

Designer Selection – draft only*

By drawing on the collective experience of our successful members, AGDA has developed a designer selection process that is effective and professional. The emphasis in our recommended approach is on the appointment of the most able design consultant providing the appropriate level of service at the right price. We have also provided a 'Selection Checklist' to assist clients in evaluating and comparing design consultancies.

Merit-based selection process

Step 1 – Selection

- a. client identifies objectives, critical issues and program
- b. selection time frame and brief established
- c. written proposals setting out qualifications and capability are invited
- d. proposals are evaluated and a short list determined
- e. a tour of the site/facility may be arranged for shortlisted firms
- f. interviews and portfolio reviews are conducted and shortlisted firms are ranked in order of preference

Step 2 – Definition

- a. top ranked firm is invited to participate in further discussion to develop a fuller understanding of the project requirement
- b. Scope of service required for project is agreed and fees negotiated
- c. Upon agreement, the creative/design process commences, as per the agreed scale of fees
- d. If agreement cannot be reached with the top ranked firm, negotiations are broken off and commenced with second ranked firm and so on until agreement is reached

Step 3 – Retention

- a. the agreement covering the above negotiated arrangement is executed
- b. all firms involved are advised of the outcome of the selection process
- c. a report is prepared setting out the reasons for the final selection (use the following AGDA Selection Checklist to assist you in structuring the report)

* 'draft only' means that this document is still being approved by AGDA National Council for printed publication and could be subject to changes. AGDA does not intend for this Practice Note to be anything other than a useful reference for designers and their clients.

AGDA Selection Checklist

1. Professional chemistry

To achieve good results, you need a good relationship based on respect and trust. It is important to know who you will be dealing with and that there is the chemistry there to work well together

2. Understanding the client's needs

Your design firm must understand what your needs are, who your audience or market is, and the project constraints (time, budget, materials, approvals)

3. Design process

Different design firms have different design processes. They vary in degree of formality, documentation and account management. You need to select a firm with a management approach that suits your company and you.

4. Track record

Look at their previous work. Ask questions about the original brief and the success of the project in fulfilling that brief. Was there anything learnt from that project or others by either them or the client that would benefit your project?

5. Referrals

Ask the design firm for referrals so that you can speak to their other clients about satisfaction with the working relationship and the results. In this way, it is similar to what you would do if you were hiring an employee

6. Fee Structure

Ask them how their fees are structured (with a breakdown where necessary) so that you can budget for other projects as they arise.

7. Value for money

Different clients have different objectives and budgets. It is unreasonable to expect high budget results on a low budget. Conversely, if it is a major project with a big budget, you will want to be sure that your design firm thoroughly understands and can handle the extra project management load these types of projects carry. 'You get what you pay for.'

Sources

- AGDA Merit-based Selection Process developed by AGDA Queensland, 1995
- AGDA Selection Checklist developed by AGDA NSW (1996) in conjunction with Lewis Khan
- Authored by Andrew Lam-Po-Tang, AGDA General Manager

AGDA is grateful for our councillors' and members' support and their value of their experience