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## A Strong Foundation

**I**n a world of tangibles and not of analogies, foundations and buildings are constructed by real people using real data and materials to plan, design, obtain approvals, and build structures or on-site improvements that will functionally and aesthetically stand the test of time. As the three little pigs discovered, the wrong choices of materials, plans, and execution will eventually lead to failure. As we know, most consumers focus on choosing a reputable and reliable architect, or landscape architect, to execute the desired project; but before the first nail is driven or the first tree is planted, these design consultants need to create design plans.

In many ways, the value of the design process has a direct relationship to the base data utilized. Often times an architect attempts to gather all available site information ranging from old topographic surveys, United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps, aerial photos, or other documents in hopes of determining the lay of the land and its features. This process is often completed by merging multiple maps of different scale. As map and plan makers, we can safely assume that a moderate amount of data manipulating is required by the design consultant to create a base map which becomes the guiding document for most, if not all, design and planning. The risk to the consultant and client when this approach is employed is that design plans often require modifications at all phases. Cost and profitability are negatively impacted each time the project returns to the drawing board, regardless of the



extent of modification. This is obviously detrimental to the client, but equally disastrous to the business reputation of the architect or landscape architect.

The easiest way to avoid the cumbersome data-gathering process resulting in unreliable information is to utilize a land surveyor at project commencement. Position your business with architects as a resource that can provide much of the necessary data to allow for a solid design process. We have been successful in this process by taking time to educate each consultant on the benefits of our products offered. Architects and landscape

architects are educated and intelligent consultants, but making the assumption they understand our standards, products, and professional benefits is a large misconception in a land surveyor's marketing strategy. Our firm began directly marketing these consultants many years ago and it has generated much work through the years. At times, the design consultants have used their own budget to pay for our services upon understanding the great benefits created by using a land surveyor. Once they design a project with a solid existing conditions worksheet or plan provided by a surveyor, they may have difficulty returning back to the former process. We have architects and landscape architects as clients, capable of efficiently generating a fee for our services which they implement as part of their project budget. As an added bonus, they allow us a buffer to adjust the fee as needed. This benefit exists because of the trust and respect developed during our time spent with them, and through helping them obtain a strong understanding of the many advantages of our services. Either way, compensation is much less challenged due to the obvious value added to the project.

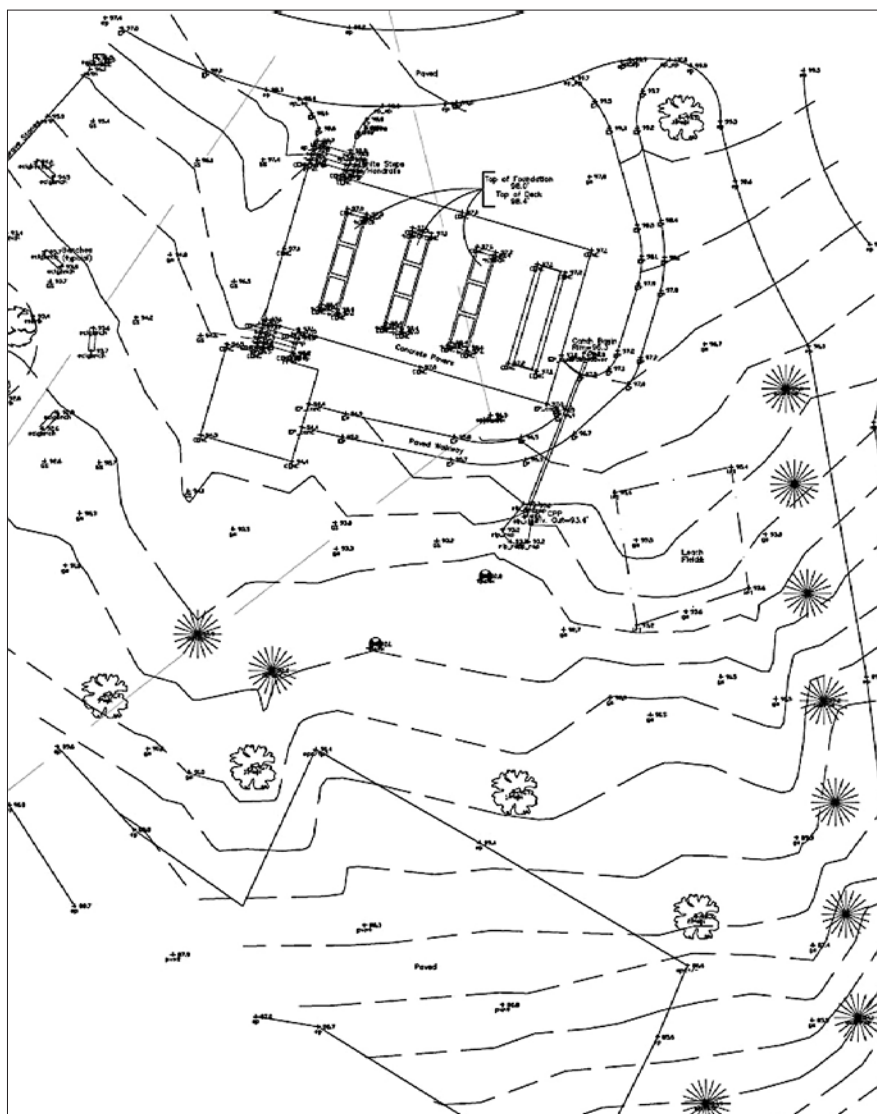
Another component of marketing these professions is your ability to tailor services without compromising professional standards and liability. Educate these consultants on the logic that adequate data collection time can range from one day to several, which is based solely on the amount of data they desire to implement in the design process. This strategy, of course, goes hand in hand with the preparation of a service contract that is detailed



