

ARC 555 Management and Practice 1

**Assignment 3:
A CRITICAL SELF – APPRAISAL OF THE LIVE PROJECT**

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0. Introduction

According to David Chappell and Andrew Wills, 'Communication is the most vital aspect of management' and 'architects must be excellent communicators.' (p.281 Chappell, David and Wills, Andrew. 2005) In contemporary architectural practice, communication is one of the most important factor rather than just designing decent cutting edge appearance building. As progressing project, architecture is created through a series of consultation with client, contractor, community group, special consultant and other stakeholders. Regardless to say, all of consultation requires appropriate communication. Furthermore, consultation is not only necessary for diplomatic matter, but also it is essential among team members. To achieve successful consultation, architect inevitably devises communication methods with stakeholders. Effective communication would result in good management. In this paper, from communication point of view, the live project, project 01 Scarborough Old Railway Line, will be investigated how it could be improved.

1 Project Overview

1.1 Stakeholders

(See Appendix 1) In the Live project, Scarborough Old Railway. Broadly saying, there are 4 kinds of group: authority group (Sc council, Yorkshire forward,), half-authority half-community group (Sc urban renaissance), local community groups (Walking and Cycling Action Group, Friends of the Railway Line(Urban)), Other specialized group (Sustrans). This project's client is Scarborough Borough Council. With the client, consultation had been undertaken and developed product.

1.2 The development of the brief throughout the project

According to RIBA, *Architect's Job Book*, development of the brief flow is: '1, Client requirements; 2, Statement of need; 3, Strategic Brief; 4, Project Brief; 5, Project Brief. '(p.64, Lupton, Sarah. 2000) As design development, the process takes place in between each brief development stage: 'Appraisal; Outline Proposals; Detailed Proposals; Final Proposals.' (p.64, Lupton, Sarah. 2000) Compared with RIBA's model, our development of the brief is quite different from regarding on defining client requirements and statement of need.

2 Communication with Stakeholders

2.1 Briefing process

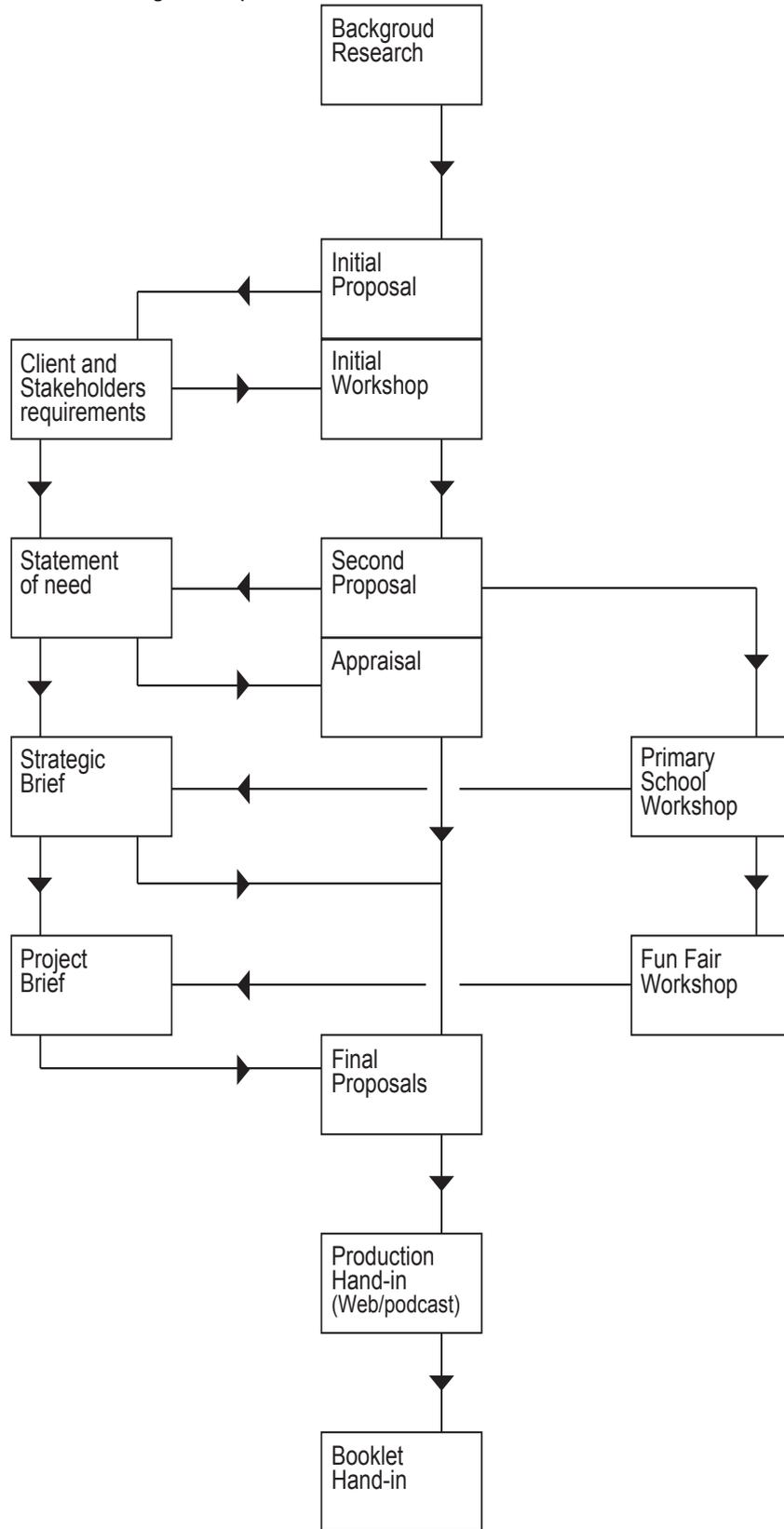
Briefing process is considered as three phased process: firstly, 'The statement of need', second one is 'the strategic brief', and in the last, 'the project brief'. Our team had been struggled to identify client requirements and needs of the project for almost four weeks. This is mainly caused by two factors.

