

Mindsets That Accelerate or Hinder an Authentic, Equitable, Collaborative Culture in the Profession of Architecture

Authentic

ACCELERATES:	HINDERS:
Architects and designers are design thinkers — we are skilled in defining the true problems beyond the obvious, and in learning from the failures and successes of experimentation.	Design thinking is an important skill for architects, but it applies to design of projects, not our internal firm processes or firm culture.
Clients would respect us more, value us more, if they understood what we do.	Mystery and being seen as the expert is more important than client understanding.

Collaborative

ACCELERATES:	HINDERS:
Architecture is about creating the future — collaboratively.	Architecture is about creating the future — on one's own.
Architecture is the work of partnerships and teams.	Architecture is inherently competitive — others' success is a threat.
Collaboration is primary. Credit and legacy are team based and that team includes all aspects of the project.	Individual achievement is primary (the "hero" architect). Pursuit of "legacy" is noble and individualistic in nature.

MINDSET THAT ACCELERATES AUTHENTICITY:

Architects and designers are design thinkers —skilled in defining the true problems beyond the obvious, and in learning from the failures and successes of experimentation.

Equitable

ACCELERATES:	HINDERS:
<p>Architecture from throughout the world, from cultures of all geographies, provides insight into what people want and need, and can inform and inspire great work regardless of whether it was designed by an architect.</p>	<p>Western European architecture (the canon) is the foundation of all successful architecture and architects must have a complete understanding of this history in order to create competent designs today.</p>
<p>Architects and designers can have strengths in various areas — we don't all need to be great at all aspects of the work of architecture in order to be successful.</p>	<p>People need to be both artistic and technically proficient to be successful students of architecture and successful in the profession of architecture.</p>
<p>Older architects have experienced and led change, and they have the capacity to continue to do so. Their insights inform the path toward the culture we need to create.</p>	<p>Older architects are uninterested in or incapable of learning and growing. They need to give up their leadership roles and make way for others.</p>
<p>Those who are within their first years working in the profession are idealistic, driven, and have the capacity to fix the system, if given opportunities to lead.</p>	<p>"Emerging professionals" are not yet professional. They don't yet have valued knowledge or perspectives and need to pay their dues. Wisdom only comes with age.</p>
<p>Firms led by women and by people of color have unique and important capacities that other firms can learn from; they are ready and able to lead. Lack of capacity in terms of financial position and ability to take on liability are symptoms of longstanding racism and sexism in lending practices and how the financial industry assesses risk.</p>	<p>Firms led by women and by people of color lack capacity and need to be overseen by, and mentored by, others when partnered on a project. They cannot take on large or complex projects on their own.</p>
<p>Expansion of the profession is good (e.g., definition of architecture, "non-traditional" paths, K-12 outreach). The strength of an architecture program is in the myriad contributions made by those who engage in its program.</p>	<p>Winnowing of the profession is good. More entrants than graduates from an architecture school is indicative of a strong program.</p>

MINDSET THAT ACCELERATES EQUITY:

Architects and designers can have strengths in various areas — we don't all need to be great at all aspects of the work of architecture in order to be successful.

Authentic & Equitable

ACCELERATES:

HINDERS:

Each person who works in architecture has their own unique blend of skills, desired career path, and definition of personal success. We can't make assumptions about the kinds of project assignments individuals will desire or excel in based on their identity.

Architects and designers who are women, people of color, LGBTQ+, who have disabilities, and/or who are expressive of their religion, are most interested and skilled in addressing projects that leverage these aspects of their identity. They should also be asked to lead equity, diversity and inclusion efforts.

Architects and designers should not be used as "window dressing" or relegated to outward-facing work based on their gender or race/ethnicity in order to further the firm's needs.

Architects and designers who are women and/or people of color are best assigned roles that are outward-facing, dealing with community members and clients to show the firm's commitment to diversity and to connect well with people of the same gender and race/ethnicity.

