

# BLUEPRINT FOR TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURE

Karen Pitsley, AIA, has been nominated for a 2009 “Innovator of the Year” award by The Maryland Daily Record. She has worked for various firms for 13 years, has worked on commercial, institutional and residential projects, earned her license in 2001, has been a partner in a firm, and launched her own private practice two years ago. Staying in touch with her colleagues and growing her own practice has made her aware of common issues for architects. Almost all of those can be solved by using systems and methods other industries have adopted with great success.

Architects are finding that the world is changing. Home building has come to an abrupt halt. Money for home renovations is not readily available and homeowners are reluctant to put more money into a home that may be dropping in value.

For years Architects have relied on a call from a builder to perform their design magic for a customer who had called the builder, not the Architect. This reflects a fact that few independent Architects and fewer firms want to admit... their own customers don't know how to find them.

Home buyers have become familiar with the names of huge homebuilders like Ryland Homes, NV Homes, and probably others, but many homeowners could not tell you the name of the Architect who designed their new home.

It is often said that the first step in solving a problem is to admit you have one.

Name a place to buy hamburgers... McDonald's. Name a brand of car... Lexus. Name a brand of Macaroni and Cheese... Kraft. Name an Architect...???

Marketing. Branding. The consumer who knows the brand name of a product will almost always buy that brand name over the same product with a generic name. Familiarity is comforting.

Suppose the average independent Architect spends \$5,000 per year “advertising” their services. That would get them local newspaper ads, a postcard mailer they could send out, a few boxes of pens with their name on it, and a few other scattered efforts at making clients within an hour of their office aware of their existence. If that Architect was part of a national system with 100 offices, that \$5,000 would become \$500,000 and suddenly ads could appear on the HGTV show, where homeowners get ideas for renovations and new homes. Ads could be shown on DIY shows where a national audience would become aware of a Brand of Architecture...

## TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURE.

Instead of Tom Jones, Architect he would be known as Tom Jones, A Transforming Architecture Company. Karen Pitsley, AIA, founder of TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURE, believes this is just one of many advantages for Architects joining her effort and



Karen Pitsley, AIA  
Founder of Transforming Architecture LLC

becoming something unheard of in the world of Architects... a Franchisee.

### WHY FRANCHISING... WHY NOW?

The case for marketing already has been discussed. But there are many more reasons a national franchise system of Architects makes perfect sense. Let's review the other advantages:

**BUSINESS START-UP:** While in school, Architects may have had one class devoted to the business aspect of starting a practice and running their own firm (if at all).

**TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURE** will offer guidance and training for all who join. There will be extensive classes showing Architects which business format is right for them, the legal

requirements in the contracts they offer clients, proper methods of making people aware of their existence, and even what to buy and not buy when spending money setting up the new firm. Procuring a business loan through the SBA or local bank is much more likely to be met with approval with a franchise purchase than a start-up business. The chances for business success improve with a franchise system, as well.

**ON-GOING COACHING:** As an independent, private practitioner, the Architect today is on his or her own when it comes to running their office.

**TRANSFORMING**

**ARCHITECTURE** realizes that regular coaching, on a monthly basis, has helped national organizations make individual offices perform better. The Franchisees will have access to a business coach to guide them through questions and issues they are confronting, and help their business perform to its potential.

**FREE-TO-BE-ME:** McDonald’s always sells exactly the same thing in every store. The **TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURE** Firm will offer the services they choose to provide. Some will do commercial work, some only custom home design, some only renovation and addition design, some government work, and for the very ambitious, all of the above. As a franchisee, you decide which services you will provide. Another advantage of the franchise is that if you want to bid a project for which you have no prior experience, you can rely on the “community portfolio” that is available from other franchisees that do have the experience required to allow you to bid that job.

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**FIRM VALUE:** One day you will want out. Maybe you will retire or maybe you want to move closer to family. Those who have their name on the door know that the value in the firm diminishes greatly when the ‘name’ wants to exit the firm. Being a franchisee adds value to the firm by retaining its worth, even when a principal moves on. A **TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURE** Franchisee has a protected territory with a Brand name, and a national marketing campaign; all providing retained value to the firm.

**DON’T BE LEFT ALONE.**

The argument for getting clients through “co-op marketing” alone is a sufficient reason to join the franchise system. The other issues discussed herein should make it clear that **TRANSFORMING**

**ARCHITECTURE** is the future, and can help new firms launch faster and existing practitioners connect with more clients.

**TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURE** realizes they are stepping outside the box. Discussion Boards at AIA and other internet sites have raised the debate over architects becoming “McArchitects.” While there is humor in seeing the golden arches over your private practice, the reality is if you sell hamburgers, those arches have vaulted you to the top of the hamburger-selling universe. With the solid business model other franchise systems have used to create a name brand... **TRANSFORMING ARCHITECTURE** knows that those who see the positive side of franchising will end up being at the top of the universe for selling the services an Architect offers.