and qualified appropriately. You could even go as far as creating an internal checklist to review with the consultants. We have found the checklist strategy a successful educational tool for the consultant, as this concept allows them to properly budget a fee for land surveying services within their proposal. It all starts with educating clients on your high level of capabilities.

Often times the initial scope of services results in the need for a boundary survey, municipal site plan, or subdivision plan, and you are in the driver's seat to acquire these additional services, establish another professional relationship, and brand your firm as an excellent source for providing this data in any project. Once the land surveyor and the consultant have determined the needs of the project, the land surveyor can begin efficiently collecting data. Initial products delivered to the consultant include, but are not limited to, existing conditions plans, topographic surveys, boundary plans, subdivision plans, FEMA documents and submissions, feasibility studies, or utility base maps. Trust me, once established with this process, the architect or landscape architect will try hard to implement a land surveyor-created base map on all design projects since it is far more accurate than a compilation of available maps and anecdotal evidence.

The nominal cost of hiring a land surveyor in order to provide good base data becomes invaluable and will streamline the entire project. We have discussed the benefits to the architect during their part of the process, but as we move further into the many components involved in order for their client to enjoy the proposed improvements to their property, one cannot overlook that municipalities also appreciate the reliable data supporting the consultants' submittals. The partnership between



**Top:** Our surveyors helped to confirm the proposed roof height on this residence would be in compliance with municipal building requirements before it was built.

**Bottom:** A worksheet prepared for a cemetery project to help engineers, architects, and contractors, with their design plans.



the land surveyor and the consultant is blindingly evident when these terms become part of the discussion. Client satisfaction is greatly influenced by how tumultuous or seamless the approvals process is. Strong data provided by land surveyors, incorporated by architects, and judged by municipal officials is a successful strategy for expediting the client's project.

Staying true to higher standards means providing a reliable and versatile product. Architects greatly benefit from our services by maximizing building footprint, complying with municipal ordinances, and choosing a design which best fits both the clients' desires and the lay of the land. Landscape architects are skilled craftspeople and scientists who meticulously plan everything from driveway placement to drainage. They can plant proper vegetation, while maintaining the integrity of the drainage system, create patios, and other aesthetical and functional improvements to the exterior of the home. All of these elements bring added value to the property from curb appeal, client satisfaction, sustainability of land features, and resale value.

This is one of the most straightforward and outwardly beneficial partnerships a land surveyor can have with these industries. Simply wondering how those who need you and could benefit abundantly from your skill set and products is not going to bring business through your doors or enhance your reputation. Instead, become an active participant in the business of building relationships. Network, reach out, and directly market industry professionals using education and sincerity as your guide. You will likely notice the same benefits we have experienced.

At the end of each day or project, an emphasis on ethics, trust, technical standards, and treating customers and partners fairly and kindly, will always serve your business model well. Keeping an eye on the bottom line, including providing quality service and charging appropriately for its delivery, is the responsibility of every business person. All marketing is best when it comes from a place of education and genuine desire to improve your profession's level of service, the client's experience, and the branding of your business. When the foundation of a business is strong, the building stands tall. *A*

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