



# Your Checklist

## for Pricing Contractors, Architects or Designers



### 1. Find out how busy they are

Just because your prospective designers or contractors are juggling too many projects at the same time doesn't mean they are the best in town. It is a better sign when they know how many projects they can comfortably serve and try to stay within that range.



### 2. Ask to see similar completed projects

You should do this for three reasons.

**First**, to confirm their experience and expertise. If your designers or contractors specialize in restaurants or stores, they have a pretty good idea on how to save you money. They also had to overcome a few challenges in the past, which makes them more valuable to your team.

**Second**, to see if what they create appeals to you. This doesn't mean, however, that a designer cannot adapt his or her style to incorporate your preferences and ideas. Designers are creative people.

**Third** and most importantly, so that you don't fall into the trap of companies that copy and paste the same design from one project to another. There are a few companies out there that offer the same layout and design to all the restaurants or stores they work with. Their designs differ only by colors and finishes. The goal of these companies is usually to sell you their equipment, not creating or building your brand.



### 3. Ask for referrals

Yelp is a good place to start when researching your future designer or contractor. If you don't see enough referrals there, ask for personal referrals or for places they designed and built, then go talk to their owners.



### 4. Compare proposals by deliverables, not overall price

When you compare designers' proposals, you need to know exactly what you'll be getting. Most architects will help you with the building permits, but not with the interior design. Other design agencies, as **Mindful Design Consulting**, can do it all: branding graphics, interior design and permit drawings. Pricing contractors, make sure everything is included, down to any type of trim, plumbing fixture or light bulb.



### 5. Ask if your architect or designer can help during construction

Do not get rid of your designer once the Design and Permitting phases are done. In the Construction stage, he or she can review contractors' proposals to ensure that they are fair and that the design is implemented correctly. Communicating with your designer will save you time, money and headaches during construction.



### 6. Learn about standard prices

You probably know by now that the cheapest designer, architect or contractor is not necessarily the best. A quick rule of thumb is that the designer or architect's industry standard cost is 10% of the construction cost or more. A contractor's labor cost is typically double the cost of materials. Contractors also charge about 10% profit on top of their total proposal.

\* If you need a rough estimate of the construction cost for your project, use our **calculator**.

