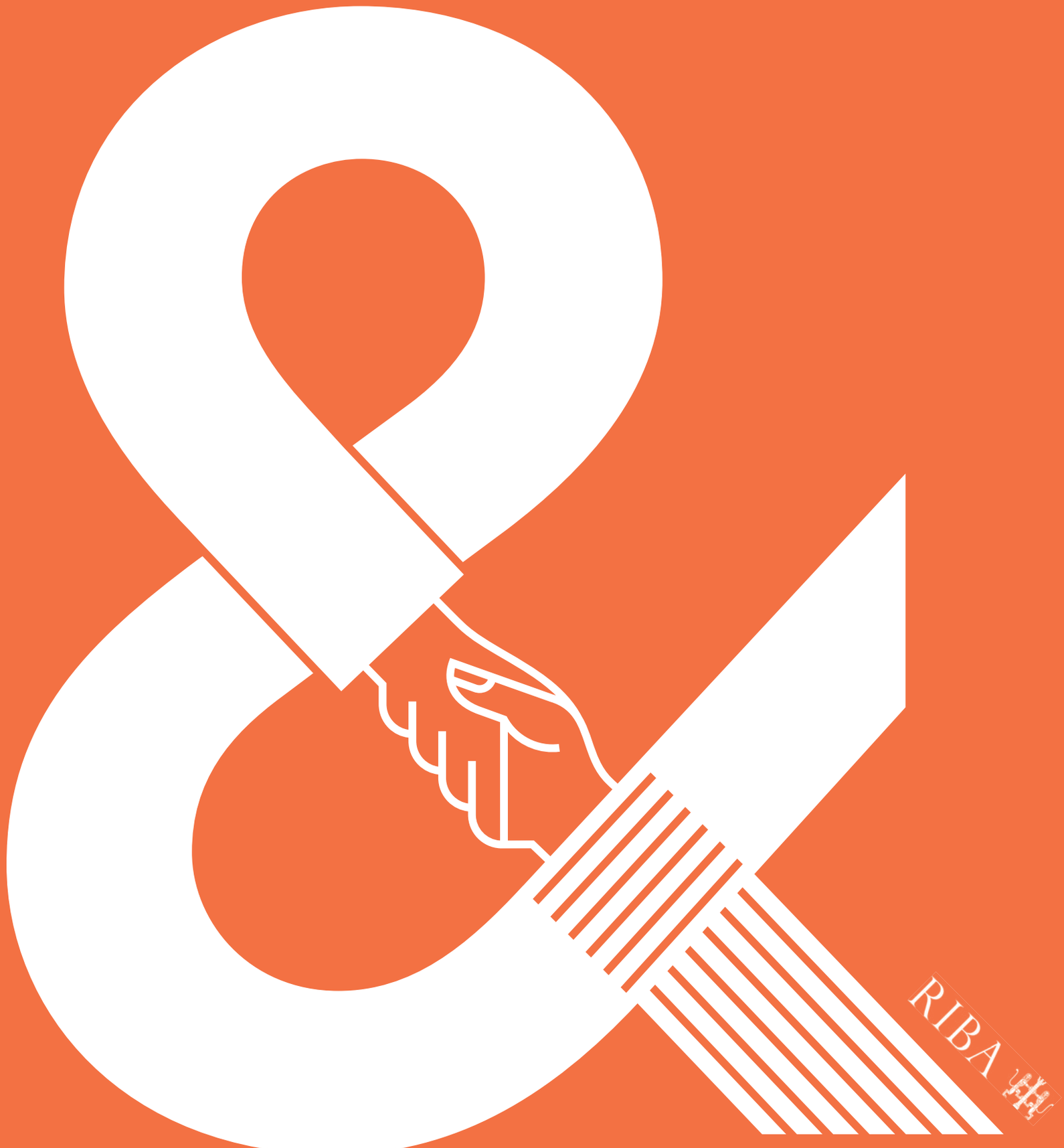
Client & Architect

developing the essential relationship



‘The RIBA for Clients initiative is important. It promotes exactly the kind of open, collaborative spirit that’s needed to meet the challenges for the construction industry today’

Lyndsay Smith, director of education and national frameworks, Morgan Sindall

‘Great value buildings for people, communities, investors and owners alike are only possible with architects who work well with their clients. We applaud the RIBA’s initiative to explore that critical relationship’

David Partridge, managing partner, Argent

‘What makes a career in construction so special, be it in design or delivery, is the legacy it leaves. This document will help point us in the right direction’

Chris Blythe, chief executive, CIOB

Special thanks to Morgan Sindall, Argent and Chartered Institute of Building for their support in co-funding this report.

MORGAN SINDALL
CONSTRUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE

CIOB
THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF BUILDING

ARGENT

Context

Findings

Voices

'We congratulate the RIBA for taking this initiative. Great design is part of the reason we get out of bed in the morning'

Tom Bloxham, Urban Splash

Supporters

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Here's our chance to show our worth

To grasp the huge opportunities of today and tomorrow, architects need to find the keys to the hearts and minds of clients, says Stephen Hodder

Significant opportunities await us as architects. That may seem an outlandish statement to those who believe our role has been emasculated, and to those who feel that the value our profession offers is poorly appreciated.

Massive forces are fundamentally altering our society and the buildings we need. Huge distribution sheds servicing on-line shoppers are displacing consumer palaces. Employees increasingly hot desk or work from home. Coffee shops pop up, patronised by professionals tapping laptops.

Fears over the environment are prompting governments to regulate how resources are consumed, changing what and how we build and how we use buildings. Iconic buildings reshaping skylines in major global cities stand testament to the flow of global money, feeding the desire among huge international corporations for worldwide prestige.

These are early signs; the full force of change lies ahead. The process of interpreting this change and realising the future is where the skills, imagination, vision and craft of the architect come to the fore.

One statistic hints at the scale of the challenge and the size of the prize. The UK built environment in 2013 was officially valued at £6.4 trillion. Almost half was the value of the land on which the buildings stand. That's important to note.

Nobody can predict the exact shape of things to come, but we know that how we use the built environment is in rapid flux and transforming today's built environment to meet tomorrow's needs is an immense task.

History shows us how powerfully radical shifts in the economy and society can impact on what we build. The late 1970s saw the UK shift from an industrial to a post-industrial economy. Then, a third of employment was in manufacturing and about a half in services. Today services accounts for 80%, manufacturing just 10%. By 2000, commercial work represented about a quarter of all construction, five times more than industrial.

With hindsight that huge transformation seems obvious and straightforward in terms of technical challenges and business models. Knocking down factories and replacing them with shops, offices and homes is not simple, but the intellectual, financial and technical apparatus was pretty much in place.

What buildings and structures we will need in future is far less obvious. How to fund the transformation is, perhaps, even less certain. How will investors and government most effectively inject their capital to create value, capture it and make the best return?

Architects create more worth than can be expressed through the capital value of buildings. Without even debating the scale or where this extra value lies we can see that it exists in the nation's balance sheet. The asset value is far greater than the build cost.

Some of the value a building creates spills over, as externalities, to benefit neighbours. This means there will be value generated by the architect that is hard for the developer to capture. Bad buildings can destroy value in the location where they are built. These realities test us as architects. For all this, the challenges offer a better opportunity to display our worth than for a generation or more.

We found clients eager for the skills, insight, creativity and leadership we can offer

Shifting social and economic pressures will bring subtle transformation. It will not just be about large projects in major cities, but a whole range of work taking place on the high street, in commercial centres, in cities, towns and villages, much of it organically. People – citizen architects – will reshape buildings to meet their needs.

We will succeed by using our talents to interpret these complex changes and what they say about what people really want and need. We can envisage new and reconfigured buildings that work best for the users and make a sufficient return for the developer to prompt them to invest. We can show our clients how to unlock value. From there, entrepreneurial clients can create business models that best capture the value generated to finance and construct a built environment for the future.

The potential opportunities in the UK may seem huge, but are dwarfed by the global market. Here RIBA members benefit. The nation's regulatory history, stability and rigour, makes the UK and its professional practices highly attractive to international clients.

So why should we be anxious about opportunities? They appear there for the taking.

There is one significant proviso. We need to find the keys to the hearts and minds of clients. This may seem daunting to architects who feel their value is unappreciated. It need not be. We found clients eager for the skills, insight, creativity and leadership that we can bring to the design and construction process.

We need to grasp the opportunities to bolster the perception of our worth. This report, and the ongoing work, aims to help architects find the keys to unlocking opportunities and develop the essential relationship between client and architect. ●

LEFT: The roundtables are part of ongoing work to help architects unlock opportunities and enhance the essential relationship with clients.

PHOTOGRAPH WILDE FRY

WE'RE WITH YOU ALL THE WAY

CIOB chief executive Chris Blythe offers the RIBA president his wholehearted support

Dear Stephen,

On behalf of the 42,000 CIOB members across the globe, I am personally delighted to support the RIBA's initiative to enhance the relationship between architects and clients.

There are many reasons why and two in particular. Firstly, relationships within construction are critical to an industry so easily riven by conflicts. Secondly, our members, as construction managers working for contractors, increasingly find themselves cast as clients for architects. Strong relationships are key. They separate good teams from poor and, so often, the best projects from the also-rans. These relationships build over time through experience, trust, understanding, empathy and respect.

As fellow professionals, CIOB members recognise and respect the value architects bring. They recognise too that in the uncertain, complex, often fraught environment of a building project conflicts arise and compromises are necessary. Tribal and narrow commercial interests can easily trump good judgement and problem solving. All professionals must guard against this. Compromise, not conflict, should be a baseline. Better still, the creative, practical and commercial tensions that emerge should be grasped as opportunities, to display talent and solve problems that improve on a shared vision.

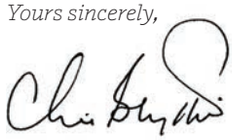
Naturally, everyone should do their best to ensure the project they work on both meets the client's needs and stacks up commercially. And, as more construction managers take the mantle of client, every step that improves the relationship between architects and clients is welcome. So I see great value in the focus you place on improving the client-architect relationship.

As professionals we have a public duty to look to the wider world and future generations, to ensure as far as we can that the buildings and structures function well and are adaptable throughout their often very long life. That is a huge responsibility. It is, ultimately, what should bind all those who work on a project to a common goal, site operative or financier, architect or construction manager.

What makes a career in construction so special, be it in design or delivery, is the final product. We know that what motivates so many people who choose the built environment as a career is the legacy it leaves – to be able to say with pride to family, friends and acquaintances: 'I built that'.

That is what should guide all professionals, trades, and others working in the built environment. This document will, I am sure, help point us in the right direction and serve as an excellent starting point. We look forward to developing greater collaboration across industry.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Blythe, chief executive, CIOB

The Chartered Institute of Building is at the heart of a management career in construction. It is the world's largest and most influential professional body for construction management and leadership. It has a Royal Charter to promote the science and practice of building and construction for the benefit of society, and has been doing that since 1834. Its members work worldwide in the development, conservation and improvement of the built environment. The CIOB accredits university degrees, educational courses and training. Its professional and vocational qualifications are a mark of the highest levels of competence and professionalism, providing assurance to clients and other professionals procuring built assets.

It's an ongoing conversation

The profession must adapt to prosper, according to the first findings of the ongoing RIBA Client Liaison Group dialogues

At the start of his presidency, Stephen Hodder set up an RIBA for Clients programme aligned to the Institute's five-year Leading Architecture strategy. This began an ongoing dialogue with clients across sectors and regions, run by a permanent Client Liaison Group.

The group is chaired by Nigel Ostime of Hawkins\Brown and includes Paul Morrell OBE, the government's former chief construction adviser and an honorary Fellow of the Institute.

Twenty years ago, the then president Frank Duffy commissioned a strategic study of the profession with the aim of reinventing the role of the architect in modern society.

One of the study's tasks was 'making sure that the RIBA accelerates the development of architectural knowledge through finding the most effective ways of ensuring that architects are continually communicating and learning from clients, in as systematic a way as possible, about what architectural design can do to anticipate and satisfy the emerging needs of users, clients and society'.

Inspired by this, the Client Liaison Group aims to identify strategic factors that will help architects to improve their business offer to different kinds of clients.

This report records the first findings of the group's dialogues. It directly supports the first priority of the RIBA's strategy. This relates to clients and is to '…stimulate demand for architecture that delivers economic, social and environmental value' and to 'provide members with researched insights into changing needs of major categories of clients so that members can shape their services to better support client needs'.

Hopefully this report will mark the beginning of a much deeper engagement with clients. Continuous monitoring of their needs, their objectives and how architects can best respond must remain essential to the work of the RIBA. Greater understanding can only mutually benefit clients, architects and society at large.

The evidence in this report flows from the many generous insights and comments made by contributors at roundtable meetings and one-to-one interviews. As this report goes to press, the group will have held 15 roundtables and disseminated findings in the RIBA Journal and the RIBA for Clients pages on architecture.com.

This report teases out the things that clients look for in their ideal architect. In doing so, it sheds light on the generic issues critical to contemporary architectural practice.

Its conclusions are both daunting and exciting, and should interest not just architects but others in the construction industry – including clients. It indicates that the profession must adapt to prosper, and this action falls into five broad categories: championing the vision; listening and understanding; engaging with people; delivering technical talent; and learning and improving.

Desirable attributes highlighted in the report – business savvy, process efficiency, leadership, and so on – reveal the particular blends different types of clients look for.

