

# Part 1 The Art Of Being Special

*Dear Friend,*

I write this letter to you sitting on my bed in a traditional French chalet deep in the French Alps. My wife and I, with our three teenage children Claudia (19), Max (17) and Holly (15) are in a delightfully quaint town called Sallanches, about 30 kilometers from Chamonix.

From this soft office, I can see Mt. Blanc through my window. I am lucky enough to be able to live here for the next three months because I have mastered what you are about to learn today.

The last thing you ever want to appear as is “just another architect.” But like architects, marketers operate in a crowded market place, so both you and I need to find ways to slip clear of the crowd and stand out. We need to be different, we need to be as attractive as possible and we need to be *special*.

When you learn the art of differentiation or positioning yourself as a rare valuable object, you will never be looking for projects. You will be choosing projects. But here is the catch ... your problem is you that while you *are* different no one SEES you as different.

## **Sit back and let me tell you a story.**

This was a cold January morning in 2007 down in the Washington D.C. Metro Station. A busker sets up his violin and plays six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, approximately 2,000 people went through the station, most of them on their way to work.

After three minutes of this, a middle-aged man noticed there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried to meet his schedule.

After four minutes, the violinist received his first dollar: A woman threw the money in the box and continued to walk.

At six minutes, a young man leaned against the wall to listen to him, then looked at his watch and started to walk again.

At ten minutes, a 3-year-old boy stopped, but his mother tugged him along hurriedly as the kid continued to watch the violinist. Finally, the mother pushed hard and the child resumed walking, turning his head all the time. This action was repeated by several other children. Every parent, without exception, forced them to move on.

Nearing 45 minutes, the musician played on. Only six people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but continued to walk at their normal pace. He collected \$32. At one hour, he finished playing and silence took over. No one noticed. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

No one knew this, but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the best musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written, with a violin worth \$3.5 million dollars. Two days before, Joshua Bell sold out a theater in Boston where the seats averaged \$100.

### **The problem was that no one knew the busker was special.**

Think how this situation applies to you. I'll bet you are highly skilled, you probably produce works of art and are also probably underappreciated and underpaid just like Joshua Bell was on that cold January morning. The difference is Joshua Bell will return to the stage, adoring crowds and his big celebrity fee. You on the other hand will continue to be hustling on a daily basis in front of people who do not see you as an expert, or anything special unless you do what I will teach you in this letter.

That sounds a little harsh, even for me. But unless I tell you straight, you may pass this lesson off as just another letter. Listen here, bucko, you need to take everything I give you in these letters as the most important marketing secrets you will ever receive because ... they are. No one in the world gets their fingers burned more than me, but at the same time, no one gets more success for architects either – and I mean no one anywhere.

Now we have that clear, let's proceed :-)

Today, we are going to start to answer a question very few architects ever answer. This is THE question every potential client is asking. They may not ask this question out loud but they WILL be asking this question inside their head. You need to answer this question even if they do not ask it out loud because they will need an answer.

Here is the question ...

"Why should I hire you over ALL other options including the option of using a draftsman, builder, other architect or even doing the design myself?"

A good answer will give you a life of abundance filled with fulfilling projects. But a bad answer and you can expect to continue to under-earn, have clients who treat you as a commodity and be constantly justifying your fees as if you are overcharging.

Your financial future depends on how you answer this question.

I will share six ways to differentiate yourself, probably just two this month and four the next. I think you are better served by allowing me to drill the theory and examples into your head rather than hand you a list you will forget by lunchtime tomorrow.

See I really do care.

'In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different.'

-- Coco Chanel

Remember very few architects will ever work this out on their own, so please don't strive to answer this question perfectly, just answer it quickly, test the response you get and adapt as needed until you find an answer that resonates with the people you want to attract.

Tally ho then!

There are three ways to be different:

1. You can be cheaper
2. You can be faster
3. You can be better

I am going to ignore the first two because they usually won't work well for you. You aren't a sausage factory with a superior conveyor belt and you seldom want to be the "cheap guy." Let's work on #3 ... being better in some way.

