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CLIENT SELECTION

Design professionals can improve the odds of success by evaluating their potential clients with the same critical judgment they apply to other areas of their practices. While clients come in all shapes and sizes, there are some danger signals that can be objectively measured. Other warning signs are less obvious. There is a form for '*Client Evaluation*' at the '*Checklist*' tab on the main menu. (The warnings in this section, and elsewhere under headings like '*Getting Paid*' may seem obvious, but many claims originate in these situations.)

Under-funded clients

Time and again, under-funded clients hit the financial wall and try to economize by stopping payments to the design professional. Plaintiffs begin lawsuits against design professionals in the hopes that payment will be suspended, possibly forever.

When the project is bigger than the client's pockets are deep, the very best the design professional can hope for is partial payment. The worst is a series of expensive, time-consuming and pointless lawsuits.

Unsophisticated clients

Clients who do not know what they are doing can be as risky to design professionals as disreputable ones. They can combine thin finances with unrealistic expectations and be more prone to mismanage projects. The end result can be claims against the design professional.

Clients who vanish

Avoid dealing with developers who build at the lowest possible cost, sell out quickly and then disappear. This client sometimes gives a good indication of their intentions by securing minimal design services at the lowest possible price and refusing to pay for any level of construction phase services. At project completion, the same client will demand all certifications required by mortgage lenders and municipal governments. When these clients sell out and move on, the design professional is still liable to the subsequent purchasers of the property. Claims are often driven by a lack of appropriate funding.