

Programming: Strategic Planning

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The client is the driving force behind every project. And, as everyone already knows, every client has a distinctive set of corporate qualities and project-specific criteria. Thus, it is of utmost importance that the first step in the design process be to gain a thorough understanding of who the client is and what they are all about. This information-gathering phase has traditionally been known simply as the programming phase of a project. Today, this phase needs to include not only programming, but also client insight, workplace analysis, and test fits. Thus, the phase is actually best titled “Strategic Planning.” The thoroughness of strategic planning can mean the difference between the success and failure of the project.

The following sections describe the strategic planning components and the significance of each, while periodically using AmSouth Bancorporation as a case study. AmSouth Bancorporation is a financial institution located in the southern United States. A few years ago, AmSouth decided to relocate their offices from eight office buildings scattered throughout Birmingham, Alabama, to one corporate headquarters. AmSouth had many of the typical client goals and project issues and thus will serve as a good example as we begin to understand the strategic planning phase.

CLIENT INSIGHT

Uniqueness. This is what makes each of us individuals. It is essential to recognize this in our clients, as the best interior design comes from an in-depth analysis and understanding of what makes a particular company and its workforce unique. Understanding the company’s culture and business goals and the workforce’s lifestyles provides direction for the architectural design.