residential construction, and managing design-build projects.

You'll learn from top instructors on your schedule, from anywhere in the world. Once you complete a course, we'll automatically update your AIA transcript with your continuing education credits.

Check out these great courses:

- [CRAN Symposium 2015: Client Attraction](#) | Earn 1.5 LU / RIBA
- [CRAN Symposium 2015: Profit...then Art: 12 Steps to Building a Successful Small Firm](#) | Earn 1.5 LU / RIBA
- [CRAN Symposium 2014: Paradise Planned](#) | Earn 1 LU / HSW / RIBA
- [CRAN Symposium 2014: Traditions of Home](#) | Earn 1 LU / HSW / RIBA
- [CRAN Symposium 2014: The New Modern House](#) | Earn 1.5 LUs / HSW / RIBA
- [CRAN Symposium 2014: The New Traditional House](#) | Earn 1.5 LUs / HSW / RIBA
- [Profiting From Design Build for a Residential Practice](#) | Earn 1.5 LUs / RIBA
- [Avoiding or Reducing Architect-Contractor Conflicts in Small Projects](#) | Earn 1.5 LUs / RIBA
- [Fundamentals of NetZero Residential Construction](#) | Earn 1 LU / HSW/ RIBA
- [Small Firm Sustainable Strategies: Applying Sustainable Principles to Small Projects](#) | Earn 1.50 LUs / HSW/GBCI / RIBA

Individual courses are \$25 for AIA members and \$40 for non-members. Buy four or more courses and save 15%, no promo code needed.

[Check out more great courses on AIAU >](#)

Did you know anyone can join AIA Custom Residential Architects Network for FREE? Sign-up on [AIA KnowledgeNet](#) and start a discussion in the [AIA CRAN Discussion Forum](#).



The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

AIA Knowledge Communities 

This message was intended for: %%emailaddr%%

The AIA strives to provide information that is most relevant to you. To update your contact information or add an AIA Knowledge Community, update your [AIA.org Account](#).

[Unsubscribe](#).

Letter from the Chair



Your CRAN leadership team has been working hard to prepare this year's symposium, and I hope you'll consider attending. The event will take place at the Hyatt Vineyard Creek in Santa Rosa, California, in the heart of Sonoma County—Wine Country—from September 18 - 22, 2016. Our event begins with a welcome reception hosted by the local AIA chapter, **AIA Redwood Empire**, on Sunday night, followed by a day and a half of education sessions. The CRAN home tour takes place on Tuesday from late morning through afternoon. Wednesday and Thursday morning continue a day and a half of education sessions.

Our CRAN home tour will feature contemporary and traditional houses by Wendy Evans Joseph, Obie Bowman, Ralf Konietzko, and Anderson Architecture. Wendy Evans Joseph presented her guest house and remodeled main residence in her talk at last year's symposium in Minneapolis.

Educational sessions will allow participants to explore regional architecture including work by Julia Morgan and Joseph Eichler, wine country architecture and the process of wine-making, and building in the natural landscape. Other educational sessions will explore designing for your climate with the Green Police, as well as best business practices, including how to manage your clients, a behind-the-scenes look at three projects with Mark LePage, and Jeremiah Eck discussing why art matters.

Cocktail receptions each evening will offer an opportunity to explore the sponsor showcase and interact with other attendees. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to dine with sponsors and other attendees at fine restaurants in Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, and surrounding communities.

A highlight of the symposium will be a Winemaker's dinner in the Knights Valley Garden, a lovely setting in the vineyards behind the hotel. This optional dinner will feature a 30-minute wine and hors d'oeuvres reception (with a cash bar for people wanting a non-wine option), followed by a perfectly-paired four course meal with wines from [Dutton-Goldfield Winery](#)

In addition, AIA Redwood Empire has organized additional events the weekend before and the weekend after for participants who want to stay longer, as well as a "Squeeze Tour" for guests during the symposium.

The symposium is expected to sell out quickly, so register now reserve your spot!

Respectfully,
Dawn Zuber, AIA

Project Profile

Algoma Cottage

What are the unique and outstanding functional, environmental, and aesthetic features of this project?

