

The Architect's Voice: Advocating for Our Profession

A comprehensive guide to help you communicate effectively
with your clients and your community



Table of contents

06	Introduction
09	Communication philosophy & message design process
11	Step 1: Key words
14	Step 2: Headlines
15	Step 3: Proof points
16	Step 4: Structuring your message
19	The architect's contributions
22	Working with clients
28	Strengthening society
34	Designing solutions
38	Transforming communities
45	Opportunities to connect
49	Preparation

Dear AIA Member,

While the public has great respect for architects, they have little understanding of what we do and why it matters.

This guide helps bridge that gap. It uses message points, statistics, and anecdotes that are supported by a tremendous amount of research to help you tell your story and advocate for the power of design.

Whether you're communicating that story in a formal client meeting or a casual conversation, this guide helps ensure your audience hears—and remembers—your message.

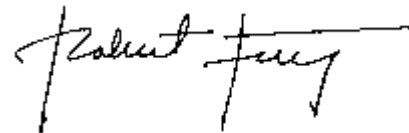
The guide is organized into topic areas that are summarized by these four bold statements:

1. **Architects work with clients:** We are collaborative, approachable partners throughout every design process.
2. **Architects strengthen society:** We demonstrate the critical role architecture and design have in our communities.
3. **Architects design solutions:** We offer solutions that showcase our passion, creativity, experience, and professional education.
4. **Architects transform communities:** We show how architecture improves the lives of individuals and the vibrancy of communities.

That's a story we all need to tell. We emphasize these four topic areas here because they can easily be tailored to your personal area of expertise, and they highlight the spirit of our profession in an informative and memorable way.

As an architect or design professional, you embody these attributes and more—and we want to help you share that important distinction with clients and the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Ivy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Robert Ivy, FAIA, Chief Executive Officer
The American Institute of Architects

Introduction

This guide will prepare you for interactions with clients, potential clients and the public, whether in presentations, public speeches, or just conversations with neighbors. It will help you express and enhance your architectural story—the tale of what you do and how it benefits all of us. And, that story will be more memorable.

This guide demonstrates a way of communicating that allows your audience to remember positive messages associated with our profession.

Architects work with a wide array of audiences and settings, including:

- School boards/districts
- Local governments
- Institutions (museums, libraries, higher education, religious institutions)
- Industrial organizations
- Hospitals
- Retail/entertainment locations
- Small businesses
- Contractors/home builders
- Building owners (facilities)
- Residential design clients

Architects need to seek out opportunities to engage and communicate with each of these audiences and teach them how we work with clients, design solutions, transform communities, and strengthen society.

“Inspiring leaders and companies...think, act and communicate exactly alike. And it’s the complete opposite of everyone else.”

–Simon Sinek, Author:
“Start with Why”



Communication philosophy & message design process



The messaging outlined in this guide is built around the idea that we can influence what our listeners hear, believe, and remember about architects and architecture.

Whether you're talking with colleagues, clients, or friends, following this guide will make your communications more effective and memorable.

After some research in preparing the guide and its topic sections, four bold declarations emerged. They not only summarize our contributions but also describe our values and commitment in a positive and pointed way.

Architects work with clients

We are collaborative, approachable partners throughout every design process.

Architects strengthen society

We demonstrate the critical role architecture and design have in our communities.

Architects design solutions

We offer solutions that showcase our passion, creativity, experience, and professional education.

Architects transform communities

We show how architecture improves the lives of individuals and the vibrancy of communities.

Step 1: Key words

Begin with a list of key words that convey your most important messages. Individual words are the most powerful message driver. They are remembered, repeated, and related to by listeners. Here's a list of key words that are associated with architects in a positive way.

Use them, in their various tenses, when communicating with all audiences, large and small. The more you do, the more they will be remembered and repeated.

