

[i] Insight *Briefing*

Design and Build: defining simplicity and results in workplace design and fit-out procurement





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Foreword

The best way of getting what you want is invariably to follow the simplest route. Research, experience and common sense tell us that in most cases, simple systems achieve better, faster and less expensive results and that the success of any project will often be in inverse proportion to the number of people involved in the system used to implement it, the number of decisions these people have to make between them, and the number of times they have to communicate with each other.

Complexity is the enemy of success. Simplicity is all. And it is this that is the underlying principle behind 'Design and Build'; often the best, fastest and least expensive method of developing and implementing an office design project, yet also one of the least understood, especially with regard to its ability to deliver exceptional design.

This White Paper is aimed both at those who want to find out more about this uniquely effective method of completing a project, but also at those who may have mistaken preconceptions about Design and Build. This is an idea whose time has come and it is all based on the most fundamental of all fundamental principles: by keeping things as uncomplicated as possible, it can often deliver the best value, best design and the best response to a brief in the quickest time and at the lowest cost.

Charles Marks, Managing Director, Fresh Workspace

In anything at all, perfection is finally attained not when there is no longer anything to add, but when there is no longer anything to take away.

...Antoine De Saint Exupery



Design and Build

What is Design and Build?

'Design and Build' frequently offers the most straightforward way for you to create a new workplace because it is based on a partnership with just one firm who are responsible for the design, management and delivery of a project.

This can help you to avoid the obvious complexities of working with a number of firms and people. Of course such complex relationships can also provide a best fit solution and can deliver great results but they rely on strong lines of communication and disparate levels of responsibility and delegation.

A well-managed Design and Build process often allows a number of aspects of the project to be developed at the same time rather than consecutively as they may be with a range of suppliers and consultants.

In the vast majority of cases this dramatically reduces the time taken to complete a project, a fact acknowledged in a recent briefing document from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

The success of Design and Build as a concept is easy to measure. Research from the Chartered Institute of Building found that a typical Design and Build project is

implemented 40 per cent faster and 15 per cent cheaper than one that uses a 'traditional' multi-contractor approach.

It achieves this without sacrificing the standard of design and the excellence of the end result. Little wonder that around a third of all new construction is now accounted for by Design and Build and since 2011, the UK Government insists that projects favour Design & Build as a procurement route wherever possible.

We should not assume however that Design and Build is a one size fits all solution. There are a number of variants of the fundamental Design and Build model that are specifically designed to meet the needs of different types of projects.

Many of these are based on a fully integrated contract form in which the client works with just one firm to develop a brief, design, construct and fit-out the entire building. Sometimes a consultant may be involved at some stage, perhaps in developing the brief.

In novated contracts, an in-house team may develop a design which is then passed to the Design & Build contractor who takes responsibility from that point on.

A typical Design and Build project is implemented 40 per cent faster and 15 per cent cheaper than one that uses a traditional approach

What are the advantages and disadvantages?

The first point to make is that while Design & Build offers a number of advantages, it doesn't mean that it is invariably the right solution. In its briefing note on procurement routes, RICS identifies the following potential disadvantages:

- The initial price may be higher as the contractor may build into his price a 'risk premium';
- Post-contract variations can be more expensive, and it is often more difficult to monitor the additional charges raised (particularly where works are priced on the basis of a specification and drawings - for example);
- The client has less control and influence over design matters;
- There is only limited scope for the client to make changes to his requirements once the client's requirements and contractor's proposals have been agreed otherwise the cost consequences may be prohibitive. If the client does not have a firm and robust set of client's requirements he may be given a design that he did not want, or may be required to pay considerably more to obtain the design that he did require;
- There may be a conflict between the client's requirements and the contractor's proposals unless both documents are carefully checked. This conflict can be obviated by making it clear in the contract which document takes precedence;
- Because it is often perceived that the contractor is driven by price rather than design standards, it may be that the design and build procurement route is not the appropriate one to use, unless a robust specification regarding the design is included within the client's requirements;
- There is the potential of dual loyalties of a novated architect. Also there could be complex legal issues in relation to the novation process. the question of the quality achieved can be an issue because of the lack of control that the client has over the architect. The architect acts for the contractor not for the client so if the client wishes to take independent advice on design issues following the building contract being entered into, or the novation of the design team to the contractor, the client will have to pay additional fees.

It's quicker (and it will be on time)

Rather than having a series of designers and contractors completing their part of a project before handing it over for the next stage, the Design and Build contractor can successfully manage tasks to run in parallel to help the project stick to a critical path. Instead of a team of runners passing a baton to each other in relay, nearly everybody can be running at the same time. That is where the time savings come in over traditional methods.

The research into the speed of Design and Build projects is unequivocal. A typical Design and Build project based on a minimal brief statement (that is, where an outside consultancy has not been used to develop a detailed brief or outline statement before appointing a contractor) is completed 40 per cent faster than a project based on a traditional approach. Even when a detailed outline statement has been produced by external consultants, Design and Build will still deliver projects 25 per cent faster than traditional methods.

