CURRENT TRENDS IN CLIENT BRIEFING: A SURVEY OF ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Abstract
Successful briefing requires the accurate transfer of information between a client and their project team. Choosing the most appropriate method for the transfer of this information is vital to the success of the briefing process. Consequently, those involved in briefing must have an appreciation of the choice and appropriate use of various briefing methods. This paper surveys medium-sized architectural practices in Western Australia to identify their current methods of briefing and then compares these findings with the results of a previous survey of smaller-sized architectural practices in both Western Australia and the UK. The surveys show that respondents prefer an initial informal and then subsequently formalised briefing process. There are few apparent differences between the methods used by smaller and medium-sized firms, except that larger firms appear to have more opportunity to use analytical and problem solving techniques. Overall, there was no specific preference for any one briefing technique.

Keywords
Client briefing, briefing methods, project success

INTRODUCTION

Client briefing is essentially a communication process and is a necessary step in the identification and eventual interpretation of the client’s requirements. It is important that practitioners have a full understanding of the range of briefing methods available and their respective use. This paper follows up on a previous survey (Castell 2003) in which architects from smaller practices in both the UK and Australia were asked to describe and comment on the briefing methods they use.

As the earlier study focussed on smaller architectural firms it was contended that the value of projects they undertake may have affected the extent and nature of their briefing practices. Consequently, this paper surveys medium-sized architectural firms in Perth, Western Australia, to investigate their briefing methods and then compares the findings with those of the earlier survey.

METHODS OF BRIEFING

There are numerous briefing methods that can be used to resolve the problems of complication and surfeit of information (Salisbury 1998). As a background to the surveys, the following section describes some of these methods, under four broad categories:

(a) written or documented processes