

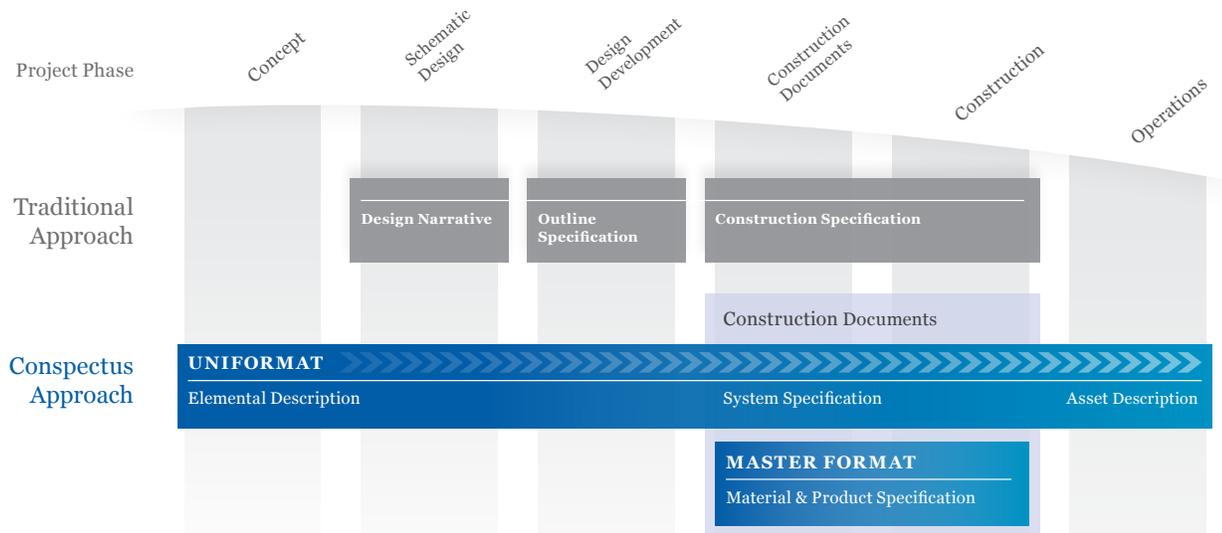
FOR ARCHITECTS

Our Approach

From the earliest project stages, architects face a complex and ongoing set of challenges. First and foremost, you must constantly focus on delivering a designed solution for realizing the owner’s vision in both form and function. At the same time, you must continually address concerns and demands raised by the contractor relating to constructability, scheduling, and budget constraints. This can be particularly troublesome when contractor demands conflict with an owner’s requirements.

Not surprising, this complicated mix poses a correspondingly complex set of risks, which can be broadly categorized as those that: 1) compromise design intent, 2) jeopardize the successful completion of the project, and 3) negatively impact the architectural firm’s efficiency, profitability, and reputation. Compounding these risks, the further along in the project that issues and conflicts arise, the more serious the consequences become.

There is a solution. The Conspectus approach to construction specifications and project documentation creates a seamless flow of information that extends from concept through design and construction and all the way to owner occupancy and operations. It’s an approach created to help architects resolve issues and optimize designed solutions by capturing and preserving the complete body of increasingly complex information, providing data for incremental cost analysis of design and construction options, and documenting all decisions as they are made.



CLOSING THE GAPS. REDUCING THE RISKS.

Traditionally, specifications are developed sequentially as discrete documents, a disjointed process resulting in critical information gaps that often increase risk. Conspectus approaches specifications as a seamless continuum of information gathering, analysis, and documentation that closes the gaps, reduces risk, and adds value for architects, owners, and other stakeholders.

CONFRONTING THE RISKS

By carefully pinpointing the risks inherent in the project specifications process, Conspetus can help architects identify the underlying causes and avoid the very serious and potentially costly consequences of inadequate or incomplete documentation.

THE RISKS TO DESIGN INTENT

Architects bear the prime responsibility for delivering an optimal designed solution supported by high quality construction documentation. When forced by expedience or economics to make design decisions based on inadequate data or to provide documentation out of sequence, the results can trigger problems that extend across the entire project continuum and linger long after.

One of the most onerous of the consequences is reactive value engineering (VE) driven by construction costs and budget constraints. VE can occur almost anytime during each design phase. When it does, design teams often face the dilemma of whether to continue to work in the owner's best interest or to preserve the design. All too often, value engineering efforts compromise the design intent, alter project scope, and significantly disrupt schedules. Obviously, VE also requires the architect to expend more time and resources, which can seriously erode efficiency, productivity, and profit margin.

