

plan? Assuming here we are talking about a significant intervention, a refurbishment or a new build, the business plan will develop alongside the early design stages. Although there is not yet a Royal Institute of Business Planning to set down work stages in the way that the RIBA does, I believe there is a strong case for thinking about developing a business plan in much the same way. Stages A to C, initial requirements and essential parameters, provisional sign-off by the board or trustees. Stages D to E, detailed business planning taking full account of design proposals and adoption by the board or trustees. Stages F to H, production of information of action planning, including change notices. Stages J to K, rolling out the plan, business planners' instructions. Stage L, monitoring and evaluation and updating the plan to reflect actual outcomes, organisation snagging, bearing in mind my earlier comment about the short shelf life which business plans enjoy.

**Business plan need not precede briefing of design team**

Taking this sort of approach, both the project design scheme and the business plan will, ideally, be mutually complementary. The scheme will reflect the client's ambitions for physical development while the business plan will demonstrate how the client will evolve organisationally in parallel with, and as a consequence of implementing, the scheme. I don't think this is an issue of chicken and egg. I don't see that the organisation needs to have its business plan in place before briefing a design team. Nor that a scheme design will be the fundamental driver behind the business plan. However, the design team do need to understand exactly what those fundamental drivers are if they are to respond with an appropriate scheme. And the most creative designs will reflect those drivers back to the client. Similarly, the client needs confidence that the scheme design won't introduce new areas of cost which might derail its business plan or create unmanageable spaces.

Suzie Bridges and I saw this happen on the refurbishment of the Victorian Royal Theatre and the 1980s Dergate in Northampton, where I led the feasibility study. Suzie is the architect and project director for the design team, and the client undertook its own business planning. Since the project began in 2002, the organisation has undergone

internal changes just as huge as the physical changes now underway. For a start, the artistic emphasis of the theatres has changed, with a renewed focus on their producing role. The role of chief executive changed as indeed did the chief executive. The theatres also changed their name, from the rather 1980s feel of 'Northampton Theatres' back to their original separate titles. The scheme itself changed, twice, partly in response to the available capital funding, but also to become aligned with the organisation's changing vision where participation and could add that changed, but this the theatres represented fine tradition, and reflected these scheme. Along the theatre's bus enabling the throughout the o

*As part of the explanation of the importance of commencing an arts building project in the right way, management consultant John Matthews here describes the features of the business plan, while architects Suzie Bridges and Kiem-Lian Thé explain their approach to briefs, and James Williams, a client, talks about his experiences on the Hampstead Theatre reconstruction.*

**The need for an organisation plan**

I have just started working with a tiny theatre here in London which is looking, long term, to relocate. During my interview it became apparent that, as well as the Arts Council demanding the organisation produce a business plan by the end of the year, the implications of change after years in the same building required the organisation to revisit itself. I proposed, and they accepted, that I initially undertake the preparation of an organisation plan. This will then inform the essentially financial plan which the Arts Council wants and will help define the sort of accommodation the theatre company will be seeking. I described my role as being that of a critical friend. It can't always be easy being that kind of friend, particularly when faced with a blatantly flawed business plan.

I am reminded of the Royal Shakespeare Company's decision to quit its residency at the Barbican Theatre and seek a peripatetic

*Left: the Royal Theatre in Northampton (1884) perhaps the best preserved theatre by Phipps, and right: Dergate, the first truly multi-purpose venue, opened in 1983 and still working well*  
Photos: Theatreplan

