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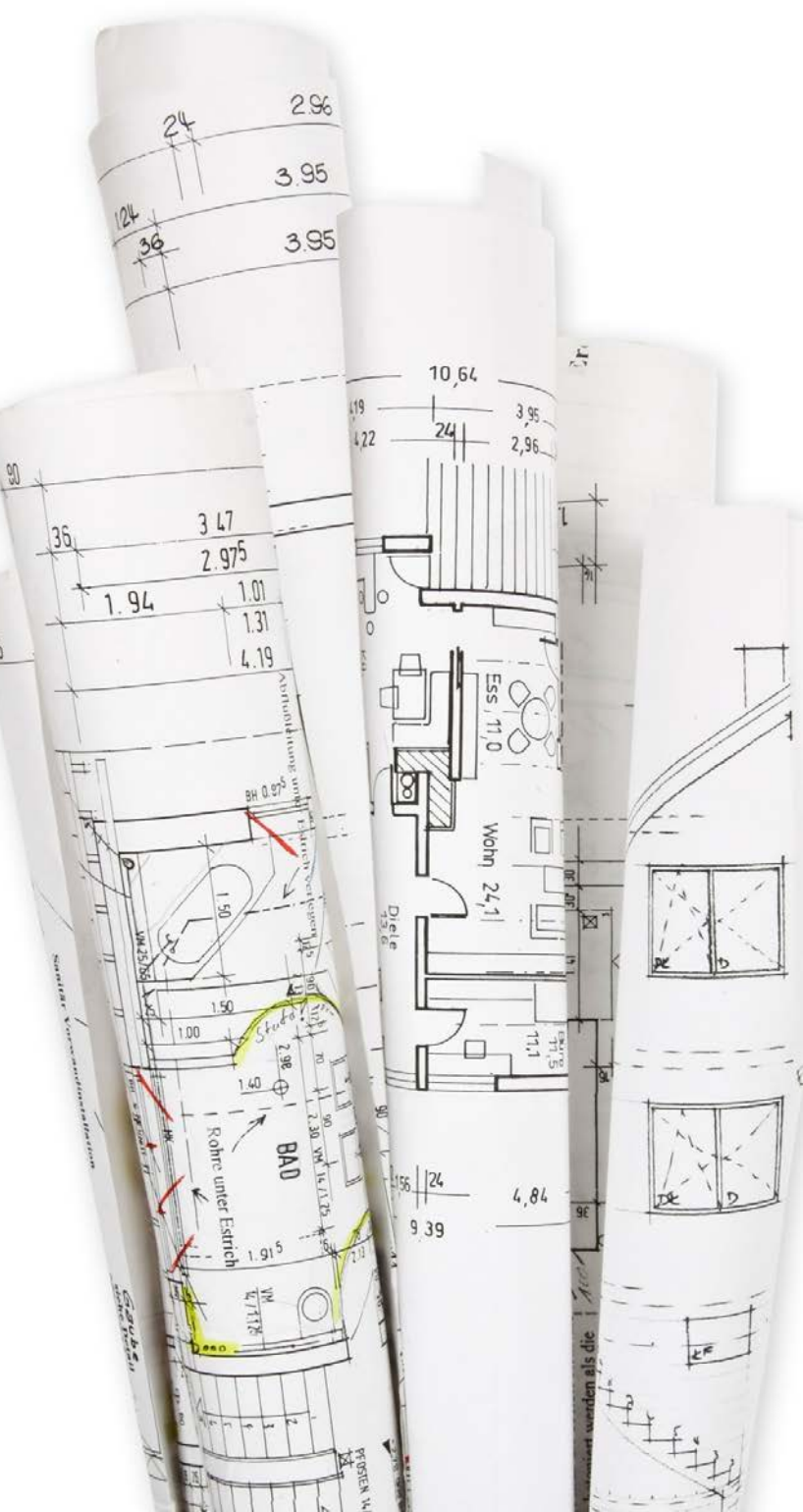
PRODUCING QUALITY CONTRACT DOCUMENTS – #7 OF THE TOP 10 RISK MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS

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In the October 2019 issue of Building Blocks, we outlined the top 10 risk management principles regarding design professionals for the next 10 months, one principle at a time, focusing on one each month.¹ Consequently, in the seventh of the top 10 principles, the May, 2020 issue of Building Blocks is focusing on **“Producing Quality Contract Documents,”** The top 10 principles are based, in part, upon the Council of American Structural Engineers’ (CASE) “Ten Foundations for Risk Management,” and the National Council of Architectural Boards’ (NCARB) two of the six educational modules titled “Practice Management” (PcM) and “Project Management” (PjM) of the Architectural Registration Examination (ARE). The first five risk management principals relate to practice management, and last five risk management principals relate to project management.

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A QUALITY ASSURANCE PLAN

The contract documents in a construction project are the deliverables that communicate the design intent to the construction team. In an effort to raise the document quality bar, CASE recently released CASE Tool 9-2: Quality Assurance Plan, which provides guidance to the structural engineering professional for developing a comprehensive detailed quality assurance plan. The guidelines in the CASE materials are applicable to all design professions, including architects, landscape architects, interior designers, etc. See CASE <https://www.acec.org/CASE/202.347.7474>.



