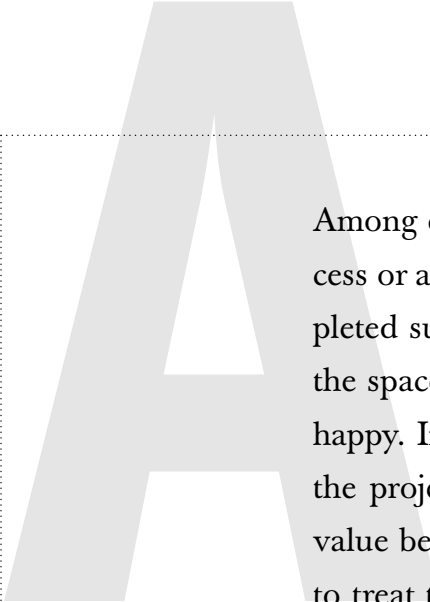


Managing the Consultant Relationship

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Among designers, project management is often characterized as a success or as a failure only in terms of the final outcome: a project is completed successfully if, when all of the contract obligations are met and the space is in use, the project is on time, on budget, and everyone is happy. In this view, the many different parts and pieces that make up the project as a whole are a problem, and project managers provide value because they have the skill and the knowledge that allows them to treat those parts and pieces as components of the whole project, to hold them all in place and make them work together. Of course, this view represents an important part of what design professionals need to understand about project management. However, in the eyes of the client, perception often dictates the success of a project, involving a complex set of expectations that needs to be expertly handled. Even so, it is just as important that designers who understand the big picture do not then forget the parts and pieces, and how the project manager must deal with them, sometimes in surprisingly personal ways. The view of the project manager as a monolith, or an ultimate authority, or as an expert in team dynamics, may in some cases cause more problems than it solves. How do project managers guide if they or the design team as a whole lacks expertise in a certain area?

The answer is “consultants”: the project manager must find the right experts and include their skills in the design team in a productive way to provide what the project needs to succeed. To manage the consultant relationship effectively, the project manager must be able to assess not only what the project needs, and to communicate that clearly to all members of the team, but also assess what consultants need, and keep them focused on the project and motivated to do their best.

In order to truly manage a design and construction project, the project manager must identify all of the parts and pieces that make up a particular