Practicing Collaboration

The ethics behind constructing and developing partnerships to enhance design solutions.

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS!

TMP Architecture strives for excellence and for the last 60 years our professionals have dedicated their practice to serving educational clients. TMP's in-house philosophy of "do not let the architecture get in the way of education but let it support and reinforce educational philosophies" certainly says it all. Over the course of this year, TMP's Leadership Team will each be highlighting and celebrating the key influences that have contributed to the firm's success. Join us as we discuss the unique characteristics that have allowed TMP and our professionals to grow into the rich and diverse firm we are today.

It seemed like a simple notion, and TMP did not invent it. That is, to build a design team that is constructed of many parts representing the expertise necessary to solve the problem of creative project design, documentation, and delivery. Our clients ask for solutions that deliver high level outcomes in both product and process areas. For much of our 60 year history, TMP Architecture has been building project teams that increase client value and provide an enhanced level of design insight and problem solving. This particular notion, however, was not always as easy as it seemed.

> ## "Our goal was to add value to the project and its owners through layering of expertise and experience."

Traditionally, design teams consisted of an architectural firm working with a few engineers to create a building or environment that met a client need, schedule, and budget. Practice was singular and solutions were limited to the vision and expertise of the stand-alone firm. However, in the 1980's, TMP explored the idea of working with HLM, a design firm from Iowa, on a series of very challenging and complex projects for academic health care.

TMP + HLM joined in a collaborative process that would ultimately bring together two design firms to make a single design team more than the sum of its parts. Our goal was to add value to the project and its owners through layering of expertise and experience.

The objective was to create a collaborative practice solution, in which other team members were brought into the design process to provide deeper, more relevant, and current expertise. The outcome was the growth of our professionals and the ability of our team to deliver a higher level outcome.

As a result, the new practice of a design team consisting of more than one architectural firm, and many other specific expert consultants, was emerging. As this practice proceeded, many still questioned whether more than one architect, firm, or design professional could

Timothy A. Casai
FAIA, Senior Vice President

Timothy Casai is a Senior Vice President of TMP Architecture and has 43 years of professional architectural experience, of which over 40 have been with the firm. Casai has served as lead designer, project manager, and firm executive on dozens of challenging and innovative projects, currently with Detroit Country Day, the University of Michigan, and Michigan State University.

In 2011, he was honored with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Michigan Chapter Gold Medal Award, and in 1999 he was recognized as a Fellow in the AIA. In 1992, he was presented with AIA's Robert F. Hastings Award, given annually in recognition of significant effort and contribution to the society and to the architectural profession.

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work together in a collaborative manner for the direct and tangible benefit of the client and the project. The answer was sometimes hidden in the weeds of daily practice, ego, and ethics. What many design firms, including TMP, realized was that the answer was a resounding yes. When certain fundamental understandings of professional practice are confronted and addressed, firms are able to succeed and provide enhanced value to clients.

Cancer and Geriatrics Centers
University of Michigan Hospital
Partner Firm: HLM

These fundamentals include:

1 **Understanding the goals and objectives** of the proposed project is essential. By examining more deeply what the project and client are trying to achieve in terms of utilizations, outcomes, and involvements during the design team building process, will yield a more responsive and robust critical mass of expertise.

Taubman Health Sciences Facility Renovation
University of Michigan
Partner Firm: Ballinger
Christopher Lark Photography

Building the team around complementary and not just supplementary experience creates greater collaboration. In other words, the team indeed becomes more than the sum of its parts when there is meaningful contribution of expertise beneficial to the client from all parties.

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3 **Committing to sharing expertise** to the benefit of the project. By opening up the design process to the input of all team member ideas, professional jealousies and conflicts are marginalized in favor of collaborative and creative solutions.

Hull Prairie Intermediate School
Perrysburg Schools, OH
Partner Firm: The Collaborative, Inc.
Christopher Lark Photography

Communication and technology. These have become the lubricant of a successful collaborative design team. As technology has facilitated idea and content exchange, barriers to effective communication on behalf of the project have been removed. Presentation technology has grown the ability to communicate ideas, concepts, and solutions with the client in a manner not previously possible. It must, however, be on constant use and display to be effective.

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Southmoore High School
Moore Public Schools, OK
Partner Firm: The Hodges Group P.C.

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5 **The development of team wellbeing** is essential to the ongoing success of the project and of client satisfaction. All team members are credited and celebrated for their partnership and delivery of ideas and expertise to the project. Professional ethics demand it and communication builds it.

Common goals and objectives. Developing a shared and well-reasoned set of project process and product values. Communication and agreement on work plan, work split, and work delivery for the benefit of the client's budget, schedule, and program provides the roadmap to a professional sharing of responsibilities and creates a shared sense of deliverables.

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Student Recreation Center
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa
Partner Firm: Sherlock, Smith & Adams
Tim Hursley Photography

Additionally, the ethics of collaborative practice demand that the team is not only constructed for the direct benefit of the project, but that the team can answer the age old question: Are you who you say you are? Credentials that demonstrate teams with superior experience working together, with exceptional expertise in the delivery of creative solutions, and with an outstanding track record of client service rise to the top. It is a simple notion that provides tangible benefits to both the client and the design team when executed in an ethical and collaborative manner.

So now teaming among design firms seems to be everywhere and client expectations for successful outcomes are justifiably very high in the selection of design teams. It is important for other firms to invest in those efforts with a strong emphasis on working together with honesty, diligence, integrity, and responsibility. TMP was an early adopter of this practice and we still find it highly beneficial to this day, as long as it is built on the six fundamentals and is practiced in a manner that is both ethical and collaborative.

ABOUT TMP ARCHITECTURE

TMP Architecture was founded in 1959 with the goal of designing the finest buildings for education. For 60 years we have focused our practice on educational clients. Our vision statement "Life. Long. Learning." encompasses the passion, creativity, strength, and commitment we bring to each client. TMP's offices in Bloomfield Hills and Kalamazoo, MI have grown to serve the broad spectrum of needs for institutions across the country.

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