The Client Liaison Group will continue to expand its reach, digest findings and disseminate conclusions, refining its approach as it goes. Its evidence-based insights will help individual RIBA members to shape their

'The work of the Client Liaison Group is a vital cog in the overall governance of the profession. As I take up my presidency, I look forward to developing a set of useful tools and initiatives which will benefit RIBA members. Our findings will be used to articulate the extraordinary value that architects add not just for clients, but to society as a whole.'
Jane Duncan
RIBA President Elect

COLLABORATION WORKS

Morgan Sindall is deeply committed to the cooperative approach, not least because it delivers more for less, says Lyndsay Smith

Good collaboration is the only way to achieve construction quality viably in a cost-constrained world, especially in public projects and frameworks where value for money is critical.

For Morgan Sindall, collaboration means timely, transparent and effective two-way communication between all parties – the head client, end-users, the supply chain and, indeed, all stakeholders.

It is the way we balance high aspirations for design quality against very real budgetary, programmatic and geographical constraints. We take it seriously, having become one of the first construction companies to achieve the requirements of BS 11000 Collaborative Business Relationships accreditation.

However, it is not easy. It requires teamwork and cooperation. For architects treading a difficult path between aesthetic judgement, meeting the brief and cost control, it takes exceptional skill and commitment. More than anything, we look for architects who listen to our drivers without compromising on design creativity.

Our Wigan Life Centre shows what can be achieved. It sensitively addresses its historic context to combine disparate community functions in a single new landmark building.

Its success is down to the design team, the head client's team and ours working closely in partnership throughout the lengthy competitive dialogue process. We were able to minimise waste and inefficiency through supply chain input, value engineering and value management, delighting the head client.

The architects, Astudio and LCE Architects, thrived under this regime, managing the design and handling many competing drivers to deliver real value.

Equally successful, our two Liverpool primary school builds – New Park and Northway – are putting collaboration at the heart of their operations. Using the same supply chain and a common design for both has achieved significant economies of scale.

The architects, Mouchel, embraced the innovation, collaborating closely with all parties, not least the teachers and students to create a buzz of excitement.

Paul Anderson, head teacher at Northway Primary School, says of the architects, 'By working, communicating and moving forward together, we've ended up with a fantastic design that will give so much more to the children.'

At Morgan Sindall, collaboration delivers more for less. Adopting it across the industry and developing best practice could deliver so much more for the country.

Lyndsay Smith is director of education and national frameworks, Morgan Sindall plc

Morgan Sindall is a UK construction, infrastructure and design business. The company works for private and public sector customers on projects and frameworks from £50,000 to more than £1 billion. It operates across the commercial, defence, education, energy, healthcare, industrial, leisure, retail, transport and water markets. Morgan Sindall is part of Morgan Sindall Group plc, a leading UK construction and regeneration group with revenue of over £2 billion which operates through five divisions – construction and infrastructure, fit-out, affordable housing, urban regeneration and investments.

BELOW LEFT A computer-generated image of the innovative school solution used at New Park and Northway schools in Liverpool. **BELOW** Wigan Life Centre.

careers and practices to target work more effectively and to improve the value they offer.

The ongoing work of the group must also feed into the bigger debate and into real action so that the RIBA can meet its aspiration to become the first port of call for anyone thinking about projects in the built environment.

To do this, the RIBA must radiate trust, knowledge, advice and understanding. There are multiple ways the Institute can make itself more welcoming and attractive to clients and others and more effective in delivering its messages and supporting its members.

It is not the purpose of this report to prescribe exactly how this should be achieved, but it has highlighted some of the lessons in orange. Actions taken must be underpinned by knowledge captured from a continued deep dialogue with those who procure, commission and use the built environment. ●

ABOVE: Listening and learning – the core element of Stephen Hodder's RIBA for Clients initiative is the ongoing evidence being gathered through roundtable discussions and interviews across sectors and regions. Future work will build on these.

PHOTOGRAPH: WILDE FRY

Championing the vision

'We want architects to coordinate the team because they have the overall vision.' James Pellatt, head of projects at Great Portland Estates

Listening and understanding

'Architects need to be business analysts – you need to understand how the client's business works.' Andrew Bugg, partner, head of project and building consultancy at Knight Frank

Engaging with people

'For us it's about developing relationships with architects, gaining a level of trust so that we can be assured of the right response.' Nick Watson, former senior regeneration manager, Croydon Council (now with Lend Lease)

Delivering technical talent

'If you go wrong after planning permission then you lose the benefit you gained at the early stages. The technical side generates huge value.' Richard Cook, director, Lend Lease

Learning and improving

'I don't think an architect can work effectively unless they see their work through to completion. Otherwise, how does one learn from the mistakes that one makes?' Andrew Barraclough, group design director, Wates

There's huge potential out there

The future is full of opportunity for architects. To unlock it the profession must adapt to clients' needs and demonstrate how it adds value

There is a huge opportunity for architects to boost their workloads and their fees. Clients value what architects do. That's clear from the many round-table sessions so far held under the RIBA for Clients initiative.

The other message is more sobering. These opportunities rely less on finding the right kind of work from the right client in the right place and more on providing the right kind of service.

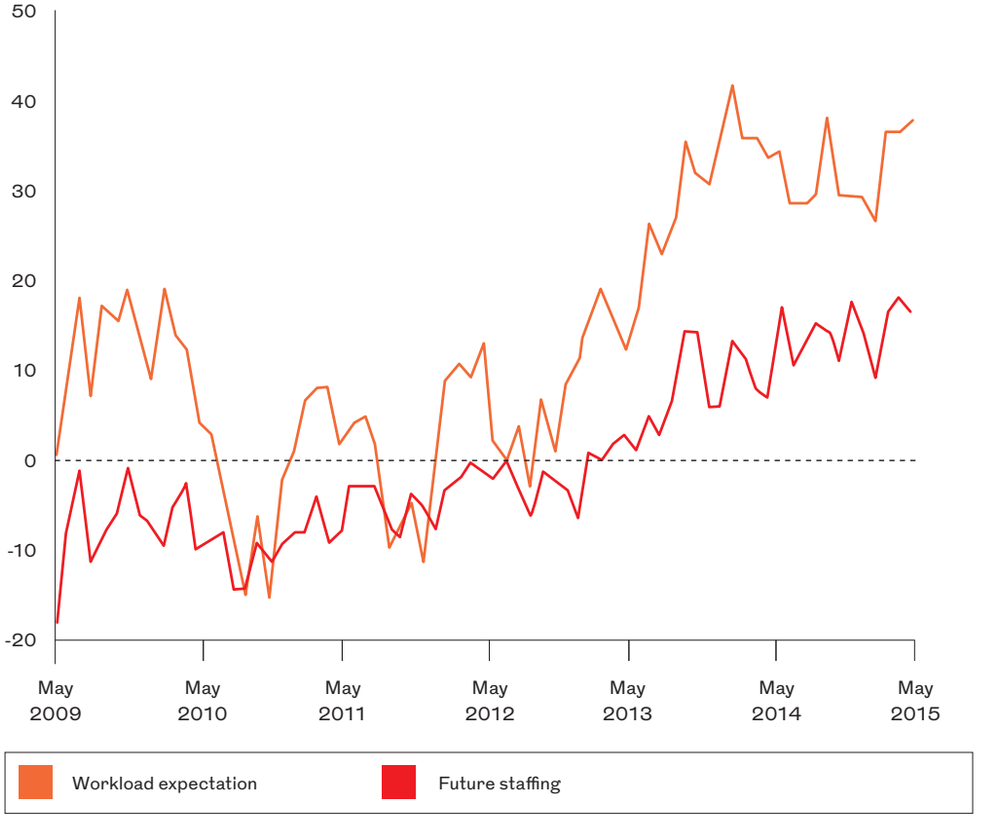
The view from the round tables was plain: many if not most architects will have to adapt if they want a successful future.

Construction clients value architects' vision, creativity and problem-solving abilities. Many are actively rooting for architects, willing them to succeed. But clients who think architects don't add value will look elsewhere. They will pursue different ways of delivering their buildings, ways that relegate the importance of or obviate the need for an architect.

Should they abandon those whose skills have helped them so well in the past?

The answer, surely, is no. The challenge of

Architects' workload expectations (balance of responses %)
Source: RIBA Future Trends Survey



← Architects' workload expectations (balance of responses %)

British architects are growing in confidence. The message from the RIBA Future Trends Survey is unambiguous. Since early 2013 ever more RIBA members have seen growth in workloads. As 2013 approached 2014, growing workload raised the expectation of increasing staff numbers. Finer detail in this dataset shows that for almost two years, nearly 90% of those surveyed expected their workload either to hold firm or expand. That builds confidence.

→ Construction output growth for selected sectors for 2007-14 and forecast 2014-18

The worst-hit sectors are recovering fastest. This chart gives the expert forecasters' view of where things are heading. Using data provided by the Construction Products Association, it shows simultaneously how much growth there was in various sectors from 2007 to 2014 (falls mainly) and how much is expected from 2014 to 2018 (growth across the board). What we see is those sectors that fell most are expected to grow most now.

creating a better built environment is arguably greater today than at any time since the post-war reconstruction.

Our analysis of the round table discussions revealed multiple opportunities. Some apply across sectors, regions, client types and project sizes, while others are very particular to a given circumstance.

Scanning the market, scouring the data, spotting the trends and keeping an ear to the ground will help pinpoint where opportunities lie. That process is important and one architects might better hone as a skill.

Selecting potential opportunities carefully, gauging when, how and if to diversify, and pitching for work judiciously will all help a practice maintain a fresh, vibrant and secure portfolio of work. Again, these are marketing skills that architects might sharpen.

The key to unlocking a successful, sustainable future, however, is to match the service and the delivery of that service to the needs of clients. It is that basic but not necessarily that easy.

This message rings loud and clear from the round tables. Helpfully, the assembled clients provided many clues about what they want to see more of from architects.

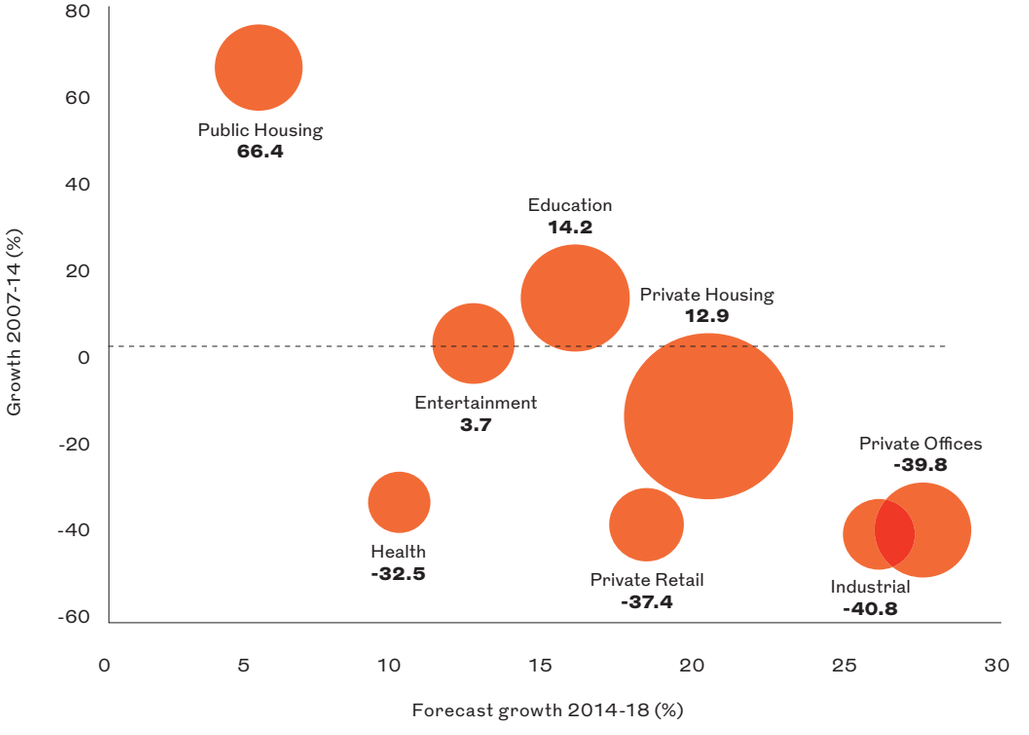
We have sought to capture in a detailed collated analysis the ingredients reportedly missing from the profession as a whole. The findings are generalisations, but the fact that they were highlighted, particularly those that are common across sectors, means the profession should pay heed.

They are organised around our five key themes but of course are heavily cross-cut by other recurring factors. Where there is evidence of distinct differences between sectors, these are pointed out.

Below we highlight data that shows the near future looks bright for architects. The next few years should offer an extremely benign environment within which architects can reshape the service they offer to clients.

There can seldom have been the coincidence of such a great need and so huge an opportunity for architects to prove their worth in reshaping the built environment and to delight their clients.

Construction output growth for selected sectors for 2007-2014 and forecast 2014 to 2018. Source: Construction Products Association, ONS



Bubble size illustrates the relative size of the market

What the numbers say about opportunities for architects

Demand for services in the built environment is in constant flux. In any given sector or sub-sector, for any given skill, opportunities ebb and flow as the needs that people and organisations have for buildings shift.

For architects, as for all construction-related businesses, it is essential to scan the market to understand these changes. Here hard data help hugely. They can distil and interpret the signals we glean from anecdotes, changing client preferences, technological developments or observations about mutating trends in people's behaviour.

Data can highlight and scale where there is possible opportunity and where there are potential pitfalls. But, read without care, data can be very misleading.

The charts presented here provide some clues to where the better opportunities might lie within the UK market. But, as stressed elsewhere, once found those opportunities need to be unlocked. The key for architects is to provide and be seen to provide value.

Pull all of this data together and we begin to see what most architects may well feel, relief after the recession and excitement over the growing opportunities emerging over the next few years. Encouragingly, the data show a pattern of growth spread, though unevenly, both geographically and by sectors.

