

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY

AN OFFICE FIT-OUT NEEDN'T BE DREADED

Facing an office fit-out or refurbishment project? It can be a daunting prospect if you haven't done one before. And often even more daunting if you have. Design and Build – one of the construction industry's best-kept secrets – might be the answer.



By David Henderson
Managing Director, Morgan Lovell

THE RACE was on for Tricia Weener. As managing director and founder of marketing company Intelligent Marketing Communications, she had just six weeks to design a new office space, build it, and move in. Friends and colleagues told her it couldn't be done.

"In two years we'd doubled in size," explains Weener. "We urgently needed a bigger space to accommodate our growth – but we also wanted one that expressed the personality of the company we'd become. It was a tall order in the time we had."

The office fit-out – whether it involves a sprucing up of the existing surroundings, or a total relocation – is an exercise all growing companies one day have to carry out. It's a major preoccupation for those concerned. The managing director wants an office to be proud of. The finance director wants a project that comes in on time and to budget. And the facilities manager wants it all to happen with a minimum of hassle.

But it's a challenge making sure all these wishes are met.

LITTLE EXPERIENCE

The logistics of fitting out a workplace are rarely straightforward. There's a lot to think about: seeking planning permission and liaising with the landlord; designing the new space; hiring and managing the contractors; managing the budget; co-ordinating the IT; and choosing the right furniture. And all too often, especially in smaller companies, the person responsible for bringing all this together will have had precious little experience of doing it before.

The scope will vary from job to job. But it might involve moving hundreds of people to another floor or building. Relocating a data centre or financial trading floor. And at all times, keeping disruption to the business at a minimum, if not zero.

There's potential for unexpected costs, broken lines of communication, buck-passing, and at the very least, a few headaches along the way. It's no surprise how often tales of projects gone wrong hit the national headlines.

Intelligent Marketing’s new office had to reflect the company’s image conscious nature and go-getting attitude, as well as address some more practical considerations. The space had to provide a workplace, an exhibition area, a storage space and a meeting place for clients. Crucially, it also needed to encourage people to take time out to think – essential for a business that trades in ideas.

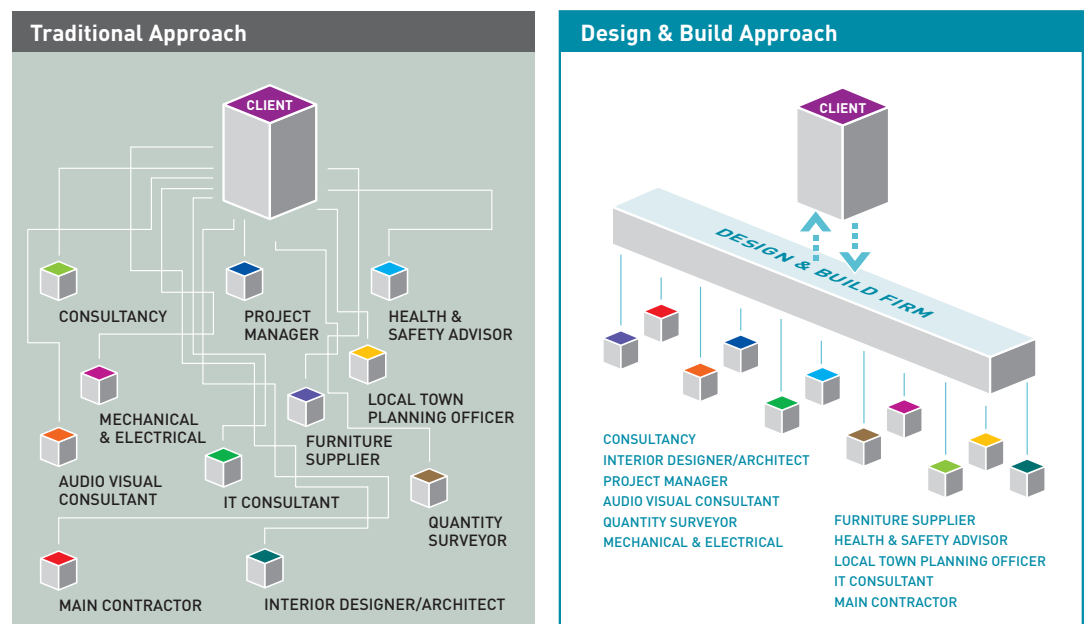
“We’d found a lovely converted furniture mill in North West London, and had a few ideas about what we wanted to do with it. But I just couldn’t see how we could turn those ideas into a reality with the deadline we had,” recalls Weener.

Fortunately, she did find an answer.

