The Design Manager’s Handbook
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To my father, Kenneth James Eynon, 1925–2008
A gentle, private and resolute man who built his home in my heart
If you just want to do the 9–5, go home at night and not think about improving at DM at all, then this book probably isn’t for you.

However, if you want to grow in your understanding and your role, and ‘poke the box’ or push the boundaries of your thinking, then you’ll find some ideas here to get you started!

‘Those who have aimed at acquiring manual skill without scholarship have never been able to reach a position of authority to correspond to their plans, while those who relied only upon theories and scholarship were obviously hunting the shadow, not the substance. But those who have a thorough knowledge of both, like men armed at all points, have the sooner attained their object and carried authority with them.’

– Vitruvius, On Architecture, 1st century BC
Perhaps the first commentator on Design Management!
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Design Management, to most, is a relatively new form of consultancy.

Its history dates back to the huge increase in Design and Build contracts in the late 1980s. During that period there was a fundamental shift away from traditional contracts, where architects ran the construction contract. D&B offered many benefits to clients, most notably a fixed price and a fixed programme. Design Managers at the time usually came from a construction background and their task was to take an existing design, already developed up to planning level, and procure the work for the best possible price with either the original architect or a new design team. However, it was often associated with erosion in terms of design quality, since finance and speed were the most important measures of success.

Over the last fifteen years there has been a significant change in the role, owing to the emergence of government-funded projects such as LIFT, BSF and other forms of PFI. These projects involved all forms of public buildings including libraries, town halls, health centres and schools amongst others. The challenge for the construction industry in these projects was that architects and the rest of the design team would now be employed from the very earliest stages by a contractor, and therefore the contractors needed to act as clients from day one.

It was in this area that the industry lacked experience. Traditional Design Managers were more used to procuring an ‘oven-ready’ design and lacked skills in briefing and the team building necessary to motivate consultants in a positive manner. On the other side, design teams lacked skills in understanding the link between design, cost and construction in the fast-track programming that accompanied these new forms of procurement. For the very first time, contractors, engineers and architects needed to work together from the very earliest stages if they were to win lucrative contracts. It was in this arena that Design Managers became a vital component of the team, forming a bridge between good design and clever construction. The new Design Managers came from all sides of the industry: architects, engineers and surveyors as well as contractors. They often became ‘translators’ for both parties, and this handbook highlights the complex set of skills needed to make the job a success.

The many well-designed public buildings procured, particularly over the last five years, are a testament to the way the construction industry has embraced these new challenges and I believe successful design management has been the vital component. Over the last few years we have seen the process become more sophisticated as the industry has learned how to improve its service to clients by embracing new technologies such as BIM, off-site manufacture and standardisation in an attempt to provide more affordable solutions in these austere years. In this sense, the role remains more important than ever.

This is the first time such a handbook has formally set out the scope and tasks necessary to perform Design Management and as such I believe it will become a ‘bible’ within the industry for many years to come.

Paul Monaghan is an Architect and a founding director of Allford Hall Monaghan and Morris (ahmm.co.uk). The practice was founded in 1989 and now works...
worldwide. Paul works on a wide range of projects, including masterplanning, arts, educational buildings, housing, offices, public buildings and health buildings. Recently completed projects under his direction include Kirk Balk Community College, Anne Mews, Villaggio in Ghana, Unity on Liverpool’s historic waterfront, Latitude House, Barking Central, Westminster Academy and Kentish Town Health Centre. He is currently working on a further wide range of projects, including Nine Elms, several high-profile schools and the reinvention of Liverpool’s Royal Court Theatre.

Paul has lectured throughout the UK, and has been an external examiner at several Universities, including Liverpool, Westminster and Southbank. He has been Vice Chair of the CABE Schools Design Review Panel and is currently on the CABE National Design Review Panel. Paul has been chairman of the Young Architect of the Year awards, and up until 2010 chaired the RIBA awards panel. He is also a RIBA Client Design Advisor.
Welcome to the CIOB Design Manager’s Handbook!

A while ago I read a book by Robert Pirsig called ‘Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance’. In his book he discusses the philosophy of maintaining your motorcycle and the key ingredient that you need – ‘Gumption’.

‘I like the word “gumption” because it’s so homely and so forlorn and so out of style that it looks as if it needs a friend and isn’t likely to reject anyone who comes along. I like it also because it describes exactly what happens to someone who connects with Quality. He or she gets filled with gumption!