We are the guardians

Protecting the project vision requires architects to be 'inventively flexible', Stephen Hodder explains

If you had to pick one word in the built environment lexicon that is associated with the architect more than any other fellow professional, it may well be vision. It was used time and again in the many client-architect round table discussions we have so far held as part of the ongoing RIBA for Clients initiative.

One message is clear: for so many clients it is a critical role of a good architect to champion the project vision from concept to completion. It is essential to investigate what this means for architects and how they might raise their game in the eyes of clients, win more work and produce designs of greater commercial and social worth.

The following pages pull together the

PHOTOGRAPH: HÉLÈNE BINET

LEFT: 'We were impressed how the scheme held good from competition stage all the way through to completion. The project was a success architecturally and also from a lettings point of view... It shows there is a way of dealing with very decayed buildings that you can't restore conventionally.' Alastair Dick-Cleland, Landmark Trust, on Witherford Watson Mann Architects' Astley Castle, 2013 RIBA Stirling Prize winner.

'The vision is an unbreakable thread that guides the project from concept to completion and hopefully beyond'

desires of clients and advice from the round table discussions about this. But it is worth considering what we mean by vision and what championing that means for architects.

Brian Green: How do you interpret the meaning of 'vision'?

Stephen Hodder: The word is used so frequently in association with architects and architecture it is easy to lose sight of what it means.

In the RIBA Journal in 1965, Denys Lasdun wrote: 'Our job is to give the client, on time and on cost, not what he wants but what he never dreamed he wanted and, when he gets it, he recognises it as something he wanted all the time.' Apologies for the masculine pronoun!

I've always considered this to be a succinct capture of the meaning. However, the use of the words 'our' and 'give' imply a disconnect in the design process. The vision is that which encapsulates all the objectives of the client, meets societal needs, but it is defined through conversation and collaboration within a team in the broadest sense.

BG: What does it do?

SH: It provides an unbreakable thread that guides the project from concept to completion and hopefully beyond. I say beyond because a realised vision is one that enriches a client's purpose, whether it be better learning outcomes in schools, supporting recovery in hospitals, or driving efficiency in the workplace.

BG: What does it mean for architects?

SH: Time and again, during the client round tables across all sectors, we were told that the architect is the 'guardian' of the vision. We bring tangible order and form to a vision in support of human needs, whether functional, spiritual or commercial.

A vision is not the output of a single individual, but it needs someone to initiate and then to be a focus for the ensuing conversation. In a recent discussion piece in the Architects' Journal, the structural engineer Hanif Kara said, 'Try to write, and if he's holding the pencil and she's holding the pencil at the same time as me, we can't write the same word. There has to be one person holding the pencil in my view; that is the architect often.'

This places architects in an exceptional position within the design team. It's a huge responsibility but, evidentially, a responsibility that clients wish us to assume.

BG: Why is it essential for architects to hold the vision?

SH: Finding solutions to the inevitable challenges that emerge through the design and delivery stages, technical, regulatory and commercial, will put pressure to deviate from the vision. Clear direction and leadership is needed to deliver the right outcomes for the client. The vision is the lodestar guiding our choice of direction to meet these outcomes.

We stake our claim to 'hold' it on our qualities of passion, sense of idea ownership, wider responsibility to society, and our innate ability as facilitators and mediators of the process.

BG: Why is it essential to be inventively flexible, but never lose sight of it?

SH: I've described it as a thread. It's not an iron bar. Good architects accommodate change with a degree of pragmatism but never lose sight of the vision.

There will always be conflicting pressures within the team. There will always be new information to assimilate. Rejection of things that are seemingly unimportant to the agreed plan is unwise. Much better to apply a process of prudent testing. The first question should be whether change can be accommodated within the concept. The second is to see if it can be accommodated in a way that enhances the outcomes expressed in the vision.

Challenges should be seen initially as opportunities for improvements not threats. If they really can't be delivered within the vision then stand firm.

BG: Why is it essential to communicate the vision and embed it within the culture of the team?

SH: Successful outcomes cannot be delivered by an individual. Successful buildings delivered by our practice have been with the collaboration of many people, particularly an engaged client. Getting everyone buying into the vision brings a shared responsibility, accountability and reward. All other members of the design team will think in terms of the vision when they need to adapt the design.

But implicit within your question is the need for great communication, and the necessity for direct communication between client and architect.

It's easy to fear that with the threats of commercial and technological change the role of the architect will be diminished. But in any organisation in any industry, now and in the future, project champions will be needed. What is clear from our research is that the need for architects to champion the vision is well recognised. More importantly it is what clients want. ●

Keep the faith

Architects are the spiritual leaders who must see the project vision is delivered

All projects begin with a vision. It is the seed of success. Yet it takes skill and leadership to fertilise, germinate, and protect it through to fruition.

Clients know this. They also know that it is easy to lose sight of the vision in the hurly burly of day-to-day business. They recognise this eats away at success, especially the whole-life benefits of a building.

They are willing to invest significant trust in people who can nurture a vision from conception to completion and deliver the greatest value. In their minds, the person most likely to have the competence, knowledge and experience to fulfil this role is the architect, on projects of all sizes across most sectors.

As Nick Searl, partner at Argent, puts it: 'Architects are the spiritual leaders in this process. Everyone wants you to do it. Believe in it and reassert!'

This view is not confined to the private sector. Local authorities with a regeneration agenda recognise architects as the key professionals for unlocking value. Local authorities want designs, especially for flagship projects, to be emblematic of their ambition and aspirations and to add real value to communities.

'It's about taking a vision forward, it's about working with us as a client and our communities, and it's about shaping our city,' says councillor Ruth Rosenau, cabinet member, Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

However, the perceived value of vision is fragile. Take schools. From a high during the

LEFT: The Love Shack, Cumbria, by Sutherland Hussey for Adam Sutherland and Karen Guthrie. 'We sent the architects pictures of buildings we liked and got a fantastic result that we could never have imagined,' says Sutherland.

PHOTOGRAPH KAREN GUTHRIE

RECOMMENDED READING
Design Management RIBA Plan of Work 2013 Guide, Dale Sinclair
Project Leadership RIBA Plan of Work 2013, Nick Willars
RIBA Plan of Work 2013 Stage Guides (Briefing, Design, Construction)
www.ribabookshops.com

What the roundtables found:

- Clients are prepared to invest trust in those who can deliver a vision.
- Clients see architects, in most cases, as the professional best placed to lead the vision.
- Vision matters on projects of all scales across most sectors.
- The perception of the value of vision can be fragile.
- Clients are, in most cases, keen to see architects step forward to lead the vision.
- BIM offers a fresh opportunity for architect to re-establish their role leading the vision.
- Architects need to be business savvy, demonstrating an awareness of how to deliver value.

Building Schools for the Future programme, clients and other stakeholders today have a guarded opinion of architects. Austerity and the focus on cost have diminished trust in the value of architects' work.

Even here though, architects have great scope to quickly re-establish their worth and authority, with evidence-based models of design that demonstrate measurable improvements.

Jane Wade, operational manager, Vale of Glamorgan Council, puts it this way: 'We need to create inspirational spaces – how children feel when they walk into the space is the biggest measure.'

In design-build procurement, contractor clients think that architects have relinquished the leadership role, forcing them, with some regret, to invest in specialist design managers instead. However, there is an open invitation to reprise the role, provided viability, accuracy and buildability are given due attention.

'Architects should champion design quality,' says Colin Tedder, technical director, Bouygues UK. 'That's their primary function and their greatest skill. It's important that they take the lead and recognise its importance in delivering their services.'

Housing developers too regard architects as natural design-team leaders. The round table found there is an unparalleled opportunity to reinforce architects in a leadership position, especially those who can demonstrate experience and efficiency in using BIM.

Communication and business savvy are critical, and managing delays and overspends needs to be high on the agenda.

'The profession should be perceived as leaders in the industry, and that's right through the process, from inception, consultation through to delivery, product innovation and construction,' says Sean Cook, design director for Clivedale London.

In large-scale housing retrofit, clients generally regard the work as a mere technical fix that does not require an architect. In doing so, they potentially miss out on considerable value-adding opportunities that arise from the wider design vision that architects offer.

There is much that can engage their interest provided it is couched in terms of the value that an architect can add – validated design solutions, better user focus, better project leadership and coordination, better cost-benefit, better viability, and less risk.

Bolster skills and techniques to champion the vision from concept to completion.

This is particularly important for contractors, retrofit clients, commercial developers and homeowners. The benefit clients derive here is self-evident: they are after continuity to at least maintain and preferably add to the value won at concept and planning.

After the vision has been created, clients want a single point of responsibility for efficient and effective control to keep it uppermost in the project team's mind.

The role of maintaining the vision in the context of the client's (especially contractors') key commercial drivers has been ceded to independent or client-employed design managers. However, the door is wide open to architects able to satisfy clients of their competence.

Local authority clients are accountable to the public and, in what they call the 'regeneration agenda', need to attract inward investment from developers. The value-adding vision is vulnerable in the austerity squeeze, catastrophic to the value-for-money equation. Moreover, it will fail to attract developers.

Ensure communication is engaging, authoritative, and persuasive.

This is true across the board, of course, but particularly among housing-retrofit and schools clients.

Retrofit for housing clients is generally carried out without the involvement of architects, missing significant opportunities to add value in improved spaces, layouts, and public realm. Architects need to win clients' ears and persuade them of their competence.

Schools clients are wary of what value architects add. Effective communication is the necessary flipside of robustly validated design practice, and leads to better project management.

Lend them your ears

The client-architect dialogue is so important it's worth restating how it's done. Nigel Ostime gets to grips with communication

Clients want architects to challenge the brief. They don't, however, want architects to ignore their business prerogatives and constraints. That path is wasteful and costly. It disrupts team cohesion and the smooth running of projects.

Listening. Understanding. Communicating. Delivering. That's what clients want from us. It's simple really. But why do some clients feel this isn't happening and where might a solution lie?

It may in part be a product of architectural education. Design teaching in schools of architecture largely follows a process of evaluating a brief given by the tutor, or self-determined by the student, followed by design development.

There is no client-architect dialogue, as typically there's no client. Ultimately, the design is critiqued by tutors and peers. Dialogue with the tutor (who could be seen as a surrogate client) tends to focus on theory, creativity and problem solving.

The brief acts as a framework for exploring ideas and learning the processes of creative design. In the 'crit', the design has to be defended against sometimes hostile criticism looking to uncover weaknesses. Done well, this can induce open discussion and debate. But it can also engender a tendency to defend the scheme at all costs.

Most aspiring architects don't actually meet clients, certainly to interact with them as their agent, until they are in the workplace. Even then they don't often engage with clients until they have been in practice long enough to be trusted with such a precious business resource.

Perhaps we need to reinforce the importance of the client-architect dialogue at this formative stage. If so, what is it that needs to be taught? How might the curriculum be bolstered to accelerate ability in this key skill?

Briefing process

The briefing process is the foundation of a meaningful dialogue between architect and client. The RIBA Plan of Work 2013 establishes three stages:

- Strategic brief in Stage 0 (strategic definition)
- Initial project brief in Stage 1 (preparation and brief)
- Final project brief, which is to be signed off by the end of Stage 2 (concept design)

This could be rather mechanical, but conducted with consideration it should develop from initial conversations, following the client's enquiry, to a brief that encompasses all the criteria for success and paves the way to achieving the desired outcomes.

The key is to actually listen, not just make assumptions or presumptions. Of course an architect should challenge the brief, but to elicit angles that the client may not conceive without prompting. This is where value is first determined and a wrong direction inevitably leads to value lost.

The best architects raise expectations and help clients understand what can be achieved within the cost and programme constraints. Ultimately, though, they deliver what the client wants, not what they think the client should want.

My practice, Hawkins\Brown, uses a 'mission statement' to capture in a tweetable phrase what the client and architect jointly aim to achieve with the building. For example, a facility for UCL with a three-year lifespan had: 'Work quick and dirty to create a well-considered temporary facility.'

Communication

Once the architect has interpreted the client's needs, it is essential to communicate that back to the client (so they know you know) and then communicate the design solution.

BELOW: Here East, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, Hawkins\Brown for iCITY. The architects worked side by side with the client, openly exchanging and challenging ideas, building consensus in a shared spirit of open dialogue.

This process is becoming easier as the use of sophisticated 3D visualisation spreads, offering the potential for real-time, photo-realistic virtual walk-throughs of the emerging design. Despite technological advances, physical models remain, in many ways, the best way to communicate a design. Michelangelo never drew perspectives, just plans and elevations supplemented by beautifully crafted hardwood models.

More importantly, for meaningful dialogue to occur there needs to be trust and respect between architect and client. On Here East, an Olympic legacy project, Hawkins\Brown is working side by side with the client, stripped of badges and openly exchanging and challenging ideas, building consensus in a shared spirit of open dialogue. This recognition – demand even – that all those around the table can and should contribute to solving the problem has been central to the success of the project. The designer seeks inventiveness from the client as much as vice versa. This environment of mutual creativity is a model that we look to foster on all our projects.

Optioneering and progressive fixity

The design process can be wasteful unless carried out with rigour. An iterative process is essential to producing the best design, but that does not mean developing ideas in too much detail that are later to be discarded. Design options should be explored with equal weight at the start.

Having explored the options, the client should then have the means to be clear about the direction of travel. This will bring confidence and reduce the likelihood of major changes. Change does happen in projects, but it is better done on the drawing board than the construction site. It should never be down simply to a change of mind.

The design should be progressively fixed. That means a client needs all the information necessary to make considered decisions along the way, with the comfort that the project team has established the best solution.