Key words

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Accessible | Economical | Resourceful |
| Active listener | Efficiency (energy) | Respectful |
| Add value | Ethical | Solution-focused |
| Advisers | Expertise | Thoughtful |
| Beautify | Fun | Transformative |
| Big picture | Future-focused | Trusted |
| Build communities | Honesty | Understanding |
| Relationship builders | Improve lives | Valued |
| Clarify | Innovative | Vision |
| Collaborative | Inspirational | |
| Confidant | Leader | |
| Considerate | Optimist(ic) | |
| Creative | Passionate | |
| Dynamic | Problem solver | |



Architect Jargon

Architect Jargon is any word or phrase that your listener doesn't use on a daily basis. It could be an acronym or a word that is specific to one particular industry. Sometimes, jargon is a buzzword or a word that has a new meaning.

Using plain English can have the strongest impact with any audience. Overly technical jargon and "archi-speak" is off-putting and can alienate clients, journalists, and the general public.

For example, your listener might not use words like "fenestration," "chamber," "parti," or "planar" regularly, if ever.

Use "doors and windows" instead of fenestration, "room" versus chamber, or "design concept" as an alternative to parti.

How to handle negative statements and questions

When responding to questions you perceive as negative, don't repeat the negative word or concept. Instead, respond positively, and try to use some of the key words listed earlier.

For example, the negative word in the question below is "expensive." Rather than repeating "expensive," your answer might focus on an architect's ability to "solve problems" and "add value."

Question: How do I justify the cost of hiring an expensive architect for a small renovation?

Response: Architects add value to your project. Not only are they problem-solvers—they can also enable you to avoid costly problems. Chances are high that your small renovation will run into unexpected roadblocks that require creative long-term solutions. Hiring an architect is a good investment—one that can pay for itself several times over in the future.

Statement: I don't understand what the value is in hiring an architect to remodel my kitchen.

Response: A kitchen remodel is a significant factor in the value of your home. Working with you, an architect can maximize that value by revealing how to transform your kitchen in the most creative and dynamic way, and yet still be economical and efficient.



TIP: Always ask yourself: "Does my audience understand the technical or industry terms I'm using?" If the answer is no, you might be using JARGON.



Step 2: Headlines

Use headlines developed from the key word list. Your headline is the brief message that you want your listener or audience to remember and repeat—even if they remember nothing else! Think of the headline as the one message you hope they later use to summarize and share what you said.

Headline

For example, let's say a residential client is meeting with you about a new project, but his or her spouse or partner can't be present. Your headline is the succinct message you hope is relayed later to that spouse or partner.

A good headline incorporates key words because they're easy to remember and repeat, and they reflect well on architects and what we bring to the table. By our definition, headlines are short, catchy, and make a claim. The term "headline" helps remind you to not include too much information.

But your work isn't done in just stating the headline—your listener will be waiting for you to prove it.

Step 3: Proof points

Back up your headline using proof points. This guide arms you with the tools you need to prove claims made in your headlines. They're called proof points, and they include:

1. Informational proofs: Facts and statistics
2. Motivational proofs: Stories, anecdotes, and quotes. Stories are often the most memorable. A good story includes names, dialogue, action, challenges, and a resolution. And a great story includes emotion or humor.

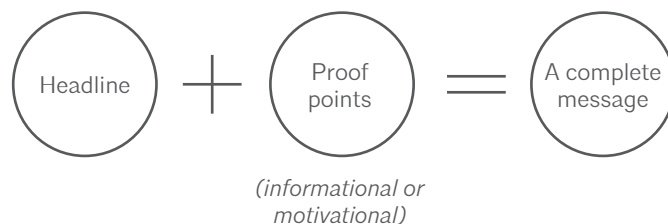
This guide contains several sample proof points you can use to help prove your headline.



Step 4: Structuring your message

Put it all together by designing your message. You've gathered the basic building materials: Key words... headlines... and proof points. Now put them together and design your message.

As an architect, you know design is crucial. Place that same value in how you communicate and structure your message. Thoughtful design allows your listener to remember what you say and addresses questions and comments in a clear and concise way. Using well-designed messages in your responses will help the listener feel like he or she has been heard. Adding proof points in the form of stories or quotes help strengthen and support the message.



