

Directed Research 2025

School of Architecture

Aidan R. Turner | Dean Michael Speaks



Discipline (Education)

Studying architecture
over the past five years.

Practice (Profession)

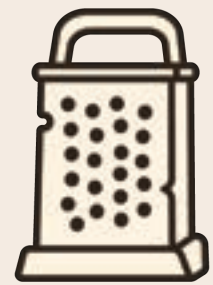
Projection of how I will
practice after graduation.

Executive board of the Entrepreneurship Club

Social Chairman of my fraternity

Entrepreneurial Mentor at the Blackstone LaunchPad

Current Vice President of the Fashion and Design Society



**grater
things**

*Grater
Things
Threads*



digital_toxicity

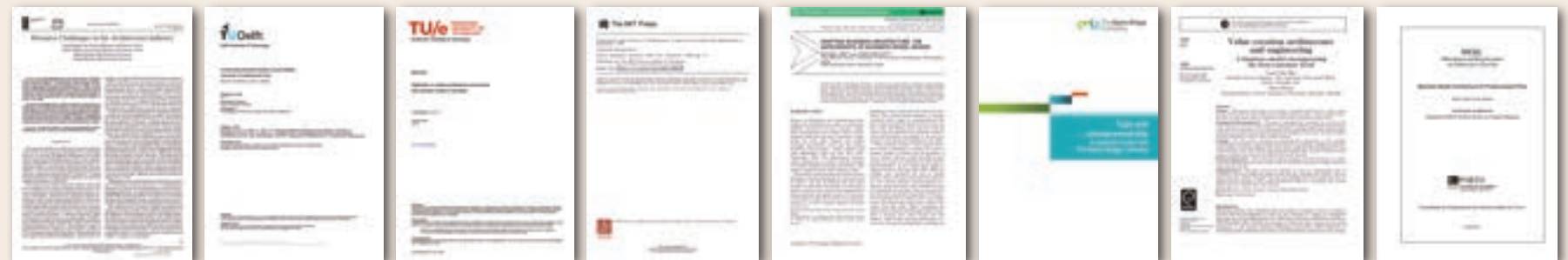
B.Arch Degree | Minor in Real Estate | Consistent Dean's List

Literature Review

Architecture Industry Reports



White Paper Research



Architecture Publications



Entrepreneurship Publications



+ Plus several online articles regarding the architectural profession & entrepreneurship

Jacqueline Grant

Interview conducted by Aidan R. Turner

Position Title:	Founder	Education:
Entity Name:	J. Grant Enterprises	Investment:
Medium:	Virtual Video Call	

Topics:

- Consulting, Strategy & Client Advisory
- Business Operations & Financial Model
- Branding, Media & Public Engagement
- Entrepreneurship & Startups

Summary:

In her conversation with Aidan R. Turner, Jacqueline Grant reflected on the business model of J. Grant Enterprises, her role as founder, and her approach to client advisory and business operations. She discussed the challenges of building a business from scratch and the importance of maintaining a strong brand identity while navigating the complexities of the market.

Eric Schlameuss

Interview conducted by Aidan R. Turner

Position Title:	SVP Design, Major Projects, and Capital Improvements	Education:
Entity Name:	FDRH Realty	Investment:
Medium:	Virtual Video Call	

Topics:

- Real Estate Development & Investment
- Consulting, Strategy & Client Advisory
- Entrepreneurship & Startups
- Innovation, Technology & Tools

Summary:

In his conversation with Aidan R. Turner, Eric Schlameuss discussed his role as SVP Design at FDRH Realty, his experience with major projects and capital improvements, and his approach to consulting and client advisory. He also shared his insights on entrepreneurship and innovation in the real estate industry.

Patrick Ahearn

Interview conducted by Aidan R. Turner

Position Title:	Founding Principal	Education:
Entity Name:	Patrick Ahearn Architects	Institutions:
Medium:	Virtual Video Call	Date:
		Mar 06, 2025

Topics:

- Entrepreneurship & Startups
- Branding, Media & Public Engagement
- Real Estate Development & Investment
- Business Operations & Financial Models

Summary:

In his conversation with Aidan R. Turner, Patrick Ahearn shared his journey from working in traditional architecture firms to building an entrepreneurial practice centered on branding, storytelling, and strategic development. He described how early mentorship experiences shaped his business acumen, leading him to blend architectural design with real estate investment and lifestyle branding, inspired by Ralph Lauren's marketing approach. Patrick emphasized creating a desirable narrative around his work, helping position his firm as both operational and approachable. He also detailed innovative fee structures and business strategies that allowed him to grow sustainably while maintaining a lean team. Throughout the conversation, Patrick critiqued outdated norms within the architecture profession and advocated for architects to embrace risk-taking, entrepreneurship, and better financial literacy to reclaim the value of their work.

