

Architects — Five Questions Worth Asking, Answered

Is adoption of a new product too risky to be part of our firm's strategic design approach?

A recent study conducted by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) found that more than 70 percent of architects surveyed [1] viewed an existing working relationship as key to their choice of which products to utilize. Familiarity and knowing that a product will work are valuable selling points, however, this “go with what you know” approach has pronounced drawbacks. Most notably, it rules out innovative, potentially superior options, simply because a product was recently released, and architects have yet to discover its capabilities. Also, it directly calibrates your firm's innovative design approach to the degree of currency in product knowledge of those working relationships. Combining existing knowledge sources with forward-thinking ones will yield balanced input on new products and how they can best serve your firm.

What impact does adoption of innovative products and technology have on my firm's relevance in the market?

The pace of technological change throughout our world is accelerating at a rate never before witnessed, and the construction industry is growing and evolving in ways that seemed unimaginable merely five years ago. A healthy sense of skepticism is wise, but avoiding innovation altogether in the name of playing it safe could be just as damaging to the reputation of your firm as placing your faith in the wrong product. Here's a few questions to ask yourself:

- Does the innovation approach the solution in a dramatically new way?
- Is the innovation science based?
- Does the innovation have time savings benefits?
- Are these benefits applicable on my projects?
- Do the time savings translate to financial savings?
- Is the innovation from a market leader?
- Is it being used on other projects?
- If I adopt an innovative product, how will it impact building owners' trust in me?

When a building owner is seeking an architect for a construction project, they're seeking expertise. The kind of expertise that allows an architect to offer solutions to problems that the owner never would imagine. This can be a trying process for architects, and they frequently must prove themselves to clients repeatedly throughout the working relationship.

However, there's one quick, easy way to demonstrate your prowess to a prospective client: Offer them an advantage that other firms won't. While building owners may be initially skeptical about new innovations, you can quickly win them to your side by explaining the potential benefits and savings they offer. There's no better way to earn the trust of a building owner than showing them exactly how you can save them money.

How early should I bring in the contractor on building envelope design and specification?

As contractors are responsible for transforming the ideas of architects from complex plans to real-world

structures, the relationship between these two disciplines is crucial. And because contractors offer uniquely practical insight into construction problems architects may not be aware of, they are increasingly involved in the early stages of the procurement and specification processes.

Truthfully, it's never too early to involve a contractor, and the sooner you do, the sooner you can start to develop a productive, trusting relationship that will pay massive dividends for any projects you work on together.

Why should I specify a newer product, rather than one with a longer track record?

First, without adoption of new products we'd still be using recycled cotton as a water barrier like we did more than a century ago. It is a question of when, not why. Specifying a newer product allows you to capitalize on the advancements in science and engineering in building products. They enable you to build more efficiently, utilize labor more effectively, and improve the quality of your projects exponentially. Isn't that what progress is all about?

[1]http://www.architectmagazine.com/aia-architect/aiafeature/the-truth-about-specification_o