Nigel Ostime is project delivery director at Hawkins\Brown Architects

RECOMMENDED READING

On briefing: **A practical guide to RIBA Plan of Work 2013 Stages 7, 0 and 1**, Paul Fletcher and Hilary Satchwell

On design: **A practical guide to RIBA Plan of Work 2013 Stages 2 and 3**, Tim Bailey

Walk a mile in their shoes

Clients believe that architects who listen and understand properly are rare. That must change

Clients build for specific reasons, so architects must listen carefully to what they say, ensure they fully understand the client's needs and account for them in the designs. That's obvious. Yet, while some architects excel at listening and understanding, the evidence from the round table discussions suggests they are seen as exceptions.

'Some of the skills that architects are missing are to do with really understanding the value – not just energy efficiency, or the building performance – but how a building translates into real returns, some of which are monetary, others that are less tangible to the client,' says Sunand Prasad, founding partner of Penoyre and Prasad.

Clients are motivated to build by a blend of personal and business considerations. These might include return on investment, strategic objectives, branding, corporate social responsibility, ruling philosophy, and so on. Clients are almost always constrained by the capital or time available and their formal or informal assessment of the risks.

As Andrew Bugg, partner and head of project and building consultancy at Knight Frank, notes: 'Architects need to be business analysts – you need to understand how the client's business works.'

The relative importance of each factor within the project is negotiable. Benefits in one area can be traded for bigger benefits elsewhere. In commercial projects, for example, certain clients accept more capital expenditure if they are persuaded of operational savings or increases in profit.

Viability is critical and the extent of this trading is limited to what is best for the

Invest in understanding clients' world views, speak their language, pre-empt problems and optimise designs to meet their key drivers.

This is about walking a mile in the client's shoes. The fact that it is a plea across the board indicates how large an opportunity it is for architects.

It is difficult. On the one hand, architects are expected to push the brief. On the other, they must not overreach boundaries.

For commercial developers, contractors, housing and workplace clients the chief benefit of this approach is that it protects viability, giving sound financial risk management due prominence. The key qualities are efficient, appropriate decision-making and lean management. Getting it right breeds trust and boosts reputations.

For retrofit clients, getting it right reliably adds value in improved spaces, layouts, and public realm.

Really understanding local authority clients revolves around the vision, attracting inward investment, meeting economic, social and environmental targets, and value for money.

Schools clients need reassurance that projects will remain viable without compromising on value.

PHOTOGRAPH PAUL RIDDLE

client – a building that adds value optimally. Benefits that the client cannot capture – externalities – may be an aspiration for the architect, but they are hard to justify unless they align with the client's drivers at no cost or add overall value for the client.

Balancing benefits is often thought of as taking and refining the brief. However, briefing concentrates purely on the product of the design, the physical building, whereas clients are also concerned about the process.

'There's a perception that if an architect is left on his own it won't be commercially viable or he won't maximise the opportunity,' says Gregor Mitchell, land director, be:here (Willmott Dixon's private rental housing arm).

LEFT 'Many buyers said it was the Scandinavian-style design that focused on space and light that really sold the homes.' Linden Homes, client for Alison Brooks Architects' 'Be' housing in Essex.

Inefficient, inaccurate, late, clumsy, badly managed and poorly communicated processes can chip away at the value of a project. They fray relationships in an already stressful, resource-constrained environment.

'Once we're on site and chasing design details to deliver the project to what is often a very tight programme and, in the current climate, very tight cost constraints, having a design that is both late and poor or insufficient is a very expensive luxury that we cannot afford,' says Mark Wakeford, managing director, Stepnell.

Clients expect you to listen to their reasons for building, understand them, and thereafter accord them due respect for the duration of the project.

Paul Chandler, executive vice-president of Skanska UK, says: 'Understand who your client is and what their key drivers are, because it will be different in different circumstances. Understand where he needs to be more efficient.

'When you do that, the chances of working successfully in a collaborative fashion increase tenfold and we all come out of it with a much better result.'

Within this framework, architects can be encouraged to challenge the brief creatively and push for solutions that will exceed expectations.

As Steve McGuckin, managing director, Turner & Townsend, notes: 'Contractors look for creativity, problem solving and delivery from architects, ultimately giving the head client something they didn't even realise they wanted.'

Architects who listen and understand breed trust in their clients and reduce their perception of risk. This greases the wheels of project management, increasing the chances of success and repeat business, to say nothing of its reputation-boosting effects.

'We rehire practices that are creative within the brief, get on with the work, and listen,' says Richard Cook, head of residential development, Lend Lease. 'They engage with the team, the place-making and the community. That is the real value add.'

Some clients recognise that they do not always serve architects well. Panellists at the developers' round table admitted shortcomings, especially falling prey to loss aversion (fearing loss much more than cherishing equal potential gain). With gearing high and incubation periods long, persuading them out of this position is an uphill battle.

As Nick Searl, partner at Argent, puts it: 'The biggest problem for architects is clients; they might be fund managers whose blinkered objective does not extend beyond getting in and out without scars.'

Local authority clients recognise this problem too, but exhort architects to help them.

'What we are in danger of losing in the cost squeeze is the value of thinking, design and the understanding of space. Architects need to help educate clients about the value they bring,' says John Betty, interim director of place, Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Subtle changes in emphasis are required for listening to different sorts of clients. For workplace clients the overriding principle is facilitating agility. For local authorities it is accountability to the taxpayer. For retrofit clients it is accommodating user behaviour. With schools projects it is cost. For contractors it is cost-efficient, timely, buildable delivery. For housing developers it is minimising risks. For commercial developers it is successful community engagement and viability.

What the roundtables found:

- Clients think architects who listen and understand properly are rare.
- Architects must understand better how a building translates into real returns for the client.
- Clients build for a blend of motivations, and these must all be appreciated.
- Knowing a client's needs better means architects can trade benefits to optimise overall value.
- Better listening and understanding greatly improves collaboration and project outcomes.
- Architects have a role in reassuring clients who fear losses more than they cherish gains.
- Architects who listen and understand are better placed to challenge the brief.
- Good communication skills breed trust, reduce perceived risk, and boost repeat business.
- Different clients need to be listened to differently.

RECOMMENDED READING
Being an Effective Construction Client
www.ribabookshops.com

The boundaries have blurred

The old certainties have gone forever. Successful building projects are a shared endeavour, says Paul Morrell

When I started work, the pecking order, my position in it and my profession's position in it were clear. There was a vestige of the idea of everyone knowing their place.

Now, the boundaries between the professions have shifted and blurred. So has the boundary that used to exist between the professions and contractors and their supply chains. For many professionals, including architects, it is not always clear whether they are working on the demand or supply side.

One reaction, frequently heard from architects in particular, is a call to 'win back lost territory' or 'reclaim the high ground', but no profession will find a lasting future in its past. The need is to work out how to do one's best work in a world where distributed leadership has replaced the 'I'm in charge' approach; and in which a number of forces are going to continue to disrupt traditional practice. These include new forms of procurement, the growing influence of BIM, globalised practices, and a shift in the balance of power and influence within the industry. Collectively they represent, depending upon your point of view, either a driver or a facilitator of change.

While for some this may still be about territory, for me everything points to a need for collaboration. It's an awkward word which, for the doubtful (or cynical), perhaps retains associations of getting too close to the enemy, but it also implies a degree of shared endeavour beyond passive cooperation. The surprise is that it is even remotely controversial, and of course the idea of working closely together is not new: it has, with a few hideous exceptions, been the experience of my working life.

Effective collaboration requires the recognition of two facts of life.

First, that both security and authority come from the skills we bring to the table and how we speak for them, not from some imagined status. This is not a cosy process. At its best it is loaded with challenge – but, critically, with a shared aim.

Secondly, to find that shared aim, one truth stands constant: for any built asset, value is created through a joint venture between enterprise and design – on drawing boards (or, these days, computers), and not on building sites. Although there are many dimensions to value, all of them start when construction finishes: they reside in the lifelong use of the asset thereafter.

The concept of value therefore fundamentally 'belongs' to clients, but it is designers who find it. Anyone who chooses (or claims) to lead projects must understand that to get between designers, their clients and end users, and to obstruct the constructive dialogue they should be engaged in, is almost certainly to destroy value.

In this context, the trajectory followed in commercial office development is interesting. Commercial developers live largely by exchange value, and there can be few simpler equations: if a building cannot be sold for more than it cost, the enterprise is doomed. Yet few sectors have shown more improvement in the quality of their product, to the extent that the UK now develops the best office buildings in the world.

This has largely been the result of the drive of visionary clients, working with talented designers who can anticipate and handle the flexibility required for unidentified end users and show how their interests can be represented in the design while working within a budget that is not so flexible.

Both security and authority come from the skills we bring to the table and how we speak for them, not from some imagined status

This is not unique to offices. On almost all projects there are different, sometimes competing priorities, and a tension between the ambitions of clients, the boundless imagination of designers and budget limitations.

So, to the core skill of designing for purpose, there needs to be added the skills of listening and learning – working with advisers from beyond the traditional design team on the realities of the market, working on how imagination and innovation might create new realities; and above all working across the full breadth of a client organisation to mediate competing interests to find the ideas that work best for all. Leading this briefing process is a core skill of architects, and the antidote to the most shocking thing I have ever heard a (competition-winning) architect say – which was, in response to a suggestion for a way of organising the briefing process, 'We don't want to do that: it might compromise our original design idea'.

In a world where there are so many obstacles to getting anything done, there may be a call for a degree of obstinacy verging on bloody-mindedness. Someone has to defend the concept of long-term value against the pressures of the day. Obstinacy is not, however, a good default mode, and the contribution of others needs to be respected, whether it relates to innovation from within the supply chain leading to a better design proposal, or in effective delivery of the project to avoid waste or inefficiency.

This brings us back to acquiring the habit of collaboration, to recognising its potential to deliver better value for clients, and to break forever its association of consorting with the enemy. As Charles Darwin wrote in *The Descent of Man*: 'Selfish and contentious people will not cohere, and without coherence nothing can be effected.'

Paul Morrell was formerly the government's chief construction adviser

LEFT One St Pancras, King's Cross, London, David Chipperfield for Argent. The brief was a flexible, sustainable, speculative office development. The finished building, surrounded by columns of recycled textured cast iron columns, is now fully let. The high environmental performance reduces running costs for occupiers and, with an Underground entrance in the building itself, offers great convenience for employees.

Brush up your people skills

Being good with people smooths project stresses and forges lasting business relationships

'Haworth Tompkins have delivered a building that is sustainable, technically first rate and with unparalleled accessibility for a theatre,' says Gemma Bodinetz, artistic director of the Stirling Prize winning Liverpool Everyman Theatre.

Clients value the ability of architects to manage and successfully interpret stakeholder consultations. These require good people skills as much as any other service. It is, then, ironic that clients see significant scope for architects to improve the people skills they display within the project team.

'The team has to work together, but in my experience working together is not a concept architects enjoy, ' Donald Farquharson, head of capital programme delivery for Kent County Council, says bluntly.

Good people skills – teamwork, collaboration, cooperation, communication, anticipation, respect, empathy and so on – are hard to define and tough to acquire. But they are very important in building trust and overcoming the stresses that inevitably arise, even in the smallest of projects.

For an architect, getting these soft skills right brings lasting relationships, repeat business and a stronger reputation.

Comment after comment during round table discussions made this plain.

'We choose our architects based on their commitment, right fit and ability to blend into the project teams,' explains Paul Chandler, executive vice-president, Skanska UK.

'Lots of architects are great problem solvers, but where they could do better is in identifying risks earlier so that we don't have to manage problems – which comes back to collaboration.'

'Trust in the relationship is very important. As you start to get into those sorts of relationship there's more scope for sharing risk and reward,' says Richard Meier, partner at Argent.

'For us it's about developing relationships with those ranges of architects, gaining a level of trust in both ways so that we can be assured of the right response,' adds Nick Watson, former senior regeneration manager at Croydon council, now with Lend Lease.

That is not to say that robust challenging

PHOTOGRAPH PHILIP VILE

Find the sweet spot between authoritatively and reliably leading the design vision and working collaboratively

Clients want effective collaboration with other project team members. The advantages are process efficiency, less delay, fewer overspends and better problem solving, cooperation and risk management.

For commercial developers, housing clients and contractors, good collaboration facilitates design coordination, especially in complex design-build projects using BIM. For contractors there is extra value in timely collaboration with their supply chain.

In retrofit and workplace projects, good collaboration helps when procurement routes are complex, safeguarding quality. In retrofits where the risk of unforeseen problems is relatively high, good collaboration can avoid or mitigate common issues.

Local authority clients benefit because it contributes to good, accountable governance of public funds.

Careful guardianship of the design objectives adds value for schools clients by preserving the link between building and educational standards.

Sustain appropriate, persuasive, authoritative communication

Commercial developers and workplace clients want architects to communicate their knowledge with flair, imagination and excitement. Freehand sketching in presentations or in discussions is particularly engaging. Communication of this sort reassures and helps the whole project team to buy into the vision.

Workplace clients are also looking for the transparent disclosure of skills and competencies at the earliest possible moment to safeguard quality.

Contractors want open, timely, accurate communication, particularly during the delivery phase of a project.

Private domestic clients need to be supported and guided through the planning, design and building maze.

of the brief or sticking to your guns is wrong. Far from it. However, going beyond the brief or stubbornly sticking to a position in the absence of supporting evidence most definitely is.

As Lyndsay Smith, director of education and national frameworks at Morgan Sindall puts it: 'When the team gels, what comes with that is a healthy and challenging relationship.'

Richard Meier adds: 'Everyone's got slightly different priorities and if you can't be pragmatic, which people sometimes struggle with, it just sets up a whole series of issues and problems and tensions which are unnecessary within the team.'

