

snipebridge

**NAVIGATING THE  
UNIQUE LANDSCAPE  
OF ARCHITECTURE  
HIRING**



[www.snipebridge.com](http://www.snipebridge.com)



# ALISHAA CHHABRA

FOUNDER & CEO, **SNIPEBRIDGE**

Alishaa is a leader in strategic talent acquisition solutions tailored for the digital age. She has over 20 years of experience in HR management, operations, process optimization and advisory services. Alishaa helps architecture and engineering firms in meeting their hiring objectives by crafting customized talent strategies and managed services programs. Additionally, she provides consulting on recruitment process transformation, talent attraction, employer branding, diversity recruitment, and the development of robust talent communities.

[snipebridge.com/blog](https://snipebridge.com/blog)

 snipebridge

The architecture industry is an intricate tapestry woven from diverse threads of creativity, technical expertise, and cultural nuances. Unlike other professions, hiring within the architectural field is shaped by unique dynamics that reflect the industry's inherent complexities. As firms vary in size, design sensibility, and project typologies, the hiring process becomes a distinctive experience that goes beyond traditional recruitment practices.

## **Firm's Culture: The Heart of Architectural Identity**

The culture within architecture firms can shift dramatically between small and large entities, influencing how teams collaborate and innovate. In small firms, the atmosphere often resembles a tight-knit community. Here, individuals wear multiple hats, contributing to various aspects of projects, from initial design concepts to client interactions. This environment fosters a sense of ownership and intimacy, enabling team members to develop close working relationships. Hiring in such settings prioritizes adaptability and a shared vision, as every member's contribution can significantly impact the firm's trajectory.

Conversely, large architecture firms tend to operate with a more hierarchical structure and embody a unique mix of creativity, business acumen, and global influence. Here, multicultural employees must balance artistic innovation with practical client needs and rigorous project management. The culture is often defined by specialization, where employees focus on specific roles within sprawling teams. This division allows for a diverse range of expertise to flourish but can also create a sense of detachment among staff. When hiring in larger firms, the emphasis shifts to finding candidates who can navigate complex systems, collaborate with diverse teams, and adhere to established processes.

Understanding this dichotomy is crucial for both candidates and employers, as the cultural fit can determine long-term job satisfaction and success.



**As an architect, you design for the present,  
with an awareness of the past, for a future  
which is essentially unknown. That requires  
a firm culture that is dynamic, forward-  
thinking, and collaborative, because it's the  
collective effort and shared vision of the  
team that shapes how we respond to  
evolving challenges**

-

**Norman Foster**

Renowned for his innovative designs and  
leadership at Foster + Partners

## **Design Sensibility**

In the architecture profession, design sensibility is not merely a stylistic preference; it's a fundamental aspect of a firm's identity. It refers to the unique aesthetic and conceptual approach that guides a firm's creative decisions. Design sensibility encompasses the firm's values, preferences, and design principles, influencing everything from the choice of materials and spatial organization to form, function, and interaction with the environment.

Different firms develop distinct design philosophies that resonate with their core values and target clientele. When hiring, firms seek candidates whose design sensibilities align with their own, as this ensures a cohesive approach to projects.

In large firms, design sensibility is also the lens through which a firm interprets and executes architectural ideas, shaping the identity and reputation of individual practices within the organization. Prospective employees with similar design philosophy & ideology, aesthetic preferences and who can integrate technologically through their expertise in cutting-edge tools like parametric design, BIM, or sustainable technologies are the best fit for the team.

An architect's ability to adapt to various design styles and philosophies becomes a critical factor, particularly in firms that tackle a range of project typologies. A firm must review candidates' portfolios, looking for evidence of design principles, creativity, and personal style that aligns with the firm's aesthetic. Additionally, targeted questions can be posed during interviews to gauge candidates' understanding of design concepts, their inspirations, and how they approach problem-solving in relation to specific project types.



**It's important to have people who share the same vision and design sensibility because architecture is a collective effort. If you surround yourself with people who understand and support the direction you're heading, the work becomes more coherent and powerful**

-

**Zaha Hadid**

Known for her futuristic & bold architectural designs

## Project Typologies

Hiring architects with experience in similar typology aligns their skills with the firm's area of expertise, ensuring smooth project execution and maintaining design quality. Architects familiar with specific typologies, whether residential, commercial, or institutional, bring specialized knowledge of the unique functional requirements, building codes, materials, and construction methods associated with those project types. This leads to more efficient design processes, better client satisfaction, and fewer costly errors. Moreover, architects with aligned typology experience can quickly adapt to the firm's established workflows and contribute meaningfully to projects from the outset.