Architectural Practitioners

Traditional Architects & Firm Leaders



Lee Morrisette
Principal at Dietz & Company Architects



Joshua Silbaugh
VP & Principal at Gannett Fleming



John Algeo
Retired Principal Architect at Walt Disney Imagineering



Karen Rojas
Design Strategy Lead at Meta



Jeff Zynda
Principal at Perkins+Will



Ron Goodin
Principal at Colliers Engineering & Design



Colby Mauke
Architect at Patrick Ahearn Architects



Chris Baylow
Science/Technology Leader at Page Southerland Page



Kirk Narburgh
CEO / Managing Partner, King + King Architects



Eduardo Terán
Architecture Instructor at Syracuse University



Thomas Zoli
Principal at Workshop/APD Architecture

Entrepreneurial Architects & Founders



Jake Rudin
Senior Manager of Digital Technologies at Adidas; Co-founder of Out of Architecture



Erin Pelligrino
Founder and Principal at Matter; Co-founder of Out of Architecture



John Rojas
Founding Principal at Zero Ten Design



Sara Loperigolo
Founder of Loperigolo Architects



Michael Phinney
Founder of Phinney Design Group



Richard Granoff
Founder of Granoff Architects & Granoff Real Estate



William Dodge
Co-Founder of a gang of three; Founder of p-u-b-l-i-c



Patrick Ahearn
Founding Principal of Patrick Ahearn Architects



Jiwon Shin
Founder of SHINOH



Ozzie Gonzalez
Founder of P3 Consulting



Alex Sheft
Founding Principal at Sheft Farrace



John Farrace
Founding Principal at Sheft Farrace








Julia Gamolina
Business Dev. Director at Ennead; Founder of Madame Architect

Professionals Beyond Architecture

Real Estate, Construction & Architecture-Adjacent Industries

 <p>Sherif Anis Senior Director of Development at KAFO</p>	 <p>Scott Shuster Founder & President at 11 Development</p>	 <p>Keir Weimer Founder & CEO of Weekender Hotels</p>
 <p>Eric Schlameuss SVP Design, Major Projects, and Capital Improvements at RXR Realty</p>	 <p>Milena Petrova Professor of Real Estate and Finance at Syracuse University</p>	 <p>Jason Tabak Senior Project Manager at Petra Construction</p>

Strategists, Creatives, & Entrepreneurs

 <p>Thomas O'Brien Co-Founder of Project FreeFall</p>	 <p>Natasha Brao Founder of Shooka</p>	 <p>Jacqueline Grant Founder of J. Grant Enterprises</p>
 <p>Khairi Reynolds Founder of KHAIRIX Design Firm</p>	 <p>Cira Masters Director of Marketing and Business Dev. at Philney Design Group</p>	

A Strategic Report for Emerging Architects

Redesigning Architectural Practice Through Entrepreneurial Thinking

Ron Goodin

Interview conducted by Aidan R. Turner.

Position Title:	Healthcare Principal	Education:	B.Arch
Entity Name:	Colliers Engineering & Design	Institutions:	Syracuse University
Medium:	Virtual Video Call	Date:	Feb. 26, 2025

Topics:
Traditional Architecture Practice
Consulting, Strategy & Client Advisory
Education, Mentorship & Professional Development
Firm Leadership, Culture & Growth
Business Operations & Financial Models

Summary:
In his conversation with Aidan Turner, Ron Goodin, a seasoned architect and firm leader, shared deep insights into the challenges and opportunities of architectural practice, particularly around business strategy and mentorship. He emphasized the importance of architects recognizing their role not just as designers, but as businesspeople responsible for sustaining teams and delivering value. Ron discussed the structural dynamics within firms, highlighting the divide between technical project architects and relationship-driven project managers, and underscored the need for mentorship programs—like the multi-tiered “mentoring matrix” he developed—to guide young professionals. He spoke candidly about business development, client relationships, and geographic growth strategies, especially within the healthcare market, while offering thoughtful reflections on leadership, entrepreneurship, and the gaps in architectural education. Ron’s perspective reinforces the need for architectural professionals to think both creatively and strategically, pairing design excellence with business acumen and long-term vision.