The most common structures to be found in this area of northeast Wisconsin are modest, efficient, functional wood-frame vacation cabins dating from the 1940s and 50s which were built as spots of respite for weary city dwellers. This new, clearly contemporary house shares much in common with these earlier structures. While lifestyles and building technologies have evolved, the desire to escape the everyday and appreciate the beauty of nature remains as strong today as ever. The painted lap siding and gabled form of the house harken to the local vernacular while subtle moves such as tweaks to the geometry of the house's volume and its relationship to its site, perched on the slope of a bluff that runs down to the boulder strewn water line of Lake Michigan, relate to more contemporary principles.

From conception, the design focused on the home's setting. Intended for family retreats, care was taken to keep the spaces intimate, with emphasis on the outdoors. Responsive to its Northwood's site, the mudroom/foyer serves as an air lock during the winter and a refined residential interpretation of a containment zone to "de-bug" in warmer seasons.

The main level's multipurpose room houses the open kitchen, dining and living spaces. Having eastern and western exposure, the room is inviting at both breakfast and dinner. Massive glass doors focus views east to the lake. A fireplace with reclaimed wood provides an intimate space along north wall. Beyond the fireplace a pantry and office (which doubles as a third guest room) screen a neighboring residence.

How does the design respond to the surrounding physical and cultural context and environmental constraints?

Approaching down the drive, the house appears to grow from the hillside. A split level layout was used as a direct response to the slope of the bluff the house is nestled within. The shifting levels maintains a compact overall footprint for the house while providing for heightened privacy for the master suite and guest rooms from the public areas of the house. On axis with the main entry steps, a large picture window allows views through the house to the lake beyond as you approach the house on foot. The patio on the side of the house opposing the lake is nestled within a retaining wall made of stone sourced from a nearby quarry. It is here an intimate dining area enjoys a prime seat to enjoy the sun setting amongst the old growth cedar forest.

In massing, scale, and in materials, the house evokes neighbor vacation cabins. The building was located just a few miles down the road and completed almost all of the construction using local materials and craftsmen.

Describe uses of materials and building systems that created an environmentally and contextually responsive design.

The house is exceptionally energy efficient. All windows are triple glazed and the walls and roof are super insulated. Reclaimed materials, such as the oak flooring were used throughout. The house is conditioned using a series of geothermal wells. The design includes sustainable features such as utility grade floors, and Richlite counters. Recycled rubber roofing and cement siding were chosen for their long life. Throughout the design and construction process, the property's history emerged through site exploration and insight from local community members. The construction crew resided within fifteen minutes of the site. All these elements strengthen the relationship between the land

and the structure. A step up from the living area, the master bedroom peers into the tree canopy through large plate glass windows. A lower band of screened awning windows falls below the main sightline and provides ventilation even in light rainfall. The home is not air-conditioned. A pair of oversized corner windows above the tub opens the master bath into the woods.

Project Details

New Construction: Yes
Year Completed: 2011
Building Type: Residential
City: Algoma
State: Wisconsin
Country: USA
Foundation: Poured-in-place concrete
Superstructure / Framing System: Wood framed
Exterior Enclosure: Hardie Plank
Roof Material: Carlise EcoStar
Square Footage: 2,100 sqft
Number of Rooms: 3 bedrooms / 3.5 bathrooms
Mechanical: Geothermal
Site Area: 6.38 acres

Project Team

Architect:

Searl Lamaster Howe Architects – 500 N. Dearborn St. Suite 950, Chicago IL 60654 – 312.251.9200 – searlarch.com

Pam Lamaster-Millett, AIA, Principal Architect – plamaster-millett@searlarch.com

Contractor:

Forestville Builders – 141 Main St. PO box 8, Forestville WI 54213 – 920.856.6460 – info@forestvillebuilders.com

Tom Dier, General Contractor

Project Profile

Asbury Residence

What are the unique and outstanding functional, environmental, and aesthetic features of this project?

The head scratching question on this project came from the client at the initial meeting: what form does a house take that is both contemporary in spirit yet reflective of traditional Mediterranean design concepts?

