

Architecture, Art and Engineering – Fused in Metal

A. Zahner Company designs and fabricates architectural metalwork for the world's most distinguished architects for use in landmark projects around the globe. Steve Miller of Miller Schirger helps protect Zahner's business and legal interests with insight and wise counsel.



Pritzker Pavilion



Art Wall at Doha



“Steve is methodical, yet very intuitive and is good at listening and understanding. He knows us well and he helps us stay true to our principles and our stewardship of this company. He’s helping us guide it, protect it, and grow it so it can thrive for another 100 years.”

Bill Zahner, CEO/President
ZAHNER®

The shop floor at A. Zahner Company is a hub of constant activity. New patinas and unique surfaces are developed in a wide range of metal alloys. Shop cranes move slabs of metal onto giant tables for forming and shaping.

At A. Zahner Company, raw material is perpetually being transformed into some of the most celebrated architecture across the globe.

Bill Zahner is CEO/President and a fourth-generation leader of the firm. With over 200 employees, fabrication shops in Kansas City and Dallas, and projects in various states of completion, it's a big job.

Zahner knows art, architecture and fabrication. And he knows his numbers, but for legal advice and representation, he relies on Steve Miller.

“Because what we do is so customized and so specialized, we have unusual risks and exposure,” said Zahner. “Our legal matters can be highly subjective, complex and expensive. We can trust Steve to handle almost any issue.”

“GET YOUR COAT”

Every year, A. Zahner Company produces over two-hundred projects for owners and architects all over the world. Ninety-nine percent of them come off without a hitch, but just like any other business, there are occasional bumps in the road.

“We have a responsibility to make sure things are done right, according to the exact standards of the artist or architect,” said Zahner. “We consistently go above and beyond what is normally required because we want the end result to be extraordinary.”



A. Zahner Company Headquarters

Zahner says that philosophy of excellence is sometimes at odds with contractor or owner punch lists. Change orders can amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars for some projects and they can be interpreted many ways by the contractors and building owners.

“Steve has guided us through several lawsuits and mediations over the last ten years,” said Zahner. “And what I like is that Steve listens carefully to the details and proposes solutions that are fair for everyone involved.”

If, however, opposing parties refuse to work towards a win-win solution, Miller knows when to withdraw and regroup, or even walk away from unreasonable terms.

“In one situation recently we were very close to a mediation agreement when Steve said to me ‘get your coat,’” said Zahner. Zahner and Miller were leaving due to an impasse in negotiations.

“We started to walk out the door and the other side caught us at the last minute and agreed to strike a reasonable deal. That was a great lesson in knowing when and why to walk away from a deal that wasn’t good for us,” said Zahner. “Steve doesn’t grandstand, and neither do we, but that was the right thing to do at the time.”

Miller has learned how to read these situations over the course of a 30-year career as a trial lawyer. He has represented businesses and individuals in state and federal courts and before arbitration

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panels nationwide in a variety of business disputes, with a particular concentration in construction law.

“Extended disagreements serve no one. We work hard to assess details and resolution options so we can move quickly,” said Miller. “We want to help Bill get on with his business by finding fair solutions for everyone involved.”

BUILDING ART, GROWING RELATIONSHIPS – AND BUSINESS

Bill Zahner and his team of engineers and artisans have worked with the most recognizable names in architecture.

These names include Frank Gehry, Moshe Safdie, and Daniel Libeskind – all elite designers of buildings, memorials and museums worldwide.

“We’re as proud of the creative relationships we’ve built as much as we are the metalworks,” said Zahner.

Does he have a favorite metal?

“Copper,” he says without missing a beat. One of his most-beloved A. Zahner projects is

DESIGNING IRON-CLAD PROJECT AGREEMENTS

1. Be precise, accurate and comprehensive with the details up front.
2. Provide clear parameters for change orders and approvals.
3. Get it all in writing. Oral agreements have force, but written agreements eliminate ambiguity and he said/she said arguments.

the Copper Screen Wall in the Smithsonian’s Museum of the American Indian. A. Zahner collaborated on the installation with Hopi artist Ramona Sakiestewa.

It’s easy to see why Zahner bonds with the artists and architects he serves. His calm, soft-spoken demeanor gives subtle clues to an underlying current of creativity. He’s an author, as well as a designer of his own furniture and metalworks.

It’s also easy to see why he trusts Miller with everything from intellectual property protection, to contract disputes. Miller works precisely and creatively, too.

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Steve Miller

Steve Miller is a partner at Miller Schirger and works with clients nationwide to help them manage risk and protect their legal interests. You can reach Steve via email at SMiller@MillerSchirger.com or by phone at 816.561.6500.