



The Zipper Effect

Connect at Every **L E V E L**

The Zipper Effect *emphasizes intentional, relationship-based alignment* across every level of a project team within the AEC industry.

1. Project Development Leadership
2. Senior Management & Partner Leadership
3. Project Management Leadership
4. Production & Boots on the Ground Leadership
5. HR, Administration & Financial Leadership

Each layer of leadership forms direct, peer-to-peer connections with their counterparts. This ensures that communication is not only top-down but also lateral and continuous.

A tightly integrated structure is created where information, expectations, and values are consistently reinforced at every stage of the project.

By *zipping together* all leadership layers, the entire organization becomes unified around the project's goals and the owner's vision.

This alignment fosters trust, accountability, and clarity — reducing the risk of miscommunication and disconnect as the project progresses.

The Zipper Effect ensures the original intent behind the project is preserved and effectively executed, resulting in a seamless transition from original concept through final occupancy. **The delivered outcome will reflect the owner's vision with consistency and quality.**



1 Project Development Leadership <i>setting the foundation before the project begins</i>	• Honest Go/No-Go • Reality-Check the Budget • Right Team, Right Fit	Establish a clear business case and conduct an honest go/no-go evaluation Validate cost assumptions early — reality-check the budget against the vision Develop a Project Initiation Document that defines program, schedule, and cost expectations Define the building program with clarity and specificity Assemble the right team early — evaluate fit, not just availability
2 Sr. Management & Partner Leadership <i>championing the vision and setting the tone for collaboration</i>	• Clear Vision, Shared Belief • Team Charters & Rules of Engagement • Circular Communication, no Hierarchy	Clearly convey the project vision so every team member understands the 'why' Build a strong, intentional team — don't leave chemistry to chance Establish rules of engagement through a team charter Foster circular communication — break down hierarchical barriers and chain-of-command thinking Ensure ownership & owner's rep teams are approachable, visible, & actively involved
3 Project Management Leadership <i>translating vision into daily action and team culture</i>	• Pick People, Not Companies • Build & Maintain Project Culture • Fast, Clear Decisions	Evaluate team members on individual experience and capability, not just company reputation Define and nurture the project culture — including community engagement where relevant Align leadership with the client's passion and purpose for the project Actively build and maintain project culture throughout the project lifecycle Prioritize speed and clarity in decision-making to maintain momentum
4 Production & Boots on the Ground Leadership <i>executing the vision with alignment, respect, & shared understanding</i>	• Share the Vision — Early & Often • Know the WHY, not just the WHAT • Define Roles, Scopes, & Lanes • Respect Trade Expertise	Translate the project vision into actionable plans — share the vision early and often Understand the <i>why</i> behind the project, not just the <i>what</i> — this prevents undermining decisions through late changes Clearly define roles, scopes, and lanes of leadership across all parties Foster team buy-in, alignment, and a strong team culture from day one Respect the trades for their expertise and judgment, not just their craft — include them in page turns and design conversations Identify known unknowns early and manage change proactively
5 HR, Administration, & Financial Leadership <i>building the financial and operational framework that enables project success</i>	• Funding Realities Shape Delivery • Align Scope with Available Funds • Clear Terms, Clear Expectations	Understand how the owner finances the project — funding realities shape delivery strategy Align design scope with available funds through collaborative budgeting When phasing is necessary, design in phases while maintaining the long-term vision Establish clear payment terms and administrative expectations with the full team Address staffing availability and workforce planning as a project-level priority



1 Project Development Leadership <i>setting the foundation before the project begins</i>	• Honest Go/No-Go • Reality-Check the Budget • Right Team, Right Fit	Have we honestly evaluated whether this project should move forward — and can we articulate why? Does our business plan hold up against a realistic cost and schedule assessment? Can we clearly describe what this building needs to be and do? Have we developed a Project Initiation Document that clearly defines program, budget, and timeline? Are we assembling the right team for this project — or just the team that's available?
2 Sr. Management & Partner Leadership <i>championing the vision and setting the tone for collaboration</i>	• Clear Vision, Shared Belief • Team Charters & Rules of Engagement • Circular Communication, no Hierarchy	Can every person on this team articulate the project vision — and do they believe in it? Have we been intentional about how this team was built, or did we default to convenience? Do we have a team charter that defines how we'll work together — not just what we'll deliver? Can anyone on the team raise a concern directly, regardless of title or role? Circular communication breaks down silos — hierarchy kills collaboration. Is ownership visible, approachable, and genuinely engaged — or are they just signing off?
3 Project Management Leadership <i>translating vision into daily action and team culture</i>	• Pick People, Not Companies • Build & Maintain Project Culture • Fast, Clear Decisions	Are we choosing team members based on their individual experience — or just their company's logo? What is the culture of this project, and are we actively shaping it? Does our leadership understand and connect with the client's passion for this project? How are we building and sustaining project culture — not just at kickoff, but throughout? Are decisions being made quickly and clearly, or is indecision quietly eroding momentum?
4 Production & Boots on the Ground Leadership <i>executing the vision with alignment, respect, & shared understanding</i>	• Share the Vision — Early & Often • Know the WHY, not just the WHAT • Define Roles, Scopes, & Lanes • Respect Trade Expertise	Has the project vision been shared with the people doing the work — early and often? Does the field team understand <i>why</i> this project matters, not just <i>what</i> to build? Understanding the <i>why</i> prevents decisions from being undermined by late changes. Are roles, scopes, and lanes of leadership clearly defined — or are people stepping on each other? Have we earned genuine team buy-in, or just compliance? Are we respecting the trades as experts with judgment and insight — or just as hands? Include them in page turns and design conversations. Have we identified what we don't know yet, and do we have a plan for when things change?
5 HR, Administration, & Financial Leadership <i>building the financial and operational framework that enables project success</i>	• Funding Realities Shape Delivery • Align Scope with Available Funds • Clear Terms, Clear Expectations	Do we understand how this project is being funded — and how that shapes what's possible? Are we collaboratively aligning scope with available funds, or designing in a vacuum and cutting later? If the project must be phased, are we designing each phase while protecting the long-term vision? Are payment terms and administrative expectations clear to every team member from the start? Do we have the people we need — and are we planning for workforce availability as a real project constraint?



*A zipper
works when
both sides*

A L I G N

*The best
project
teams are
no different.*

*Inspire.
Educate.
Unite.*



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