Key to the design was the recognition that what has developed as a “Modern Mediterranean” style in this country is neither all that modern nor does it accurately reflect the diversity of building stock from this vast region; for the most part the term has come to describe an unrestrained pastiche of clichéd, predictable elements. Objectively looking back into history helped define a fresh direction for the project.

Italian Rationalism of the 1920s, itself a derivation of Renaissance concepts, with an emphasis on reason and logic, became a launch pad. The house is an amalgamation of simple, easy to identify volumes. Therefore, the stately front façade contextually establishes the house (within Evanston’s Ridge Historic District). Detailing was streamlined and minimized. The interior’s open plan wraps around a central courtyard and is a reflection of a contemporary, casual lifestyle. Orienting spaces toward the courtyard also serves to buffer busy street noise. Extra height spaces invited the addition of over-scaled windows to bring in sunlight without compromising privacy.

How does the design respond to the surrounding physical and cultural context and environmental constraints?

The house sits within easy walking distance of Evanston’s urban center and various public transit lines, enabling a degree of connectivity which is rare in a suburban setting. The site once housed a warehouse and effectively was a brownfield that required extensive soil remediation before construction could begin. Thick stucco walls and foam insulation help to minimize energy costs in addition to attenuating noise from the busy thoroughfare on which the site fronts. Now home to ten month old child, the house was built under strict V.O.C. limits. Reclaimed lumber, ornamental ironwork salvaged from structures slated for demolition, and shingles made out of recycled tires are key elements in the material palette. Large windows provide abundant interior light but are tinted to minimize heat gain. Suspended razor thin LED strips discretely illuminate the locally sourced wood ceiling in the great room.

Describe uses of materials and building systems that created an environmentally and contextually responsive design.

The use of large oversized windows in the house are a central feature. The use of triple glazed glass helped to minimize energy consumption year round. A light solar tint on the most exposed windows further reduces heat loading. Even with the large number of windows and exterior walls, the house still exceeded state set energy conservation standards by 30%. The roof of the house is clad in a tile made from reconstituted rubber and reused or salvaged materials appear throughout the house. The house itself is relatively compact for its neighborhood.

The key goal of the house was to develop a design that was reflective of its historic neighborhood while also being clearly of its age. The overall volume of the house is fairly traditional but subtle gestures clearly communicate that the house is of the 21st century. As one approaches the house

from the street, the roof gables disappear behind a project modern, cubic volume which is punched by an asymmetric layout of windows and door. Details too, simplified to their very essence, establish a progressive vocabulary.

Project Details

New Construction: Yes
Year Completed: 2015
Building Type: Residential
City: Evanston
State: Illinois
Country: USA
Foundation: Poured-in-place concrete
Superstructure / Framing System: Wood framed
Exterior Enclosure: Stucco
Roof Material: Slate
Square Footage: 2,965 sqft
Number of Rooms: 3 bedrooms / 3.5 bathrooms
Mechanical: Trane
Site Area: 0.17 acres

Project Team

Architect:

Searl Lamaster Howe Architects – 500 N. Dearborn St. Suite 950, Chicago IL 60654 – 312.251.9200
– searlarch.com
Greg Howe, AIA, Principal Architect – ghowe@searlarch.com

Contractor:

S/H Builders - 4300 Lincoln Ave Suite Q Rolling Meadows, IL 60008 – 647.991.0123 – sh-builders.com
David Haegland, General Contractor

Architectural Models for Small Firms

By Kevin Harris, FAIA



As architects, we are all familiar with the process and benefits of modeling our designs prior to construction. Models are an effective medium to study proposed creations and help communicate those concepts to our clients.

Constructing a model takes time however, it can give us an opportunity to take a break, reflect on new insights, and manipulate the parts until all seems right. Working with a model is a process that helps us elevate our plans from good to better.

As part of their ongoing effort on identifying what information could best benefit members of the AIA, the Small Firm Exchange (SFx) distributed its Small Firm Survey (Beta version) during the 2016 AIA Convention. Its purpose was to identify and measure the variety and commonalities existing in small firm models with the goal of providing meaningful insight to all architects practicing in small firms. It collected data on firm location; staff number, credentials, and commitment; project numbers, types, locations, and budgets; business plan existence and update frequency; contract usage; fee methods; gross revenue; and identified interest areas for additional studies.

