Brian’s 2nd ConEd Session in Halifax

See What’s New? May 5 for the 1st Halifax Session on Professional Fees.

Brian invests a lot of his time tracking changes in the design/construction sector, identifying emerging opportunities (and new risks!), then helping his clients develop strategies to profit from all of it.

He shared a lot of that information with 100 Nova Scotia architects and interns in late April.

Brian opened with discussion about why carefully designed strategies and business plans are critical to the success and sustainability of every business, including professional service firms like architects. To emphasize how critical it is, he pointed to a recent study on the future of the architectural profession in the U.K. that, in his words, "Doesn’t paint a pretty picture!". And added that many of the causes of that pessimism also prevail in Canada.

He explained the key components of a successful strategy, and the process for developing one. Along with the importance of strong execution of the plan. Brian noted that he now includes the execution - the tactical plan - when he facilitates strategic planning for his clients.

He then went on to discuss a long list of trends and factors that input into and drive the development of successful strategies, like:

- sustainable design and growing interest in the market in all things “green”
- demographics - impact on demand for, and supply of, architectural services (This generated a lot of discussion on the supply side. Had four generations in the room, and the younger were explaining to the older how they have NO intention of working 80 hour weeks ... it’s about work/life balance!"
- owners and clients increasingly attempting to transfer their risks to others, including contractors and architects
- new forms of infrastructure procurement and delivery like Public Private Partnerships
- prefabrication
- government policy - from procurement and climate change all the way to land use and the economy in general
- “peak oil” and the Hubbert Curve
- urbanization
- the need - demand! - for innovation and the risks attached to it
- the infrastructure deficit
- potential of public owners “bundling” a number of projects together to gain efficiencies and critical mass given austerity programs being implemented in most parts of Canada (and the U.S. and around the world)
- an increasing trend seeing design consultants broaden their Unique Selling Proposition, delivering greater value to clients by transforming to Professional Service Firms
- technology - from BIM to new building systems and technologies, and on to potential for robotics applications in construction (Yes, it is being worked on!)
- the need for more R and D
- with aging building stock and shifting needs in our communities, opportunities for adaptive reuse
- the emergence of Integrated Project Delivery to address the huge inefficiencies and poor productivity in this sector
• both continuing consolidation and increasing diversification in the industry
• the emergence of Project Management as a distinct service, often provided by specialists, who often become the de facto client
• specialization vs. general practice in architecture as has happened in other professions
• globalization
• broader public interest in quality of design
• and more!

Brian closed talking about Lean Project Delivery (LPD), which is just starting to appear “over the horizon” in the U.S. LPD builds on Integrated Project Delivery by applying the principles of Lean Manufacturing (think Toyota) to the design and construction of buildings. Focus on creating greatest value for the owner, and minimizing the waste in design and construction. (Studies show that anywhere from 30% to 55% of the resources we invest in design and construction are wasted! One of the main reasons why profitability in this sector is so low when compared to others.)

LPD works by teaming the critical members of the project at the outset - owner, designers, constructors, key trades, key suppliers. From then on, it’s all about collaboration with the best possible project outcome their mutual objective.

They all have “skin in the game”, agreeing to share project risks (budget, schedule, quality, asset performance, etc.) AND also to share rewards, such as significant cost savings from better and more innovative planning and execution of the project, and more efficient management of trades.

LPD is already demonstrating schedule savings of 20-30% and cost savings of 10-20%. Better quality. Improved safety. It’s truly a win-win-win approach for the project and the team. Brian recently spoke to a U.S. architect with successful experience in Lean projects, who said “This has proven to be a golden opportunity to double my fees while delivering greater value to the owner and client - all at a reduced cost!”

LPD and IPD require expert facilitation of the team ... and guess what? Brian is positioning Strategies 4 Impact! to offer that service in Canada through an alliance with a U.S. consultant with extensive experience in both.

END