The complexity and sophistication of contemporary construction, especially in BIM-enabled design build procurement, have flattened traditional hierarchies in project environments.

Each professional is expected to take control of an area of competence, but otherwise collaborate constructively with fellow team members in pursuit of a common goal. To do so successfully requires being transparent in disclosing skills and competencies, communicating openly and committing to a culture of teamwork.

'Architects have been used to sitting at the head, whereas in a collaborative process it's a very flat structure. Some architects have a cultural shift to make to even the playing field, to realise we're all batting for the same team,' says Paul Chandler.

Architects who spend time engaging their clients and explaining their value proposition for the duration of the project are more likely to attract repeat business.

The cherry on the cake for clients is when you alert them to opportunities, pre-empt problems, and generally keep them ahead of the game.

'Something to aim for in an architect-client relationship is a symbiotic understanding of the client – then the architects know the client's value drivers and can creatively come up with alternative solutions,' suggests Sean Cook, design director, Clivedale London.

For contractors, especially those in housing, strong collaboration helps to preserve value gained at planning permission and deliver the square metre rates they need to remain profitable.

'Collaboration is absolutely fundamental in today's market,' says Mark Wakeford, MD of Stepnell.

'The only way that we can ensure that project success is to have a great deal of collaboration, particularly with our designers, commitment and communication across the team to resolve issues and manage the risks that we're facing.'

In the retrofit sector and to lesser extents in the workplace and commercial developer sectors, the procurement process is fragmented, highlighting the need for strong team-building and leadership skills.

Nicholas Doyle, director, Adecoe, makes what might seem an obvious point, but one that is easily overlooked: 'Successful architects deal with all those little things along the way and maintain their relationships so that clients don't have to make all the decisions and do all of the work. The point of having an architect is to do that for them so that clients don't have to worry.'

This is particularly the case for private domestic clients. As a Mr Bartlett, who used an architect to renovate and extend his 1920s house in Windermere, says: 'Doing the work ourselves was in theory possible but in practice impossible. We needed – without being patronised – to have our hands held.'

RECOMMENDED READING
Being an Effective Construction Client
www.ribabookshops.com

What the roundtables found:

- Many architects lack the people skills needed for collaborative working.
- Good people skills boost your reputation, helping you to win work and repeat business.
- Some architects need a cultural shift to adjust to flat management structures.
- Good communication involves keeping the client ahead of the game.
- In highly fragmented sectors even greater attention must be paid to good people skills.
- Good people skills and communication mean clients have to do less and worry less.

We need to raise the bar

Architects must prove to clients that they can do more than competent contract administration argues Dale Sinclair

Two consistent themes are woven through the RIBA's client sessions. Very broadly, they reveal what promotes and what inhibits clients' interest in appointing an architect.

The first is that clients value good architecture and the benefits that it brings to their businesses. They understand that different architectural practices have different strengths. Some clients want a safe pair of hands whereas others are happy to gamble on less experienced practices in the hope of an 'edgier' or more innovative solution. Our portfolios provide the clues to allow them to make these decisions.

This is all good news for the architectural profession, suggesting our approach to design education is delivering the skills that help architects meet our clients' expectations.

On the second theme, clients consistently and repeatedly vent their frustration about those aspects of architects' services that wrap around the design process. Concerns include variability in design information, designs that are not technically assured, lack of coordination in the design team, late information, a failure to understand the client's business drivers, and not listening properly as the design progresses, among others. Unfortunately, clients cannot avoid practices with these deficiencies simply by perusing portfolios.

Despite this, clients still want their architects to take greater holistic responsibility for design. They would like us to undertake the lead designer role more diligently and consistently, and emphatically lead the design team. Contractors underlined that the design manager role would not exist if designs were delivered to higher standards of assurance or in a manner that flagged design risks and allowed them to be avoided or managed.

While individual practices can do much to improve clients' faith in architects, there is a fundamental question about how the RIBA should raise the bar for the profession as a whole. Without a response, clients will not hesitate to adjust their design teams to ensure design risks are adequately managed in some other way.

These observations come at an opportune and exciting time. Many business-savvy practices are embracing and harnessing new digital design tools (commonly referred to as BIM) to profoundly change the way they work as well as delivering new services that add value to the process, such as point cloud surveys or data for asset management purposes.

What can the RIBA do? Focusing the Part 3 course on the lead designer role would be a good start. Being a great project architect should be about more than merely having the ability to administer different forms of contract (which in any case is becoming less relevant because of the surge in design and build procurement). The RIBA's Future Leaders initiative already responds to this notion.

The recession has resulted in a generation of architects who have limited site experience and only piecemeal practical knowledge

Easy wins include contributing to initiatives that define the information to be exchanged at each stage of a project. By developing sector norms that are agreed with core client groups, we can all bid on a level playing field, confident we will be delivering the right information at the right time.

From an architectural perspective it is important that we consider the boundaries between our profession and the specialist subcontractors. At present we rely on our practice 'design responsibility' matrices, which are all subtly different. Industry agreements would make a significant contribution to the consistency of what we deliver.

Frequently missing from the BIM agenda is the information that is not included in the

PHOTOGRAPH HUFTON+CROW

'The Sainsbury Laboratory provides a fertile ground to realise our ambitious scientific vision, and simultaneously make a spectacular public statement about the seamless connection between nature, art and science,' says laboratory director Ottoline Leyser of Stanton Williams' design for the University of Cambridge. It won the Stirling Prize in 2012.

BIM model. Although we are moving towards wholly digital deliverables focused on new digital construction processes, in the short term bricklayers or others will still require the '1:5' details that sit outside the BIM model.

Appointments will need to be flexible in the short term to allow a mixture of analogue and digital deliverables. Guidance on this topic is essential.

The recession has resulted in a generation of architects who have limited site experience and only piecemeal practical knowledge. At the other end of the spectrum, many architects with significant knowledge have disappeared from our industry. We need to consider how to respond to this skill gap and potential risk to our clients.

With our lead designer hat on, we need to contribute to discussions about the information produced by the rest of the design team at each stage. This is crucial as it fundamentally affects our ability to coordinate. More importantly, we need to analyse the reasons for failures in coordination. Should this core task be covered more fully in the education process? Are our design team colleagues producing the right information? Are contractual arrangements impeding the process? Should the lead designer employ the rest of the design team? How is BIM altering this crucial task?

Answering these questions, repositioning clash detection tools as clash avoidance tools harnessed by the lead designer, and considering new collaborative ways of working is vital. These are exciting topics and challenges that will help to reposition our profession as lead designers fit for the future.

The RIBA for Clients initiative has provoked valuable, thoughtful insights from clients. We must carefully absorb them. This will allow the RIBA to offer guidance on how the lead designer services – so crucial for the success of our designs – should be delivered. It must respond to new collaborative working processes and the digital landscape that will affect all aspects of the built environment.

Dale Sinclair is director of technical practice for AECOM's architecture team, RIBA vice-president practice and profession and editor of RIBA Plan of Work 2013

Good architects are good problem solvers

Clients might divide practices into concept and technical architects, but they want the skills in one package

PHOTOGRAPH DANIEL HOPKINSON

Technical skills are central to the practice of architecture and include many competencies. Indeed, the core curriculum consists of acquiring and maintaining them, helping to define the profession.

In the context of this report, the term 'technical skills' extends to the knowledge that can only be gained through relevant professional experience. This is ingrained knowledge permanently at an architect's fingertips, the kind that feeds creative instincts, unconsciously prompting action that avoids errors and speeds good decision-making.

'The really good architects we work with, as well as being good designers and good managers of design, are actually really good problem solvers,' says Paul Chandler, executive vice-president of Skanska UK.

Clients recognise that the technical skill of good design adds most of the value to projects and that, thanks to their unique training, architects are well placed to supply it.

'Architects are very good at delivering the fundamental qualities – space, light, good aspect, storage, homes that work,' says Jane Briginshaw, head of design and sustainability for HCA.

However, disruptive technologies and processes (BIM, modern methods of construction, one-stop-shop contractors, off-shoring, specialisation, standardisation, whole-life costing, resilience planning) are changing the picture, requiring architects to adapt.

Given this welter of increasingly sophisticated knowledge, it is impractical for one person or even one practice to know everything. Clients regard the profession as falling into two broad and separate categories: the concept architect and the technical architect.

According to the round table panellists, some clients struggle to find practices that are strong in both categories and commonly

OPPOSITE: 'Our great team of architects helped us create designs which work with the existing template and enhance it,' says Urban Splash chairman Tom Bloxham of the work of Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West at Park Hill, Sheffield.

RECOMMENDED READING
An Introduction to Low Carbon Domestic Refurbishment, CPA
Residential Retrofit, Marion Baeli
Whole Life Sustainability, Ian Ellingham
What Colour is Your Building? David Clark
BIM Management Handbook, David Shepherd
BIM for Construction Clients, Richard Saxon
BIM in Small Practices: Illustrated Case Studies, Robert Klaschka
BIM Demystified 2nd edition, Steve Race
www.ribabookshops.com

Add business-savvy to the design process

This opportunity is about adopting rigorous techniques to treat cost, time and other client constraints as the grit in the oyster.

Commercial developers and contractors are especially keen for architects to make this leap.

Developers believe architects forget about viability as they develop the design, which can be disastrous.

Contractors want architects more actively engaged in identifying cost savings, improving the efficiency of delivery and improving buildability.

Maintain a holistic user focus

User satisfaction is critical for clients who retain an interest in the building after it is built. However, those who divest on completion are also increasingly concerned about it. This is because their buyers are well informed and have high expectations. Great user value commands a premium. It also boosts clients' reputations.

For workplace clients, putting the user centre stage supports future occupiers' recruitment strategies and has brand appeal, attracting tenants at good rents and minimising void periods. And of course, validated success attracts long-term investment.

The performance gap from design to reality plagues retrofit. A forensic focus on how buildings are used by people will make for longer rentals, shorter voids, more satisfied occupants, and better returns.

Keep focus on whole life of the building

Clients are focused on whole-life considerations for the same reasons that they are on building users. Cheap to run, easy to maintain, energy efficient, attractive, flexible, adaptable, well liked buildings command a premium.

Housing clients see the impact in better yields and shorter and fewer void periods.

For schools clients, the advantages are value for money and better outcomes for educational standards.

The procurement of offices is complex and fragmented, and future occupiers are generally unknown. Clients need designs that elegantly, efficiently and effectively accommodate change to attract tenants, minimise voids, and attract investors.

Keep knowledge, skills and competence up to date; innovate

It impresses clients when architects' knowledge (of BIM, for example) exceeds normal professional standards, especially when outside their ordinary orbit of concern. Equally, where risks are satisfactorily mitigated, innovative practice can give architects a competitive advantage.

The schools sector and contractors are looking to innovate to save costs. Competence in lean processes, BIM, and modern methods of construction, to say nothing of experimenting with procurement routes, is prized. Commercial developers and housing clients are particularly invested in BIM, too.

The public or affordable housing sector is a political hot potato, artificially massaged in complicated ways. It is especially important that architects appreciate and proactively interpret them for added value.

feel they have to replace the concept architects with a 'safer' pair of hands after Stage 3.

This is based on the perception that the creative flair that makes a good concept architect is an unacceptable risk during technical delivery. In other words, it is a compromise in the face of fear that the value gained with planning permission will be lost through inefficiencies, inaccuracies and waste.

'We'd love to see the ability in architects to identify costs, cost savings or cost wastage, and work within the team to mitigate those risks and reduce that wastage,' says Mark Wakeford, MD of Stepnell.

'Architects' mistakes can add tens of thousands of pounds onto the project and then it's disproportionate to their fees,' adds Stephen Day, technical director, Barratt London.

Clients say they would rather engage a single practice to champion the vision from concept to completion and beyond. But when this occurs, clients – especially contractor clients – say that architects' interest wanes.

'Far too often architects dismiss the importance of the delivery phase and their fees are set up front-ended so there's no fee to deal with that latter stage,' says Colin Tedder, technical director, Bouygues UK.

Sean Cook, design director, Clivedale London, says: 'We like to see architects to take a cradle to grave approach. At times the procurement of the project might not allow that. If that's the case, we will generally keep the original architect on board on our side to monitor design and quality through to completion.'

The mark of investible quality these days focuses on building users, linking sustainability and wellness to operating costs, user satisfaction, place making or community value, resilience, and long-term adaptability or flexibility. This is true across many sectors but especially workplace, schools, housing,

VISION AND TENACITY

Richard Meier explains how the qualities Argent seeks in its architects can maximise value and affection in 'hero' buildings

For Argent, architects are the 'spiritual leaders' of the building process. By encompassing art, creativity and excitement, their unique strategic visioning skills ignite the value chain, hugely benefiting occupiers, owners, investors and the local community.

The really good ones minimise risk by maintaining that vision for the duration of the project without losing sight of viability. And since we have a long-term interest in our developments, viability is all about net operating income. Not only must the building remain optimally attractive to the market, it must be economical to run too.

One of the 'hero' buildings at King's Cross, the landmark grade II listed Granary Complex, is a case in point. Comprising 32,000m^2, it is the campus for Central St Martins, which is part of the University of the Arts London.

Repurposing such a large-scale industrial building before the site infrastructure was complete required an analytical design approach. Our brief needed the architect to consider the building's future context at the heart of the King's Cross development.

This was not only a complex brief architecturally, but also involved many different stakeholders and end users, from tutors to students, to different colleges within the university, and English Heritage.

Our architects, Stanton Williams, stepped up to the plate. They created a highly flexible, adaptable, raw and robust space that maximised value for both the King's Cross Partnership and the University of the Arts. Critically, it anticipates changes in how the university will use the space over time, and so is capable of accommodating evolving teaching methods and numbers of students.