Design firms can include typology evaluation in a recruiting process through:

- **Tailored Job Descriptions:** Clearly specify the firm's focus areas (e.g., healthcare, retail, or urban planning) and require candidates to demonstrate experience in those typologies in their portfolio.
- **Portfolio Review:** Evaluate candidates' portfolios specifically for relevant typology projects, assessing their ability to handle design challenges and deliver high-quality solutions within the same categories.
- **Interviewing:** Ask targeted questions about the candidate's experience with typology-specific challenges, such as zoning laws, client needs, or technical requirements, to gauge their depth of understanding.
- **Case Studies or Design Tests:** Provide real or hypothetical projects that align with the firm's typology expertise to assess candidates' problem-solving and design sensibility within that specific domain.

An effective typology evaluation in the hiring process ensures firms hire architects whose expertise complements their core competencies, leading to better project outcomes and a stronger, more cohesive team.



**Architecture is about solving specific problems—each building type presents its own set of challenges. Having people on your team who understand these nuances is crucial. When you bring in architects with experience in a particular typology, they can hit the ground running, ensuring the project is not only feasible but exceptional**

-

**Renzo Piano**

Known for projects like The Shard and the Centre Pompidou

## **The Nuances of Working with Starchitects**

In recent years, the term “starchitect” has emerged to describe architects who have garnered significant fame and recognition, often leading landmark projects that shape city skylines. Collaborating with starchitects introduces additional complexities into the hiring landscape. These renowned figures often have distinct design sensibilities and may require a specific type of support staff to execute their ambitious visions.

Working alongside a starchitect can be both exhilarating and challenging. Emerging architects and designers must possess the resilience and flexibility to adapt to high-pressure demands while also maintaining a strong sense of individuality. Hiring for roles that support starchitects requires a careful balance of technical skill, creativity, and the ability to thrive in a fast-paced environment.

Attracting the right talent to work directly with starchitects also requires a thoughtful and multi-faceted strategy. You must craft a compelling offer that resonates with the prospective architect's vision and values. This might include opportunities for unfettered creative expression, involvement in high-profile projects, or the freedom to push the boundaries of design innovation. Foster strong relationships within the architectural community and cultivate connections with influential clients or developers. These networks can serve as a magnet for top talent, drawing architects to your firm.

Consider offering equity partnerships or leadership roles over the long term. This can be a powerful draw for prospective architects seeking to leave a lasting imprint on the firm's direction and legacy. Throughout the hiring process, prioritize clear communication of mutual goals and aspirations. Ensure that the candidate's design ethos aligns with and complements the firm's brand and long-term vision, setting the stage for a harmonious and productive partnership.



**A starchitect can elevate the entire firm's profile and open doors to extraordinary opportunities. Their vision and recognition not only drive innovative design but also inspire the team to push boundaries, ultimately creating spaces that resonate on a global scale**

-

**Daniel Libeskind**

Known for projects like World Trade Center Memorial and Imperial War Museum North

## Conclusion

The architectural hiring landscape is as unique and varied as the structures these firms create. Successfully navigating this terrain hinges on a tailored approach that respects each firm's distinct culture, design sensibility, and project objectives. By strategically aligning recruitment processes with these elements, firms not only reinforce their own architectural identity but also drive innovation and excellence within their teams. The challenge and opportunity lie in finding the right balance between visionary creativity and practical execution, particularly in an era shaped by influential architects. By doing so, firms will not only meet the demands of today's ever-evolving built environment but will also set new standards in the world of architecture.

The dynamic interplay between small and large firms shapes not only how teams collaborate but also how they innovate and execute projects. By aligning hiring practices with the specific needs of the firm - whether through assessing cultural fit, prioritizing relevant design philosophies, or evaluating typology experience - firms can cultivate cohesive teams that enhance their architectural identity and project outcomes.

As the curtain closes on this intricate dance between creativity, culture, and technical expertise in the architecture industry, it is clear that hiring in this field is an art in itself. The ever-delicate balance between individual creative voices and the cohesive firm culture must be struck anew with each hire. Both the firm and the candidate embark on a journey, together crafting a harmonious partnership that elevates architectural ideas into tangible realities. To master this symphony requires not only a nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics and design philosophies but also a thoughtful and dedicated approach to recruitment, uniting diverse talents into formidable teams that redefine the possibilities of the built world, one structure at a time.

## **About SNIPEBRIDGE**

SNIPEBRIDGE is a leading talent solutions firm based in the US. We help top architecture & engineering firms and boutique studios hire exceptional talent and build high performing teams.

Our embedded recruiting service is transforming the way AEC firms hire talent. We empower them to compete in attracting, engaging and acquiring the best talent in the industry using modern recruiting methods, individualized programs and technology innovation. Over the years, SNIPEBRIDGE has built a large and trusted network of top industry practitioners across architecture, engineering, landscape, interiors and planning disciplines.

Our strategic approach and alignment with customer's business helps reduce time and cost per hire while significantly lowering the new hire attrition rate through passive talent engagement practices.

Our purpose-driven team is fanatical about Customer Success!

snipebridge

Talent Drives Success