The surveys were distributed as paper copies in both the SFx and AIA Fellow/VIP Lounges at the convention. Participants in this “Beta” test group formed a small sampling however, one large enough to reveal certain patterns of important concern to small firm practitioners.

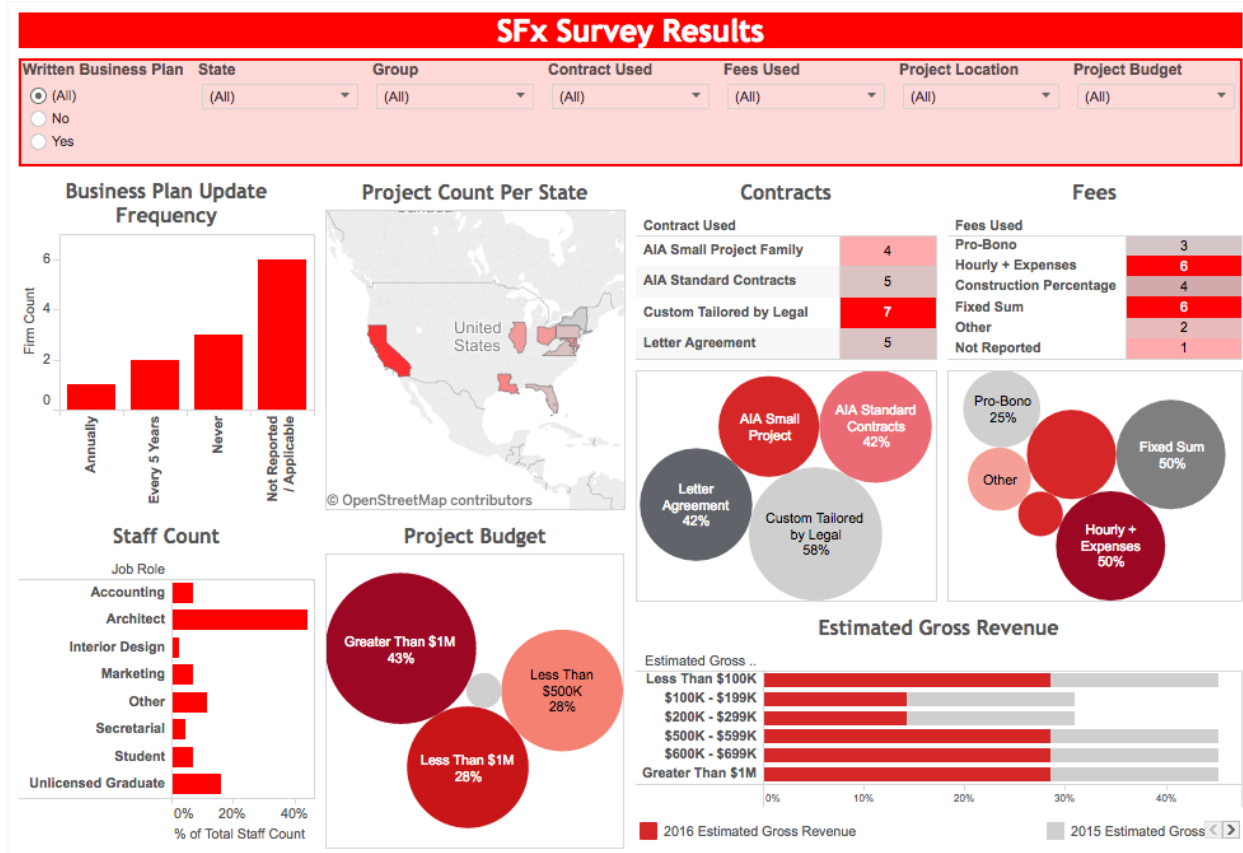
Most notable is the fact that very few responded as having, or updating, a business plan. Those that did have one admitted, at best, to infrequent review or updating of this important planning tool. A business plan is widely acknowledged as a basic guide that is to be used throughout the lifetime of any business. In order to be of value, the plan must be kept up-to-date!