Stanton Williams were at the heart of the wider project team, helping to develop the brief fully and leading on extensive model-making to develop the design as the brief progressed. They skilfully managed the process of broad stakeholder consultation with planners, heritage experts and key stakeholders, successfully securing reserved matters approval.

Argent looks for tenacity, sensitive design work and obvious love for the building in its architects. With the Granary Complex, we got it, helping us to a BREEAM 'very good' rating, an RIBA London Award, praise from Mayor Boris Johnson, and, most importantly, affection from its 5,000 strong student and teacher population.

Richard Meier is a partner at Argent

Since 1981, Argent has delivered some of the best mixed use developments in the UK: major commercial, residential, education, cultural and community developments in the country's largest cities. It is involved in the full development process, from identifying and assembling sites, developing designs and obtaining planning permission through to financing, project management of the construction process, letting, asset management and (sometimes) selling. It also manages and maintains buildings and estate.

Argent has a team of over 130 people. In March 2015 it entered into a joint venture partnership with respected US developer Related, forming Argent Related, to pursue future opportunities for urban development, with a focus on the build to rent sector.

For more information about Argent, visit www.argentllp.co.uk

BELOW: Stanton Williams' design for Central St Martins created a highly flexible space that maximised value for both the King's Cross Partnership and the University of the Arts London.

local authority and retrofit markets.

Even where the client will sell the building on completion, they must attend to these factors to attract buyers or investors. And in the battle for commercial advantage, not achieving these goals damages reputations.

'It's important to keep your void rates, management and life cycle costs down,' says Gregor Mitchell, land director, be:here (Willmott Dixon's private rented housing arm). 'If I was an architect, I would look beyond the concept design to what will happen once the building is being operated.'

Housing developers are adopting BIM, and want architects to lead the integrated consultant team.

Richard Meier, partner at Argent, says: 'How well coordinated the project is has a huge impact on costs, delays and issues further down the line. I'm keen to see architects who understand BIM and the coordinating role it plays because it de-risks projects.'

Local authority clients need surety as well as good team coordination and creative problem solving.

'Local authorities do not like surprises,' says John Betty, interim director of place at Stoke-on-Trent City Council. 'We have quite rigorous processes in the full glare of public scrutiny for how we make decisions and commit to buying a building. Understandably, we need reliability.'

Contractors, squeezed between contract price and project costs, need architects who respect this constraint more than ever.

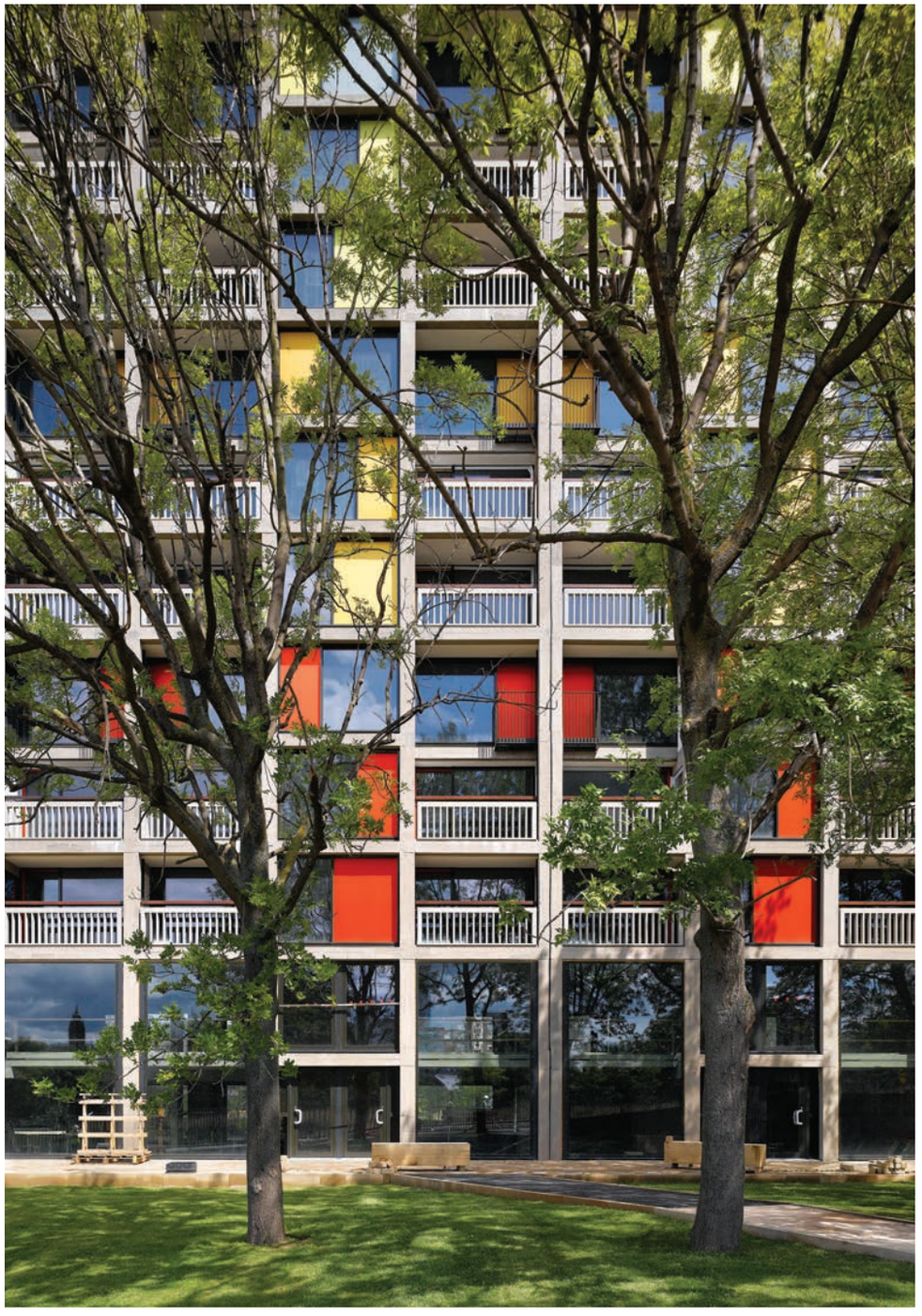
Schools clients are looking for innovative, proven ways to deliver fit-for-purpose, long-lasting spaces that positively influence educational standards. Lean working, standardisation and BIM are all part of the formula.

Designs for retrofit clients must not only accommodate human behaviour but actively improve people's experience of the building.

In the workplace sector, generic appeal is key: flexibility in the grid, good levels of daylight, good acoustics, an effective M&E strategy, urban design, and low running costs.

BELOW: Park Hill demonstrates that with the right partners, post-war modernism can be successfully reinvented, says Tom Bloxham.

Useful links:
BIM Task Group, www.bimtaskgroup.org
National BIM Library, www.nationalbimlibrary.com
NBS Toolkit, NBS Create, NBS Building Contracts, www.thenbs.com



PHOTOGRAPH DANIEL HOPKINSON

What the roundtables found:

- Disruptive technologies and processes are forcing architects to adapt.
- Clients say it is hard to find practices good at both concept and technical work.
- Despite wishing otherwise, clients think it necessary to replace concept architects with a 'safer pair of hands' after Stage 3.
- Clients want architects to maintain their interest all the way through the delivery phase and beyond.
- Many clients adopting BIM want architects to lead the integrated consultant team.
- Clients want architects to place greater emphasis on how the building operates in use.

Clients need more than they're getting

Sir Stuart Lipton stands high among the UK's most influential clients. His respect for architects is clear, but he demands pragmatic, high performance design

In the world of BIM, artificial Intelligence and algorithms, what's the role of the architect?

Ingenious design, public realm, vision, social fit and awareness, appropriate density and context, thoughtful use of materials, innovation, fitness for purpose, buildability, value engineering, a 100% complete and coordinated set of drawings, a legal appointment fair to client and architect, and a relationship between architect and client born out of mutual respect with the opportunity for creative tension, debate and decision. Can architects perform all these roles?

I am fortunate to have experienced the skills of many architects, achieving these roles at 1 Finsbury Avenue, Broadgate and Stockley Park with Arup Associates, at Chiswick Park with Richard Rogers, at Central St Giles with Renzo Piano, and many others.

It's a time-consuming occupation where the client needs to commit huge amounts of effort, and so does the architect as design lead. How often is that the case? Many architects don't lead on design personally.

In an era where town planning issues remain a constraint on supply, there are opportunities to ensure that development fits its local context. A market town needs housing in a modern vernacular of the original rather than a row of boxes which so incense the local community. Ingenious design should be a prerequisite, but so is a balance of context and density to fit a growing nation.

Use of materials is a real challenge; apart from the curtain wall we have hardly changed building materials for centuries.

Innovation remains a difficulty. Is new design making full use of BIM and computers or the still useful art of drawing?

Buildability and value engineering are often considered dirty words by architects, as though cost doesn't matter and the issue means sacrificing design quality. Most of the ingenuity of our great architects has been achieved on low-cost budgets.

Public realm and spaces between buildings appears to have been forgotten as a civic necessity and many spaces are pale imitations of our traditions.

Fitness for purpose remains a challenge. Whether it's an appropriate living space or a new work area, we have hardly moved on with use of space, yet socially life is very different, with home and work often merging.

Architects' rigorous educational training does not include an understanding of the practical implications of how to build. This removes some of the skills required for a successful project and, increasingly, architects and quantity surveyors look for trade contractors to supply these skills. Not only does this add cost but it impacts design quality and in my view the curriculum needs to be changed. The architect needs to understand all of the skills required to implement construction, not at the trade contractor's price, which is inevitably based on previous projects and bad experiences, but on what is a fair price for the job.

Architects' rigorous educational training does not include an understanding of the practical implications of how to build

A complete set of drawings remains a dream. Is the role to produce a full set of complete drawings which are signed off as coordinated and fit for purpose? Or, is it a design concept to be passed on to a design and build contractor? I have never seen a UK set of complete drawings, while these are the norm in America, where they are produced in great detail, in their terms to the quarter inch, bound and legally binding. From my point of view a set of drawings which is complete and coordinated is a prerequisite for success in terms of design quality, fitness for purpose, value and whole life cost.

A fair contract between architect and client is critical, but remains impossible while the wilful blindness of the institutions allows clients to believe, wrongly in my opinion, that their terms of employment protect clients as much as their members.

The relationship between architect and client still needs a better understanding, with clients putting sufficient time into architect selection. The government needs to be persuaded that, as the largest client, it can lead on design quality, good value and innovation. This will impact on the quality of life for many individuals whose circumstances need change. The benefits on a whole-life basis might reduce welfare costs and improve health, educational and employment aspirations, by being part of an uplifting built environment.

In my lifetime as a developer much has improved, but much more needs to be achieved with the RIBA focusing on quality and education.

Finally, the siloed nature of the professions remains a major frustration. If the RIBA and other professional bodies in the built environment cannot see it is practical or desirable to merge, they must at least find a way of working much more closely together to focus on producing a holistic product – or face a gradual erosion to the design and build contractor.

Architects have shown that their extraordinary design skills can make a real difference to the quality of life and our health and wellbeing, but they need to demonstrate that they are providing consumer needs, civic quality and spaces.

PHOTOGRAPH HUFTON & CROWE

Chiswick Park, London, Richard Rogers for Stanhope demonstrates a successful client-architect relationship. It regularly features in the top 50 best places to work.

Seek and listen to feedback

Clients want to see architects involved in post-occupancy evaluations, providing evidence of what works well and what doesn't

Continuous improvement is central to architects' professionalism. It benefits the buildings they design and in turn the economies and culture of the communities they serve. It supports and extends the body of professional knowledge, reinforcing the status of architects among their peers. It sends a message of competence and trust to the world.

More compellingly for individual architects, perhaps, it supports personal aspirations to strive for excellence.

'It's really important that in 10 years' time when you go back to your building that you're still proud of it,' says Gregor Mitchell, land director, be:here (Willmott Dixon's private rental housing arm).

However, disruptive technologies are threatening the bastions of professional knowledge. In a competitive market for architectural services, therefore, architects need to demonstrate how their learning benefits clients.

'Architects' free thinking and problem solving skills are rich and powerful, but packaging them into something you pay for can often be difficult,' says Barra Mac Ruairi, strategy director for place at Bristol City Council.

Clients increasingly expect evidence of competence and the effectiveness of designs. They want reassurance that what the architect does complements their reasons for building and is not wasteful.

As Paul Morrell, formerly the Government's chief construction adviser, puts it: 'We have no idea how little we can build quality for until we get waste out of the process. We need to learn what works and replicate it.'

Reassurance generally comprises four deeply interrelated quality measures:

- Financial performance – will the investment be worth it for the client?
- Technical performance – will the building do what the client wants it to do?
- Process performance – will the work be carried out efficiently and effectively?
- End user satisfaction – will the occupiers enjoy using the building?

Aesthetic appeal, which in certain circumstances is critical for clients, is harder to measure. It is, however, routinely evidenced in design awards and published reviews.

The unmet need for evidence about buildings, which includes post-occupancy evaluations (POEs) and BREEAM rating systems, is nothing new. It clearly concerns the whole project team, not just architects.

'We need a quality loop like you have in the automotive industry where they pull cars apart to see where they went wrong,' says Geoff Haslam, director of Local Agenda.

James Pellatt, head of projects for Great Portland Estates, argues: 'Architects should seek and listen to feedback. In that way you get continuous improvement.'

Market barriers to doing so linger, chiefly because architects think it is not viable. Nonetheless, the round table panellists, especially those in the workplace, schools and retrofit sectors, think that the benefits now outweigh the costs.