Being the best isn't as simple as you may think. I have my 8 favorite ways for an architect to be "better" but none is the right answer. Today, let's dig into the first two "bests" on my list.

## DIFFERENTIATION #1: The Specialist

When you try and be all things to all people, you end up being “nothing to no one.”

OK, now brace yourself ... because what you are about to read next may be one of the toughest truths you ever face. But remember tough love is real love and sometimes you need to be told the truth, even if it hurts.

Ready? Take a deep breath and proceed ...

Being an architect requires a more diverse range of skills than any other profession I have ever come across. You need to be an artist, an accountant, a project manager, negotiator, people manager and marriage counselor. That is just a start. When it comes to design, you have to understand construction, engineering, design, and branding, then work all of that within the environment you face.

Learning everything must be exhausting. Not my bag, too much for me but I respect you more than you can know. I know I could not do your job.

Now here is the problem. Let's say you get a client who wants X, your reply is that you can do X. Then you get a client who wants Y. You can do Y, too. Along comes a project that requires Z and you are the one for that as well.

You are fully within your rights to call yourself a generalist (an expert in a number of different genres) because you have earned the right. BUT while you may see this as your competitive advantage, your market certainly does not.

They should but they don't. Finish this well-known phrase.

“Jack of all trades, master of ...”

While you see your multi-skilled abilities as your greatest asset, your market sees a generalist like a low-end handyman. That is how perceptions work. Your apprenticeship of toil and sweat in 20 different areas is NOT a marketing advantage after all.

Being a specialist is. I know this is unfair, and I know it's not right, but I am here to give it to you straight. You deserve to hear the truth. Think about it ...

If you have a heart problem do you see the general practitioner or the **specialist**?

If you are being charged for murder do you see the general lawyer or the “get people off murder charges” specialist?

If Tiger Woods has an issue with his swing does he ask to see a general golf pro or Butch Harmon the “swing coach”?

The New Zealand All Blacks rugby team has a specialist scrum coach, NFL teams have a kicking coach and a specialist kicker. That’s all he does, how tedious.

In pretty much **any** industry, specialists are perceived as being the best. It doesn’t matter if the only reason they became a specialist is because they were useless at everything else.

The people with money will naturally gravitate towards experts, the specialists.

We see a specialist as “someone who has seen and solved my problem before.” Someone that, even if my situation is slightly off the normal distribution curve, can handle the challenge. Why take the risk with someone who isn’t a specialist when you can afford to get the job done right the first time?

The rich end of any market doesn’t like risk and they don’t like to pay for someone to learn on their project. IBM knew this when they made their slogan “No one ever got fired for choosing IBM.”

The rich end of the market is prepared to pay an insurance policy of a higher fee to get the guy or gal who will do it right. Yes, they can get a cheaper architect but why take the risk? And they don’t mind paying more to get more. That’s how big budgets operate.

One of the reasons you probably came to AMI is because we specialize in marketing for architects. You figured that since marketing for architects is all we do we can probably help you with proven strategies that have already worked for architects before you. You’d be right and this strategy is one of the secrets we recommend. While it is a great strategy, the “specialist” strategy is not *exactly* a secret because a few architects have cottoned on to this specialist gig.

So if you want something hardly anyone knows, then this next differentiation strategy is almost unknown to architects.

## **DIFFERENTIATION #2: The Leading Educator**

Oh, this is soooooo sneaky. Why compete with 10,000 other architects for a project when you can swim in the Blue Ocean?

### **What is Blue Ocean Strategy?**

Blue Ocean as a strategy is the simultaneous pursuit of differentiation and low cost to open up a new market space and create new demand. It is about creating and capturing uncontested market space, thereby making the competition irrelevant.

### **What are Red Oceans and Blue Oceans?**

In their book, "Blue Ocean Strategy," W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne coined the terms "Red Ocean" and "Blue Ocean" to describe different markets.

Red Oceans in your context would be competing as an architect. In Red Oceans, industry boundaries are defined and accepted, and the competitive rules of the game are known. This might include free site visits, fee comparisons and competitions to win projects.

