

The USABLE BUILDINGS TRUST

Feedback and strategy for better buildings

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NEW PROFESSIONALISM: TEN PRINCIPLES ALL BUILDING PROFESSIONALS COULD ADOPT TOMORROW

by Bill Bordass, Adrian Leaman and Richard Lorch, the Usable Buildings Trust (UBT) and members of the Edge

Background

In September 2011, Edge Debate 46 discussed the role of the building professional in the 21st century. Speakers identified a number of gaps: between professions; between practice and academe; and between design assumptions and how buildings work in use, owing to a failure to develop a shared knowledge base.

Solutions were seen to lie in ethics, integration, practice based on evidence, and an action-learning culture. Some thought the UK had all the necessary knowledge and skills, but lacked the resolve to bring them together.

Building Research & Information then issued a call for papers on New Professionalism, leading to a Special Issue on the subject: Volume 41, Number 1 (January 2013). This was discussed at Edge Debate 54 on 20 February 2013, where four authors of papers in the Issue presented their views. Points raised by the audience were then debated with a panel of representatives of RIBA, RICS, CIBSE, CIOB and Keith Clarke, former chair of CIC. Details can be downloaded from www.edgedebate.com/?p=1842.

The challenges of sustainability are revealing inadequacies of regulations and markets, creating a vacuum that building professionals and their institutions could help us to fill. The global situation invites us to be “*more moral than we could ever have imagined*”, said Stephen Hill at the debate, quoting the words of Malcolm Bull.

But will building professionals and their institutions be able to rise to the occasion; is their voice loud enough for anyone to be listening if they do; and do they have a sound enough knowledge base to be trusted by society in this role?

Critical needs were identified for:

- A shared vision and identity for practice and education, with more on the ethical aspects and perhaps with something a bit similar to the Hippocratic Oath.
- Better procurement processes, with a proper focus on outcomes.
- Building performance in use to become a properly-recognised and represented knowledge domain.

As the Special Issue was being prepared, the Edge discussed whether there might be some shared principles that any built environment professional could adopt - today.

The ten points that emerged were included in the Editorial of the Special Issue and shown below. They offer a vision and guidance to individuals, including reflection, sharing of knowledge and development of skills.

ELEMENTS OF A NEW PROFESSIONALISM – TEN POINTS DEVELOPED WITH THE EDGE

from *Building Research & Information*, 44 (1), 1-128 (Jan-Feb 2013), Table 1, page 6

1. Be a steward of the community, its resources, and the planet. Take a broad view.
2. Do the right thing, beyond your obligation to whoever pays your fee.
3. Develop trusting relationships, with open and honest collaboration.
4. Bridge between design, project implementation, and use. Concentrate on the outcomes.
5. Don't walk away. Provide follow-through and aftercare.
6. Evaluate and reflect upon the performance in use of your work. Feed back the findings.
7. Learn from your actions and admit your mistakes. Share your understanding openly.
8. Bring together practice, industry, education, research and policymaking.
9. Challenge assumptions and standards. Be honest about what you don't know.
10. Understand contexts and constraints. Create lasting value. Keep options open for the future.

www.usablebuildings.co.uk

contact Bill Bordass 020-7722 2630 bilbordass@aol.com