Gregor Mitchell says: 'If you can demonstrate that as an architect you have significantly improved the profitability by reducing costs, increasing revenue, or squeezing more space out of a building, you can almost dictate your own fee.'

As well as better outcomes on particular projects, honest performance review engenders trust, boosts reputations and can be intelligently digested to improve an architect's performance on all measures. More importantly, it can be used to demonstrate the unequivocal competence and effectiveness

PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW HEPTINSTALL

RECOMMENDED READING

Retrofit for Purpose, Penoyre & Prasad
Retrofitting Neighbourhoods, Irena Bauman
An Introduction to Low Carbon Domestic Refurbishement, CPA
Residential Retrofit, Marion Baeli
Changing Hospital Architecture, Sunand Prasad
Future Schools: Innovative Design for Existing and New Buildings, Nick Mirchandani and Sharon Wright
Buildings Bite Back, Adrian Leaman and Bill Bordass (out 2016)
Energy-People-Buildings, Judit Kimpian, Hattie Hartman, Sofie Pelsmakers (out 2016)
www.ribabookshops.com

LEFT: 'The architects really got inside our heads,' says Jane Loomes, head teacher of Jesmond Gardens Primary School, County Durham, by ADP for Hartlepool Borough Council. 'The result is improved attendance, improved behaviour and we are now oversubscribed.'

Supply evidence of service quality and design effectiveness

The demand for architects to invest in continuous learning was a clarion call from all kinds of clients, whether openly expressed or implied. Doing so robustly validates architects' service, inspires trust and boosts their reputation.

Because the performance gap is well documented, retrofit clients want reassurance that designs are likely to perform in use as predicted. Without this, they are sceptical about claims for anticipated paybacks.

In their quest to achieve value for money, schools clients need evidence of what is likely to improve outcomes for pupils and teachers. Workplace clients are already committed to post-occupancy evaluations and BREEAM ratings for market appeal and competitive advantage, and they want architects to be equally committed.

of the service delivered to existing clients and on offer to prospective clients. This gives them a competitive advantage.

Round table panellists repeatedly highlight their need to be educated or reminded of the value of what architects do. Evidence provides the language with which to articulate worth. Shared between fellow architects, it could clarify the value of the profession's unique contribution to the built environment, enhance the body of knowledge, and promote the standing of architects and the profession.

'The industry doesn't know the value of its own products,' says Paul Morrell. 'We need to fix the absence of a feedback route.'

Alexi Marmot, director, Alexi Marmot Associates, bluntly reinforces that message: 'You wouldn't take a drug if it hadn't been evaluated. We need to invest in more knowledge.'

Continuous improvement is a hot issue across all sectors, but four stand out in the desire for architects to demonstrate the effectiveness of what they do: schools, workplace, retrofit and healthcare.

The innovative schools designs during the Building Schools for the Future programme have been branded poor value for money. Little evidence was found of extra benefits to educational outcomes. In an age of austerity, the reaction has shifted the focus to defining the design dividend. This makes long-term involvement and continuous learning critical for architects.

'Architects need to learn which bits make a difference to the educational outcomes. Inspiring spaces make a difference; tiny details around a door frame do not,' says Lyndsay Smith, director of education and national frameworks at Morgan Sindall.

Andrew Barraclough, group design director, Wates, observes: 'I don't think an architect can work effectively unless they see their work through to completion. Otherwise, how does one learn from the mistakes that one makes?'

Workplace developers need to hone their

THE TRUE VALUE OF POST-OCCUPANCY EVALUATION

Many architects believe POEs are unaffordable. They should see them as a strategic investment or CPD, argues Chris Moriarty of Leesman

Time and again the RIBA round-table discussions highlighted the need for architects either to undertake or be engaged in post-occupancy evaluations (POEs), with clients seeing them as part of a properly professional service.

POEs benefit architects. They can help to improve how and what you design. This establishes your authority, strengthens your brand, distinguishes you from your competition and, ultimately, makes it easier to sell your services. Clients are more likely to hire architects who can demonstrate their value with evidence from previous POEs.

Clients also have a vested interest in continuous improvement that leads to business-critical outcomes. This is especially true of workplace clients who retain an interest in their buildings, prompting them to seek POEs from specialists like Leesman.

The case in favour is unequivocal. However, POEs are not the norm. Why? Architects say that they are not paid to carry out POEs and so they are unaffordable. In the face of stiff competition, though, not doing them might be even less affordable. Framed as strategic investment, CPD or even customer service, POE begins to make more sense.

In the corporate workplace sector, certainly, the numbers suggest there is work to do. Of the 100,000+ people who have taken the Leesman survey to date, only 54% agree the design of their workplace allows them to be productive. Given that one of the primary reasons for workplaces is to support the work of its users, this is a worry.

Leesman has constructed a picture of what high-performing buildings look like compared with low-performing ones. There are trends in common but also subtle differences that are crucial to improving design outcomes. One size does not fit all, and the more information that designers are armed with, the better chance there is of producing effective workplaces.

The clients that Leesman works with – that get the best value from the process – establish a baseline by gathering data before and after occupancy. This allows them to understand what their people need to be productive, and to work with designers to ensure that what is delivered hits the target. What's more, these clients are able to monitor how work practices evolve over time, which is critical to informing their future investment decisions.

Does the design of your office enable you to work productively?

30% disagree | **16%** neutral | **54%** agree

LEFT: So far more than 100,000 employees have taken part in Leesman's survey of corporate workplaces. Only 54% agree their building enables them to work productively.

At their heart, POEs are about facilitating informed decision-making, which is why the round table panellists are so keen on them. They inspire trust, reduce uncertainty, and help in the quest for quality. It is time for more architects to take note.

Founded in 2010, Leesman has fast become the world's largest independent source of workplace effectiveness data. It provides organisations and workplace designers with a quantitative assessment of how fit their workplace is for supporting work.

Win a free survey

The RIBA and Leesman are offering RIBA accredited chartered practices the opportunity to have a free survey conducted on their workplace by entering a draw. The winner will be announced by RIBA President Stephen Hodder at an evening reception on 15th September. To enter the draw visit http://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Competitions/Enteracompetition/LiveCompetitions.aspx

RIGHT: 'We wanted to do away with the traditional classrooms and corridors' – head teacher Jane Loomes on Jesmond Gardens Primary School.

products for enduring market appeal and profitable lifetime yields for investors. Since they rarely occupy the spaces themselves, they are desperate for evidence of what works from POEs and bemoan architects' lack of involvement beyond practical completion. They believe architects should validate their own work as standard.

'Architects need to be learning organisations,' says Neil Usher, BskyB's workplace director. 'There is a huge responsibility on the part of the architects to deliver high quality design.'

'The analysis should be about how the business is performing rather than the building,' says Ron German, executive director of Stanhope. 'You can tell the architects who have connected back after completion. Should POE be a service or CPD?'

Pure retrofit is potentially one of today's larger market opportunities. However, clients are not tapping the value architects might add because they treat projects merely as technical fixes. They are nervous of long payback periods, poor performance in use and, because spaces are already occupied, disruption. To allay clients' fears and expand opportunities in this market, architects need to 'prove' the effectiveness of their services through POEs and by producing solid business cases.

Sunand Prasad of Penoyre & Prasad says: 'We are still very far short of really understanding how buildings perform. We claim performance credentials at quite early stages of design but, because nobody pays us, we don't stick around to see what happens when people actually start to use the buildings.'

What the roundtables found:

- In a competitive market architects must demonstrate how they benefit clients.
- Clients increasingly expect evidence of competence and the effectiveness of designs.
- The pressure for architects to provide demonstrable evidence is mounting.
- Some clients believe architects should validate their own work as standard, treating it as customer service or CPD.
- Clients increasingly see the benefits of post-occupancy evaluations outweighing costs.
- To expand work in retrofit, architects need persuasive evidence and a strong business case.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Retrofit coordinators, the Centre of Refurbishment Excellence (CoRE) 10-day training programme to upskill professionals. RIBA-recognised.
www.core-skills.com

Help with post-occupancy evaluations

CIC Design Quality Indicator, http://cic.org.uk/
BCO Guide to Post-Occupancy Evaluation
www.bco.org.uk
www.leesmanindex.com (see page 34 for the chance to win a free workplace POE).
www.ribacpd.com

Help with public or stakeholder consultation

Consultation Matters is RIBA's new stakeholder and community consultation service. An experienced team will work with you to plan and deliver bespoke consultation programmes, either as part of your in-house team, or directly for your client.
www.architecture.com

USEFUL LINKS

www.gov.uk/organisations/homes-and-communities-agency
www.hbf.co.uk
www.housingforum.org.uk
www.building-knowledge.info
www.bre.co.uk

A world of opportunity

Look abroad, where the RIBA brand can prove rewarding in more ways than one, urges Peter Oborn

Te Matau a Pohe or Lower Hatea River Crossing, New Zealand, designed by Buckinghamshire-based Knight Architects for Whangarei District Council. The curved 'J' shape is an interpretation of the fishhook motif widely used in Maori culture.

Working overseas may seem daunting to many architects but for others, particularly those in large multinational practices, it will seem more natural.

It is becoming more regular fare for RIBA members, especially those used to operating in more mature markets. The latest RIBA Business Benchmarking survey shows 16% of income to UK offices comes from international projects and there are few signs that this flow will dry up. This suggests practices need to look harder at the international scene.

The potential prize is immense. Global Construction Perspectives and Oxford Economics predict that worldwide construction activity will grow about 70%, to $15 trillion, in the period between 2012 and 2025.

This growth will not be evenly spread. The centre of gravity of global architectural work is shifting to the emerging economies.

PHOTOGRAPH: PATRICK REYNOLDS

In 2005 a third of construction was in the emerging markets. By 2025 that share is expected to be nearly two-thirds.

China, India and the US will dominate, accounting for 60%, but there will be other hot-spots. Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia, for example, will together present a $350 billion market with annual growth topping 6%. Contrast this with Western Europe, where even by 2025 construction is expected to still be below its pre-recession 2007 peak.

These figures are not pie in the sky. The United Nations estimates that population growth and urbanisation will add 2.5 billion people to the world's cities by 2050; 2.1 billion of that rise will be in Asia and Africa.

Looked at from a UK perspective, these figures suggest almost 99% of the global market (including the British market) for construction work could be overseas.

Opportunities to enter new markets or to expand existing international workload abound and members of the RIBA have a distinct competitive advantage.

The power of the RIBA brand should not be underestimated. Britain's colonial and Commonwealth past has played its part, with lower trade barriers, a common business language and a shared legal system together with British standards and working practices in many parts of the world. But the real strength of the RIBA derives from a commitment to high standards and the professionalism, integrity and creativity of its members.

Opportunities for new or expanded international workload abound and RIBA members have a distinct competitive advantage

This is of immense value, particularly in less mature markets.

Today, the RIBA enjoys an expanding global footprint with 5,000 of its international members based outside the UK, supported by chapters in North America, the Gulf and Hong Kong. It validates more than 30 schools of architecture internationally in key markets and demand for its services is growing.

The RIBA's international influence is also felt through close links with fellow institutes around the world and participation in regional bodies that help shape architectural policy and advance the profession globally. The RIBA maintains close ties with agencies such as UKTI, the Foreign Office and the British Council, to foster and spread understanding and promote members' skill and expertise.

This skill and expertise, so needed across all international markets, is not the sole province of signature architects and big practices. The UK's Knight Architects are a perfect example of how small firms can succeed in internationally. Founded in 2006 and now with a staff of 12, the practice has developed a strong reputation for a design-led service in the rather unusual sector of bridge design.

By leveraging its specialist expertise together with its relationships with leading engineering practices, the firm has completed numerous award-winning projects – in Scandinavia, North America, the Middle East, China, Russia and, of course, the UK.

Not all markets are equal and some are more challenging than others. In developed economies in Europe and North America, for example, members can expect to engage as equals with their professional counterparts and compete on their merits.

In newly industrialised economies the environment can be more challenging and regulation can sometimes make it tougher for foreign firms. In developing economies institutions are often weak or non-existent and the regulatory environment, especially in terms of building code and planning law, may be outdated.

There are general rules of engagement, but remember that context is always the key. What works in one country may not work in another. Working internationally requires preparation and commitment, but it can be deeply rewarding. ●

Peter Oborn is RIBA vice-president, international, and a national member of RIBA Council

Preparing for the international market

Understand your capabilities. Start with self-reflection. What do you have that international clients want? Sector specialism or a particular skill? How will you differentiate yourselves from competitors?

Working internationally isn't for everyone. Understand your objectives. Why work internationally? What do you hope to achieve? Does it fit the ambitions of your practice? Do your staff have the appetite for it?

Identify the opportunities. Explore how each market operates. How is work procured? Are fee levels realistic? Where might you add value? Trade missions run by the RIBA with UKTI provide a low-cost way to experience new markets.

Winning work is one thing, delivering it another. Do you have sufficient local knowledge? Would it be better to collaborate with a local partner? This can pay dividends, but ensure there's a proper agreement between you.

Leverage your network. Getting started may be easier than you think. Chances are that opportunities lie in your network. Many practices work with engineering counterparts to bid for work in consortia. This can be a way in for smaller firms.

Make sure you have the resources. Be realistic about the time and money needed to break into new markets. Working internationally usually requires sustained effort. Don't give up at the first attempt.

Promote yourself. Writing articles, speaking at conferences and exhibiting at trade shows will raise your profile. Take space on the RIBA's stand at MIPIM perhaps, or participate in 'Shanghai Shop Windows'.

Remember that 'international' starts right here. Many international clients may already be working in your home town, particularly in cities such as London. Relationships built at home can provide a springboard for work abroad.