This brings up the rhetorical question that, as a profession, why don’t architects apply those concepts of creative process improvement modeling, used to arrive at better designs, to plans used to guide their own businesses? Why indeed!

I am also guilty of spending little to no time on developing, studying, or “modeling” my own business plan. This SFx survey has piqued my interest on what other things I might learn from observing other practices. What patterns are applicable to my own firm? For example, since I want to improve my financial success, is there a correlation between firm income and the number of projects each year? Or does the number of staff in my outfit restrict the types and sizes of projects I can best handle? What type of contracts do others use? Are there better patterns to distribute the responsibility hats worn by a sole proprietor when in a firm of 2-4 people, or is it any better with 5-10? Is a larger firm more profitable than a sole practitioner

without support staff? The data sampling of small firms must be greatly enlarged to properly study these and other relevant questions.

Below is a sample “dashboard” that visually communicates the data gathered from the initial “Beta” version. Similar outputs will be applied to the digital version, and will be made available to all who participate. [Follow this link to the survey.](#)



Answering basic business questions and conducting mid-stream course corrections is required for your basic business survival. Having access to a database illustrating how your peers address these same issues will go a long way towards guiding you towards a more financially sustainable practice.

[Take the survey NOW!](#)

Updated small firm model statistics will follow in a future issue of the CRAN Journal.

The value in planning your financial future

By Ann Casso, Hon. AIA

Architects at all career stages need to assess their finances and plan accordingly



In order to be successful in your professional and personal life, you must understand how to manage money. Good financial management requires effective decision-making in order to accomplish the objectives of your firm and family; this includes raising and allocating funds, long-term budgeting, and allocation of short-term resources such as current liabilities.

When it comes to your firm, this includes short- and long-term business planning, management and allocation of expenses, marketing services and cultivating business, collection of receivables, payroll and employee overhead costs, and much more.

If you're an employer, then you know that attracting and retaining employees who are skilled, loyal, and dedicated to your company creates a strong foundation on which your firm can grow. By offering employee benefits, a company tells their employees that they are valued and their contributions are important, creating more incentive to become and

stay a part of the team. On the AIA Trust website, the section for established architects on running a practice outlines numerous employee benefits that should be considered, along with any needed firm insurance. In addition, the booklet *Making the Transition to Running Your Own Firm* covers the many insurance coverage issues that a professional practice must consider.

Money is the measure and fuel of any business, including a design firm. You need to be aware of the correlation between unpaid fees and troubled projects that can result in lawsuits alleging professional negligence. The AIA Trust white paper on getting paid without getting sued addresses the topic of payment issues, which can be the single greatest warning sign of a project in trouble. The paper outlines financial success as a project-long process, providing insights and tools to assist you as the member in making the process successful.

Managing your own finances

In your personal life, you also must manage expenses within your income and strategically plan for future expenses, whether they include a home mortgage, tuition expenses, future retirement, and other goals.

Regarding retirement planning, per 2016 IRS regulations the maximum contribution to a 401(k) for individuals under age 50 is \$18,000. There are many online calculators available to calculate your own retirement needs and savings, such as this retirement planning calculator from AIA Trust partner AXA. There are also many approaches you may take to retirement plans:

- If you're a sole proprietor, an owners-only 401(k) combines the benefits of profit sharing and 401(k) plans without costly set-up charges. You may also be able to defer more than in other types of plans.
- If you're an owner with younger employees looking to maximize for retirement, you may be able to take advantage of age-weighted allocations and new comparability plans that enable you to have designated plan participant groups to make larger contributions for those closest to retirement.
- If you're in an established plan with assets over \$500,000, you may want to consider a program that includes a group variable annuity with no asset fees or set-up charges.
- An individual variable annuity program can grow your retirement assets and address the ups and downs of a fluctuating market by investing on a tax-deferred basis with a capped rate of return tied to the performance of a specified index with some downside protection.