Overview

Role of Architecture

Q: How do you educate your clients—and the public—about what architects actually do and the value they bring to a project?

He explained that many architects fail to recognize and communicate their value. He uses personal and personal engagement to help clients understand what goes into their work. He believes design professionals need to educate clients about how, issues, and project complexity to correct public misconceptions.

Q: What strategies have you used to build trust with clients and communicate your firm's value throughout the design process?

He focuses on listening and building relationships. His working matrix includes communication, listening, and he believes mentoring and relationship building are core to both trust and long-term business development.

Q: Why do you think so many architecture struggles to meet their worth—and what have you learned about changing how that reflect your value?

He believes it stems from formal education, a lack of business training, and discomfort with asserting value. He highlighted the importance of putting back when project scope changes and having clear conversations about additional services and fees.

Q: What has been the most important lesson you've learned about positioning yourself—or your firm—as indispensable to a project's success?

By involving project managers and developing strategic client relationships. Ron positions his firm as a long-term partner. His proactive involvement early in projects builds confidence and ensures alignment with the client's vision.

Business Development & Client Relations

Q: How have you applied architectural thinking beyond traditional building design—into business strategy, consulting, or partnerships with clients across other industries?

Q: How do you approach client selection—and how do you decide when to walk away from clients or projects that don't align with your values or goals?

Not directly answered.

Q: Have your experiences with different service lines, packages, or pricing models led to different client types—and if so, what have you learned?

He discussed different contract types being run, hourly, not to exceed and adjusting scope expectations but did not outline formal fixed offerings.

Entrepreneurship & Firm Growth

Q: What are the biggest challenges you've seen in how architecture firms operate as businesses—and how best you worked to overcome them?

Architects often miss the big picture, focusing too much on production-oriented enough-on design. Ron connects this with networking, strategic planning, and systems thinking.

Q: What role has entrepreneurial thinking played in your career decisions, and how do you balance working on your business versus on it?

He actively balances high-level strategy and client relationships with project oversight. He views his leadership role as entrepreneurial and is focused on scaling through strategic hiring and market targeting.

Q: What are the trade-offs between working at a small firm versus a large one, especially when it comes to growth, risk-taking, and entrepreneurial opportunity?

He's worked at firms of various sizes and values small firms for their flexibility and hands-on experience. However, he recognizes that growth requires systems and mentorship to scale.

Q: What advice would you give to someone starting their own firm—in transitioning from traditional architecture into real estate development or other entrepreneurial paths?

He emphasizes hard work, strategic thinking, and understanding your differentiators. He discusses targeting niche markets, growing relationships organically, and planning through geographic and market analysis.

He applies systems-level thinking to firm growth. He uses geographic and market-based analysis (e.g., mapping hospitals and staff locations) to plan national expansion.

Q: What new revenue streams or service offerings has your firm explored—and how do you package or position those to clients?

Not directly answered.

Q: What role does entrepreneurial exploration and firm culture—especially around mentoring, advising, or innovation—play in enabling this kind of evolution?

He built a structured mentoring matrix with knowledge offices and tiers. This system creates a culture of growth, advising, and professional development, which supports firm evolution and talent retention.

Q: What's been the most challenging aspect of leading your firm from a business strategy standpoint—and how do you define or approach business development?

He views business development as relationship-based and strategic. He uses the “three buckets” rule and focuses on personal, geographically informed outreach. He's challenged by growth pacing, maintaining quality, and having others to replicate his business development approach.

Market Positioning, Client Retention & Advocacy

Q: How can architects use branding, storytelling, and content to elevate their perceived value and differentiate themselves in the market?

He talks on being the voice encourages the power of storytelling—especially in healthcare projects where emotional impact is part of the client proposition—but does not detail a branding strategy.

Q: What role does marketing—both traditional and digital—play in growing your practice, and what specific approaches have worked best for you?

He values relationship-based marketing over commodity-style advertising. He leverages client referrals, case studies, and presence at conferences rather than digital or social media heavy strategies.

Architecture Education & Training

Q: Do you think architectural education adequately prepares students for the business side of the profession—and what's still missing?

He believes architecture does a lot of work and has a high gap. He believes business training—especially real-world application—is missing in most programs.

Q: How has your education—especially regarding design, business, and diverse responsibilities—helped you in your career today?