Not only that, projects are more likely to be completed on time. Around 78 per cent of projects based on a minimal design statement will be completed on time compared to just 56 per cent of projects developed using traditional methods.

It's cheaper and won't go over budget

According to RICS, Design and Build projects are typically around 15 per cent cheaper than projects using traditional methods thanks to its greater use of in-house resource from the contractor, shorter project times and simpler contractual arrangements. This means that there is greater certainty and transparency when it comes to costs.

The other good news is that this saving is not significantly influenced by any detail specified in the brief so you can be fairly sure that what you will get will be exactly what you are expecting at the lowest possible cost that will meet your objectives to create an exceptional working environment.

And the OTHER good news is that it probably won't go over budget. Around 76 per cent of design and build projects based on a minimal design statement are completed to budget or below.

It's better at meeting a brief and getting it right

In almost all cases, Design and Build will deliver better results than traditional methods, notably in terms of cost and speed to complete. But it also offers exceptional designs and end results when you work with the right partner. As RICS points out, it is also more likely to have active buy-in from all stakeholder in a project. Of course, there is no absolute guarantee that any process will provide you with a better design so the outcome will come down to the skill and experience of the people working on a project.

If you've chosen the right partner for the project, you should expect them to create a workplace that meets all your expectations across a wide range of factors, not least in how it meets or exceeds your legislative obligations but also in terms of meeting your wider business objectives.

One final point in its favour is that when or if things go wrong, there is only one point of responsibility. The buck usually stops with just one firm from your point of view, so any problems or missed opportunities can be dealt with in the simplest and quickest way possible.

Going about it the right way — is it right for you?

Whether you use Design and Build or a more traditional approach to your project will ultimately depend on your own objectives and your own understanding of the best method to deliver them. This goes right back to how you would like to develop the brief and how much risk you want to take on with a project. What is beyond doubt is that Design and Build is the route for you if you:

- need to minimise costs
- want certainty about budget
- need the project to be completed on time
- demand an exceptionally well designed and practical end result
- are happy to work directly with one firm that is responsible for all major aspects of the project
- are looking for a project that will be completed to a high standard (your own) but which may not win the Stirling Prize

The quality of a design is not an intrinsic benefit of any system. That comes down to the talent and experience of individual designers working on the project. A Design and Build firm is at least as able to employ these skilled individuals as an architectural practice, probably more so. Don't assume that one type of firm is better than any other. Make sure that you check

references and ask to see examples of work carried out before assuming you're going to get better results from one particular designer or architect.

Working with the right Design and Build partner means that you will achieve exceptional results. You

*Good design is as little design as possible.
Back to purity, back to simplicity.
....Dieter Rams*

are also far less likely to divide opinion about the merits of your workplace and can sleep at night knowing the person you're working with doesn't see your building as an opportunity to make it on to the front cover of the Architectural Review as much as meeting your brief.



Conclusion

We've never had more choice about the design of the types of places we work nor how we go about creating them. There are almost limitless possibilities open to us in our choice of workplace and so the real challenge in the modern world lies in how we create something that is right for a specific organisation, both in terms of the finished design and the process by which it is created.

There is no doubt that Design and Build offers one of the best ways of achieving outstanding results in the most straightforward way possible for many organisations. Of course, it is the way of the modern world that no solution ever provides the silver bullet that addresses every single challenge involved in a specific project, so we should not see it as a panacea but Design and Build often offers the best approach because it offers a number of advantages over traditional procurement routes:

It's often faster

It's 40 percent faster because contractors aren't necessarily waiting for other contractors to

finish whatever it is they are doing before they can start.

It's often cheaper

It's on average 15 per cent cheaper because of the shorter project times, straightforward contracts and direct lines of communication.

It's often better

It's better because:

- It delivers better designed workplaces and helps you to meet all your objectives for a project.
- It gives you one point of responsibility
- It gives you one point of communication
- It's better at getting things right
- It's better at putting things right if they go wrong
- It focuses on client needs so is better at meeting the brief, keeping the solution simple but to the right standard and addressing the complex legislative and business demands of your workplace

Whenever two hypotheses cover the facts, use the simpler of the two. ...Occam's Razor



About Fresh Workspace

fresh workspace

Fresh Workspace is an office design and fit-out firm based in London and the South West of England but offering national coverage. The firm has completed major projects across the UK with a well-established and still growing reputation for developing long term relationships with their clients.

Fresh offers the know-how, approach and resources to create truly exceptional results. Their services encompass office design and fit-out, relocation, refurbishment and project management. What really makes

the firm stand out in a competitive sector is their ability to listen to what clients need from their offices then deliver outstanding solutions that allows the whole organisation to thrive

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