LIBRE
DESIGN

A FREE GUIDE FOR INVESTORS

7 mistakes when choosing an interior architect for a hotel

Where investors lose the most,
before a single wall goes up.

Daria Bogacka
Creative Director, co-founder of Libre Group

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BEFORE YOU SIGN

Why this choice costs more than you think

Since 2011 we have designed, furnished and delivered hotel and restaurant interiors in Poland, Czechia and Slovakia. Over those years we have taken over many investments after a failed engagement with a design studio. The story was almost always the same: the architect was chosen quickly, on the strength of pretty images and a low price.

This guide collects the seven mistakes we see most often. Each one is described the same way: what it is, how you will spot it in a conversation with a studio, and what to do instead. At the end you will find a list of twelve questions you can take into a meeting with any architect. Fifteen minutes of reading that can save you months on site.

Daria Bogacka, Creative Director, Libre Group

01

Choosing on renders rather than delivered work

Any studio can produce a beautiful render today. The difference shows up on site: in the details, in the materials, in whether the property opened on time and whether it makes money. A portfolio full of concepts and empty of handed-over properties is the most common warning sign when picking a studio for a hotel investment.

RED FLAG
The architect shows only visualisations and cannot name properties you could go and visit.

DO THIS INSTEAD
Ask for three delivered properties of a comparable scale and for contact with their owners. Two phone calls will tell you more than a whole portfolio.

02

A design disconnected from the economics

A hotel is a machine for generating revenue. Every design decision raises or lowers the nightly rate, occupancy, table turnover and cleaning costs. A studio that designs aesthetics alone is handing the financial risk to you.

RED FLAG
The architect never asked about room rates, guest mix, or how the property is meant to make money.

DO THIS INSTEAD
Insist on reasoning in business language: what this decision changes in revenue, guest ratings and running costs.

03

A concept without construction documentation

Between concept and construction there is a stage where the budget is won or lost: construction documentation, details, material schedules and services drawings. Without them every contractor quote is guesswork, and the site turns into a series of expensive improvisations.

RED FLAG
You are told the details will be worked out on site, and the quote is to be based on the concept.

DO THIS INSTEAD
Commission full documentation with specifications before you tender the construction. Only then can you compare bids honestly.

04

An architect with no delivery capability

A hotel interior requires coordination of services, acoustics, lighting, kitchen technology and furniture suppliers. A studio that stops work the moment it hands over drawings leaves you alone at the hardest stage.

RED FLAG
The contract ends with the design. Site supervision is an optional extra you have to ask about.

DO THIS INSTEAD
Choose a partner who runs the investment through to handover and carries single responsibility for the result.

05

A contract without stages, deadlines or revision rules

Arguments about what is included, how many rounds of revisions you get and when things are due can stall an investment for months. A single lump-sum contract with no milestones always works in the studio's favour, never the investor's.

RED FLAG
One line on the quote, no schedule, nothing about copyright in the design.

DO THIS INSTEAD
Write out stages with deadlines and payments, fix the number of revision rounds, and include the transfer of copyright in the fee.

06

Deciding purely on the price of the concept

An architect's fee is a fraction of the investment budget. A cheap design that adds a quarter to the construction schedule, or forces you to replace furnishings after two seasons, costs many times what you saved at the start.

RED FLAG
The quote was produced without a site visit and without questions about your business. Price competition instead of a conversation about outcomes.

DO THIS INSTEAD
Compare the total cost and outcome of the investment, not the design fee. Ask exactly what you are paying for at each stage.

07

Furnishings and textiles left until last

Furniture, lighting, carpets and textiles are often half the interior budget. Specified at the end, under opening-date pressure, they are bought more expensively, with quality compromises and without coherence with the design.

RED FLAG
The design has no FF&E budget, no furnishing specification and no delivery plan against the opening date.

DO THIS INSTEAD
Plan the furnishings from the first drawing. A studio with its own supply lines and textile production shortens schedules and lowers costs.

TAKE THIS TO THE MEETING

12 questions before you sign

01. Which three delivered properties can we visit, and which of their owners can we speak to?

02. How will the design affect the nightly rate, occupancy and guest ratings? How will we know?

03. What exactly does the documentation contain: details, material schedules, services drawings?

04. Who coordinates the services, acoustics, lighting and kitchen technology?

05. Do you provide site supervision through to handover, and to what extent?

06. What are the stages, deadlines and payments? What is the deliverable at each stage?

07. How many rounds of revisions does the price include, and how are further ones charged?

08. Does copyright in the design pass to the investor as part of the fee?

09. How is the FF&E budget planned, and who is responsible for purchasing and delivery?

10. How does the schedule sit against the planned opening date?

11. Who personally runs our project, and how often do we get reports?

12. What happens if the construction budget overruns: who looks for savings, and where?

Would you rather just talk it through?

At Libre we combine consulting, design, furnishing and delivery in one team. The first conversation about your property is free: we will go through these questions together and show you what deserves the most attention in your investment.

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