

# Marketplace Research

## Readers Report on Becoming Integrated Service Providers



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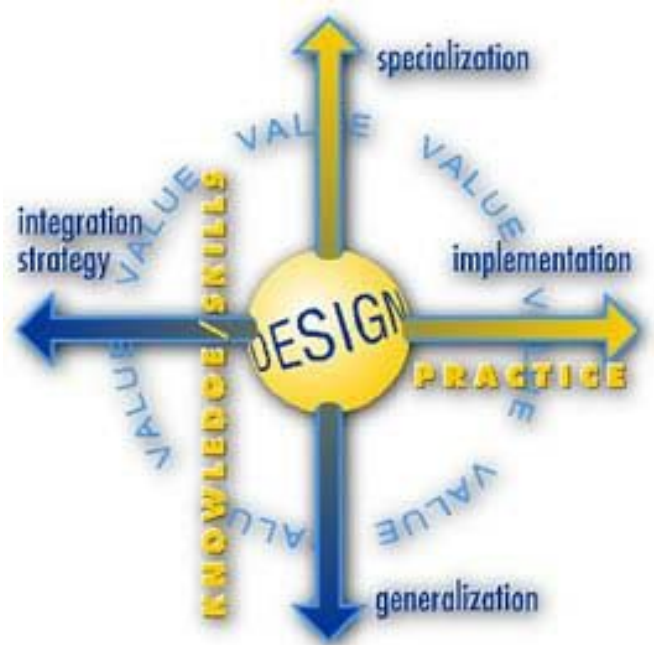
In his book *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell defines "tipping point" as a threshold, a boiling point, or a moment of critical mass. It seems to me that we have reached a tipping point in accepting the role of the architect as an

Integrated Service Provider, if recent feedback to my column is any measure. Many of the architects who responded have found interesting ways to provide alternative services that increase their design opportunities. Others provide services not directly related to a building. Here are their stories.

**Image integrator:** Paul Chaplo, AIA, ([www.chaplo.com](http://www.chaplo.com)) is an architectural photographer who sees himself as a coordinator and integrator of imaging and presentation services and products. He is not taking photos, he says. Rather, he is expressing the emotion, spirit, and strategy of a client.

**Matrix builder:** Tim Culvahouse, AIA, says that the two-dimensional redefinition matrix may be unduly constraining for the ideas it is trying to show. He points out that architecture as a practice is at least four dimensions. He also believes that the matrix is neutral in terms of value—and the final measure of our work is the value, or quality produced. Culvahouse brings up the thought that integrated services—or any services at all—may not have anything to do with good design, especially services increasingly distant from design. (Others argue that nothing is distant from design, because "it's all design," and that integrated services support an even more complete design.)

**Streamlining the design process:** Scott Shaw, AIA, reports that ISPs, professional responsibility, and "negentropy" are concepts that architects seem to be putting to work all over the Northwest and Pacific Region, almost as a byproduct of the search for a more

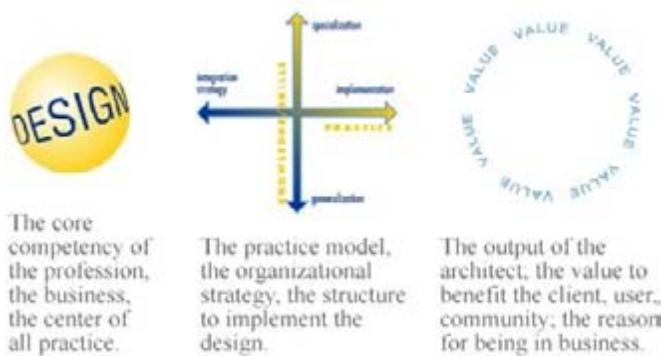


streamlined design process. He states that architects facilitate connections with the community to get work and get work for those we respect. We facilitate "gentropy" by encouraging participation, and "team" interaction through all phases of the design/construction process. It's all about making connections to the communities in which we work and live, Shaw says.

**Benefiting clients:** Over the last 25 years, Isaac Molina, AIA, has seen clients defining design as "style." When you think about it, he says, that's a very narrow service. He has "unexplained" to clients that design is a process they absolutely need to protect their investment in the project. He finds that once you educate the client on benefits of the architect as an integrated service provider, it becomes an obvious cost-effective insurance policy for them. His 10-year success at working in this manner is an indication that "if you can get in front of potential clients, they seem to take notice."

**Right from the start:** CH2M Hill and its Eco-Charrettes managed by Nathan Good, AIA, IIDA. (See *AIArchitect*, Best Practices, June 17) offer a good example of architect involvement from the outset. As the facilitator for integrated design workshops, it is not uncommon that the firm's involvement is with clients who have not selected their architect or design team. They are involved in the genesis, the definition of the design issue or project—way before the cocktail napkin phase.

**A synergistic model:** Page Sutherland Page, ([www.psp.com](http://www.psp.com)) a 100-year-old firm, began a major shift in 1993 when they created a



The core competency of the profession, the business, the center of all practice.

The practice model, the organizational strategy, the structure to implement the design.

The output of the architect, the value to benefit the client, user, community; the reason for being in business.

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strategic consulting group under the direction of Kurt Neubek, AIA. They developed a synergy of strategy and architecture in each area of expertise: health care, education, science technology, and laboratories. Each of the expertise areas has its own vocabulary and issues in which the firm is now a knowledge leader. It has paid off. When Baylor College of Medicine needed an immediate facility-management process for their campuses, PSP stepped up to provide this in a stopgap method and, in turn, set up the entire campus.

Each of these architects has shifted his firm toward being an ISP and says that this shift offers greater value to clients and to the firm in turn. We will share their different strategies for making shift in the near future.

### **The evolving role of architects**

The Experience Economy by Pine and Gilmore talks about how we have evolved from a raw materials economy (the '40s), to a goods economy (the '50s) to a service economy (the '70s) to the experiences economy (the '90s). It is worth looking at to see how the role of the architect has changed into one of "thinking how the user thinks." As one example, John Eberhard, FAIA, AIA Research, relates this notion to research by the AIA and the National Association of School Boards on educational environments:

- 1940s (raw materials stage): Classrooms had seats and blackboards were arranged in set patterns.
- 1955 (goods stage): Classrooms were designed as adaptable spaces that could be changed around by teachers (but rarely were).
- 1970 (service economy): Classrooms became places where "free-ranging" children did what they pleased and for whom the teachers provided "stimulation" as their service in the design.
- 1990s (experience economy): Architects need to think the way the teacher thinks when he or she is providing a learning experience for the student and in what way the physical environment of "classroom" supports the teachers in providing this experience.