

Millennials: 5 Ways to Help you Become a Building Design Professional...

Millennials sometimes find when searching for a job in the building design industry a surprising amount of experience is required to advance—So many years that it can feel like the requirement is the same as their age, or at least it can seem that way! I'm sure you've seen the meme that says "You're telling me....I have to get experience BEFORE I get experience?" This prompts the thought, "How can I develop my career when no one will give me the opportunity to jump in feet first, or even at all!"

So, millennials, here are five simple ways to help you take on your career in the building design industry in the early stages of your career:

1. Take on different roles and projects

Instead of only sticking to what you're familiar with, step up to the plate and ask to be a part of multiple phases of a project you're assigned to. This will allow you to grasp the ins-and-outs of the project from beginning to end and will help you understand the design and construction process every step of the way. Don't forget to find what really interests you and become a subject matter expert in that area. For example, if you're into sustainability, attend sustainable conferences and help coordinate in-house seminars at your firm. The more projects and processes you work on, the more knowledgeable you'll become and more doors for professional advancement opportunities will open.

2. Keep your portfolio current

Your portfolio should be relevant and up to date. Include specifics of the projects you've worked on and how you helped manage each project. Include all your responsibilities and the various hats you've worn in different roles. Highlight your contributions and include an example of a contract document from a previous project you facilitated. Showcase your most unique and creative work, highlight your stronger pieces, and include a wide variety of pieces that flow smoothly.

3. Improve your presentation skills

Public Speaking is an invaluable trait for a building design professional. You may have had the opportunity to take public speaking courses during school for class credits, but if not, it's never too late to practice your public speaking. Even if that entails rehearsing your presentation in front of a mirror before your big presentation at a meeting. After the important meeting, ask your peers for their feedback on your performance keeping in mind that constructive criticism isn't a bad thing. Also, avoid using "archispeak"—You don't want to be that one person who uses elaborate words to impress clients. This can rub them the wrong way. They don't expect you to incorporate words that you'd only find in the dictionary.

4. Set goals.

Set goals and actively challenge yourself. Remember, a firm is looking for someone who can help fulfill their short term AND long-term goals by hiring the right person who sets goals that impact the firm's overall performance and vision. Have you been setting goals for yourself? Maybe personally? Maybe professionally?

When was the last time you've set a goal and met it? Even in the beginning of your building design career, setting goals will put you a head of those that don't challenge themselves. Develop strategies, even on your little tasks. Take these assignments seriously and eventually your superiors will notice your passion for design. Eventually, you'll be the one leading design efforts on very significant projects. This goal-oriented mindset will help you achieve career success, no matter if you're just starting out, or if you could do the job with your eyes closed.

Now to my fourth point— In order to be successful in your career, you must seek both wisdom and knowledge from others that have plenty of years of experience under their belt. Network, network, and network some more!

5. Seek Wisdom & Knowledge

Adopt a collaborative mind set and keep your eyes peeled for mentorships. Find designers who have skills and roles that you aspire to and use them as resources. Be proactive and identify mentors that can help guide you throughout your professional career. It's important to network within your organization. Doing so, will help you seek and share knowledge, expose you to additional education courses, and will increase your credibility. These mentors will help foster your foundational development and will be instrumental to your building design career advancement. Don't be afraid to network and ask lots of questions not only with your peers and colleagues within your organization, but leverage working relationships with different types of professional groups, societies, and other organizations. This will help you conquer your profession and will put you one step ahead.

And there you have it. In order to flourish in the early stages of your building design career, be proactive, and apply all five of these simple tips. You'll be glad you did when you see your career come to full fruition.

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