



How do these models work for clients?

Cooperative Design Resources promotes the strength of five designers and landscape architects – Tom Trench, Terry Rudolph, Venessa Lines, Jennifer Verprauskus and Roger Hupfer. Each partner has his or her own design company, yet in the summer of 2013 they joined forces to create Cooperative Design Resource to offer landscape companies the benefit of their 135 years combined design experience. “As a small group, each of us sees all the designs that come in, and we have an opportunity to contribute ideas” says Rudolph. “Customers get the benefit of all our different experiences.”

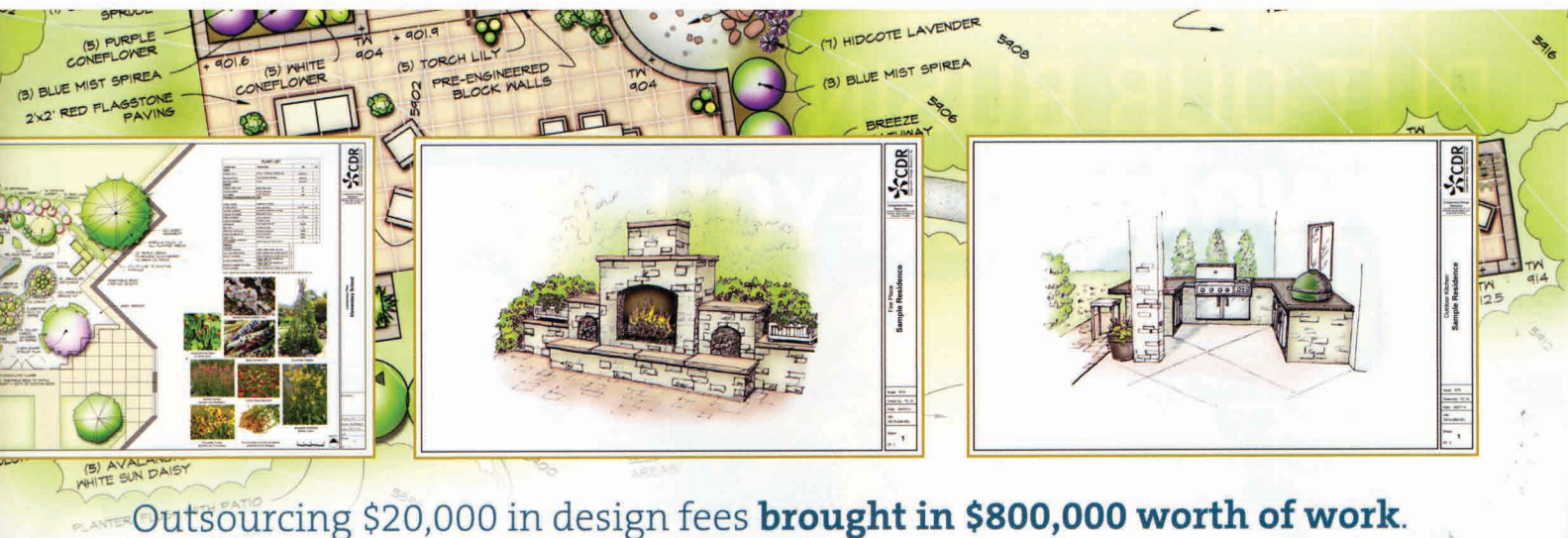
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Before partnering with a landscape company, a CDR partner meets with the company team to get acquainted. Both potential partners need to trust each other for the relationship to work. If CDR is going to design to the company’s expertise, they need to know about the company’s installation capabilities, strong points and even limitations. Having this information informs design considerations and how the job will be built. If the customer wants a feature outside the contractor’s expertise, CDR can often recommend subs.

On the landscape company’s side, they need to know that when they hand over qualified leads, the CDR team will represent their interests seamlessly with the prospect, understand customer needs and create a design that reflects them. Evan Elliot, owner of Colorado Living Spaces and a CDR client says that his leads are precious and he was reluctant to let an outside company insert itself in front of his client. “It took me a while before I gave them a chance,” he admits. Now the trust factor is there and he is confident about the process.

After meeting with clients and finalizing the design, the CDR designer hands it off to the contractor to bid. Once the bid is completed, CDR takes the proposal back to the customer to sell it. Elliot found his time was freed up. “CDR sells the design. Then I create the proposal,” he said. “That’s it. We didn’t have to do anything.” The closing rate for installation contracts is more than 95 percent for customers whose budget is known. CDR partners attribute this high closing rate to their varied design skills plus all their combined years of experience in landscape construction.

As a partner, CDR takes on some of the risk by charging a reduced design fee and receives sales compensation only upon signing of the installation contract. Design fees are based on the size and complexity of the design. The contractor determines the project price. CDR’s sales



Outsourcing \$20,000 in design fees brought in \$800,000 worth of work.

compensation – same percentage for all projects – is based on the price set by the contractor. If there is no sale, there is no sales compensation.

Remote Design Solutions, on the other hand, doesn’t want to meet with customers or walk their sites. Remote means remote. They work with landscape companies and even other design firms when they need help with their overflow. Remote Design’s customers have to do the on-site legwork. “There’s a little bit of a learning curve for them,” says Hiner, “but it really works easily with their company.” The landscape company is “responsible to walk the site, take many photos and turn them over to us along with a plot plan and a bubble sketch of where the sod goes, for example.”

At that point, Remote Design Solutions takes the information and creates the drawing. Their design fee is based on square footage and complexity. Hiner says that 99% of all their design fees fall into one of five pricing tiers that can be seen on their website. Contractors know up front what the price is and because contractors present and sell the design, they can price the design to include their up-front time spent on the site to generate data for RDS.

Because Remote Design Solutions can work for any client anywhere, their marketing efforts are taking them to trade events throughout the country. Prospective clients in the under-40 age bracket who are Internet savvy, in particular, are among those who are most receptive to their concept.

—Contributed by Lyn Dean, editor of Colorado Green and Becky Garber, ALCC’s director of communications