

Your AEC business development toolkit

Commercial work pays more, repeats more often and is less dependent on housing cycles. Here is how two iGUIDE Pros expanded into AEC without leaving their core business behind.



Dan Richard

Measure My Space · Moncton, NB

Started in residential listings. Repositioned around documentation and floor plans. Commercial projects now make up the majority of the business.



70/30

Commercial vs residential split



Ron Elias

London House Photography · Ontario

Expanded into AEC through referrals from early commercial clients. Consistent measurements across repeat visits became the reason clients kept coming back.



CAD-ready

Outputs delivered to architects and project teams



"Once iGUIDE started doing CAD files I saw the potential with that. I expanded into commercial."

Dan Richard / Founder, Measure My Space

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STEP BY STEP

How to find your first AEC clients

1

List renovation and construction firms nearby

General contractors, interior designers, architecture firms. Start with 20 names from Google Maps and LinkedIn. Don't overlook realtors in your network. Agents often have direct contacts in the AEC space and can make a referral.

2

Reach out with a specific problem you solve

Pitch accurate CAD-deliverables and immersive virtual walkthroughs. Contractors lose hours on return visits when measurements are off.

3

Offer a first project at a reduced rate

Deliver clean CAD-deliverables and an immersive virtual walkthrough. Let them see what you produce before asking for a recurring relationship.

4

Ask for a referral while the project is fresh

Right after delivery is the best time. "Do you know other firms that deal with this kind of documentation?"

5

Join a local industry association

BOMA and local home builder and commercial construction associations put you in the room with property managers and developers.

2

WHO TO APPROACH

Local businesses to contact first

CLIENT TYPE	WHAT THEY NEED
General contractors	CAD-deliverables and virtual walkthroughs before and after renovation. Measurements that hold up across the project.
Property managers	Floor plans for leasing listings, insurance and tenant fit-out.
Architecture firms	Existing conditions surveys. CAD-deliverables they can work from directly.
Interior designers	Accurate room dimensions and a visual reference to share with clients and suppliers.
Office-based businesses	Documentation for fit-outs, space planning and insurance.
Retail and hospitality	Floor plans for renovation permits, franchise docs and insurance.

3 AI BUSINESS TOOLS Prompts to help you work smarter

Paste these into ChatGPT, Claude or any AI tool.
Replace the bracketed fields with your details.

COLD OUTREACH EMAIL

"Write a short cold email to a [general contractor / interior designer / property manager] in [City] introducing my CAD-deliverable and virtual walkthrough service. Lead with the problem of return site visits and inaccurate measurements. Keep it under 150 words and end with a low-pressure call to action."

RESEARCH A LOCAL MARKET

"List the top 10 [general contractors / architecture firms / commercial property managers] in [City] and summarise what kinds of projects they typically work on. Include any publicly available contact details."

WRITE A FOLLOW-UP AFTER DELIVERY

"Write a short follow-up email to a client I completed a commercial site survey for last week. Thank them, ask if the documentation has been useful and gently ask if they have upcoming projects or know anyone else who might need this service."

DRAFT A SIMPLE PROJECT PROPOSAL

"Write a one-page project proposal for a [property type] documentation job. Include scope of work, deliverables (CAD file, floor plan, immersive virtual walkthrough), timeline and a placeholder for pricing. Keep the tone professional but straightforward."

4 PRICING Things to consider when pricing a project

⌚ Time on site

How long will the capture take?
Factor in setup, scanning and any re-shoots.

📍 Travel

Distance, fuel and any time spent travelling to and from the property.

💰 Cost of goods

Processing fees, software and any deliverable-specific costs.

🎯 Desired margin

What do you need to earn for the job to be worth your time?

💵 Local market conditions

What are comparable services charging in your area? Commercial clients expect to pay more than residential. Price accordingly.

5 AFTER DELIVERY Turn one project into a pipeline

Walk your client through the deliverables

Book time with your client to walk through the deliverables and make sure they understand the value of the virtual walkthrough.

Send a review request

A Google review from a contractor carries weight with other commercial clients. Send the link directly.

Follow up 30 days later

Ask if the CAD-deliverables have met their expectations and if they've found value with the virtual walkthrough and whether another project is coming up.

Ask for an introduction

"Do you work with other contractors who deal with this kind of project?" One warm referral is worth ten cold emails.

Keep a simple contact list

Reach out to past commercial clients regularly. For smaller accounts, twice a year works well, but if you are managing many, consider a more frequent cadence.

6 GET STARTED Your first 30-day checklist

- ☐ **Complete Advanced Capture certification**
Gives you your ION Pro badge and access to the full marketing toolkit.
- ☐ **Set up your ION directory profile**
Add a photo, your service area and your equipment.
- ☐ **Pull together two hero samples: one residential, one commercial**
One CAD-deliverable and virtual walkthrough from each.
- ☐ **List 20 local firms to contact**
General contractors, interior designers and commercial property managers in your area.
- ☐ **Send your first five outreach messages**
Use the AI prompt above as a starting point.
- ☐ **Set up a review request**
A Google review link ready to send the day after your next commercial delivery.
- ☐ **Share your ION badge on LinkedIn**
Commercial clients search for service providers on LinkedIn more than most people assume.