



The more players, the more complicated the game. This is nowhere more true than in the design and construction of buildings and interior spaces. Paul McGillick offers a case study illustrating the trend to simplify it all.

Text  
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1. Holy Brain Cafe, Sydney
2. Truman Hoyte lawyers, Sydney



Whether it is a house, a commercial building or an interior, the nightmare is the same: how to control all stages of the process. Especially in an era of sub-contracting and growing shortages of skilled tradesmen, it is harder than ever to control quality and completion times – and, therefore, cost.

One response to this has been to set up 'one-stop shops' as a more efficient and cost-effective way of running the design and build process. It saves a lot of time, says CBD Projects Director, Robert Bowles, "because you start to overlap a few processes." He says it creates a pool of knowledge where, in normal circumstances, the knowledge is spread around among a host of different players. Bowles says it also puts an end to 'adversarial contracting', thus saving time because, having control of the budget, a lot of issues can be worked out before going on site.

CBD Projects is an example of such a 'one-stop shop' or a fully integrated fit-out and refurbishment service offering head contracting (where a designer has already been retained by the client), project management (where CBD commissions a designer, matching the designer to the client and the job), tendering, negotiated works, planning, programming, cost analysis and drawing up of dilapidation schedules.

In this way, CBD can provide a fully customised service where so often a project ends up being only partly customised because of a lack of integration of all processes, including the failure to fully integrate the client into the design and build process.

Bowles came to Sydney from London where he had spent 15 years doing interior fit-outs for a company whose turn-over grew from £2 million to £200 million in the time he was there, "all based on the service which they gave to the clients". CBD Projects was set up a little over three years ago and has experienced rapid growth in that time, first by

working with building owners, then building managers and interior designers. Now they work as a design and build operation with four project managers, including Bowles, with multiple projects running at any one time.

CBD operates what Bowles calls a "zero deficit policy". This involves aiming for zero defects as part of policy to deliver customised and innovative quality solutions on time and to budget. The key to this, says Bowles, is combining the integration of services within a single entity with effective planning and construction methods – along with an emphasis on flexibility of approach.

In the traditional approach – which resembles a loosely linked chain of independent players and contractors – there may or may not be a satisfactory level of teamwork. Often there is an uneasy – and, therefore, inefficient and unsatisfactory – mix of individual and collective agendas. Most typically, for example, a builder has his own established way of doing something which is resistant to a customised design. Another scenario is where a client makes after-the-fact budgetary changes which compromise a previously agreed design programme. Or projects fall behind schedule because of a lack of coordination or comprehensive supervision leading to avoidable remedial work.

Robert Bowles argues that CBD Projects is an example of an approach which can minimise – ideally, eliminate – these kinds of inefficiencies by integrating all the components of the brief/design/build process whereby the right hand always knows what the left is doing.

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