

Designers need to know well in advance about early package issues in design development, and they need to plan for them in this phase and the previous phase. Common early packages are for long lead items such as specialty glass, stone pavers, and/or steel. Before advance development can take place, these items and everything related to them ideally needs to be “frozen.” Consequently, the design development process for a complex project with early packages will require a gestation period. Otherwise, if, when these packages get issued, the drawings are rushed just to get them out the door, then the team may quickly see that the design is locked in. The result would then be that, instead of working with a space or an element of the design, the team must work around it, almost as though they were required to renovate an unbuilt space.

In fact, it can be said that, for any project, designers need concentrated quality time in the design development phase if they are to move a design forward. “Quality time” means that, before the design development phase begins, it is very important that earlier phases be fully completed. In this phase, the “oh, we’ll pick it up in the next phase” attitude quickly forces designers to spend the short amount of time they do have just playing catch-up. Design development is the turning point in a project—it is the bridge between ideas and reality, not the time to do what should have been done before.

The Layered Approach to Design

The “layered” approach has consequences for the way designers should think about the quality of their design development phase. Designers should not measure the success of design development by the number of sheets produced or details recorded. Even so, the drawings you do send should be more than just toss-offs designed to solve an immediately pressing problem—they must be a real part of the design hierarchy. It is very important that, when drawings do get issued for review or pricing, only carefully thought-out drawings leave the office. All too often, a quick response to the request that you “just send me what you have, I realize it is only preliminary” locks you into a palette of finishes, design intent, or level of detail which has not been properly thought out. You should assume that you will be held to what is shown on even the most preliminary drawing. Draw quickly and thoughtfully, and bring all aspects of the job along at the same pace. It is better to issue ten drawings that are 30 percent developed than one sketch which has not been adequately considered or folded into the greater whole of the design.

CONCLUSION

Design development is a process—that of advancing the development of the design of an entire project at a similar pace—in which the design team fashions each piece or section or area with a strong design hierarchy that can be followed by the team and understood by the client. For, at the end of the design development phase, ideas must appear on paper, documented in such a way that the larger team client, contractor, and designer can move comfortably and confidently into the next phase, knowing that the design is ready to become a reality.

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