

# Trade Secrets



PHOTO BY KEVIN ELLIS

## The Davis file

**Name:** Tripp Davis

**Position:** President, Tripp Davis & Associates

**Education:** Masters degree in landscape architecture from University of Oklahoma.

**Professional background:** NCAA All-America golf team selection and former Oklahoma State Amateur champion. Founded Tripp Davis and Associates in 1994, with a focus on historical renovations. Has worked on more than 25 projects around the U.S.

## Davis on choosing a golf course builder

Right decision on contractor can make a difficult process easier

Golf course architect Tripp Davis and his design partner Michael Rhoads between them, have worked with every one of the major golf course builders in the country, plus a number of smaller regional builders. There are plenty of quality golf contractors and talented individuals operating today that developers can choose to work with, Davis says. But there are some guidelines developers should follow to get the best from the company they trust with their project — and their money.

### 1. Look at the big picture

Davis advises developers to consider all the projects the golf course builder is doing now and when they will be complete.

“You want to know if a golf course builder is at their max number of jobs,” he said. “Instead of going covert, just simply ask. We have had a number of jobs where a builder we would want to bid does not because their talent would be spread too thin. We appreciate that more than a builder who will try to fit it in.”

If you are concerned, he said, ask around the industry about the builder and his ability to deliver on time.

“Fortunately, it is a small industry and not many things happen in a vacuum,” he said.

### 2. Weigh a company's size carefully

“If the project is larger, the principal advantage of a larger golf course builder may be their ability to bring more crews in if the project is running behind schedule,” Davis said. “However, speed is not an

advantage if the detail is not there and they would not be behind if they were committed in the first place.”

Don't overlook small builder. In some cases they have more specific expertise. With smaller projects, don't overlook the larger golf course builders. Just because they are big does not mean they can't commit to doing smaller projects with the high level of attention to detail you are looking for.

With any size of type of project, look first to see what kind of experience they have with projects of similar size and issues to the project you are undertaking.

### 3. Don't make it a numbers game

“One of the biggest mistakes a golf course developer or owner can make is automatically taking the low bid,” Davis

said. “They must still meet the other criteria.”

One way to avoid this is to pre-qualify the bidders to make sure they are the right company for you before you allow them to bid. Or have your golf course architect create a select bidders list and conduct one-on-one interviews with each company prior to bidding. And make sure your golf course architect prepares plans and specifications that leave little to interpretation so the builder is better able to provide a solid bid.

### 4. Choose people you think you will enjoy working with

“Golf course construction can be a very interesting and fulfilling endeavor as long as the people you are working with are enjoyable to be around and exhibit the same passion you have.”

— Rebecca Luczycki