

Richard Landon Design: Expectations Regarding Billing Practices

During a project's three stages—Planning, Budgeting, and Implementing— billing occurs per the following practices. As you read down the lists of activities and events, note how very few of the activities actually create tangibles! This reality contrasts with how some would measure the value of design services—by how many pages of drawings they receive.

Since RLD's practice is client-driven and client-dependent, the number of hours in Planning can vary considerably. Each "trip around the mountain" generates more ideas and more learning. Not surprisingly, one client may take many more trips to work out an inspiring arrangement of ideas, products, and finishes than another client, even on similar projects! Therefore, the value of services provided in the Planning phase resides more in the Process and intangibles. How much is it worth to surface aspects of your home's design that someday would likely irritate and stress you? To resolve things that could later cause regrets or force you to accommodate them?

1) Hourly Activities and Events

A) Planning

1. Sketching ideas.
2. Developing ideas in CAD, including exploring options and refining them.
Drawings depicting cabinetry are precise and used by RLD as "shop drawings." With respect to Lighting Plans, the client decides the level of detail they want. Typically, it works best to generate an approximate plan, and then wait until the framing is known before detailing these drawings. As an alternative or in addition, RLD's on site involvement precisely locates lighting fixtures and switches and adjusts placement to minimize re-framing the home. Tile layouts can be drawn with enough accuracy to order. However, the final layout should be determined on site, with the designer and tile installer present and the owner available to confirm.
3. Notating drawings with measurements, installer/contractor notes, product numbers, factory reference numbers, and more.
4. Researching products on the Internet and/or by phone calls.
5. Telephone calls or teleconferences with client and/or contractor(s).
6. Site visits (including travel time) to discuss project with client and/or contractor
7. Showroom visits, usually with client, to select products and finishes.
8. Reviewing drawings from firms providing permit drawings (architects, engineering, Certified Building Designers, or drafting services). Refining designs with same.
9. Reading and responding to e-mails.

B) Budgeting

1. Reviewing estimates with client and resolving questions raised.
Decisions reconcile Quality vs. Ideas vs. Cost. RLD is not expensive, yet ideas may invoke the C² rule of "Coolness Costs" or the C³ rule that sometimes "Coolness Costs Considerably!"
2. Bidding cabinets. Itemizing the cost of the cabinets is not billable; refining the design while reviewing the drawings during itemization is. Therefore, RLD bills at half time during this phase. Itemization enables his clients to weigh the value of each decision.

C) Implementing

1. Reading and responding to e-mails.
2. Telephone calls or teleconferences with client, contractor, and/or project team.
3. Site visits (including travel time) to discuss project with client and/or contractor.
When RLD provides cabinets, visits to support the installation are not billable.
 - a) Framing.
 - b) Tile layouts. (See comment under A.2.)
 - c) Plumbing and electrical rough-ins. (See comment under A.2.)
 - d) Refining design and product choices.
4. Mediation and resolution of job site issues.

RLD's portfolio demonstrates his ability to resolve the unsettling, unexpected discoveries that can indeed occur during all stages. When clients stay in the Process, RLD's persistence and dedication to his clients produces the pleasing, often-published projects you see on his web site's Photo Tour.

2) Products Supplied

Contractors are accommodating more and more client involvement in procuring products, as the Internet has substantially altered the supply chain. With respect to many products, RLD has proven sources. They may be "preferred" because they are reliable, or they offer a better value and/or the greatest selection. That said, RLD accommodates you, the client, if you want to choose your own sources. RLD's objective is, first and foremost, to generate and refine the ideas in which you, the client, can justify investing.

- 1) Appliances—which the client typically provides
- 2) Cabinets—which RLD typically provides (See comment under B.2)
- 3) Surfaces—which either the contractor or the client provides.
RLD often provides specialty countertops, such as Pyrolave or wood.
- 4) Fixtures (lighting and plumbing)—which either the contractor or the client provides
RLD often provides the cabinet knobs and handles.
- 5) Millwork (windows and doors)—which either the contractor or the client provides

Final Note

When comparing the value of RLD's services provided to other design professionals with proven high-quality track records, RLD returns significantly more dollars to his clients to invest in their projects by effective methods and his on site presence. Some architectural design firms now charge percentages up to 20% when their firm takes a project through all three stages to completion! RLD's fees average about 3-8% of the project's total budget, and that includes the profits from products supplied! The larger the project, the lower the percentage. This savings allows RLD's clients to invest in more "coolness" for their homes. (See comment under B.1.)

The result is a home that looks great, works well and, most importantly, feels right!