

Appendix E

If Architects Had to Work Like Programmers

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PKR2, Defense Information Systems Agency

Dear Mr. Architect:

Please design and build me a house. I am not quite sure what I need, so let's get started. My house should have between two and 45 bedrooms. Just make sure the plans are such that the bedrooms can be easily added or deleted. When you bring the blueprints to me, I'll make the final decision about what I want. Also, bring me the cost breakdowns for each configuration so I can arbitrarily pick one at a later time.

Keep in mind that the house I ultimately choose must cost less than the one I am currently living in. Make sure, however, that you correct all the deficiencies that exist in my current house (the floor of my kitchen vibrates when I walk across it, and the walls don't have nearly enough insulation in them).

As you design, also keep in mind that I want to keep yearly maintenance costs as low as possible. This should mean the incorporation of extra-cost features like insulated windows or composite siding. (If you choose not to use Anderson insulated windows, be prepared to explain you decision.)

Please take care that modern design practices and the latest materials are used in construction of the house, as I want it to be a showplace for the most up-to-date ideas and methods. Be alerted, however, that the kitchen should accommodate (among other things) my 1952 Gibson refrigerator.

To assure that you are building the correct house for our entire family, you will need to contact each of my children and our in-laws. My mother-in-law will have very strong feelings about how the house should be designed, since she visits us at least once a year. Make sure you weigh all these options carefully and make recommendations. However, I retain the right to overrule any recommendation you make.

Please don't bother me with small details right now. Your job is to develop the overall plans for the house and get the big picture. At this time, for example, it is not appropriate to be choosing the color of the carpeting; however, keep in mind that my wife likes blue.

Also, do not worry at this time about acquiring the resources to build the house itself. Your first priority is to develop detailed plans and specifications. Once I approve these plans, however, I would expect the house to be under roof within 48 hours.

While you are designing this house specifically for me, keep in mind that sooner or later I will have to sell it to someone else. It should — therefore appeal to a wide variety of potential buyers. Please make sure, before you finalize the plans, that there is a consensus of the potential home buyers in my area that they like the features of this house.

I advise you to run up and look at the house my neighbor built last year, as we like it a great deal. It has many things that we feel we need in our new home, particularly the 75-foot swimming pool. With careful engineering, I believe you can design this into our new house without impacting the construction cost.

Please prepare a complete set of blueprints. It is not necessary at this time to do the real design, since they will be used only for construction bids. Be advised, however, that you will be held accountable for any increase of construction cost as a result of later design changes.

You must be thrilled to be working on such an interesting project! To be able to use the latest techniques and materials and to be given such freedom in your designs is something that can't happen very often. Contact me as soon as possible with your ideas and completed plans.

Sincerely,
The Client

PS: My wife just told me she disagrees with many of the instructions I have given you in this letter. As the architect, it is your responsibility to resolve these differences. I have tried in the past and have failed to accomplish this. If you can't handle this responsibility, I will have to find another architect.

PPS: Perhaps what I need is not a house at all, but a travel trailer. Please advise me as soon as possible if this is the case.