

## *Characteristics of a Good Design Build Firm*



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It seems as though just about every architectural firm or general contractor in the world is presenting themselves as "experts" in church design and construction, regardless of the level of experience they might have in actually designing and/or constructing church facilities. However, the fact remains; churches are different. The design demands of churches differ from any other building in existence. If anyone ever tells you churches are just like theaters or auditoriums or civic theaters or any other type of structure, run away from them as hard and fast as you can because they do not understand churches.

Likewise, if a contractor tells you that a building is a building regardless of whether it is a school, a store, or a church, run away.

Church building projects are different. Deciding how to build onto a church facility without interrupting the ministry is far different than building a shopping center or doctor's office.

So how can you select a good design-build firm to design and construct your new facility? Here are a few things to keep in mind when selecting a design-build firm for your next church building project.

- Does the design-build firm design and build quality church facilities? Selecting a design-build firm on the basis of low square footage costs is a sure way to end up with a costly building to maintain over the many years your church will be using it.
- Does the design-builder have a good track record of designing and building facilities within the church's budget?
- Does the design-builder have a good track record of completing the construction within the scheduled time?
- Does the design-builder have a good track record of paying the subcontractors on a timely basis? The national average for the payment to subcontractors for work completed is over 60 days. A more acceptable time frame is within 30 days.
- Does the design-builder have a history of initiating a lot of change orders after the design has been completed? The national average is an increase of 7% in construction costs during the construction phase because of change orders.
- What is the design-builder's track record in regard to having liens put on completed building projects?
- What kind of safety program does the design-builder have in effect and how many accidents have there been on past projects?
- Does the design-builder have a policy of keeping a rein on the subs and workers in keeping them from cursing, indulging in lewd conversations, wearing clothing with offensive graphics, etc.? After all, these people are building something more than just a building, and they should be reminded of such.
- What happens after the church facility is built? Can the design-builder be counted upon to follow up on all warranty items?

When interviewing a prospective design-builder for your next church building project, be sure to ask about these issues. How they respond will tell you a lot about their level of experience in working with churches.