



## From Business Plans to Architecture

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A business plan is a document to ensure the complex interrelated systems of a business are coherent, considered and articulated. It will include where the market is, what product or service is offered, the resources required, accompanied by statements on timescales, finance, legal and more. A business plan is considered to be an essential requirement for businesses.

Architectural plans are documents that ensure the complex interrelated systems of a building are coherent, considered and articulated. It will include where the location is, what form and service is offered, the resources required, accompanied by statements on timescales, finance, legal and more. An architectural plan is considered to be an essential requirement for buildings.

The two are not dissimilar in concept, but differ in their form of expression and scope; perhaps best understood as though they are two different languages.

### **Business plans for buildings**

Here is an opportunity: architects can complement their architectural designs with a business plan. This would offer their clients more than a construction solution, they would also provide the business opportunity for the building. The value of an architect's work is only apparent after the project's completion... they have designed it, and so are aware of the opportunities built into it.

However, this is not so simple; architects are specialised in the construction process and are not well

versed in business plans, which is a separate area of expertise. The business that appoints an architect will have ownership of the business plan, with the knowledge that the construction and timeframe of the building is only a part of their overall plan. A business plan leads up to, and then beyond, a construction; in short, the business plan overreaches a development.

Nevertheless, some overlap between the overreaching business plan and architectural plan would be useful...

### **RIBA Plan of Work: Stage 0 - Strategic Definition**

The RIBA, recognising the business context of architecture, changed their Plan of Work in 2013 to include the new *Stage 0 - Strategic Definition*. This to encourage an inquiry into the business context. In this stage, pre-design issues are considered, labelled as the 'Strategic Brief' and 'Business Case'.

The question arises, to what extent are, or should, architects be involved in formulating this business plan? Should they write the Strategic Brief and Business Case mentioned in the Plan of Work, or insist these be provided, or simply accept whatever has already been formulated which may or may not fit into these two titles?

An architect is specialised in construction solutions which is most clearly is the *RIBA Plan of Work Stage 1 - Preparation and Brief* and subsequent stages. It is not the strategic business plan that gives context to the need for a building.

Perhaps, a business needs to reformulate its business plan when they want to appoint an architect, shoehorning the plan into the format of a Strategic Brief and Business Case?

What is needed is for a business requiring a building, together with the architect, to understand each other's needs better. This is difficult, as the RIBA's *Feedback from the 'Working Architects' Client Survey 2016* results show; the most complaints about architects include: 'one third of commercial clients are not satisfied with architect's commercial understanding', followed in second place with 'Added value activities'.

This sounds very much like disconnect between architects understanding of value and the imperatives expressed business plans.

### **Strategic Definition workbook**

So how to ensure better understanding between architects and their clients? How, and who, should formulate a Strategic Definition? What should the content of this be, i.e. what exactly is contained within a Strategic Brief and Business Case? Answering these will then enable better buildings...

It is with the intention of facilitating this, that the *Strategic Definition - Property Development Workbook*

has now been published. It is intended for property asset managers and/or architects to formulate a property strategy. It does this by considering the business context first: the business' model and future strategy. This is then mapped onto property as a Strategic Brief, with the consideration of various options. The preferred option is then considered in more detail as a Business Case. After the consideration of wider stakeholder values, the Strategic Intent then be clearly formulated, to inform subsequent development stages. This workbook does this by way of asking the right questions, guiding you step-by-step through this process.

Widely referencing business, property and architecture sources, this is an invaluable guide to help you formulate your property requirements.

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