Headline:

Great design is necessary for a healthy community.

Proof point:

(Informational) Design can have a substantial impact on public health. A Columbia University healthy-living and walkability study found that participants living in neighborhoods designed to promote activity engaged in 100 more minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week than the average American.

OR

(Motivational) "Our bodies, our health and buildings are forever connected. The links between architecture and well-being are richer than merely affording safety from injury; buildings can be, should be, agents of health – physical, mental and social health."

—Richard J. Jackson, MD MPH FAAP, AIA's Local Leaders:
Healthier Communities Through Design



The architect's contributions



Our goal is to help you tell your story when you're responding to clients and others who ask about what you do.

The four topic areas outlined earlier can be easily tailored to showcase your own area of expertise in a way that is both informative and memorable.

Notice how each declaration is supported by a headline, which is strengthened by a proof point. Those points should be drawn from your own personal story.

Architects work with clients

Headline: I am my client's partner. I feel an obligation—both personal and professional—to work with my client in a true collaboration. What emerges is transformative design that satisfies and succeeds.

Proof: Architects believe that what we do is not just work, or a practical process, but it's a passion. I get my greatest creative enjoyment from a true team effort with my client. It's a kick to look back and say, "Together, we designed solutions. We created for the future. And we had fun." For example... (use a personal challenge/outcome story illustrating the power of collaboration).

Architects strengthen society

Headline: Architects help make our communities safer, healthier, and more livable. They guide collective visions and help transform lives.

Proof: We all want livable, sustainable, and inspiring communities, ones that respect the past, present, and future. Values, vision, and ethical responsibility can be designed into a community. For example... (relate story of a project whose design provided community benefits).

Architects design solutions

Headline: An architect's education and experience allow him or her to not only solve problems but also avoid them. That resolve to provide solutions isn't present in less structured design.

Proof: Architects are problem-solvers and community builders who bring passion and innovation in helping clients achieve their goals. They take the client's vision, find ways to enhance it, and lead it to reality. For example... (use a story of how your work, or your firm's work, added value to a vision or exceeded the client's expectations).

Architects transform communities

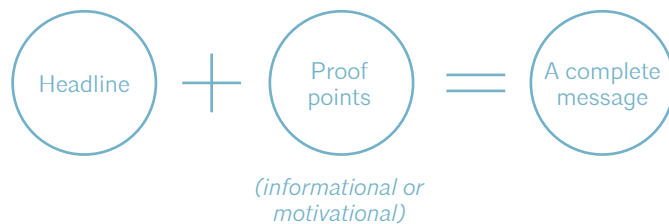
Headline: An architect's work turns a place into a community. We look beyond the blueprints and the buildings. We want to improve the lives of the people around us and the people who follow us.

Proof: We see architectural solutions that can have a lasting impact on the vibrancy of an entire community. We help buildings work better for society—and enable society to perform better. It's what drives us in any project, large or small. For example... (tell the story of a project that was transformative for your client or the community).



Architects work with clients

Verbalize each headline, one at a time. Think of how to frame the narrative introduced by that headline. Then choose a proof point (story, quote, fact, statistic) to prove the headline. Your goal is to implant one takeaway one key message you want your listener to remember, such as: Architects take pride in not just working for clients, but working with them throughout the design process.



Headlines

The following headlines were created using the key words listed earlier in the guide.

- Our goal is to be transparent and approachable through all stages of a project.
- We are committed to being collaborative partners.
- Architects engage clients; they are committed to what the clients want and need.
- As your architect, I see myself as your trusted advisor and partner throughout the design process. I will always give you honest and straightforward counsel.
- I see the work that I do as my calling. Your design needs become my priority.
- I like to think of the design process as a conversation because I'm dedicated to listening to your needs—and meeting them.