He didn't explicitly reference this, but he emphasized that mentoring by using and structured mentoring have shaped his understanding of practice.

Q: If you were designing a business-focused curriculum for architecture students, what key topics or real-world skills would you include?

He would focus on contracts, fees, business development, negotiation, and financial modeling—much of which is now built into firm's mentorship matrix.

Q: What opportunities outside of formal education should aspiring architects pursue to better understand the practice and business of architecture?

He promotes mentorship, conferences, networking, and hands-on experience. He advises young professionals to seek mentorship, engage with project management, and seek real-world business questions early.

Full Transcript

Date: Feb 26, 2025 0:00:00 + 00:00

Ron Goodin: 00:00

Aidan Turner: 00:00

Aidan R. Turner: 00:00

Good morning. How are you?

Analysis of the Profession

- ✦ 1. *Education, Mentorship & Professional Development*
- ✦ 2. *Firm Leadership, Culture & Growth*
- ✦ 3. *Traditional Architecture Practice*
- ✦ 4. *Business Operations & Financial Models*
- ✦ 5. *Branding, Media & Public Engagement*
- ✦ 6. *Innovation, Technology & Tools*
- ✦ 7. *Design Thinking & Cross-Disciplinary Practice*
- ✦ 8. *Consulting, Strategy & Client Advisory*
- ✦ 9. *Real Estate Development & Investment*
- ✦ 10. *Entrepreneurship & Startups*

1. Education, Mentorship & Professional Development

- ✦ Outdated Curriculum Undermines Readiness
 - ✦ *Strong design skills, weak business foundation*
 - ✦ *Graduates unprepared for real-world practice*
- ✦ Toxic Studio Culture Becomes Professional Norm
 - ✦ *Overwork mistaken for dedication and value*
 - ✦ *Studio habits fuel burnout in practice*

2. Firm Leadership, Culture & Growth

✦ Conservatism Limits Professional Evolution

- ✦ *Firms resist change, cling to tradition*
- ✦ *Architecture stuck in outdated identity*

✦ Lack of Leadership Development Stalls Growth

- ✦ *No growth paths for junior staff*
- ✦ *Lack of leadership stalls firm progress*

3. Traditional Architecture Practice

- ✦ Trapped in a Production Role
 - ✦ *Architects seen as deliverable producers*
 - ✦ *Mindset limits leadership, long-term impact*
- ✦ Service Provider Identity Reinforces Undervaluation
 - ✦ *No positioning leads to commodification*
 - ✦ *Design obsession hinders strategic growth*

4. Business Operations & Financial Models

✦ Fee-for-Service Model Limits Profitability

- ✦ *Old billing models block firm growth*
- ✦ *Small firms earn minimal industry revenue*

✦ Underinvestment in Business Infrastructure

- ✦ *Firms underinvest in marketing, systems*
- ✦ *Fragmented systems limit scalability, efficiency*

5. Branding, Media & Public Engagement

✦ Failure to Communicate Architectural Value

- ✦ *Architecture viewed as cost, not value*
- ✦ *Architects lack confidence in pricing*

✦ Visual Branding Without Strategic Narrative

- ✦ *Portfolios lack compelling value narrative*
- ✦ *Weak storytelling reduces client engagement*

6. Innovation, Technology & Tools

✦ Technology Adoption Remains Superficial

- ✦ *BIM and AI used superficially*
- ✦ *Firms miss tech's strategic potential*

✦ R&D Exists Without Depth

- ✦ *Most research lacks real investment*
- ✦ *Innovation remains shallow, underfunded, ineffective*

7. Firm Leadership, Culture & Growth

✦ Architectural Thinking Is Not Fully Leveraged

- ✦ *Systems thinking rarely applied beyond design*
- ✦ *Architects underused in broader influence*

✦ Creativity Without a Broader Framework

- ✦ *Taught as artists, not strategists*
- ✦ *Design thinking struggles to scale outward*

8. Consulting, Strategy & Client Advisory

✦ Architects Are Missing from Strategic Tables

- ✦ *Firms defer strategy to outsiders*
- ✦ *Architects excluded from early decisions*

✦ Failure to Align With Client Objectives

- ✦ *Ignoring ROI weakens client trust*
- ✦ *No follow-up means lost opportunity*

9. Real Estate Development & Investment

✦ Architects Rarely Share in Project Equity

- ✦ *Architects miss equity, stay dependent*
- ✦ *Creative work owned by others*

✦ Designers Becoming Developers

- ✦ *Some architects now lead development*
- ✦ *Architects shift from designer to owner*

