

# THE NEW CLIENT : Selecting the Architect

## Marathon of Frustration

- The first rule of architectural practice is *"Getting the first job!"* H. H. Richardson said a 100 years ago.
- Private vs. Public Clients
- It takes time, money and lots of frustration to get the job.
- The difficulties are of two reasons:
  1. Competition for work remains intense for firms both small and large, emerging and world-famous. Not only architectural firms, but engineers, contractors, and developers forced by the slow down in the construction business to offer new services.
  2. Selection processes have become more complex and exhausting because of the changing nature of businesses, institutions, and government agencies. Personal and professional relationships are not working anymore. Architects have to go through a number of management and committees meetings extending beyond the actual client. Even with existing, satisfied clients, architects have to compete for jobs for every new project.
- Business clients have complicated relationships with architects. Picking up a design firm is a decision taken by middle management or independent consultants rather than by top-level executives. This middle man interference eliminates the direct personal relationship between the architect and the client. Impatience may be a factor in choosing the architect.
- Actual capabilities vs. worm feelings.
- *"Providing free services is unprofessional and unprofitable, and, in the end, the client respects neither the service nor the professional who provides it."* Kevin Roche, Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates.
- Qualification documents, project proposals and portfolios are extra burdens the design firms have to go through to be qualified for a project.
- Competitions:
  - Open vs. Invitation
  - Intention
  - Organization and managing
  - Jurors
  - Payment (\$10,000 to \$50,000 cover a fraction of the actual cost in the USA).
- Robert Stern, of Robert Stern Architects, indicates that losing a competition can be *"financially punishing."*
- Eugene Kohn, of Kohn Pedersen Fox, says: *"You can spend so much to win that you actually make very little doing the project. For that reason, we evaluate competitions very carefully."*
- The dilemma of spending money or losing the project for the competition.
- Providing the work even before asked to do so by the client.
- Architects and designers must give value to their ideas, and clients should not expect them to work for free. *"Shame on the architect who provides free work!"* admonishes Robert Stern. *"And shame on the client who accepts it."*
- The problem of client level of education regarding design services provided by architects.
- Architecture is seen as a commodity and not as a service. *"Too many clients seem to want architecture by the square foot"* says Duncan Fulton, an architect.
- Two-week sketch competition vs. typical competitions.
- Clients of design firms were interviewed in order to qualify the firms for the San Francisco International Airport.
- Architects sitting on the clients selection team.