



7 Key Tips to Get The Most Out of Your Building Designer/Architect.

- 1. Do your research and choose carefully.** You're about to spend a lot of money on one of the single most expensive things you will do. Take time to research a few practices; many will have websites highlighting some of their previous work. Look for consistencies with the style of building you would like to build; you're not likely to get the best results by engaging someone who is unfamiliar to the ideas you have. You wouldn't appoint Frank Gehry to design a federation cottage!
- 2. Be prepared... but don't be over prepared.** You'll need to think about the primary functions you need to address and your priorities for the project. The better you can convey these ideas the better. Consider preparing a simple scrapbook of photos that have caught your eye. Visual examples are always much clearer ways to communicate than just relying on terms like "contemporary" which can mean many things to different people. A scrapbook is a great visual aid to help develop your design brief, but a short novel detailing each room with everything from paint colour to power point type and location is probably too much! Make sure you leave scope for design exploration and resolution;
- 3. Be on the same page.** It's not always easy but it is important that you and your partner deliver a consistent message. It is very difficult to design to a brief when there are two conflicting briefs. Whilst a good relationship with your designer will encourage robust discussion and resolution of your brief you will not get the best result if you are sending mixed messages.
- 4. You don't need to solve the problems.** Allow scope for innovation. Don't think that you need to solve the problems. Your "help" may actually be hindering the design process if your solutions are seen as preferences, especially if you are particularly enthusiastic about your contributions. The person you have engaged is a professional problem solver. Don't quash the potential of a unique and innovative design solution on the basis of it being different; do you want a custom design or just another house?
- 5. Quality trumps quantity.** I'm just going to come out and say it; if you want the biggest possible home for your budget then you might be wasting your money engaging a design professional. Think carefully about the spaces you need to ensure they suit your lifestyle. Where possible invest in high quality spaces rather than high quantities of space, these are specialties of experienced designers.

6. **Be realistic about your budget.** Your designer should be able to give you an idea about whether or not your brief and budget are in the same ballpark. If you do need a reality check then the sooner you adjust the better.
7. **Stay true to your brief; not your family and friends preferences!** It can be very useful to bounce ideas off those close to you but be careful how strongly they influence you; after all it is your house and if you are comfortable with the single vanity in the ensuite that your sister-in-law insists "absolutely must be a double vanity" then ask yourself again, who's house it is! Concentrate on creating a design that is a reflection of yourself, rather than something that will appeal to the masses.

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