VALUE FOR MONEY

There is another way to approach an office fit-out or refurbishment, which is still relatively undiscovered. It’s known as Design and Build in the construction industry. It saves time, minimises risk and reduces hassle – and it’s more likely to deliver on time and to budget. All in all, it represents better value for money.

Design and Build is about letting one company take care of everything. Literally everything.



Design and Build is about letting one company take care of everything. Literally everything. From planning permission to interior design to construction to move-in day. Dealing with just the one supplier brings immediate and ongoing benefits – and it does so because almost all the work is done in-house with one integrated team.

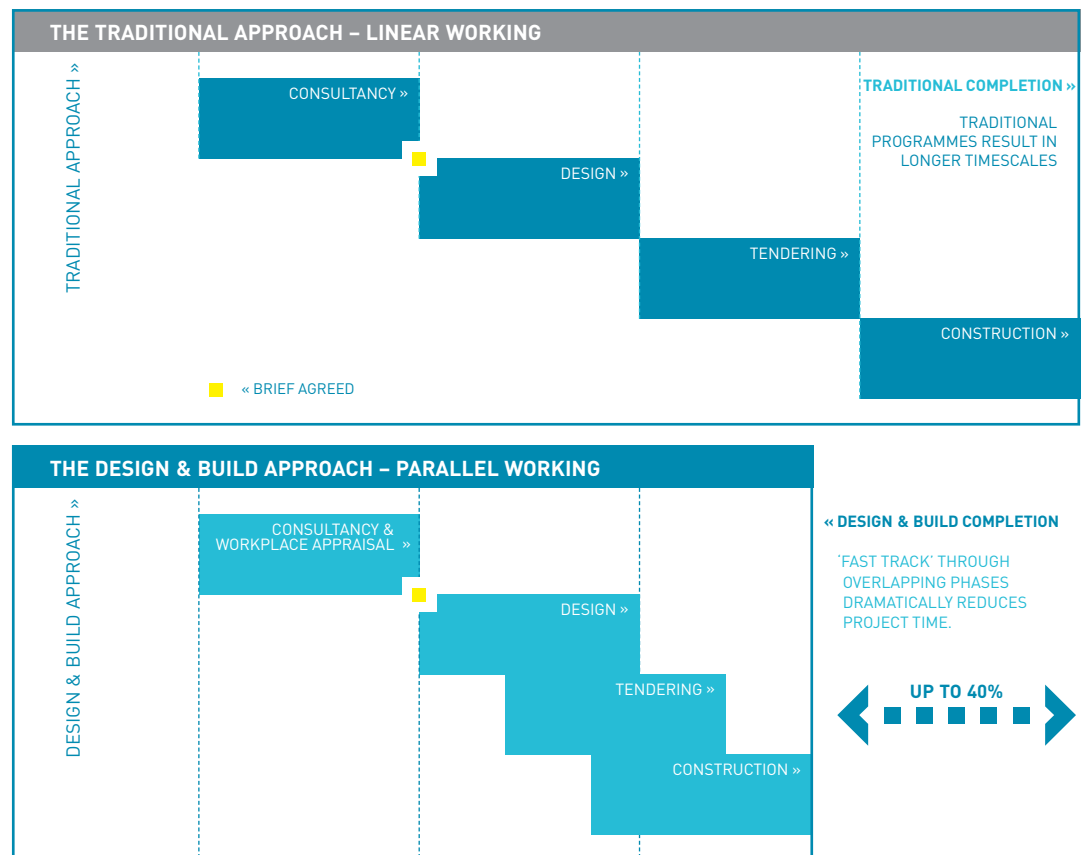
For a start, time is saved on negotiating contracts. There’s just the one agreement to sign, instead of maybe a dozen, and it covers the whole job, not one small piece of it. And there’s a single point of contact throughout the project, who will assume total responsibility from beginning to end and will oversee everything for you.

Because the designer and the builder actually talk to one another, and work together from the outset, the Design and Build approach offers firm guarantees. The design you sign off is the design you get. The cost you tell the finance director is the actual final cost. So there's more certainty and less risk. Contractually the client gets more protection this way, too.

CRITICAL PATH

Perhaps most significantly, a unique aspect of Design and Build – parallel working – helps bring forward the completion date of a project. Why? Because in the traditional approach, the designer and contractors are individual runners in a relay race, who must pass on the baton before the next one can start. But a Design and Build contractor can manage tasks so that many of them run in parallel – helping the project stick to a critical path. So nearly everybody can be running at the same time, making the whole exercise a lot quicker.

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This speed impressed Weener. “Even before we’d signed off the final design, the contractors were preparing the site. I knew then that Morgan Lovell were serious about meeting our timetable.”

