



DO YOU REALLY NEED AN ARCHITECT?

Would you have a tooth extracted by a cheaper, but less qualified person than a dentist?

Nightclub bouncers, so I understand, remove teeth on a regular basis and I would wager that they charge significantly less for that service than a fully qualified and properly equipped dentist..... And yet, oddly enough, when we need work done on our teeth, we generally opt for the dentist, despite the additional cost.

Let's just imagine for a minute that the worst happens and you decide to engage the tooth extraction services offered by Wayne Knuckles, the nightclub bouncer and part-time dentist and the results of his attention fall short of your expectations, and, as a result of Wayne's enthusiastic approach to his work, there was serious damage to three teeth. The cost of a crown is somewhere between £250.00 and £1000.00. Consequently, the net cost of your initial decision to employ the services of Wayne will be between £750.00 and £3,000, plus of course any fees that you might have parted with to engage Wayne in the first place. Plus, of course, any pain and anguish caused.

Who knows, Wayne, having got the taste for diversification, might also be offering "Architectural Services"; he is perfectly at liberty to do so. But Wayne has no more legal right to refer to himself as an architect as he is to be able to claim to be a qualified dentist.

Architects are highly qualified, professional consultants who have to train for a minimum of seven years at both graduate and post-graduate level and pass stringent professional exams before they are allowed, by law, to call themselves architects.

But there are a wide range of individuals and businesses claiming to offer the same services as an architect, but who are banned from calling themselves architects by English and Scottish law.

To legally call yourself an "Architect" you must be registered with the Architects Registration Board; the body set up by Parliament as the independent UK regulator of architects. If you go to their website at <http://architects-register.org.uk/> you can search all the professionals who are allowed, by law to practice using the title "architects". You can search these by individuals name, practice name or postcode. If a consultant is not on the ARB register this will mean they are not a properly qualified architect and should not be referring to themselves as an "Architect" or selling their services as being those of a qualified architect.

There are many people offering building design services who are not Architects. Generally, these consultants will refer to themselves as "Architectural consultants" or "Architectural designers" or the like. If a building designer is not an "architect" then it is likely that their fees will be lower than those of a fully qualified architect. But it is crucial that you ensure that you know exactly what level of professional competence they have and the level of service they offer.

If you have experience or expertise in building construction and know exactly what you need



by way of consultancy services, it may well make sense to employ a less well qualified person to provide you with basic design and drafting services. However, if you are relying upon the expertise of your designer to steer you through the complex process of getting your building designed, approved and built, then it is best to use a qualified consultant from a profession that is legally regulated and benchmarked.

Similarly, if your project is not complex or the quality of design is not crucial, it may well be that you can choose to use a less well qualified consultant to undertake your design work. You will probably save money on the initial design fees, but you must ensure that any saving made in fees will not ultimately result in greater costs arising from either poor design or unprofessional services.

Returning to Wayne Knuckles Architectural Services. The cost of restorative dental surgery pales into insignificance by comparison to the cost of putting right the damage done to the value of a property by poorly executed architectural design. Your buildings, whether they are your home or a place of work, are generally your most valuable asset and the damage done to their worth by people who have little or often no formal training in building design can make three grand's worth of cosmetic dentistry work look like pocket money.

Waterland Associates are Chartered Architects and all our senior design staff are registered with the ARB.