Proof points and quotes from you, your firm, and your clients make your headlines even more powerful to any audience.

✓ TIP: Use these lists as an a la carte menu. Pick and choose any headline that best relates to your audience and then follow it with an appropriate proof point to validate your statement.



Proof points

An architect's insights

(Motivational/informational) Patricia Shackelford read *Architectural Digest* and loved architect Gil Schafer's design for a Connecticut pool house. She sent him a note, asking him what he looks for in a client. She feared that an impressive budget would be number one on the list. Instead Schafer said, "Budget is important but not the most important." He valued creativity, trust, and a positive attitude. Regarding budget, he said, "No matter how big the budget, there is still a budget. Having that boundary actually helps the creativity."

Ethical and trusted advisors

(Informational) AIA members are bound by the AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, assuring clients of their dedication to the highest standards of professional practice. AIA architects must also fulfill annual continuing education requirements to maintain their certification and to stay current in the profession.

Architects are trusted and respected

(Informational) According to a 2014 [Harris Poll](#), architecture is one of the highest-regarded professions in the United States. AIA's own research shows the same findings.

Big picture for a fellowship hall

(Motivational) A church wanted to create a fellowship hall to accommodate its congregation for dinners and receptions. What they did not envision—but their architect did—was the array of other uses the space could provide, including yoga retreats, concerts, lectures, and more. Here's what the chairman of the church's Finance Committee wrote to their architect a year after the project was completed: "I thought of you this morning when the Chapel of the Cross kicked off the Sunday School year in the new facility. As you have heard so many times by now, the new building has been all that we had hoped—and much more. We are grateful for all the wonderful work that you and Lee and your colleagues at Hartman Cox contributed to make this vision a reality." Collaboration with the client enabled a dream to become a space that is used multiple times every day.

— Mary Kay Lanzillotta, FAIA, Hartman-Cox Architects

Partners in action

(Informational) Architects depend on clients to communicate their design preferences, functional requirements, and budget. As the work progresses, a client's timely response to questions and design submissions will help keep the project on track. It is also important for clients to not hesitate in raising concerns they may have as the project proceeds, so they can be addressed in the earliest stages. Working together, the architect and client can ensure the best possible outcome for the project.



Remember, proof points prove the claims you make in your headlines. They include informational proofs (facts and statistics) or motivational proofs (stories and quotes).



Space savers

(Motivational) An architect was working with a client who had become frustrated trying to figure out how to move her bakery into potential new space. The architect listened carefully to how her operation functioned, including who made the batter, where the ingredients were kept, and how the product was then moved to the customer. In all, the architect spent three days understanding how the bakery worked. As a result, the firm was able to design perfect solutions for the bakery's move.

Quotes

Use good quotes, either in full or excerpted form, in brochures or other communication pieces, and in presentations.

“They were sincerely interested in making sure what we wanted to happen was happening...When I wanted to be interested or involved, there was no sense of ‘here comes the homeowner again.’ They made it fun for me. I kind of miss our meetings.”

—Homeowners Karen and John on collaborating with their architects at Morgante Wilson



Remember: Quotes are another way to help validate your headline. Quotes are statements from reputable sources. They can be drawn from noted experts, other members, colleagues, the media, public figures in your community—and sometimes even you.



I was hesitant to send [my changes] over to the architect but his response was extraordinary. He thought the ideas were terrific and understood that's what we wanted in the house. He embraced that plan immediately and layered in detail after detail...He really listens to you. The starting point is understanding what the client wants. He's very flexible and malleable throughout the process without giving up on what he believes are strong architectural principles.

—Homeowner Mark about an architect at Morgante Wilson



Architects are translators. They are able to work with a client to understand their needs and translate those needs into a specifically tailored environment. In a world where few things are truly customized, architects create something unique, reflecting the aspirations of their clients. The best design comes from true understanding—understanding that is the result of close collaboration with a client.”