10. Entrepreneurship & Startups

- ✦ Architecture Needs an Entrepreneurial Mindset
 - ✦ *Architects must initiate, not just wait*
 - ✦ *Services can scale like IP*
- ✦ Architects Share Foundational Traits With Entrepreneurs
 - ✦ *Architects share traits with founders*
 - ✦ *Struggle to lead beyond buildings*

From Myers-Briggs personality test data:

Architects & Entrepreneurs

32.3%

ENTJ and INTJ

*Results from over 1,300 of Kirk Narbaugh's
professional practice students*

20-30%

ENTJ and INTJ

Results from Forbes Magazine

Architects & Entrepreneurs

Creative problem-solving
Strategic planning
Risk management
Adaptability
Attention to detail

Creative problem-solving
Strategic planning
Risk management
Adaptability
Attention to detail

Recommendations from Findings

- ✦ 1. *Education, Mentorship & Professional Development*
- ✦ 2. *Firm Leadership, Culture & Growth*
- ✦ 3. *Traditional Architecture Practice*
- ✦ 4. *Business Operations & Financial Models*
- ✦ 5. *Branding, Media & Public Engagement*
- ✦ 6. *Innovation, Technology & Tools*
- ✦ 7. *Design Thinking & Cross-Disciplinary Practice*
- ✦ 8. *Consulting, Strategy & Client Advisory*
- ✦ 9. *Real Estate Development & Investment*
- ✦ 10. *Entrepreneurship & Startups*

1. Education, Mentorship & Professional Development

- ✦ Reform curricula to include finance, real estate, negotiation, and marketing alongside design studios.
- ✦ Develop internal curriculum: contracts, finance, leadership, and negotiation

2. Firm Leadership, Culture & Growth

- ✦ ReInstitutionalize internal mentorship, not just reviews—create leadership pipelines and cultural cohesion beyond the partner tier.
- ✦ Use strength-finder tools to build complementary leadership teams with diverse cognitive profiles.

3. Traditional Architecture Practice

- ✦ Redesign proposals to include strategic impact sections, not just design deliverables
- ✦ Formalize post-project client debriefs to capture insights, identify hidden value, and strengthen future proposals.

4. Business Operations & Financial Models

- ✦ Explore non-fee revenue: royalties, equity, licensing, IP
- ✦ Integrate CRM and accounting into one system (e.g., Monograph) to improve operational visibility and reduce founder bottlenecks.

5. Branding, Media & Public Engagement

- ✦ Develop public-facing platforms (e.g., blogs, YouTube, social campaigns) to control brand identity and engage future clients and talent.
- ✦ Write and distribute a free FAQ book to demystify working with architects and build early trust with clients.

6. Innovation, Technology & Tools

- ✦ Automate repetitive tasks and use AI tools to accelerate design iteration and reduce operational drag.
- ✦ Establish an internal “Design Lab” that prototypes new workflows, tools, and services with allocated budget, team time, and measurable outcomes.

7. Design Thinking & Cross-Disciplinary Practice

- ✦ Translate studio workflows into workshop models (e.g., iterative charrettes) to solve non-building problems.
- ✦ Collaborate with fashion, art, or tech practitioners to prototype cross-media ideas that explore spatial branding and sensory storytelling.

8. Consulting, Strategy & Client Advisory

- ✦ Build packaged consulting services (e.g., pre-design assessments, scenario planning, spatial branding) that work outside the typical five-phase delivery model.
- ✦ Reposition proposals as strategic roadmaps—not just deliverables—with clear connections to the client's long-term goals.

9. Real Estate Development & Investment

- ✦ Engage in “Phase Zero” by sourcing sites, securing planning permissions, and controlling vision before design begins.
- ✦ Convert firm savings into development capital to co-invest in small-scale real estate projects.

10. Entrepreneurship & Startups

- ✦ Develop and test a minimum viable service (MVS) such as “design diagnostics” to enter new markets with low risk.
- ✦ Build a firm with integrated branding and consulting services tailored to architects and designers.

Repositioning of the Architect

Architects must lead by treating strategy, operations, and branding as design.

Design is no longer limited to buildings; it shapes firms, systems, and markets.

The new architect is entrepreneurial, impactful, and cross-disciplinary.

I encourage *you* to design the future of
architectural practice **by stepping out of studio**
and learning from the world beyond it.