

# For many, blogs pass the test

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When Portland architect Michael Riscica was studying for the Architect Registration Examination (ARE), he became so frustrated with the difficulty that he started blogging about it. His blogs went viral, so he started posting them on a website. Then he wrote a book: "How to Pass the Architect Registration Exam."

Riscica's website, [YoungArchitect.com](http://YoungArchitect.com), now gets 30,000 hits a month and his book is selling like hotcakes. Riscica also just started an online 10-week study group, the ARE Boot Camp, for five people this month and five more in November.

"I'm having a lot of fun helping people move through the process," he said.

Riscica said he's conducting the study group through Google Hangouts, which he said is similar to Skype, but better suited for his purposes.

"I can do a screen share and take over the presentation and they can all see my screen," he said. "It's face-to-face communication — what I felt was missing."

One problem with traditional study methods for the architect exam, Riscica said, is that it's a self-guided process.

"There are places you can ask questions on forums," he said, "but you can't have a conversation and see someone's face."

Riscica's blogs and other ventures are doing so well that two weeks ago he quit his job as a project manager for the city. He said his work on the Internet is taking about 80 percent of his attention at present.

But next month Riscica will open his own firm at the U.S. Custom House on the North Park Blocks, with plans to practice architecture more. He likes to design single-family residential projects, but expects to take on other project types as well.

"I also know a lot about government projects and how the city of Portland works, so I eventually will go after those types of projects," he said.

In the meantime, Riscica said he is motivated to help young people by providing



Sam Tenney/DJC

Portland-based architect Michael Riscica is a blogger whose website, [YoungArchitect.com](http://YoungArchitect.com), is geared toward helping others pass the Architect Registration Examination.

resources to help guide them through the early years of their careers. According to Riscica's Facebook page, he did just that for Courtney Rombough Lockhart of Lake Tahoe, Calif., who wrote, "I just passed my third exam because of your blog!"

Lockhart said that Riscica's blogs and book have helped her tremendously.

"I've basically done exactly what he says and I passed, which is amazing," she said. "I took the tests 10 years ago and totally gave up. But he tells you what you should do and I do exactly what he says. The tests are really hard, and every time I think I failed, but I haven't."

The blogs provide all kinds of advice, and include titles such as "10 Great Reasons to Take the ARE," "Working During Architecture School" and "10 Great Reasons NOT TO Get Your Architect's License."

After high school, Riscica eventually found something he loved: performing drafting for an interior designer. He taught himself AutoCAD, and later enrolled in the architecture program at the New York Institute of Technology, which he called "a fantastic program."

But obtaining his license was another matter, Riscica said.

"I had such a twisted experience with the architect exam and no one else was talking about it from a real human point of view," he said. "It took me four years and I went through a lot to get there."

But it was a love of teaching, inspired by his instructors at NYIT, that led Riscica to post his blogs, he said.

"I thought if I write a blog I can teach everything I want to teach on my own terms," he said. "The blogs are a medium to express myself and help other people."

Now Riscica is in the process of creating an online home for his book. He's also going to double down on his blog posts for [YoungArchitect.com](http://YoungArchitect.com), he said.

"In the month of November I will do a content surge and post every day for a month," he said.

Riscica said he was as surprised as anyone that his website has taken off as well as it has.

"But at the same time, I obsessed over it every single day for two years," he said. "It surprises me sometimes, but then I worked my butt off getting to that point."