—Paul Mankins, FAIA, substance architecture



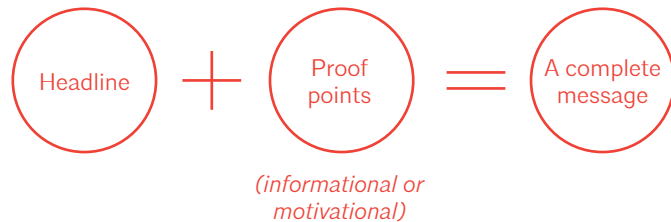
Truly successful projects are a result of collaboration between the client and the design team. Helping a client create a project that fulfills and furthers their mission can only be accomplished with careful listening and observation. The role of the architect is to help transform the client's needs into the physical reality of the vision.”

—Mary Kay Lanzillotta, FAIA, Hartman-Cox Architects



Architects strengthen society

Verbalize each headline. Frame the narrative introduced by that headline. Choose a proof point (story, quote, fact, statistic) to prove the headline. Your “takeaway” goal on this topic: Architects are proud of their role in strengthening society through their profession.



Headlines

The following headlines were created using the key words listed earlier in the guide.

- Architects are a vital component of all design/build and community projects.
- We add value and provide solutions in a variety of ways.
- Architects build communities with a focus on sustainable outcomes.
- Design has always been crucial to peoples lives but now it plays a greater role than ever before.
- Architects provide an essential connection between clients and the building team.
- Architects expand on your vision/concept/idea with a roadmap to guide building projects of every scale and type.
- Architects are solution oriented.
- We are vital community partners who provide valuable skills and services.
- Great design is necessary for a healthy community.



TIP: Remember, pick the headlines and accompanying proof points that feel most appropriate for your audience.



Proof points

Proof points validate the assertions made in your headlines. They include informational proofs (facts and statistics) or motivational proofs (stories and quotes).

Reinventing old spaces

(Motivational/informational) Norwegian architects turned an abandoned airport into Nansen Park, a space with housing, mixed development, and a public park.

Better design, healthier communities

(Informational) Design can have a substantial impact on public health. A Columbia University healthy-living and walkability study found that participants living in neighborhoods designed to promote activity engaged in 100 more minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week than the average American.

Targeted problem solving

(Motivational) Architects at the University of Kansas identify examples of what they call “urban acupuncture”—projects that deliver the most helpful adjustments to problems a community may not realize it has. One of these was remapping the bus system in Wyandotte County to provide more access to healthy food options.

Health and safety

(Motivational) Architects’ professional responsibility is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Design—including active streets, thoughtful lighting

strategies, and open sightlines—can protect people from more than physical harm. It can also remove real and perceived impediments that cause anxiety, stress, and psychological harm.

Better productivity, better business

(Informational) Access to natural light through windows may raise productivity levels. In Orange County, Calif., over a one-year period, students with the most daylight in their classrooms progressed 20 percent faster on math tests and 26 percent faster on reading tests than students with less daylight.

As mentioned earlier, you can also use proof points from your own experiences to support the headlines. Personalizing the examples helps you remember them better and relate them in a more engaging way with your audience.



Quotes

“At their best, architects create direct, functional, and beautiful buildings that engage their larger context to create something more than merely a structure, but a vitally important and contributing piece of a larger framework.”

—Paul Mankins, FAIA, substance architecture

“Architects help clients to imagine beyond the norm; helping them problem solve in creative ways that the client may not have realized were possible.”

—Rod Kruse, FAIA, BNIM

“Architects are forging partnerships nationwide with schools of medicine and public health, taking a leading role in promoting walkable communities and visionary urban planning as a way to combat the epidemic of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and obesity.”

—Robert Ivy, FAIA, EVP/Chief Executive Officer, AIA

“Architects design real homes for real people. I grew up in a home designed by an architect and it changed the way I look at the world and helped me realize what really matters.”