Marketing is your best friend

It's about creating and retaining clients, so you need to understand it and work with it, says Amanda Reekie

'We'd be happy with just a couple of articles in the nationals and some good features in the property and architectural press.'

Too often this is what I hear when architects talk about their 'marketing' requirements. I wonder when media relations became synonymous with marketing in their minds. Placing stories in the press is just one tactic. It's by no means the most effective.

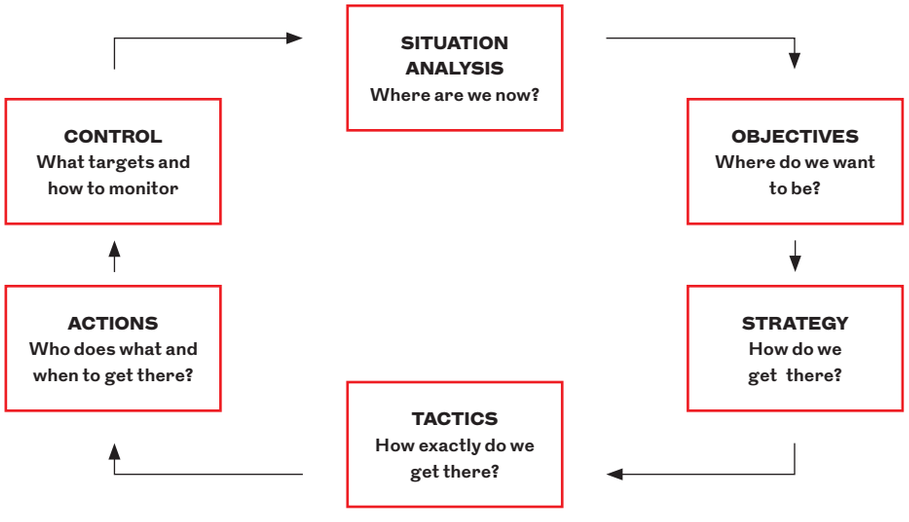
Marketing is focused on creating and retaining clients. It aligns the services and values of your practice to the needs and desires of your client base and then develops strategies for delivering the key messages to the marketplace. The RIBA's 2013/14 Benchmarking Report recommends that up to 5% of practice turnover is spent on marketing and up to 10% to break into a new area.

Sadly many architects appear to view marketing as a task. It is a profession, constantly adapting to changing circumstance and a growing understanding of what works where and what doesn't. Professional marketers will add depth, knowledge and experience, but there are many steps that directors or partners of any practice can take to create a marketing campaign that will drive the practice forward.

First, the directors need to analyse the marketplace and the practice's position relative to where they want it to be. This rests on having a clear vision. The directors need to articulate that vision, clarifying the essence of the practice, what can make it special, what it seeks to deliver, and its ambitions. This is an essential first step to effective marketing.

Next, find out how the practice is viewed from the outside. Worryingly, architects tend to base marketing strategy on their own perspective instead of what the market thinks. One of the best ways to discover market opinion is to informally interview a dozen or so clients and consultants. Such a small sample has limitations, but in my experience the feedback provides invaluable insights about the practice's brand and service, about client preferences, and sometimes about new areas of service that could be opened up. Without market intelligence, only guesswork underpins your marketing strategy.

How to create a marketing plan



SOSTAC MARKETING DIAGRAM DEVISED BY PR SMITH

To create your year one marketing plan, follow the first four steps from situation analysis to tactics, implement the tactics, review them in action, adjust according to effectiveness and market intelligence. Start again in year two.

Bishop Edward King Chapel, Cuddesdon, Oxfordshire, by Niall McLaughlin Architects, was praised for creating a modern place of worship that works both architecturally and spiritually.

Marketing positions the practice for business success and is developed in response to business objectives, so a business plan of some kind needs to be produced. A simple statement on two sides of A4 can be enough.

With this information to hand, your marketing strategy can be developed. It might include, for example, improving relations with a significant client or developing a new service to drive expansion in a particular sector. It could involve positioning your practice as a specialist, or regional leader, or community activist, or a fearless innovator. It might seek to redress a negative perception or build up an understanding of the practice as 'up and coming' or 'inventively collaborative'.

A set of realistic objectives needs to be agreed which, if delivered, will move the practice closer to its vision of success.

When the practice has assembled a snapshot of its market, defined how it is perceived, and produced a business and marketing strategy, the main messages should be refined and crafted into a compelling story about the practice's strengths. If the story is just about service, projects and delivery then it's a brochure not a narrative. Add some colour by showing character, set out your integrity by demonstrating values, and give a sense of expectation by highlighting the practice vision. In short, celebrate your culture and ambitions. Clients need to feel excited by the opportunities that your practice offers, so give yourself permission to make the story richer and more compelling.

One of the best ways to to discover market opinion is to informally interview a dozen or so clients

There are many ways to communicate and deliver messages. Some you cannot do without. These are my must-haves.

- **Website**
  Despite the rise of social media, websites are still the most important marketing tool for architects so they need to be managed and curated. The aim is to keep visitors on your site with interesting, dynamic content that engages rather than sells.
- **Images**
  Architects appreciate the power of strong visuals but can be reluctant to invest in outstanding imagery. This is a false economy. For architects in particular, pictures often speak louder than words.
- **Staff**
  Don't overlook the home team. Practice-wide awareness of the marketing 'story' is vital as every employee is a potential ambassador. Staff should be well informed about the vision and messages, and feel empowered to deliver them.
- **Third parties**
  Third party endorsers are the most valuable. They may be clients, consultants, planners, award judges, industry organisations and, yes, the media. For your story to be heard, believed and passed on you must engage with your peers, with industry influencers and the marketplace. Your engagement must reflect your culture and your values as well as promoting your service. Practices must work hard to live up to the story they are promoting and give contacts something to talk about.

Research your market, understand how your practice is perceived, articulate your vision, set your objectives, invest time and money, take determined action and settle in for the long haul. This means ensuring your actions, the service you deliver and the way you behave remain consistent with the vision and messages you project. If you can do all this and your vision is realistic then you will discover that marketing really does work and your vision becomes a reality. ●

Amanda Reekie is director and co-founder of PR and marketing consultancy Stratton & Reekie

A MODEL RELATIONSHIP

The RIBA Client of the Year 2014 has a deep insight into the client-architect relationship, and an unwavering belief in the inspirational value of the profession

Manchester Metropolitan University

BELOW: Manchester Metropolitan University has worked with BDP, John McAslan & Partners and, latterly, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, who designed both the School of Art (below) and the Business School and Student Hub (bottom).

Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) is coming towards the end of a 10-year strategic programme of capital works worth £350m.

Overseen by the recently retired vice-chancellor, Professor John Brooks, this featured several significant buildings, including the Manchester School of Art and the Business School and Student Hub. It was for these that MMU won the 2014 RIBA Client of the Year Award.

The judges singled out Brooks for his strong governance. He has long experience as an owner-occupier client and a deep insight into the client-architect relationship.

He has no illusions about the commercial realities of construction procurement, but his belief in the inspirational value of architects is unwavering. 'Their unique dimension is visioning – what the building could be, could look like and how it could function,' he says.

He is also outspoken about the client's responsibility to agree a clear brief and set unambiguous lines of communication. 'To keep control of the design, there must be a single point of contact between the architect and the client.'

He prefers architects involved from pre-concept to post-completion. MMU uses them for business scoping before even thinking about the architecture. This builds up a detailed picture of the university's market position, student numbers and research funding, giving the architects an intimate understanding of both the users' and the client's expectations.

Viability is critical, but MMU can invest long-term and is agile enough to link capital to operational expenditure to pursue radical solutions. It needs to be prudent, however. 'When you agree to an expensive geothermal water system, the architect's concept must be viable. We always do a full whole-life costing for 25 years to demonstrate cost-effectiveness to our governors,' says Brooks.

In commissioning architects, MMU looks for individuals and particular skill sets. Design creativity is a given. It seeks excellent project management, quality assurance and the ability to manage relationships with the client and the contractor. It believes the client should not be burdened with safeguarding quality and solving problems.

Brooks admires the profession, and is consistently impressed by the quality of its output. And, for a man who avers wittily that 'value engineering should be avoided at all costs', the respect is mutual.

PHOTOGRAPHS: HUFTON+CROW; POSITIVE IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHY

The school of hard knocks

It's otherwise known as learning together, observes Frank Duffy, as he wryly reflects on how his Strategic Study of the profession – which sowed the seeds for this report – was received 20 years ago

Over the five decades of my professional life the biggest mistake the architectural profession in the UK has made (and I must admit I am partly responsible) has been to fail to anticipate and respond quickly and imaginatively enough to a series of major contextual and strategic challenges.

In the early 1960s over half the members of our profession were still employed directly or indirectly by central or local government in the recovery after the destruction of the Second World War and to build, by no means unsuccessfully, the infrastructure of the welfare state: housing, schools, universities, hospitals and so on.

Even when I was RIBA President in the early 1980s, I was only dimly aware that seismic economic and contextual change was well under way. However, I initiated and led what I optimistically called the Strategic Study, the implicit and not adequately articulated objective of which was to help the profession navigate through the fundamental shift from centralised procurement and strong top down, governmental direction to the emerging privatised ideological, commercial and operational context we know all too well today. This new context has become an almost totally commercial jungle in which some very big and unruly beasts – I certainly don't mean just architects – are free to roam and do what they will with, or much more probably without, our profession's collective wisdom, guidance and assistance.

I bear some responsibility for allowing this to happen. With a perhaps too optimistic belief in the persuasive power of what I called 'architectural knowledge', that is to say data on and understanding of the relation between architecture and societal, as well as individual, aspirations and goals, I believed (and still do) that the architectural profession ought to be able to play a central and powerful role in creating environments that anticipate and respond to collective social as well as individual and client requirements.

I soon learned that there was – and remains – a long and hard road ahead before achievement of this aspiration. It wasn't long before I came face to face with a very different and much more old-fashioned reality.

With the help of many RIBA colleagues we had completed the Strategic Study. I thought it was my duty to take its findings, carefully articulated in three stout volumes, to as many of our members as possible. Consequently one dark wet Tuesday evening in February I found myself in an unprepossessing motel in Newport Gwent. The more I talked, the more idealistic, irrelevant and unwelcome my presentation must have seemed to the small and increasingly restive audience.

As I finished, one particularly unhappy member stood up and brandished a copy, saying, 'This is the worst thing I have ever seen coming out of Portland Place. It is badly written, far too wordy, far too long and above all it does not deal with the key issue: English architects coming to South Wales taking the bread out of our children's mouths.' I was saved, temporarily at least, by the next speaker, who said, 'I agree with my friend. I come from North Wales and today I must report that there are architects from South Wales coming to take the bread from our children's mouths!'

It is in such schools of hard knocks that the majority of us architects learn our lessons.

Certainly, at that moment it would have seemed absurd to me to contemplate that 20 years later the work of the Strategic Study might be regarded as sufficiently relevant to inspire another RIBA president. That Stephen has chosen to pursue through his presidency the first of three parallel tasks within the strategy's action plan provides mixed emotions, but in the most part it leaves me optimistic.

A passion and drive to build and share architectural knowledge is to the benefit of all architects, the profession as whole and ultimately to clients. We all benefit. This is not a once in a lifetime task. It is a continuous process.

Frank Duffy was RIBA President from 1993 to 1995. He was a founder of DEGW, the international architectural and design practice. This report owes a debt to his influential Strategic Study of the profession during his presidency.

‘There’s no shortage of design talent among architects but what’s needed is greater professionalism in delivery, in relationships and in overall performance. Stephen Hodder’s proposition reinforces the importance of a consistent direction to bring this about.’

Rab Bennetts, director, Bennetts Associates Architects

‘We value close collaboration with our architectural partners and were very pleased to contribute as part of the working group to the discussion around what can be done to promote better engagement between contractors and architects.’

Colin Tedder, pre-construction director, Bouygues UK

‘Good design from great architects delivers tangible, investible value for us. The mantra is no longer “location location location” but “design design design”.’

Paul Williams, director, Derwent London

‘This welcome initiative highlights how vital it is that our consultants understand the constraints we have to work with and what we’re trying to achieve. It’s like any other relationship. Getting along is great. Working through differences is more challenging but ultimately more likely to yield meaningful results.’

Isabel Allen, design director, HAB Housing

‘Stephen Hodder’s proposition will help the profession to remain relevant in the construction industry today. Architects not only should, but must lead the vision, respond positively to clients’ key drivers, and robustly manage its delivery from inception to completion.’

Sean Cook, design director, Clivedale London

‘This is a brave step forward for the profession and we congratulate the RIBA for taking the initiative on behalf of its members. We welcome the opportunity to participate in the discussion.’

Richard Cook, head of residential development, Lend Lease Europe

‘We congratulate the RIBA for taking this initiative. Great design is part of the reason we get out of bed every morning; we like to push it, have some fun with the architects and get as much as we can out of every building.’

Tom Bloxham MBE, chairman and co-founder, Urban Splash (supporters of the RIBA Client of the Year Award)

‘Good relationships come from shared values. The best clients are those that are ambitious for the institutions they represent, willing to challenge the design team and be challenged themselves for the benefit of the project. Such clients become friends for life.’

Cindy Walters, director, Walters & Cohen

Many people have been involved in this project, more indeed than in the list below. Thank you all. There is one person I would like to single out. Thank you, Frank Duffy, for your work all those years ago. It provided a foundation on which to build the RIBA for Clients work.

A special thank you to the Client Liaison Group: Nigel Ostime (chair), Hawkins\Brown; Paul Morrell OBE; Dale Sinclair, Aecom; Linda Stevens, RIBA; Bobbie Williams, RIBA.

Stephen Hodder MBE

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