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PUBLIC SCHOOL - ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER?

Not too long ago architects and engineers worked for the customer. If a customer needed heating and air conditioning, the customer had his engineer design the heating and air conditioning system he wanted and needed. If the customer needed a roof, the customer had his architect design a roof he wanted and needed. Both the architect and engineer realized they worked for the customer and the customer was the boss. During this time, physicians treated patients with respect, spent time with them explaining treatments and even made house calls, when necessary. Architects, engineers and physicians drove Buicks and lived in houses much the same as normal people.

Now, many architects, engineers and physicians drive expensive BMWs and live in 6,000 square foot, half million-dollar houses. The architects and engineers no longer have customers. They have clients. No longer do they work for the customer, the client must do what they say. Many of the architects are so bold that they require clients to sign contracts requiring the client to use the architect for any improvement to any facility owned by the client. This agreement even gives the architect a percentage of the take from services done only by an engineer. The architect selects and controls the engineer, not the client. The client usually does not have any input into the engineer's design.

A recent example is an addition to a four year old vocational school. When the building was originally built, it was designed to double its size by adding a mirror image to one side. Before the client needed to double the size of the building, the client changed architects. Even though the addition was a mirror image of the original building, the architect insisted changes be made to the interior of the building (putting his signature on the new building). Also, the architect would not use the original engineer and insisted on using "his" engineer. Although the original boiler and chiller had been sized to accommodate the mirrored building, the new engineer chose not to use them. Instead, the new architect's engineer designed a completely different heating and air conditioning system and put second unneeded boilers and chillers in the mirrored building. I guess, as with the architect, the engineer wanted to put his "signature" on the mirrored building, regardless what it cost the client. Remember, they no longer have customers. Putting architect and their engineer signatures on client's buildings increases cost substantially.

Most large commercial contractors are union. Their cost to do business is the same, regardless if the job is prevailing wage or not. Why does it cost up to 30% more to build a school than a similar commercial building? Commercial building owners are not reluctant to remind the architect who is really in charge and do not tolerate the 30% higher cost to support the architect's or engineer's ego. Also, the architect is required to use the customer's engineer, not his. The engineer is loyal to the customer, not the architect. For whom is your engineer working?