—Torrey Stanley Carleton, Hon. AIA, Executive Director, AIA San Antonio

Community responses to CHS Field in Saint Paul, Minnesota, which transformed a great neighborhood into a vital, energetic force in the city:

“I looked down all the way to Rice Park. There were 10,000 people in the ballpark and 4,000 out on the street. You couldn't tell where the ballpark ended and the farmer's market started. That created a sense of community.”

—Mike Veeck, one of the team's owners

“When you build it in a way to flow into the neighborhood and, if you build it into a community that is already strong, it can really have an accelerating impact. That's what we're seeing with CHS.”

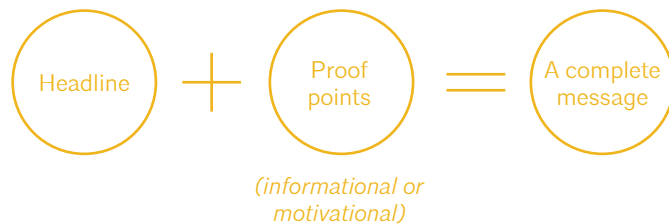
—Chris Coleman, St. Paul Mayor

Collect and craft quotes that relate to your experience or that of your firm. Your clients can serve as great sources for quotes, as well as those who have benefitted from your work.



Architects design solutions

Again, these headlines include many of your key words. Your “takeaway” goal on this topic: Architects pride themselves on being knowledgeable, well-rounded experts who offer creative solutions.



Headlines

The following headlines were created using the key words listed earlier in the guide.

- We help bring the best solutions to your project challenges, and we help create new opportunities.
- We take pride in being well-rounded experts in our field.
- Architects are highly educated and trained and go through a rigorous testing process to earn their licenses.

- AIA architects have a rigorous continuing education process.
- My skills and expertise can help foster the best solutions to meet your needs.
- We learn from our experiences, and we bring that insight to our projects.
- Architects have specialized knowledge that help them as leaders in community design.
- I want to understand your ideas, and I want to use my expertise to help you succeed.
- Skills and experience enable architects to not only solve construction problems but also prevent them.
- Architects and designers create value for your project.

Proof points

Architects add value

(Informational) Hiring an architect can save you money in many ways. Architects can monitor your budget and negotiate to get the best materials and workmanship at a good price. An architect’s design can reduce energy and maintenance costs. Architects can turn a difficult lot into a successful building site. And they spend time planning and fully developing your ideas to avoid changes once construction is under way.

Collaborative partners

(Motivational) Architects see the big picture for your project. They help you explore what appears to



you aesthetically and what you require functionally. They coordinate teams of design, engineering, and construction professionals; they sort through the maze of building codes and zoning requirements; they ensure your project is built the way it was intended.

Designing for tomorrow's needs: Reframing courthouse design

(Motivational) Architects and designers are deliberate in finding the right solutions for communities and society. For example, they are reinventing the design for public buildings, including judicial buildings and courthouses. The new designs better reflect our judicial needs in a 21st century society. ("Looking Sideways: Reframing Current Courthouse Design." Research conducted by the Shape Computation Lab (SCL) at the School of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology in partnership with the GSA and U.S. Courts.)

Creative solutions for the greater good: Rural Studio

(Motivational) Serving the community's greater good is ingrained in architects from the beginning. A great example of that is Auburn University's Rural Studio. It was established to address the dire needs of one of the South's poorest and most underserved regions. Students of this design/build program within Auburn's architecture school build low-cost, affordable homes and community buildings for the residents of western Alabama, where nearly 40 percent of residents live below the poverty line.

Quotes



Architecture has changed in the past year by not following any one particular trend, but by responding to the local conditions and working within that framework."

—Jon Dick, *Archaeo Architects*



Every educational experience, every human interaction, and every project provides valuable experience critical to the successful practice of architecture. Our profession is a complex profession. Every day there is something new to learn—a new challenge, a new opportunity, a new idea, a new way of thinking—every project benefits from these experiences."

—Rod Kruse, *FAIA, BNIM*



We know, looking forward, that architects will be in high demand to develop the kind of society and environment that will be conducive to living healthy and living well."

