How joint venture development project can become a viable alternative survival mechanism for architectural practices during economically challenging times?

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During economically challenging times, architects find it difficult to secure commissioned projects to keep their office afloat and as a result have to either take the difficult choice of downsizing or looking into alternative sources of revenue. Joint venture development projects, either with contractors or with developers, is an alternative source of income. This option could sound like a dangerous path to follow but if conducted with a proper understanding of both party’s expectation, it can achieve winning results.

By carefully analyzing a case study of a joint venture project in Dubai, UAE between an architectural company and a luxury-developer on the Palm Jumeriah which was designed, built and sold in the midst of the 2008-11 financial crises, this paper aims to better understand the challenges and advantages of such projects. By carefully analyzing the case study of the project on Palm Jumeirah, this paper aims to respond to a series of questions that predominantly most architects pursuing the option of a joint venture question and hesitate about. A few of the question are: is a joint venture an affordable option for architects or not? How can an architect secure a cash flow during joint venture project? What is the best way to assess the financial credibility of a development project? How should the profit be divided? How clear should the division
of responsibilities be made and at what stage of the project should that happen? What kind of formal agreement should exist between the different parties in joint ventures?

Even though there are no guarantees in any business, let alone a joint venture development project, having a better understanding of the possible pit-holes and challenges will help increase the percentage of success both in the projects and in the survival of an architect during challenging economical times.

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**Omid Rouhani,** has been working in the field of architecture for 30 years. With a Masters of Architecture from the University of Arizona and a Bachelors of Arts with Honors in Architecture from the Birmingham City University, Omid Rouhani has been a practicing architect in three different continents, he has designed and supervised more than eighty projects ranging from custom homes to head offices for large multinational corporations. He is also a full-time faculty at Zayed University teaching Interior Design since 2001, having established an Interior Design major in the Dubai and Abu Dhabi campuses of Zayed University.

Working very closely with the UAE Housing Authorities, his current research interests are in the areas of housing and the effects of design and cultural development on end user happiness. Papers based on his research have been presented at national and international conferences and his professional work has been published in regional and international architectural journals. His work can be viewed on [www.rouhaniarch.com](http://www.rouhaniarch.com)