‘A person filled with gumption doesn’t sit around dissipating and stewing about things. He’s at the front of the train of his own awareness, watching to see what’s up the track and meeting it when it comes. That’s gumption.

‘If you’re going to repair a motorcycle, an adequate supply of gumption is the first and most important tool. If you haven’t got that, you might as well gather up all the other tools and put them away, because they won’t do you any good.’

The same could be said of the Design Manager. It is an under-sung role, not for the faint-hearted, right in the fulcrum and the heat of project delivery – and gumption is a key requirement.

An alternative title for the Handbook might have been ‘Zen and the Art of Design Management’, but that probably wouldn’t have found favour with the powers that be!

So why the Design Manager’s Handbook?

From my earliest time as a site-based Design Manager I always wanted to join up the bigger picture on DM. It is so easy to become isolated on site or in an office and not be aware of wider opinion and current thinking. For myself, I find that understanding the broader context helps me to make sense of my own role and contribution.

I think I’ve always wanted to connect things or make connections, because beneath the surface, life is so much more connected and holistic than we recognise sometimes, or can imagine. My aim in working with the CIOB on Design Management is to connect – people, knowledge and experience, to enable communication and collaboration.

‘DM is intrinsically connected – to be effective, it has to be!’

It also seemed to me that ‘Design’ was looked upon as something of a ‘black art’ by many people in construction, rather like oil and water – there is this perception that they don’t mix! (Or perhaps they can . . . as we shall see later!) And yet as I have talked to people from across the industry, in different sectors, different businesses and organisations, the same kinds of issue have emerged: confusion about the role, limited understanding of the scope and potential of DM, lack of recognition, profile and worth for DMers.
DM can be such an intangible proposition sometimes, but you can certainly experience the results and outcomes. There is no silver bullet here. Good Design Management is not rocket science. Simply by good planning, communication, collaboration and management, combined with effective teamwork, and the use of the right tools and techniques, it is possible to achieve outstanding results and produce real value for our customers. In addition, we can have a positive experience while we’re in the process, as well as obtaining the desired end result.

This Handbook collects together much of what I’ve learned over the years, combined with the input of a few others who have joined with me on this journey.

The book is for all those brave souls engaged in the DM role on a daily basis: whatever type of business they’re in, site-based or in an office, standing in that ‘fuzzy’ zone between design and construction. It is written more from a contractor’s perspective, as that represents most of my experience now. However the processes, tools and concepts should be familiar to all, whatever seat round the project table they currently occupy.

It is my aspiration that this Handbook, together with the other thrusts of the CIOB Design Management project, will draw some threads together, ‘connect’, and enable Design Management in construction to come of age.

As we continue on this journey, I want to give everyone involved in DM some context and focus, as well as providing a platform upon which they can work, be understood, grow their roles and careers – and as a consequence to firmly plant DM on the construction sector map.

It is my hope that the CIOB DM project will give focus to everyone involved in Design Management across the industry, and enable the discussions to take place and the questions to be heard.

My experience is that most people involved in DM love to share ideas, communicate, collaborate and innovate. They are passionate about what they do.

My aim is to get people talking together about DM, sharing their experience and ideas on how to do things better than the last time around. The results of such communication and collaboration will be truly exciting, and will make a significant contribution to taking our industry forward. And to be honest, I’ve had a great time doing this, discussing DM with people across the industry, exchanging ideas and discussing how can we do things better and take the industry forward.

In writing the Handbook, and working with many people discussing Design Management over the last few months, I have been awestruck by the rich diversity of opinions and ideas – there is no vacuum, and there is never a short discussion! This Handbook is the first step in enabling that wider discussion and exchange of ideas to take place, and providing a focus for debate. In time I hope it will develop into a consensus on the activity and the role, as well as providing a best-practice model for DM within our industry.

John Eynon
Brighton
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As with any project, this has been a team effort. Many people have had an input or influence on the development of the Handbook in many different ways, and here I can mention only a few.

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And finally for this section – to colleagues and friends at Carillion and Wates and to all the DMers, designers and constructors, and everyone else I have worked with in the last 30 years. In some way you have all shaped my thinking, which has somehow found its way into this Handbook.

Special thanks to guest contributors

The Handbook and appendices include a number of contributions by others, which I have included because they are topics of interest about how our industry is