Firstly, meeting method is the one. Desirably, agenda including purpose of meeting, remaining concern, minute of previous meeting should be sent beforehand to client and stakeholders. Lacking of agenda documentation, meeting was suffered from losing direction, flowing frame work and thus it was difficult to focus on feedback from client and stakeholders. Even if the meeting occasionally went well, when unexpected discussion occurred, initial purpose would be replaced by undesirable topic leading to time waste. In addition to agenda document, timeline document would help not only for the team to keep up working to meet schedule, but also for client/stakeholders to make a decision as early as possible.

Second cause is late decision making because of relation between client and community group/stakeholders. Client of the project is Scarborough Council, public sector, so in a way, client is not able to make a decision on our proposals without engagement with community groups. There are at least two community groups directly affecting decision making: Urban Renaissance and Friends group (Urban). Thus it takes time to organize common consensus among them. Moreover, whole project meeting including the client, and the two main community groups is scheduled only once a month. The team dealt with the complex decision making system by proposing a large number of feasible ideas showing in presentations, expecting the client/ the stakeholders reaction. Although, some parts of the strategies turned to good results, there would be possible improvement, if combination of workshops and client meetings was more tactically scheduled. Especially in this case of late stakeholders decision, by making an evidence proving community supporting idea from workshop, supported idea would impress stakeholders, and possibly lead to decision. Due to intensive six-week project, workshop should have been planned more tactically.

In addition to two factors above, brief feasible study document would improve our performance as a whole. The document would contain findings from research, and proposals linking to findings. This document makes it easy to follow each proposal's purpose connecting to specific background of the project and it would lead to client decision.

Scarborough Old Railway Line Project
The process of brief and design development



2.2 Communication Strategies

The team, considering as a characteristic of public sector project, communication strategies are set to be open for every participants and sharing ideas with stakeholders. In the sector project, it is essential to make the process transparent to community members, plus the project should be supported by community consensus.

As previously described, the team found the subtle power balance among council, and two community groups. The team decided to present our ideas not only in meeting but also in blog which enables the process to be transparent, tangible and interactive way for all participants, at the same time avoiding possible disagreement against client as possible from other stakeholders after one decision approved.