Get insured

When looking at your own personal financial planning, insurance coverage should also be considered. If you have a family, life insurance is a vital tool to ensure their lifestyle should you die prematurely. And disability insurance should be considered, regardless of your family status, since disability benefits will help you to pay your personal expenses—and may be used to cover business expenses—should you become disabled at any time.

Many assume that having a disability is age-related, but chances of a disability are greater than you may think. According to a 2015 study by the Social Security Administration, one in five people have a disability in the U.S. and a 20-year-old today has more than a 25 percent chance of becoming disabled before reaching retirement age.

There are other important uses to consider for life insurance, such as key person and buy/sell agreements for practices, savings for retirement or college funding, or even bequeathing a legacy. Coverage through your employer will terminate if you lose your job, and if you wait until you're older to take out a policy your premiums will likely be higher, if you even qualify for coverage. Long-term care Insurance is also worth considering, especially when you're younger and premiums are dramatically lower. As an employee, you will likely need to proactively supplement employer benefits with your own savings plan and policies to ensure your financial well-being.

For a range of useful financial planning tools, visit the AIA Trust's section on retirement and financial planning. Whether employer or employee, you need to take a serious look at your own financial wellness programs, consider your short- and long-term needs, and plan accordingly.

Ann Casso, Hon. AIA is the Executive Director of the AIA Trust for the last 14 years, focusing on their two-pronged charge to serve AIA members and components as an indispensable risk management resource and by offering valuable insurance and financial programs.

No more starving artist

By Mark R. LePage, AIA

How to rewrite the story of our profession



With a twisted sense of pride, too many architects today accept the small firm stereotype of “starving artist”. Seeds planted in architecture school bloom into a full-on virus as professionals launch their own firms and find their way to small business. New firms are launched every day without proper planning, without an understanding of basic business fundamentals and often with an eager acceptance that life as an architect will be a difficult struggle.

I was born an entrepreneur. I learned from doing, working with my auto mechanic father as soon as I was old enough to lift a push broom. At the age of 13, I launched my own businesses detailing vehicles from the shop’s side lot and “flipping” American muscle cars, starting with my first purchase; [a navy blue 1972 Camaro](#)

Working hard and making money came naturally. It’s in my blood.

Even my choice of Architect as a career was based on my naive understanding of the profession. At the age of 10, I chose architecture for my career path because, “Artists don’t make enough money. Architecture is a profession like law and medicine. Architects are rich.”

As I entered architecture school, it happened too quickly. Within days of starting first-year studio, I began to hear the stories. “Architecture is not about the money. We change the world through our art. You must love the art, because you will never make enough money as an architect.”

Does that sound familiar?

We all have similar stories. As students of architecture, we all learned to accept the myth that our paths were doomed to a life-long struggle.

We are the story we tell ourselves

Small firm architecture is small business, just like any other small business. Eighty percent of small businesses close their doors in failure within five years of launching. Twenty percent survive and grow into successful enterprises.

On paper, architects have a much higher success rate. Small firm architecture studios typically survive for decades, only as a result of our sheer determination and refusal to give up. We've been told the story of architecture as a profession. Accepting the myth, we've planned for the struggle. We've embraced the pain. It is not unexpected, so we carry on with creating our art... and suffering... every day.

What if we changed the story?

What if we wrote a new draft? A tale of the successful small firm architect. A story of our lives filled with art, creativity and... profit. What if we embraced the psychology of success, learned [the fundamentals of business](#) and lived happily ever after?

We are the story we tell ourselves. When we accept the struggle, we live a life of struggle. When we stand up and fight, armed with knowledge and understanding, we will succeed.

So how do we rewrite the story?

Write a new draft

Successful artists are NOT starving. During his time at Rhode Island School of Design, Shepard Fairey launched his career as an artist with a guerrilla campaign, spreading art through stickers (yes, stickers). He has since grown his OBEY brand into a thriving entrepreneurial enterprise earning him a net worth of \$15 million.

Fairey has not accepted the story of "starving artist". He built a business (actually several businesses), built [a powerful brand](#) and embraced the psychology of success.

What is your story? Reject the mentality of struggle, dream big and write a new narrative of success, freedom and making a difference in the world through your own achievements.