<https://www.needpix.com/photo/508788/quality-control-quality-process-control-check-business-approval-inspection-assurance>

A well-developed and implemented quality assurance plan ensures consistent high-quality service on all projects, and is critical to both project success and maintaining key client relationships. Elements of ensuring quality service includes:

- client and project ownership by the individuals responsible for the project,
- continual staff education including both leadership and technical skill development for the firm-wide standard of care,
- quality control process with a complete communication loop, and a
- written quality assurance plan (the wisdom is to have a plan and use it—allowing the plan to gather dust that makes it way into the hands of opposing council in litigation will greatly diminish your firm’s credibility in front of a jury if you did not use your plan).

And the quality control review may consist of three elements:

- independent design (jury) review,
- internal engineering review, and
- comprehensive construction document review.

Comprehensive firm-wide standards (consisting of design/analysis standards [guidelines], documentation standards and construction administration standards) enable staff to gain historical firm-wide benefits while providing the resources to ensure that the design and documentation are clear, concise, accurate and consistent. Construction quality assurance is an important element of a quality assurance plan since it is the final step in the process.

In addition, CASE Tool 9-1: CASE Guidelines Document 962-D A Guideline Addressing Coordination and Completeness of Structural Construction Documents, is a great reference tool for preparing quality construction documents. Inadequate and/or incomplete design drawings often result in inaccurate competitive bids; delays in schedule; a multiplicity of requests for information (RFIs), change orders and revision costs; increased project costs; and a general dissatisfaction with the project. The guidelines presented in this document will assist not only the structural engineer of record (SER), but also everyone involved with building design and construction in improving the process by which the owner is provided with a successfully completed project.

Quality

<https://pixabay.com/images/search/assurance/>

The American Institute of Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice, 15th Edition, p. 304 states that a firm's staff can implement a quality control procedure by:

... creating flowcharts depicting the overall process, tracking controlled documents and deliverables, and developing and administering a client feedback form. Ideally, integrated teams will work from the same QA/QC plan. For teams with multiple consultants, an alternative would be to allow a consultant the choice of following the prime consultant's quality procedures, or adhering to its own firm's procedures, with the understanding that the consultant may be audited by the prime, especially with regard to the quality assurance of its technical work products.

The most successful quality management approach is to treat quality as an organizational activity, with associated costs and standards. The firm's overhead costs can be set aside for this activity, or these costs can be associated with each project's budget. The standards may include a firm's standard details in an electronic "library" that is constantly refined project-by-project. Establishing a quality standard and achieving that level of quality is not merely a goal, it is essential to the success of a firm.

In Summary

How many times have you heard someone state: "There is no perfect set of drawings and specs." One method when implementing a quality assurance plan, at the completion of major phases of document preparation, QA meetings may be scheduled between a person charged with reviewing the project and the project team. In this meeting, the documents are reviewed for general coordination, constructability, and to determine progress of the project. Then a written review is communicated back to the team members, and consultants, if any, for continuous improvement for projects underway and future projects. Lastly, identify the cost of quality management and audit each project from the viewpoint of the client.

¹ The above risk management principles have been adapted, in part, from an article that originally appeared in the June 2012 issue of STRUCTURE magazine, published by the National Council of Structural Engineers Associations (NCSEA), and is **reprinted with permission**. The top 10 principles of risk management for design professional are 1) A Firm's Culture & Ethical Practices, 2) Mentoring And Education, 3) Communication Skills, 4) "Go/No Go" Policy, 5) Contracts & Ownership Of The Firm's Documents, 6) Develop A Scope Of Services With Appropriate Compensation, **7) Producing Quality Contract Documents**, 8) Construction Phase Services, 9) Utilize A Certificate Of Substantial Completion, and 10) Dispute And Claim Handling.

<https://csengineeromag.com/article/principles-and-tools-for-risk-management/>

About the Author

Eric O. Pempus, FAIA, Esq., NCARB has been a risk manager for the last 15 years with experience in architecture, law and professional liability insurance, and a unique and well-rounded background in the construction industry. He has 25 years of experience in the practice of architecture, and as an adjunct professor teaching professional practice courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels for the last 33 years. As a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a member of the AIA National Ethics Council, he has demonstrated his impact on architectural profession. He has presented numerous loss prevention and continuing educational programs to design professionals and architectural students in various venues across the United States and Canada.

The above comments are based upon DesignPro Insurance Group's experience with Risk Management Loss Prevention activities, and should not be construed to represent a determination of legal issues, but are offered for general guidance with respect to your own risk management and loss prevention. The above comments do not replace your need for you to rely on your counsel for advice and a legal review, since every project and circumstance differs from every other set of facts.

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“The Good, Bad & Ugly in Construction Administration-Shop Drawings, RFIs & Change Orders in the Various Project Delivery Methods”

AIA Columbus
June 26, 2020



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