



## FUTURE LEADERS

Anyone who would be reduced to tears at the prospect of our children becoming architects could find inspiration at the RIBA Future Leaders conference, says Jean-Jacques Lorraine

## DRY YOUR EYES

I AND MY co-founder, Julian Morrow, run a growing business but find ourselves constantly debating about the type of practice we want to be. At the RIBA's Future Leaders conference in March, Jack Pringle said of this question; don't waste time trying to be good, just be great. Simple enough advice – but how? The answer came posed through the day in the form of questions we need to ask ourselves as 'future leaders' of the profession.

### Save the children

Dickon Robinson's recent report on the future of practice has fired the starting pistol for many to predict the end of architects and suggest most of us are professionally doomed. As a father of two young boys, this was brought home to me when well respected and successful architects were asked what would be their reaction to their children's decision to become architects: break down in tears came the reply. If it really is that bad, then we have two clear choices; give up and do something else or get organised and reposition ourselves at the fulcrum of the construction industry.

Buro 4's evergreen Tom Taylor, handed the last presentation in a long day, delivered a rousing call to arms – your industry needs you, really needs you; grow up, stand up, there is no one better-placed to lead. To equip ourselves to meet this challenge will require some fundamental changes, many of which were outlined during the day. Richard Saxon's reckoned that if the time spent on concept design = 1, then the value generated from 'big ideas' = 3,000. How did this gulf get so huge?

The profession has to find a way to link its remuneration to the value it delivers. It should not expect to have its hand held along

the road, and be shepherded towards a place where the architect becomes a shareholder in the projects it delivers. We can't just remain designers, we need to wrest control back from those who have taken the client's ear. As Peter Nolan from Nolan Associates explained, we have a choice everyday when we wake up, either do what we always did or do something different. Perhaps the enormous potential of BIM will allow the profession to become 'master builders' again, or perhaps we need to ditch traditional JCT contracts and standard forms of appointment to derive models that map a way for true partnering where payment is linked to the achievement of agreed targets. The emerging notion of a concept architect and executive architecture further reinforces the market's reliance on enshrining excellent ideas at the outset of any project.

### Adapt to survive

As a profession we have to adapt. Why try to compete with providers offering excellent services at competitive prices? Production information can be happening in Ho-Chi Minh City or Manila while we sleep in the West. AECOM sends services layouts to China every night so client changes and mark-ups are always up to date – why shouldn't we? Richard Saxon's polemic on practice positioning suggested that our future lies in outsourcing.

A formidable challenge lies ahead for the profession; it needs to undo a generation of being marginalised. Yet against this the opportunities are immense; one need only look at the recent deal by GE, Arup and Skanska that will allow them to exploit the retrofit potential of the £10 billion-a-year commercial property market. Cambridge University's Sebastian

MacMillan has encouraged collaboration and teamwork, notably with his IDBE masters degree, a prescient glimpse perhaps into the profession's future.

One of the most enjoyable parts of the conference was role-playing a negotiation scenario set out between client and architect. Law firm Mayer Brown gave us 20 minutes to hammer out a deal involving complex and contradictory requirements. By and large both sides of the table came to a workable agreement. Negotiation is another key skill to be developed but, encouragingly for a room full of architects, gritty resolve was shown and an in-built steeliness got good deals done. Perhaps the grilling we received in crits and the self-inflicted blisters from sleep-deprived attempts at soldering together concept models have toughened us up for the good.

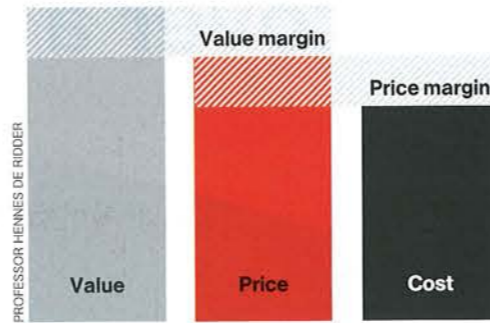
### Full toolkit

The future leaders' conference touched on other tools we must master; diction, posture, purpose, direction, body language, patience and persuasiveness. I wish I could take Peter Renel, from Partners With You, to every pitch we do as we'd be sure to win every single one. He revealed the key to presentations as variety, pace, eye contact and breathing. If you are interested in how to speak with gravitas, it involves delicately squeezing a lemon; where you place it requires a fertile imagination.

The RIBA's decision to abandon the fee structure was necessary to bring the profession in line with others. However, the vacuum that has replaced it sucks up many architects' time and pays them peanuts. A new fee basis is required and key to that is overhauling the plan of work. The nature of concept design must be reinvented, as its current definition is too narrow and puts too small a price on the value that a design team can bring.

All the speakers of the day sparked the imagination and provoked in many of those who attended a real desire to put our profession back in the driving seat – both for us and for the future leaders of the next generation. ■

Jean-Jacques Lorraine is a director of emerging practice Morrow + Lorraine Architects



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AJ handle by Arne Jacobsen

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