

# 10 Costly Business Mistakes Architects Make When Running A Practice

## 1. No Company Vision

It's all too common for architects to become lost in the daily firefighting of running a practice, working on projects that aren't suitable quickly leading to burnout, unfulfilment and stress. A clear company vision, with values, goals and a mission will act as compass particularly when times get bumpy. All the most successful architects and practices are very clear in their WHY.

## 2. Working in the Business and not ON the Business

Architects are great at designing buildings but rarely do we use these skills to design our own businesses. Successful businesses operate like an efficient machine composed of systems and processes from client acquisition, finances to delivery of building details. As business owner your job is to ensure these systems work and that MONEY is coming in at all times.

## 3. Working Alone

Working alone can be one of the hardest things you can ever do in business and yet a large percentage of architects go it alone. Working alone means you end up doing everything yourself, hours are lost 'licking stamps' and repetitive drawing work rather than priority tasks like marketing and sales. Building a Team as soon as possible is critical.

## 4. No Systems for lead generation or referrals

99% of architects gain a large amount of their work through referrals, though it is rare I ever meet an architect who has a system in place for asking for them. Even a simple scheduled email of asking a client for a referral at the end of a stage can work a treat or a system like the Dirty 30.

## 5. No Financial Systems

Profit and Loss statements, Balance sheets, how much does my business cost to run per day? How much does it cost to acquire a client? What is the length of my cash flow cycles? The most painful way to deal with these is to ignore them or hope for the best. The best architects have detailed systems for each.

## 6. Selling Features and Benefits not the Problem You Solve for the Client

"Never talk to a client about architecture. Talk to him about his children. That is simply good politics. He will not understand what you have to say about architecture most of the time." Mies Van De Rohe. Seek to understand your client's need deeper and better than anyone else – then sell how you solve that.

## 7. Working For Free

This can include not charging for advice or consultations –worse where lengthy travel is involved, discounting services, even competitions should be considered seriously before entering – many will not let you negotiate your fee and have low chance of winning and worse don't get built at all. If work is undertaken for free it must be part of a carefully evaluated business plan and where something of equal value is obtained such as equity in the final building for example.

## 8. Complaining

The Architect Blues. It's really easy to complain about low fees, lack of clients, unfulfilling work, long hours, not enough time...but this is a silent killer of any business or career and only attracts more of what you don't want.

## 9. Lack of Resource

Lack of funding is the no.1 Killer of all businesses and many of us seriously underestimate the time and money it will take before a business can replace the income from employment for example.

## 10. Being a Generalist

Marketing yourself as an architect of all things is the quickest way to cap what you can charge for your fees. Specialists are able to go deeper and can provide more value for the client and hence can charge more for their services.