The work of architecture is best accomplished when we can bring our whole selves to our work. Diverse perspectives, life experiences, and cultures — when leveraged well — lead to better design outcomes. Expression of those perspectives, experiences and cultures needs to be supported in order for the best in creativity and problem solving to come forth.

People who work in architecture are most successful when they tamp down or hide expression of their gender, culture, or sexual orientation, if they are not white, heterosexual men. Feminine expression (e.g., in use of makeup, in clothing, etc.) means people will not take you seriously as an architect. If you are a "blank slate," clients will trust you to bring their vision to life (as opposed to thinking you will assert your own vision too strongly).

MINDSET THAT ACCELERATES AUTHENTICITY AND EQUITY:

Each person who works in architecture has their own unique blend of skills, desired career path, and definition of personal success. We can't make assumptions about the kinds of project assignments individuals will desire or excel in based on their identity.

Equitable & Collaborative

ACCELERATES:	HINDERS:
Architects and designers are systems thinkers — we think about the whole of the system and its interdependencies.	Systems thinking is an important skill for architects, but it applies to our work solving great systemic issues in our built environment, not our internal firm processes or firm culture.
Architects and designers are committed to continuous improvement and learning.	Architects are the experts.
Long hours are unhealthy and not necessary to create high-quality work.	Long hours show dedication and self-sacrifice; they are a badge of honor.
All architects, designers and members of the architecture community are deeply valuable to the work of architecture. One’s position or type of work should not determine the deference they are given or the degree to which they are held accountable.	Architects who lead the design functions in firms are the “real” architects. They are more valuable to the work of architecture and should be deferred to. They are above the rules.
Architects need to be as close to the client and users as possible, to be able to design well.	Architects can design well without a strong connection or engagement with the client or users.
Architecture is one of many disciplines, skillsets and knowledge bases that are needed to create a great built environment.	Architecture is a profession and therefore inherently better than other types of jobs, trades, skillsets, and types of knowledge.

MINDSET THAT ACCELERATES EQUITY AND COLLABORATION:

All architects, designers and members of the architecture community are deeply valuable to the work of architecture. One’s position or type of work should not determine the deference they are given or the degree to which they are held accountable.

Authentic, Equitable & Collaborative

ACCELERATES:	HINDERS:
Leadership is about questioning, facilitating, and adapting towards others.	Leadership is about knowing, directing, and orchestrating; being the “master builder.”
Avoiding risk entails protecting everyone’s health, safety and welfare. To not adapt creates its own set of risks.	Avoid the risk of not appearing professional and embarrassing yourself by being too open and expressive. You reduce risk by working with “like minded” people. If you want something done right, do it yourself.
The model member of the architecture community is an individual who is authentic, equitable and collaborative. The ideal architecture community is one which equitably represents the wide range of demographics, perspectives and experiences of the broader population.	The archetypical architect — the norm and the model — is male, heterosexual, white, and affluent; even if you don’t share these aspects of identity, it is what architects, designers, and those who work with them should aspire to be like. We are most successful when we emulate this archetype.
Partnering with firms owned by women and by people of color can provide valuable perspectives and skillsets that are lacking in many firms and can lead to stronger, more responsive processes and design solutions.	Partnering with firms owned by women and by people of color is a necessity driven by rules and regulations of clients.

MINDSET THAT ACCELERATES AUTHENTICITY, EQUITY AND COLLABORATION:

Avoiding risk entails protecting everyone’s health, safety and welfare. To not adapt creates its own set of risks.

FEARS UNDERLYING MINDSETS

- Liability
- Lack of financial stability
- Not being able to manage the business side of the firm
- Losing money, not winning/losing clients if a project is priced appropriate to what is needed to do the job well and to support the needs of the team and the firm
- Being used, being undercut financially
- Being seen as easily pushed around, “unmanly”
- Losing control, losing power, losing respect
- Being uncomfortable and awkward, embarrassing oneself, being called out, not being able to save face
- Being viewed as unprofessional
- Losing traditions, losing one’s sense of identity