Another point in favour of Design and Build is the contractor's ability to address, in a more cohesive way, the legislative, health and safety, technological and environmental matters that affect modern workplaces. After all, the end result has to be practical and compliant, as well as elegant.

What's more, with around one-fifth of all projects having a major defect, however they are developed, it's important that the Design and Build contractor is around to put problems right – and they can often absorb the extra cost of doing so, too. Compare to the traditional approach, where the client is usually left to pick up the pieces.

QUALITY OF DESIGN

Unsure about the quality of design? It comes down to the talent and experience of the individual designers working on the project. A Design and Build firm is just as likely to employ these skilled individuals as an architectural practice. Don't assume one type of firm is better than any other. Make sure you check references and ask to see examples of work carried out before deciding who you're going to get better results from.

RIGHT APPROACH

Another point in favour of Design and Build is the contractor's ability to address the legislative, health and safety, and environmental matters that affect modern workplaces.

So how do you know if the Design and Build approach is the right one for you?

Well, if there's a specific designer or contractor you really want to work with, or if you're prepared to pay additional professional fees (for surveyors, architects, project managers, IT consultants, mechanical and electrical services consultants, planning supervisors and others), then Design and Build isn't for you. But on the other hand, if you're happy to work with one partner, want less hassle, and want guarantees on time and budget, it almost certainly is.

A testimony to the quality of service available from a Design and Build partner is the type of clients that have recently chosen to transform their offices by this approach. Companies for which design values are paramount to their brand, such as Philips, Expedia and ITV, have all opted for Design and Build.

Intelligent Marketing's Tricia Weener has seen the results, too.

"We wanted a company that would take our ideas and come back with something even better," says Weener. "Morgan Lovell did just that. The space is perfect – and they delivered it on time and to budget."

TEN QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF WHEN CHOOSING AN OFFICE INTERIOR DESIGN AND BUILD CONTRACTOR:

- 1 What is their track record – for both design and construction?
- 2 Are any subcontractors equally able to carry out the work to the right standard?
- 3 Are they financially sound?
- 4 What is the total cost of taking them on?
- 5 Do I have one point of contact?
- 6 Do I need to employ a professional project manager in addition to the main contractor, or will they supply one?
- 7 Do they really understand what I'm looking for?
- 8 What is my risk involved in working with them?
- 9 What guarantees are in place for time and budget overruns?
- 10 Will they put right any defects at no extra cost?

ABOUT MORGAN LOVELL

Morgan Lovell is the UK's leading workplace Design and Build business. Since 1977, the firm has based its success on its passionate belief that by transforming their workplaces, its clients can transform the way they work.

Morgan Lovell makes sure its clients get outstanding results delivered on time and to budget. It also helps them get the maximum out of their workplaces, the people who work in them, and the technology they use.

Uniquely, Morgan Lovell takes total responsibility for the whole project, from design to prompt delivery. The firm's singular, simple approach to Design and Build means it can guarantee fixed prices, firm timings, a single point of contact for clients, and outstanding results.

DESIGN AND BUILD : THE BENEFITS

Design and Build saves time, minimises risk and reduces hassle – and it's more likely to deliver on time and to budget. All in all, it represents better value for money than traditional methods.

Here are some of the reasons why:

- There's only one contract to negotiate, which covers the whole job.
- There's a single point of contact, who will assume responsibility from beginning to end and will oversee everything.
- The designer and the builder actually talk to one another.
- The contractor can manage tasks so that many of them run in parallel.
- The contractor can address, in a more cohesive way, the complex matters that affect modern workplaces.
- It's better at getting things right. And it's better at putting things right if they go wrong.
- The integrated approach is better at meeting the brief – keeping the solution simple, but to the right standard.

DESIGN AND BUILD : THE EVIDENCE

- Research from the Chartered Institute of Building shows that a typical Design and Build project based on a minimal design brief – where no outside consultancy has been used to develop a detailed brief ahead of appointing a contractor – is implemented 40% faster than one that uses a traditional multi-contractor approach.
- Even when a detailed brief has been produced by external consultants, Design and Build still delivers projects 25% faster than traditional methods.
- Around 78% of projects based on a minimal brief are completed on time compared to 56% of projects developed using traditional methods.
- The same research shows that Design and Build projects are typically around 15% less expensive – thanks to the contractor's greater use of in-house resources, shorter project times and simpler contractual arrangements.
- In the public sector, the Office of Government Commerce now requires all Government projects to be delivered by either Design and Build, a private finance initiative or prime contracting. It will only allow other approaches if an exceptional business case can be made.
- Nearly a third of all new construction is now accounted for by Design and Build.