

MEETING NOTES

Operation: Reach, Retain, and Develop Session 5

Behind the Scenes: Life in a Small, Mid-Size, and Large Firm

Friday, March 11, 2022 | 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. EDT

“Small Firm” Panelist

Marcus Thomas, AIA

Managing Principal at KEi Architects

www.keiarchitects.com

“Mid-Size Firm” Panelist

Andrew McKinley, AIA

Principal at VIA Design Architects

www.viadesignarchitects.com

“Large Firm” Panelist

Hayley Owens, Assoc. AIA

Designer at VMDO Architects

www.vmdo.com

Talk about your firm culture in relation to firm size:

Marcus

- We have collaborations with other firms/vendors
- All up in each other’s business!!!
- We can gather quickly and efficiently to solve problems

Andrew

- Celebrate the best ideas
- Opportunity/responsibility to participate (like a small firm, nowhere to hide!)

Hayley

- Have to figure out how to foster community (be sure to ask for what you need)
- Greater access to resources

What are you looking for in candidates?

Andrew

- Ability to think – shown through your portfolio and examples of work
- Familiarity with tools of the trade
- Gumption! Are you excited about architecture?

Hayley

- Process – can you connect your work to the larger project?
- Is there a deep interest in something?
- Can you talk clearly and communicate?

Marcus

- One question we ask is around your personal drive
- Can you learn and grow?
- Are you willing to go the extra mile? Bes a self-starter?
- Desire to become licensed and be part of the firm's leadership development

What is the role of technology in your office?

Tools used

- Revit, BIM 360, Adobe, inscape, Lumion, SketchUp

Hayley

- Ability to show and clearly communicate your project ideas through the tools
- Sketching too!
- Can work with consultants for other technologies

Andrew

- Trace paper
- Share best practices/coaching sessions each week with the team
- Cove tool – early energy modeling
- Procore for construction documentation

Marcus

- Use your colleagues' strengths and talents to strengthen the team
- Bluebeam

Are there questions you wished you would have asked when you were interviewing for a job?

- Ask about the ways the firm protects your work/life balance
- Talk to an emerging professional who works in the office (been there around 2 years)
- Don't make assumptions about what you would be doing – ask what a day will be like in your position (manage your expectations)

AXP/Areas of Practice:

- Ask about how soon are new hires exposed to areas of practice

Marcus

- Depends on current projects – we have to jump in where we are in the process
- We are proactive in helping you log those hours – we want you to succeed

Hayley

- Pilot programs – start AXP in Construction Administration
- Communicate your interest and advocate for yourself with your supervisor

Andrew

- Use AXP record to track hours and look for gaps in development.
- Ask leaders to assist in filling in those gaps

What is the relationship your firm has with the local community?

Marcus

- Special interest in Richmond since we've been here 40 years
- Involved in chamber of commerce, business leagues, minority business organizations

Andres

- Being part of the community is essential
- Architects bring a unique perspective to the community governance and organizations as creative thinkers and problem solvers

Hayley

- They have one pro-bono project per studio each year
- Staff gets paid for local community work that is pro-bono for the firm

The Future – How are changes in the world affecting your size firm?

Marcus

- The way we produce work has changed
- With the backlog of work – there are not enough students in school to handle it over the next 10 years
- We'll see more firm mergers and acquisitions
- We need to adopt new technologies and find new ways to collaborate

Hayley

- In order to stay competitive, we have to continue to research and learn new things

Andrew

- Continuous learning and evolution
- EDI issue influence hiring
- We have to encourage the pipeline and start early in the education process