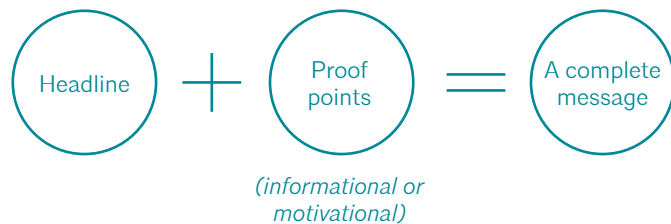
—Elizabeth Chu Richter, *FAIA, Richter Architects*

Proof points and quotes from you, your firm, and your clients make your headlines even more powerful to any audience.



Architects transform communities

Again, the following headlines include many of your key words. Your “takeaway” goal on this topic: Architects can help clients improve the lives of individuals and enhance the vibrancy of communities.



Headlines

- My job is to assess trends and look to the future.
- Design touches everyone.
- Architects enhance the spaces where we live, work and play.
- Architects can help to transform your communities for the better.

- Architects act as stewards of the environment.
- My input will increase the economic value of your projects.
- We are inspired, passionate agents of change.
- Our work can spark the vibrancy of a community and improve the lives of its members.

Proofs

Hospitals show good design improves lives

(Motivational) Forward-thinking hospitals have realized that good design, which improves patients' moods, can actually help people get well faster. “In the past, the design of health care facilities was focused more on supporting the patient care team than the actual patient,” says Scott Habjan, associate director at Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, who served as jury chair for the AIA National Healthcare Design Awards. Trend-setting designs build on research showing that the physical environment can help patients feel less stressed, require less pain medicine, and improve more quickly.

More like Apple

(Motivational) After Cedar Rapids, Iowa, lost its public library to flood damage in 2008, the city built a new one near public transport and bike trails. The library's director wanted the building to function “more like an Apple store and less like the DMV.” Architects used low book shelving for an airy feel, replaced a main circulation desk



with staff kiosks throughout, and incorporated RFID technology for tracking inventory and check-out. Thanks to an eco-friendly design, the new library is 10,000 square feet larger than its predecessor but uses less than one-third of the energy per square foot.

Rebuilding a community: Planned hope

(Motivational) In 2011, the Pratt City neighborhood in Birmingham, Alabama, was destroyed by a massive tornado. AIA's Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) mobilized to help plan a recovery strategy. The team toured the community and met with local leaders and residents to discuss how to rebuild. Residents overwhelmingly said they "had a real voice in shaping our community." Due to the community involvement and the expertise and understanding of the architects, the result was a comprehensive roadmap to rebuild a resilient and safe community.

Expanding park space & uses

(Informational) Architects worked directly with local community members and user groups to expand and revitalize a three-acre public park. During a series of on-site personal meetings and interviews, the architects and community members collaborated to develop a new and relaxed concept. The more efficient solution created a single structure for aquatics and recreation, opening up almost two acres of welcoming open space within a densely-populated area.

Quotes



At its best, architecture is transformative. The best buildings are more than merely beautiful discrete objects—they engage and enhance the world around them. They create place and support a community's values and communicate its aspirations. In my view, this requires an ability to look beyond the requirements of an individual project to understand how it might positively impact the larger context."

—Paul Mankins, FAIA, *substance architecture*



Qualities like natural light, views to nature, and quiet and clean patient rooms all contribute to a positive patient experience,"

—Scott Habjan, *associate director at Skidmore, Owings and Merrill*



Our projects will not only help us understand how built environments impact our users' health, but their behaviors as well."

—D.S. Nicholas, *AIA, assistant professor in the Department of Architecture & Interiors at Westphal College*



The architect's contributions: Transforming communities

“Architecture can unquestionably be transformative. Our clients have reported positive metrics related to human performance and the financial position of their organization, including reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, reduction in backorders, increased research funding, improved efficiencies, significant reductions in energy consumption, and significant reductions in operating costs. Design excellence is more than rich architectural expression, it is positively impactful on mankind and is human purposed.”