Go back to school

Most of us small firm architects slept our way through the few semesters of Professional Practice class offered in architecture school. We were artists. We had already accepted the story.

For those of us who did show up, know (way too late) that most of Professional Practice had little to do with being an entrepreneur or how to run a small business.

It's time to go back to school.

No. I am not suggesting an MBA or abandoning your firm for another degree. I am suggesting that we actively learn what we don't know. Find an entrepreneurship program at your local community college. Take [online courses](#).

Enroll for membership at [a virtual business academy](#). Do what you need to do to learn what you don't know. Financial management. Sales. Marketing. Brand building. Learn the fundamentals of business and apply the rules of success to your small firm.

Share what you know

As I entered the profession, I quickly learned how secretive we architects can be. We all heard the, all too often inaccurate, story of antitrust law suits and were directed to never again share information about fees. In fear of retribution from our government, as well as our own professional organization, we never discuss money or how we may be able to earn more of it.

When I relaunched this blog as EntreArchitect back in 2012, I did so with the clear intention of sharing everything I know about the business of architecture, including what I know about [fees](#) and [making more money](#). I hope to encourage all small architects to open up and share their knowledge here and all across the globe.

I believe that it will be through sharing our knowledge that the story will be rewritten. Our profession, as well as future generations of architects, will begin to learn a new tale. Young architecture students will be told the optimistic new story of how we *do* change the world, we *are* talented artists and we *do* live happily ever after running successful, profitable small firms.

Editorial Note: [See this article in its original format and read additional comments.](#)

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How to find clients through social media

By Jeff Echols

If your firm uses social networking and digital marketing properly, there's work out there for the taking



During a conversation at a recent AIA Convention, right after my presentation on social media marketing, someone asked me if architects can actually find work through those channels.

This is a question I get a lot, not just from architects but all kinds of business owners: Can using social media actually bring more business through the door? The short answer is “yes.”

Let me give you an example of a firm that used social media to generate real results. The Indianapolis-based ONE 10 STUDIO, led by principal Clete Kunge, rose from the ashes of a partner split and a recession. (Disclosure: I was their first director of marketing.) All we brought with us was a single project, a past client list, and a handful of non-compete

agreements (NCAs). We were essentially starting from scratch: no website, no logo, no social media.

The major challenge—among many—was figuring out how to compete without many of our past clients in an industry that attributes approximately 80 percent of new work to repeats and referrals. As the director of marketing, I knew our strategy would have to be both creative and quick.

I devised a plan to incorporate content, relationship, and location-based marketing to tell the story of ONE 10 STUDIO in a way that would resonate powerfully with a new audience. We built

a network of brand ambassadors; most of them never became clients themselves, but they all delivered a stream of new clients and introduced the firm into new networks and niche markets.

Over my four years at ONE 10 STUDIO, we blogged, created a Facebook page, and managed a Twitter feed. Eventually, we added Instagram and Houzz to the mix. Our work wasn't always perfect. There was always a list of broken links to fix, articles to be written, and profiles that need to be expanded. We struggled through compatibility issues between the website and our blog after a redesign. Nevertheless, we were able to attribute a number of projects directly to those efforts in social media marketing. They included:

- three custom homes
- at major residential renovation
- two potential development deals
- one craft brewery project that led to five more brewery-related projects

It's a list that continues to grow to this day.

How did we do it?

The vast majority of this work came from building relationships with key influencers. We would work hard to identify ideal clients, build a rapport over time, and turn a few into ambassadors for our brand. These were people that we “met” online and then continued to build the relationship offline, in real life.

One of the custom home projects came to us as a result of a blog post that I wrote. It was only tangentially related to the eventual project but they read the post, identified an expertise, and related to the personality that they sensed through the writing.

You'll also notice that the craft brewery led to several subsequent projects. After we completed that first project (and had a beer named after us) we posted photos and tweets about it. Word quickly got around the tight-knit Indianapolis brewing community, and we became an integral part of that niche market.

In the first four years, those social media marketing efforts alone generated about \$4.25 million, established us as noted 'localvores,' and contributed to AIA Indiana granting ONE 10 STUDIO the Distinguished Firm Award in 2012.