THE RISKS TO PROJECT SUCCESS

Regardless of the metric used to measure success — whether it's time, money, quality, or client satisfaction — when downstream contractors can't understand or execute on the contract documents, project outcomes are in jeopardy. Typically, when contractors encounter this problem, they submit a request for information (RFI) to the architect for a timely response to clarify the documentation.

Aside from the obvious delays and inefficiencies associated with RFIs up and down the project team, design decisions made hastily without complete data and documentation can embed problems that can surface anytime during and even after construction. When RFIs mount, the contractor can lose faith in the quality of the documentation, and the owner can lose faith in both the design and construction team. Once this loss of confidence occurs, it encourages opportunistic behavior from all the parties and increased costs to resolve differences.

Sometimes, to keep the project under control and on track, the architect must shift focus from what's right for the design package to what's expedient for the construction package. This often requires additional research, revisiting or reworking designs, rethinking decisions, and producing documentation — all out of sequence and exacerbated by not knowing the rationale for the original design decision.

THE RISKS TO THE FIRM

As a standard part of their responsibilities, all architects must constantly address and set priorities, resolve conflicts, and manage a relentless stream of cascading issues — many arising from circumstances not fully within their control. This effort consumes a great deal of the firm's time and talent. If not managed and solved carefully, it can result in inefficiencies, loss of profitability, and even damage to the brand value.

The comprehensiveness and quality of contractual and construction documentation lie at the heart of many of these commonly encountered problems. RFIs very often result in change orders, which in turn trigger schedule disruptions, project delays, and unanticipated costs. Faulty documentation also embeds permanent risk for litigation, which can have lingering impacts on the firm's fiscal health and reputation.

HOW THE CONSPECTUS APPROACH WORKS FOR ARCHITECTS

Architects give themselves a quality assurance and risk mitigation advantage by partnering with a specifications provider who can mine and analyze data, document decisions, help balance conflicting demands from multiple stakeholders, and streamline the entire documentation process. This is exactly what the Conspectus approach promises.

Instead of documenting products and materials for specific design solutions at the start, Conspectus takes an additive approach that focuses primarily on defining systems and performance as early in the project as possible. This means that as architects refine their solutions and as the requirements for delivering the solutions become clearer, Conspectus continues to augment and refine the data as it becomes available to support sound decision making.

For architects, the Conspectus approach opens up opportunities to explore system and assembly options before committing to a single design solution. The extensive data provided enables a rigorous value analysis of the options, which helps architects compare cost impacts, potential risks, and performance differences. Such robust information supports optimized design solution informed by professional judgment and aligned with the owner's requirements. It also lays a solid foundation for delivering a comprehensive and accurate set of final specifications and contract documents.

WHY THE CONSPECTUS APPROACH WORKS

The advantages of the Conspectus approach over traditional approaches include enhanced problem solving, improved design process efficiencies, and better-informed design decisions. Ultimately the Conspectus approach helps architects deliver and realize greater value while mitigating risk for all stakeholders: architects, owners, and builders. Here's why.

DEEP EXPERIENCE ACROSS PROJECT TYPES

Conspectus has developed specifications documentation for more than 2,000 projects of various types domestically and internationally. This unmatched level of engagement offers even the largest architectural firms an unprecedented breadth and depth of on-the-ground experience, practical knowledge, and expert judgment that can help decrease cost, improve risk management, and help keep projects on track.

INSIGHTS AND INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

Conspectus's institutional memory and intellectual capital provide a learning engine for architects, routinely helping to reduce the learning curve for less experienced design team members. For architectural firms where the various offices have significant autonomy over their projects, the Conspectus approach also creates a collective "intelligence" system that enables knowledge and insight gained on one project to be carried over to the next, helping to prevent repetition of costly errors.



INFORMED DECISION MAKING

The Conspectus approach comprehensively documents design requirements and designed solutions, allowing comparative analysis of their potential impact on the functionality, performance, quality, and cost of the project. This enables optimized decision making instead of best-guess choices.

FOCUSED ON QUALITY

The Conspectus approach naturally integrates quality assurance from the start of a project as part of the firm's broader role in monitoring processes and raising critical issues to make sure decisions are completed at appropriate times and inconsistencies, discrepancies, and errors don't go unnoticed or unresolved.

TRANSPARENCY, ACCESS, AND COLLABORATION

The Conspectus approach helps ensure that all primary stakeholders can know at every point what decisions are being made, the rationale behind them, and the implications for budget, schedule, and operations. It also promotes collaboration among the project team members who make and implement critical design decisions, translate design into construction documents, and manage the actual construction.

COMMITTED TO OWNER SATISFACTION

Conspectus's collaborative approach enables owners to contribute to the design and specifications process their own experience and expertise about what will work and what won't. It also integrates an owner's standards into the communications continuum from the start and can provide analytics to guide design decisions and to verify that the designed solution complies.