

The *Dream Team*

I've always wondered what it would be like to have my "dream team" – an architect, interior designer and store planner – all in one firm, working on projects together from the very beginning and through to the very end.

by *Nicole Klimek & Maria Rehlander*

When I work on projects and the client has their own architect or interior designer, I have this déjà vu thought of, "Gulp. I hope we get along and are on the same page!" And about 50 per cent of the time, we are – which is good, but not great. I've always wondered what it would be like to have my "dream team". . . .an architect, interior designer and store planner, all in one firm, working on projects together from the very beginning and through to the very end.

Why do I want this dream team? Well, for several reasons, the top one being it would make my job a lot easier if I could talk with the project architect from conception. It would also be nice to work with them on the site selection and development. And it would be amazing if I had someone to review my work that knew the code and ADA requirements better than I do. (ADA is American's With Disabilities Act. . . .in Canada, it's the CDA (Canadians with Disabilities Act).

Maria Rehlander, the principal architect of seven roots, a design firm that offers this no longer "imaginary" dream team, says, "Common oversights and conflict may include door locations and sizes, equipment locations not meeting code, clear space requirements etc. in relation to other building components, and interior finish selections not meeting code compliance."

As a retailer, why does this matter to you? Money of course! "Having the three work together from the start is the best option," explains Maria. "All of these services need to marry together in order to

have a functional and aesthetically finished store. If the trades do their work separately, then when it is time to merge the design, things will not fit or work out correctly. Thus, there is a lot of time and money spent on re-working the design so that it will work."

During our conversation, Maria and I talked about some of the things we both see that stores don't pay attention to, for whatever reason. Maria pointed out that, "Many times, a store will want to change just one aspect of their business, like

those people tell them their project can't happen the way they thought.

Maria continues: "Just because a store wants something that they think will be a quick and affordable change for their store, often times, it can trickle into several unforeseen items. We can help stores understand the whole picture right from the beginning to make sure everyone understands what needs to be done, and that they do not have any surprises during the process."

Site checklist

During our conversation and after a few cups of much needed coffee, we created a checklist for stores to use when they're selecting their site. This is one of the most critical times for a project and we're often not yet involved. With this list, stores can at least get the basics right. (See sidebar for list.)

At the end of our chat, we felt pretty good about what we talked about, but one thing was very clear: stores need an experienced, dedicated team right away and that team should include an architect, store planner and interior designer who work well together. •

Site Checklist

1. The biggest thing to look for in a site first and foremost is location.
2. Can customers access the building?
3. Can trucks make deliveries without getting in the way of customers shopping?
4. Is there enough on-site parking? We recommend 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet.
6. Is there dedicated, on site trash and recycling?
7. Is the store visible and easy to access?

adding or expanding a deli. What they don't realize is that although they only want to change this part of their store, often times, code requires them to then also update other parts of their store such as the washrooms. I see this all the time with merchandising or equipment as well. I love the energy that growth in the stores brings, but I don't like to see dampened hopes and dreams after the stores finally hire the right people. Often,

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