—Rod Kruse, FAIA, BNIM

“The COP-21 agreement presents a major opportunity for architects around the globe to provide leadership in designing buildings and communities that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Its call for capacity building for adaptation and mitigation of climate change represents exactly what the architecture profession excels at providing.”

—Russell Davidson, FAIA, KG&D Architects





Opportunities to connect



Where can you expect a need to communicate? Everywhere. Using the material that you've learned in this guide, you can prepare yourself for any of the opportunities below.

- Reaching out to local media: Local media are always looking for interesting stories about their community, and architects can help them with that search. Don't hesitate to contact the media and share a story idea about your project, showing how its design will have a positive impact on the community.
- Interacting with client groups: Finding ways to interact with community and client groups is a great way to share more information about the power of design. A few ideas include: schools and school boards; local government and city officials; hospital boards; children's organizations; library boards; faith-based organizations; business leaders, etc.
- Distributing news about your firm: Your firm may be involved in projects that are not only exciting to you—they may also be of interest to the public. Take the opportunity to tell your firm's story to the media. Explain how the project's design innovations will benefit the community in either aesthetic or practical ways.
- Sharing your expertise: Through community events, or your own public speaking opportunities, you can share your insights and expertise about design and examples of the value that architects bring to a project.
- Purchasing advertising: Pursuing distinctive local advertising can be an effective way to create awareness and interest in your firm and its services.
- Authoring your own articles: Regularly publishing blog posts or submitting articles/columns to industry journals, newsletters, and the local media can be a good way to talk about your firm and share your opinions on architectural issues.
- Get involved in civic organizations: Civic organizations provide educational or charitable services in your community. It's a great way for an architect to share their expertise and network with community leaders.



Preparation



Whether you're speaking before a local community group or talking with the media, the most important thing to do first is practice. This guide will help you with that prepare an effective and memorable message.

Use the following questions and recommendations as a checklist before an interview or public speaking event. Many of the same questions can help you prepare for client or contractor meetings.

Be prepared

- Do you need to consult with legal counsel or other authorities?
- Why are you doing this interview or speech: What are the "takeaways" you want to create?
- Who's your audience?
- What are your key words
- What are your headlines?
- What are your proof points?
- Do you need to research data or statistics for the story?
- Do you have anecdotes that support your headlines?
- Familiarize yourself with the AIA Code of Ethics. They can be found at www.aia.org/ethics.

Find out more about the interview or speaking opportunity

- What is the topic of the discussion?
- What's the makeup of the audience?
- Are you the right person for the interview or presentation?
- Does the reporter, or the audience, have a specific point of view about the issue you're discussing?

Be comfortable & in control

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Remember, everything is "on the record." Don't say it if you don't want to see it in the media.
- Speak about facts and what you know. Avoid rumors and speculation.
- It's okay to say, "I don't know."
- For the media, think and speak in tight phrases. Long complicated quotes are rarely used in print media, and "soundbites" in broadcast media average around eight seconds.
- Relax; stay focused.
- Use opportunities to highlight architects as problem-solvers, collaborators, and agents of positive change.



TIP: Before working with the media, always refer to your firm's policies and protocols regarding that interaction.



About AIA

Founded in 1857, The American Institute of Architects (AIA) works to create more valuable, healthy, secure, and sustainable buildings, neighborhoods, and communities.

Through more than 250 state and local chapters, AIA advocates for public policies that promote economic vitality and public well-being. Members adhere to a code of ethics and conduct to ensure the highest professional standards. AIA provides members with tools and resources to assist them in their careers and business, including means of engaging civic and government leaders, as well as the public, in the search for solutions to pressing issues facing our communities, institutions, nation and world. Visit aia.org.

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“All fine architectural values are human values, else not valuable.”

—Frank Lloyd Wright



1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006
Information Central: 800-242-3837
aia.org

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