
Considering AIA Fellowship?

A Self-Reflection Exercise: Two Questions - Why and How?

Considering AIA Fellowship? Before you begin, I'd like to have you conduct a brief self-reflection exercise. I pay it forward courtesy of Stephen Swicegood, FAIA, managing principal of Gensler Atlanta. Before you embark on your journey of AIA Fellowship submittal, ask yourself two questions.

WHY?

First, why do you want to do it? In the manner of Simon Sinek, start with *why*. Will achieving fellowship bring you professional respect? Are you doing it for others? Are you a demonstrated expert in one of the AIA's Fellowship objectives? Have you given back to the profession in extraordinary ways or just done your job? Can you demonstrate notable, exemplary, and unique ways in which you've led? Will it bring you deserved recognition, or is it just an ego exercise?

Have you looked at past examples of successful fellowship submissions? How do you compare? Do you have the stuff? If so, keep going. If not, think again. Because if you can't convince yourself, you'll darn sure face an uphill climb trying to convince the Fellowship jury that you're worthy.

Yes, submitting for fellowship is no idle task - it requires commitment. Make this question and its answers real, personal, and specific to you, your life, your work and career as an architect. Be honest. Dive deep. When you are satisfied with the answers, move on.

HOW?

Second, ask yourself how you will feel if you're not elevated to fellowship. How will you react? Can you take it? Will it cast shade on your career or devastate your self-esteem if you fail? Because most applicants do fail, so be prepared for that outcome, and possible repeat attempts.

Once you have satisfied yourself you are prepared to accept and deal with any possible outcome - from proud recognition to not being successful, move on. Many candidates justify the effort required to prepare a fellowship submittal knowing at the very least the process will leave them and their families, firms, and friends a fine legacy of their work and contributions - something to remember you by when you're gone. Perhaps it will be merely a career housecleaning, a Marie Kondo-esque decluttering of your portfolio to bring you joy, give you a walk down memory lane, clean your professional attic, and give you newfound direction and purpose as a result. Maybe it will help you find your voice and share it with others.

Now that you've considered and successfully answered these two questions, good luck!

Michael LeFevre, FAIA Emeritus

Michael LeFevre Chaired the Georgia AIA Fellowship Committee from 2017-2019. He is Managing Editor at DesignIntelligence Media Group and Principal, DesignIntelligence Strategic Advisors. He was formerly Vice President, Planning & Design Support Services at Holder Construction Company, Principal with Lord, Aeck & Sargent and Project Design Designer with Heery International.