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The Master Design Whole-house
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On the Cover: A 1952 ranch bungalow is transformed into an island retreat boasting an open floor plan and indoor-outdoor transitions. *Ciro Coelho Photography*

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A Successful Addition Begins with Communication

By Dan Contelmo

Architects face many challenges when designing an addition. They may have to deal with setback issues, tight budgets and time constraints, all while attempting to design a structure that will be appropriate for the program. One of the most common challenges, however, is communication.

For most projects, the design phase takes months to develop. The architect works closely with the client to create multiple design concepts, which evolve into one that they are most comfortable with. This is successful when the clients express their wishes and goals to the architect. By the time this phase is complete, the design is an intimate expression of the home the client will inhabit in the months ahead. The architect then assembles a comprehensive set of construction documents that details what the structure will look like and how it will be built. By this time, the client and

cohesive set of construction documents. Holding a preconstruction meeting outlines the project's goals and reveals any potential challenges that could affect the layout or appearance of the house. Once construction begins, the contractor should become familiar with the architect's documents and should speak with the architect at regular intervals to ensure the design goals are being met.

Too many times, I have seen projects veer off course because a contractor has disregarded the plans and has not communicated when questions arise. I arrive at a jobsite to find the structure has been installed differently than what the drawings call for. On the other hand, I have also heard from contractors about drawings that lacked information and were therefore left to interpretation. Unfortunately, these situations are far too common. In either case, the lack of com-

munication impedes the clients' goals. project needed constant attention during the forming of concrete and the framing. My firm was hired to be on-site each week to review the progress of the work and to document each visit with a report and photos. The on-site construction supervisor called me several times a week with questions and updates. He asked about details, which information should take precedence and raised concerns when appropriate. The contractor respected my skill as a designer, and I respected his ability to build. The contractor felt comfortable asking for clarification on architectural details, and I didn't hesitate to seek his opinions on means and methods of construction. Our recipe for success began when we honored the drawings and their intent and planned the schedule on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Doing so ensured construction was completed efficiently and correctly. This was possible because we took the time to communicate and to allow each of our teams to do what they do best.

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architect have spent countless hours together developing a cohesive design. They now look to a talented contractor to make their efforts a reality.

The contractor is responsible for executing the design during construction. One of the most important aspects of this phase is communication. Communication starts when the architect creates a thorough and

communication impedes the clients' goals. In contrast to this, I have been involved with many successful projects where the flow of communication has resulted in satisfaction on all sides. I recently completed a large renovation/addition such as this. The home was a complicated structure with many different rooflines and jogs, and it required specific detailing. The

realize that time is money and that proper communication takes time. However, neglecting the coordination required during construction often proves disastrous. I have found that engaging and encouraging contractors to communicate with my office has yielded the most successful results. | **QR**



Daniel Contelmo Architects, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., has been designing custom residential homes, additions and renovations for more than 25 years. They are one of the premier architectural firms in the New York Hudson Valley, having won numerous awards for their designs. Dan has contributed to several publications and trade magazines, books and HGTV and was recently published in *Beautiful Homes*.