In the Red Ocean, architects try to outperform their rivals to win projects. As the market space gets crowded, profits and growth are reduced. Design becomes a commodity, leading to cutthroat or "bloody" competition, hence the term Red Oceans.

Blue Oceans, in contrast, represent a market place not in existence today – the unknown market space, untainted by competition. In Blue Oceans, demand is created rather than fought over. There is ample opportunity for growth that can be both profitable and rapid.

In Blue Oceans, competition is irrelevant because the rules of the game are waiting to be set. A Blue Ocean is an analogy to describe the wider, deeper potential to be found in unexplored market space. The Blue Ocean that I have worked with many architects to create is the **educational market**.

**Now read the next few sentences very carefully ...**

While your competition is knocking on the front door to win design projects you can quietly step around to the back and let yourself in.

Here is how you do it. You position yourself NOT as just another architect but as (your area's) leading educator on (insert your niche).

***“Richard Petrie is Wellington’s leading provider of tools and resources for home-owners looking to do a multi-million dollar sustainable renovation.”***

***“Richard Petrie is Wellington’s leading provider of tools and resources for government departments wanting to move to a 100% sustainable office.”***

Think about it. Who are people going to approach first, the educator or the design salesman? Most decision-makers spend a year or maybe two in the “research phase” before they approach experts like you. People don’t want to spend money on experts until they understand their situation and know what they want. But they will request tools and resources if the topic is 100% relevant to the questions they want answered.

**What sort of questions do they want to know the answers to?**

How much will my idea cost?

How long will it take?

What is the process I’ll need to work through?

Who will I need to talk to (when I am ready)?

What are the mistakes I need to avoid?

Who do I speak to first?

If you have an educational website that specializes in providing tools and answering these types of questions then you will have a destination that people will come to. You also have a destination other experts can refer people to.

You are the only one offering what all people really want in the early stages. As people consume your education, they can learn about you through your educational stories ... a little bit like this letter you are reading right now.

You can include examples of working with clients where you managed to overcome all the problems and fears the client was worried about.

This is “stealth selling” ... selling without actually selling. All you are doing is just helping people. This is good Karma and architects who build a front-end educational platform will be more successful than those fighting it out in the Red Ocean. This is not rocket science, is it? This is common sense. But sometimes you need a non-architect to work it out. You guys and gals are too smart to come up with such an obvious dumb solution to your #1 problem.

“Whoever educates the market owns the market”

-- Richard Petrie

I hate to quote myself, seems really pompous, but I am right. Lol

Of course, you will need to get people's names and addresses in return for your wonderful, helpful, insightful information AND follow up with a well-constructed offer to meet up when they are ready, but as a reader of this newsletter, you should already know that by now.

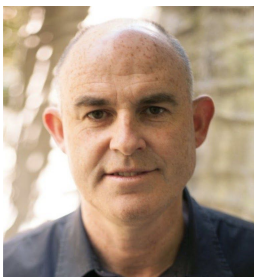
So there you have it, *maestro*, two of the six strategies I am going to share with you. Next month we will dig into how to position yourself as #1 in a market and also how to create a powerful backstory that makes you instantly attractive and different.

If you are thinking that reading this newsletter is unfair to your competition, you'd be right. Those poor, overworked, underpaid souls are slaving away still wondering why no one sees them as the alchemists they really are. But not you. Because you know you have two jobs.

JOB #1 Marketing of design services

JOB #2 Deliverer of design services

Until next month, as they say here in France “*Vive la différence.*”



*Richard Petrie*

**The leading educator for architects wanting to grow their incomes and become the in demand architect in their niche**  
(Did you see what I just did there?)

## **Your Shortcut to Success**

Make the call that can win you even more than one million dollars. To see if your firm is a fit for working with us, apply for a complimentary One-on-One session: Text “1on1” (without the quotes) to 310-507-1905 or go here: [architectresources.org/1on1](https://architectresources.org/1on1)