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# Residential DESIGN & BUILD

Design Trends and New Products for  
the **CUSTOM HOME MARKET**

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Show Issue

**SPECIAL SECTION:**  
Outdoor Living

page 55

The **MASTER BATH**  
matures page 22

■ **Induction** cooking trends  
page 28

■ **Designing lower levels**  
page 44

# Bringing efficiency to design/build

*A good team with the right attitude can deliver profitable results*



**E**xpectations of immediate gratification and top-notch customer service are the norm today. As architects, we need to study our companies and determine how we can create a mind-set of “it’ll be ready for you first thing in the morning.” We can re-examine our delivery approach to move from first client meeting to breaking ground in short order.

Architects provide one of the most expensive products available, yet our industry is traditionally poorly compensated. If we are able to produce in greater volume by becoming more efficient, we will reap the benefits of an improved bottom line.

There are many stops in the assembly line of a custom home. The first thing you need is some control of the architectural design process.

***Nothing will waste more time during design than if the preliminary has to be reworked***

If you’re working with an outside architectural firm, it is imperative you make it a “can do” relationship rather than a “you want it when?” battle. Work with a company that prioritizes your needs rather than relegates your

design projects behind a long line of other clients. If your company is directly responsible for the design, make sure you have enough resources at the level of both design and production to move quickly through this process.

To start, take the order and get the client’s needs right. An extensive questionnaire completed by the client, coupled with old-fashioned listening skills and copious note taking, will help the architect properly assimilate the client’s requirements. Clients may not be able to adequately express their needs or concepts to the architect, but they probably will not be short on words to criticize an inadequate design. Nothing will waste more time during design than if the preliminary has to be reworked due to miscommunication between architect and client.

During assembly, you need a mature, well-experienced, well-paid architect directing the preliminary design phase. This kind of creative/managerial individual is hard to find

because in many cases, this type of talent is tied up running a firm. Do what you can to expand the team at this level and watch your project start-rate increase steadily.

Once the preliminary design is in place, you will need a good production team to efficiently convert preliminaries into highly detailed sets of drawings. To be successful, utilize an extensive resource library of standard architectural details that can be reused. When project volume is low, these production architects can stay busy doing research and producing new, reusable details.

Another important team member is an overseer of the production process to ensure that details, design development and drawings are properly coordinated with the specifications, including selections. Don’t wait for an interior designer to come along before addressing these fundamental parts of your team.

An estimator is another critical element to fast-paced production. The product will sell more easily if you know the cost. Running all this good design work past the people in charge of costing is imperative to avoid further delays. Cost as you design and you will have a happier client.

We can improve the bottom line of return if we deliver a quality product with faster turnaround. If you’re working with an outside architectural team, be willing to pay for quality and fast service. The investment will pay off. If your design/build firm includes an in-house architectural team, hire quality people and be ready to train them and compensate them well. You’ll make your clients, your staff and yourself proud by being the best in the industry. ▀

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