Finding Your Design Team Questionnaire ™

This **Finding your Design Team Questionnaire** is provided as a tool to help you ask the right questions of your prospective construction team. We would hope that you choose us for your services, but if you choose elsewhere feel free to use this questionnaire to help find the best fit for your needs and project.

We suggest you make an individual copy for each perspective candidate.

Candidates Name: _____ Date contacted: _____
How to use:

- **Bold lettering -** indicates areas of concern that will need to be addressed about your project.
- Standard lettering - indicates the question to ask of prospective candidates.
- *Italicized lettering* – indicates types of responses you should expect.

Design Team

Education
What kind of education, certifications or experience do you have that's relevant to my project?
In your case a designer or architect that specializes in commercial or new construction work would not be the best suited for a renovation project.
Their answer(s):

Design Process
What kind of design process do you have in place?
You'll want to know a firm has a system in place to get at what your tastes and needs are, plus the innovation to develop an individual set of plans that reflect you. If there is no system you might just get a cookie cutter design that they've used over and over again.
Their answer(s):

Design Involvement
What kind of involvement will we have in developing a design?
Do they have questionnaires to help define your needs and do they have schedule check in times to review plans throughout the design process?
Their answer(s):

Design Price

How do you charge for your designs?

This fee should be set up incrementally. You'll want the ability to separate yourself from your design team without recourse, if you feel the design is not going in the direction you had hoped for. Prices usually vary from 5 to 15% of total construction costs.

Their answer(s):

Design Portfolio

Do you have a portfolio of your work?

You'll want to see that the work they do is relevant to the type of designs you're looking for.

Their answer(s):

Design Intention

How do you design your projects and what criteria do you use?

Just as with contractors; cheap priced designs may fit a budget but it may not include the best value, quality or appeal for your project.

Their answer(s):

Project Costs

How do you know how to design for our budget?

Designing with a budget in mind can be tricky for most design teams because they don't always know what current construction cost are. You may receive great designs only to find it's not buildable for the budget you have.
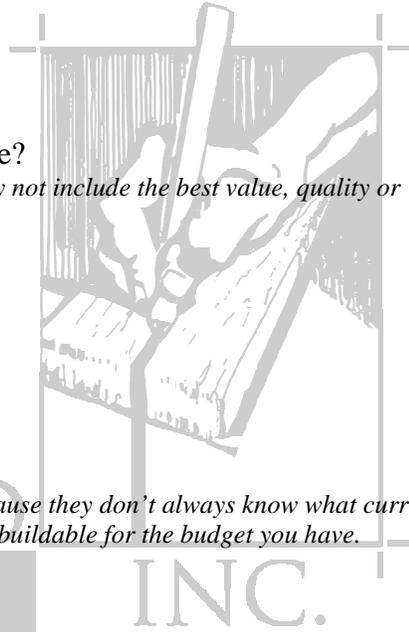
Their answer(s):

Completion Quality

How do I know if the plans are complete enough for a builder to use?

This is where most jobs costs sky rocket. You receive a bid based on your plans only to find out during the construction phase that the plans are not clearly defined and you'll need more money to finish the job you thought you were receiving.

Their answer(s):

Budget & Pricing Integrity

How does your firm address costs that might be needed because a plan costs more than our original budget?

You'll want a team that stands behind their construction cost estimates to meet budget. If the budget is substantially off will your design team redesign to bring construction costs in line without charging redesign fees?

Their answer(s):

Referrals

Can you give me a list of referrals from jobs that are relevant or similar to my type of project.

These referrals should be from clients who have had residential remodeling design work performed by the firm you are interviewing. Again someone who does new construction or commercial design will not necessarily be skilled in remodeling design.

Their answer(s):

Selected Item Representation

Will you be able to show me the type and styles of materials you'll be specifying for my project?

Your design team should have access to various showrooms to let you see and touch items being specified in your project. Not all items will be available for view but even so they should at least be able to provide photos and specification from the internet.

Their answer(s):

Definition of Quality

How does your firm decide on the quality of products and design of your projects?

This can be rather subjective but they should still provide a statement of "equal or better" than the quality of existing work in your home. You don't want to over design for the neighborhood nor do you want builder grade materials specified for your job if you're actually looking for upgraded quality.

Their answer(s):

Schedule Process & Order of Work

Do you have a schedule or design timeline that you work from to keep my project on time?

Your design team should have a design timeline schedule for various size and style projects that they perform. This timeline should also detail accountabilities that you'll have to meet in order to stay on time.

Their answer(s):

Onsite Assistance

Do you provide onsite assistance if we need questions, observations or quality control for my our project?

This is not always provided for in the design but they should have a price schedule in place if you should need assistance.

Their answer(s):

Agreements

Do you have agreements and/or contracts in place that clearly define expectations and scope of work?

Here is where you'll get an idea of how detail oriented you design team is. If their contracts are vague, poorly worded or nonexistent then you most likely receive the same type service when it comes to designing your plans and specifications. Pay attention to the red flags.

Their answer(s):

Accountability

Do you have anything that spells out accountabilities for both your firm as well as what we'll need to provide?

This style documentation should be able to spell out who does what and when. If there are no accountabilities spelled out then how will you know how to measure performance?

Their answer(s):

Expectations

How do you define expectations?

Here is where clearly defined accountabilities that are easy to follow come in handy to help define expectations. If neither party knows what to expect then, again, how do you measure performance?

Their answer(s):