

# NEWSPAPERS & TECHNOLOGY

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## FACILITY PLANNING BY DARIO DIMARE



### What are you, loco?

When it comes to choosing a local architect versus a newspaper specialist for a new facility, major addition or renovation, you would have to be loco to go local.

This article will explore the reasons certain architectural firms specialize in newspapers and the added value they bring. There are several firms that have people within their company that have experience with newspapers. Dario Designs is one of these firms, and it is a firm that specializes exclusively in the design of newspaper facilities.

If this article seems slanted toward the specialist, it is! Specialists can bring significantly more value to a building project than a local architect. The following paragraphs will explain our point.

Architecture as a profession is similar to other professions. Like professors, lawyers and doctors, there are general practitioners in each profession and there are specialists. I'll stick with doctors in this analogy, due to the obvious lack of love for lawyers.

Just as some architectural firms specialize in newspapers, some doctors specialize in heart surgery and brain surgery. Specialists bring expertise and experience to a field that is more complicated than general practice.

There are general practitioners in medicine and in architecture. These general practitioners can be the best in their fields, but they are still general practitioners. I am sure the family doctor read the book on heart and brain surgery, but would you want him operating on your heart or brain? I don't think so. If he did operate on your brain, you could very easily end up loco!

The same stands true for architectural specialists. The general practitioner can only put an envelope around the equipment and areas you select. You can gain little, if any value beyond basic architecture from the local architect.

The only exceptions are local construction methods, materials and permits, which can be secured from the civil engineers and by a quick review of the drawings by



**A newspaper specialist working with a team of general architectural practitioners is like playing a basketball game with a team of good athletes. You stand a much better chance of winning with a team of people with the same expertise.**

the local architect. Civil engineering should always be done locally for the very same reason a newspaper specialist should be used for newspapers. The engineers know the local soils and permit conditions better than an out-of-town generalist.

This principle holds true for other areas in architecture as well. There are firms that specialize in hospitals, jails, stadiums and nuclear power plants. None of these would add real value to a newspaper facility.

When working with a specialist you can ask them questions you could not ask a

local architect such as:

- ◆ What is the average size of a reporter's cubicle?
- ◆ What finish should I use on the floor in platemaking?
- ◆ Can you tell me the benefits of an ad team?
- ◆ What type of fittings do you recommend for our ink piping?
- ◆ How big should our press pad be, and do we need to isolate it from the building?

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## From front

- ◆ What would you recommend for secure coupon storage?
- ◆ What type of shipping docks do you recommend?
- ◆ How would you deal with Thanksgiving?
- ◆ Do we need spill containment for our ink?
- ◆ How high should our mailroom be?
- ◆ Why can't we store the plates in the kitchen?
- ◆ How big does the opening have to be to bring in the press?
- ◆ Does the floor have to be stronger in the area where the press is being received?
- ◆ Do you recommend rigging rails in the press hall, maintenance rails, or nothing?

Many of these questions would take a local architect weeks or months to answer, when a specialist would have the answer in minutes. There are also many questions that a specialist asks a newspaper about its facility that a local architect would not even know about. These questions could have significant consequences on the building design. It's not that the local architect is ignorant, it's just that they don't know what they don't know.

One example is "Do you plan on running straight or collect?" It's a simple question for a specialist, but the local architect would not even know the difference between straight and collect, never mind the impact it would have on the facility.

One obvious impact is that the mailroom would have to be nearly twice the size to handle a straight run as it would be to handle a collect run. This is due to the throughput capacities of the packaging equipment. If the product is coming out twice as fast,

you will need twice the equipment to handle it in the same amount of time.

Another example is asking the newspaper if it will be printing offset or flexo. The local architect would not know the difference between the two printing technologies. He might even think that Flexoman was a new super hero instead of a type of printing press.

The implications here are also significant, since flexo is a water-based system, while offset is oil-based. The flexo system will require a more sophisticated mechanical system that can have a tighter control on humidity, since the humidity level will affect the print quality more in flexo than it will in offset.

Dario Designs had one instance where we saved a newspaper more than \$250,000 on the design of their mechanical system. We saved another newspaper over \$500,000 by correcting the work and contracts submitted by their consultants. And we saved a third newspaper more than a million dollars in their acquisition of newspaper equipment! None of this would have happened with a local architect. This is real, tangible value.

One other factor to consider is can a specialist work with a local architect. Yes, but it still will not be as good as having the specialist responsible for all aspects of the project throughout its duration.

The medical analogy holds true for this as well. If you had a specialist involved as a consultant working with a local architect, it would be like having a heart surgeon working with five other doctors that have never done heart surgery. They may pull it off, but wouldn't you rather have a heart surgeon working with a team of doctors

that work strictly on hearts, and a team that he works with every day? "Oh, you said scalpel, I thought you said scalp-em. Oops."

Would Michael Jordan stand a better chance of winning with four good athletes (a football player, a baseball player, a golfer, and tennis pro) or would he be more likely to win with his teammates? OK, he'd probably win either way, but he'd score more points with his teammates.

You can build a newspaper facility with any architect. But if you want it to be safe, functional, flexible, efficient, expandable and long lasting, you're better off with a specialist. The bottom line is that a local architect cannot add nearly as much value as a newspaper specialist can.

It will be his first newspaper project, and probably his last, so there is no real incentive to learn. And if he does learn, it will be at the expense of the newspaper. A specialist does not have to learn, but can actually teach the customer something about how a newspaper facility goes together.

In retrospect, the newspaper specialist's familiarity with the operations, trends, equipment, finishes and support systems within a newspaper dwarf the potential gains you can receive by going local. In other words, you'd have to be loco to go local.▲

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