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Clearly conveying these goals to outside consultants expands and strengthens the team and its potential to effectively meet the client's needs. Ultimately, the design team must propose the developed design concept to the client team in preliminary and final presentations. Establishing clear project goals not only supports the team in developing the design concept, but also the team's understanding and confidence that the project and process are moving in the right direction.

Communication with the client begins during the programming phase when project team members discuss the client's goals and assess its current culture. Day-to-day dialogues within the entire project team, whether in formal team meetings or impromptu conversations, are on-going throughout the schematic design phase.

One of the most significant aspects of this phase of communication happens during the charrette, a series of sessions where the core design team sketches, discusses ideas, and shares images. Often, this process opens up to include many members of the firm. Drawing from this depth of experience and creative problem solving allows our design firm to use all its talent without assigning the entire firm to each project.

To further strengthen the team, we call on outside experts such as consultants, suppliers, furniture manufacturer representatives, general contractor(s), engineer(s), and specialty consultant(s). The design team researches and discusses with suppliers and furniture manufacturers' representatives appropriate material samples, furniture options, pricing, and initial lead-time information before finish, lighting, and furniture recommendations are presented to the client.

Depending on the project schedule, the general contractor may only be needed to confirm preliminary budgetary construction numbers or perhaps brought on as an active team member to facilitate an intense project schedule. Similarly, the design team assesses the need for mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire protection, or structural engineer(s), as well as specialty consultants. Typical specialty consultants include a lighting consultant, an audio/visual consultant, security consultant, and even a kitchen consultant.