Many of ONE 10 STUDIO's brand ambassadors still refer clients and projects, enabling the firm—now beyond the expiration of those NCAs—to capitalize on an ever-expanding network of repeat clients and referrals.

So that's how we did it. We organically built a network of influencers, established ourselves as experts in our field, and entrenched ourselves within a community. These are all things that your

firm can do. Be smart, develop a strategy, and then follow it. Above all else, just get started. I'll steal a line from Internet Business Mastery: "Make progress, not perfection."

Jeff Echols is the senior strategist and storyteller at Indianapolis-based digital marketing firm [echoEngagement](#).

Social media primer, pt. 1

By Lora Teagarden

The background & the why that drives you



I wrote in my [mentorship series](#) on the importance of my digital network in helping create relationships, continuing to learn, and finding mentors. I'm still learning and feeling my way through the different platforms, but thanks to a lot of articles read on the subject and friends who specialize in AEC (Architecture Engineering Construction) marketing, I continue to make progress. I thought I'd spend this blog post (and the next four to follow) giving some background on what I've learned these last two years in the digital / social media world and sharing some tips and tricks for the different platforms. This week's social media primer: the background and the why that drives you.

Social media: You've gotta be you

Every time I turn around, I see an article on the importance of being authentic, knowing your why, or living your brand. The moral to the story is: when people interact with you, they want to know "you", not some

fake version of you. And if you don't know why you wake up in the morning or what makes you tick, how can you begin to authentically interact, let alone know what platform might be best for you or your brand?

When I decided to fully invest in growing my digital network two years ago through various social media platforms, I then mostly used Facebook for friends; Twitter for silly posts; and Instagram for pics of M, food, and friends. I had under 300 Twitter followers who were mostly old high school/college friends and – while that's great to have – I knew it wasn't going to help the business side of my life. I was interested in the growth of my profession and my career (I still am) and had read enough articles to know that I needed to start engaging these awesome people I saw on Twitter and Instagram. I needed to start sharing industry and architecture-adjacent news I thought was cool. That last bit is the important part – *I had to think there was value in what I was sharing.*

To this day, I don't share anything that I don't find value in, and that's how I make sure to provide value to my followers. Sometimes that means sifting through hundreds of articles I've saved in my Feedly curation (more on that in two blogs) just to find the right article about architecture to share. My followers can choose to check out the articles or ignore them, but I know that if they do – they'll find something of value, which builds my trust with them. That is a part of my why: I want to keep learning and making this profession the best I can, which means sharing worthwhile content and helping fellow architects and industry peers learn too.

I'll share more in an upcoming blog about my curation process and how I decide when to share what.

Be you, part two

This is a scarier step because it makes you vulnerable, but you have to interact with those people you respect and who are doing cool stuff. When I first started interacting with [Bob](#), [Marica](#), [Mark](#), the [Archispeak](#) guys, [Rusty](#), [Jeff](#), etc – I was scared out of my mind. What value could I even begin to bring to the conversation? But I asked questions, said hi, invested time, and offered up the young architect's point of view.

Mostly I asked A LOT of questions. And here's the thing – because they live into their why and want to see the profession continue to grow, they engage(d) back. They helped (and still help) me learn. And two years later, I count them among my greatest of friends and mentors. I embraced the vulnerability of asking what might seem like a dumb question to them – because sometimes that's the only way to grow. I knew that if I wanted to grow, I had to lean into that.

The social media takeaway

In the coming weeks, I'm going to outline the social media platforms I use in specific, what benefit they brought me, and how they can help you. In the meantime, think about why you do what you do. What do you hope to achieve this year? 5 years from now? In your overall career? The platforms will mold, adapt, grow, and change after months and years, but if you know why you do what you do, you will be able to more easily adapt with them and keep growing too. If you aren't sure what your why is or want to hone in on it, I *highly* suggest this book from Simon Sinek, [Start With Why](#). If you want to get a taste of it, watch this [TED talk](#). The book link will be waiting here for you when you're done. It will be some of the best

money you've spent in a while.

Editorial Note: This article is the first in a series of three published by the author.

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