

THE CORPORATE ARCHITECT/FACILITY MANAGER: A SUCCESSFUL MERGER OF ARCHITECTURAL SKILLS WITH CORPORATE IDEALS

Corporate architects and facility managers who are trained as architects have the advantage of being able to merge their architectural backgrounds with the vision of their corporation in order to create tangible innovative spaces for their company. As owner's representatives, corporate architects and facility managers play a significant role in the advocacy of the profession of architecture, while protecting the brand identity and standards of their corporation. There are varied levels of architectural proficiency within the industry. Many fully understand the design process from site selection to move-in, yet some come from diverse backgrounds – engineering, interior design and business, for example – with an aptitude for facility design while not being formally trained as architects. In any case, a corporate architect/facility manager can advocate for design excellence and lead their teams to success.

In my current role as a corporate architect, I have a dual obligation to my corporation and to the profession of architecture. I am often required to meet corporate goals while maintaining a stewardship to the goals of my architectural profession – for example, when presenting projects to city councils and regulatory boards, or when submitting a project for sustainable certification. By remaining connected to the industry through membership in the American Institute of Architects; by attending seminars, events and programs; and by serving on committees and boards, I show that I respect and value the profession of architecture. When I bring my corporate and architectural knowledge and experience to project teams, I can streamline the programming and design processes to make project time more productive and efficient; as a former consultant myself, I can advocate for fair design fees and reward successful performance with ongoing work; and I can promote creativity and design innovation by advocating for submission for industry awards. Most importantly, as the face of my corporation, my goal is to promote a sense of collaboration by fostering a creative and enjoyable team environment.

Corporate architects and facility managers are brand managers; they are responsible for communicating and protecting the brand of their corporation. In most companies, “brand” goes beyond the logo identity to the core beliefs and philosophies of the corporation. In my experience, communicating our brand entails giving my consultants the tools they need to understand our corporate facility standards as well as our organization’s mission statement, vision and goals, since our standards and mission are so integrated. Successful project teams understand the goals and programmatic needs of their specific project – physical spaces, adjacencies and branding all play a role. It is the responsibility of the corporate architect/facility manager to clearly articulate those goals and needs to their consultants.

The successful merger of architectural skills with corporate ideals can make a corporate architect or facility manager an effective leader during all phases of a project. When corporate architects and facility managers hire the architectural team who best fits their needs, promote design creativity, and foster an environment of collaboration, discovery and innovation, inspired design solutions will be the end result.

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