For closed engagement with the stakeholders, the team conducted mainly two background researches. One is previous studies research, and the other is to know the site well. Although, previous studies research is essential task in any kind of project, more effective research was bike ride through the line. The fact that the team went through twenty three miles long line proved our motivation for the project and impressed them that the team is a member of the community. This sense ended up leading to reliance from client and stakeholders.

During six weeks, there were three workshops (excluding whole school event workshop). Each workshop was assigned specific purpose: first one is to directly work with client and stakeholders investigating their demands as discussing about the line after showing our primal proposals; in the second, workshop took place in primary school to gather school children ideas and to start conducting one of master plan idea; in the last, following to the second workshop, one of master planning proposal which is 'orchard line' and 'recipe book' was tested in this session.

Among the three workshops, first and the last workshops are meaningful events regarding on communication strategy for the client. Fortunately, in the last workshop, BBC radio came to report our workshop and the report was on the air in next day. BBC radio made our proposals objectively valued and also it became our effort on the project visible.

To sum up, communication strategies was successful, but there was less effective tool compared with the other facts mentioned above. Blog could be more interactive tool with the client/stakeholders. Blog was expected to be a place where the team announces their work progress and the stakeholders leave comments on the work progress but it didn't quite happen at all. It would be a good idea for the team and the client/stakeholders to launch registered blog website such as Ning. By asking the client to register, the client would also have a sense of participating design process, and as a result, working process would be more interactive and effective.

3 Communication with Team members

3.1 Group working

To define the client's and the stakeholders' demands, the team decided to show a large number of proposals as possible and tried to receive feedback for them. For keeping up effective productivity, in first phase, the team was divided into three specialized groups: Prototype design; Marketing; Master plan. After second presentation, further group revision was conducted adding Booklet team which had one person from master plan group and one from prototype.

Although thanking to this scheme, each group was able to make faster decision and to increase its productivity, it turned to hard to communicate cross-discipline division. This led to overlap work and lack of design direction as well.

All these problems possibly caused by lacking a leader of the team. In addition, appointing a sub-leader was also desirable. Expected role of a leader would make whole team decision, design direction, and a sub-leader would work as coordinator among specialized groups, gathering information of each group progress, reporting to a leader, receiving ordinary working instruction from a leader to each group. Important theme of the system stresses not on top-down decision making method but on democratic style, thus it is essential to be aware of these roles as supporting system within team.

4 Conclusion

Throughout the live project, two aspects of communication management meaning became obvious: one is diplomatic strategy; the other is introversive communication. Diplomatic scheme is to frame project process which is what, when, where, how and to whom the project is heading, and introversive strategy is to focus on how to increase productivity to meet time schedule. Balancing two communication managements would lead effective work process.

Regarding on engagement, the team realized that workshop is good measure of establishing reliance, especially in public sector project. As previous mentioned, public sector project is not only for council but also for people living in the area. Stakeholder map might be multi-layered complex relation, moreover each stakeholder would be adversarial relation each group. To ease, to introduce each other, workshop is a good method of project start. Workshop methodology is also to call its purpose, its activity, its material for work, and its chair who leads the workshop. With enough preparation and programme, the project proved that workshop effectiveness in consulting process in architectural practice.

Besides, the Live project implies interesting work style, 'active/positive work style' creating potential job. Traditional architect's work style is rather passive which job starts when client asks architect to design or consult. Especially in this project, there was a broad vague purpose designing master plan for the line, but actually there were no certain demands or criteria to the team. Therefore, in a sense, through research, workshops, presentations, the team was not asked to design master plan but the team asked the client and the stakeholders to choose, to consult their needs for the line. The project showed us possibility for future architect work style.

5. Reference

Chappell, David and Willis, Andrew. 2005. *The Architect in practice 9th edition*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Lupton, Sarah. (editor), 2000. *Architect's Job Book 7th edition*, London: RIBA Publications.

Lupton, Sarah. (editor), 2001. '10 Communication / 12 Architect – Client Relationship', *Architect's Handbook of Practice Management 7th edition*, London: RIBA Publications.

Appendix 1 (Stakeholders Map)

