



## How to use

Welcome to your interactive resource pack. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for attending the RIBA Guerrilla Tactics Conference 2022.

This document offers a summary of the insights shared throughout the conference and provides links to recordings of presentations should you wish to watch them.

Clicking the arrow icon, like the one below, on each session summary will take you to the recording.



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## Does practice culture need to change?

Ben Chapman, Ekkist; Carl Turner, Turner Works; Melissa Kirkpatrick, EPR; Siri Zanelli, Collective Works



- Argues how a culture of wellbeing can attract new talent and retain talent.
- Discusses how younger people are beginning to demand higher standards in terms of being treated well.
- What is the value of reinvented practice culture? Having a good culture goes beyond social activities or visits to the pub.
- There are three elements to consider when changing overall culture: practice-level culture, project-level culture and industry-level culture.
- There's an ingrained culture still present whereby if you're not putting in long hours, you're seen as lazy or somehow less of an employee.
- Changing culture starts by redefining success. This goes beyond award-winning buildings - the conduct inside offices has to be called into question.
- Culture should be taught at architecture school.
- Architects should be more allied to the building industry - starting early and finishing early because that's when you're at your most creative.
- Getting the value of architects right - know what to charge and when, and make it commensurate with the work and expertise you have.
- Overtime - and the concept of paying for overtime - needs to be monitored to ensure that employees aren't working too much. Using accurate timekeeping measures helps to keep tabs on everyone's workload.

## Nurturing a culture of (self) respect, part one

Siri Zanelli, Collective Works



- A fundamental respect for everyone's time requires strict timekeeping (in Collective Works' case, Harvest).
- The fees the practice sets are tied to time they are likely to spend, which is based on data from previous projects.
- If the practice sees a staff member working too many hours, it investigates and asks 'what's going on?'
- Working 30 hours a week often requires greater discipline than working 60 hours a week - priorities have to be recognised, saying no to meetings, models and projects. Accepting what the most important tasks
- Use the 80/20 principle in order to determine what the most important tasks are - 80 per cent of outcomes come from 20 per cent of input.
- Working profitable hours is a key goal, as well as knowing your cost rate.
- When it comes to timekeeping, keeping track of what all staff members do helps with profitability and efficiency.
- All emails in the practice are set to office hours.
- Asks how can take care of our colleagues, clients' and the planet's best interests if we don't take care of ourselves.

Image: Collective Works

## Nurturing a culture of (self) respect, part two

Tarek Merlin, Feix&Merlin



- As the practice has grown Tarek and co-founder Julia have realised that their staff aren't just staff - they're people, whose health and wellbeing are paramount.
- Authenticity is important. If you aren't yourself, people will see right through you. This is a key element of leadership.
- The practice works only with those who share its values - being kind to one another, respectful of values and working with dignity and respect.
- The practice works to a 'call it out' principle - for example, calling out any so-called 'banter' and types of language in tender interviews.
- Discusses the concept of 'inclusive design'.
- Be aware of the value you bring to a project, and be smart in the way you approach using your time and delivering deliverables.
- The practice has implemented a one-day-a-month off system, calling it the 'F&M Friyay'. This gives his team something to look forward to, and has created a talking point among clients.
- Stresses the need to accept differences in each other, and not to see them as barriers but as ways of connection.

Image: Pexels

# Understanding and managing our emotions

Menakshi Prasad, Emotional Intelligence Coach



- Emotional Intelligence (or EQ) is defined as how you manage yourself and how you interact with others.
- The first step is to be self aware, which helps to balance between the emotional brain and the rational brain.
- Discusses how to balance the two parts of the brain together.
- Describes what stress is and where it comes from.
- How the fight or flight response differs from the rest and digest response.
- Suggests ways to trigger the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps to destress.
- Goes through each of the hormones and shares tips on how to boost them to improve the ability to focus and improve attention and wellbeing.

**“Research has shown that the world’s most successful leaders have very high emotional intelligence. It is their EQ that sets them apart, more so than their IQ.”**  
**Menakshi Prasad**

Image: Unsplash

# How to make yourself redundant

David Miller, David Miller Architects



- Saying yes to everything isn't a sustainable business plan.
- Extreme circumstances led to a fundamental change in approach – how to move away from a practice having a focus on one individual.
- David and his colleagues reimagined the business in three ways – they thought about what the practice was for, and captured those thoughts in a vision; how they were going to support that vision; and then they put an action plan in place to bring that vision to life.
- Discusses how everyone in the business came together to form the practice's vision.
- An external administrator encouraged them to look at other companies' ways of working.
- The vision was supported by discussions surrounding physical environment, values and beliefs, capabilities and behaviours and identity.
- Discusses how the action plan led to process-driven change and improvement, with time goals. These included office systems (people, time and cost), as well as technical systems (building information management, platform design, cloud collaboration).
- The elements of the vision and the structures of work (eg. the introduction of BIM), and a creation of a central BMS (Business Management System) allows anyone in the practice to access information and contribute to adjustments.
- Positive outcomes to a change in structure include new accreditations and access to external audits, and a supportive framework for the team to be technically compliant and give them greater agency and control.

Image: David Miller Architects

# Making room for personal passions

Anna Parker, Intervention Architects



- Discusses how making room for personal passions has helped the wellbeing of the team but also the delivery of projects.
- The practice uses a 'zoom out' approach to projects in order to increase team stimulation and encourage different ways of looking at problems.
- Suggests taking oneself out of the detail when faced with problems, and getting out of the office.
- Recounts how students were more excited when they had an attachment to the work they were bringing in – Anna began to think about this through 'wellbeing lenses' when she started her own practice.
- Believes that the team is a practice's biggest asset, and what each team member can bring to a company in terms of skills and passions.
- Explains how some of her team's passions and

engagement with the local community has helped to research and complete the practice's own projects.

- The team's mutual interests and skillsets enables and further empathy and compassion between each other.

**Extra:**  
Q&A with David Miller and Anna Parker



Image: Intervention Architects

# Why psychological safety matters in business

Nicola Rich, Nine To Thrive



- Psychological safety is a relatively new term in the field of business and leadership.
- Psychological safety is defined as "the shared belief, held by its members, that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking".
- Furthermore, the term means that a person can feel comfortable speaking up as they know they will not be punished for it. Speaking up can include putting ideas forward, asking questions, raising concerns or admitting their own or pointing out others' mistake.
- To achieve psychological safety, a climate within a team that boasts interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves, needs to be fostered.
- The concept of psychological safety is often confused with trust. Both need to exist, but trust on its own is 'flawed'. Confirmation bias, third-party effect and preconceived stereotypes often feed into trust.

- Psychological safety is not a shield from accountability, about being nice, pandering, letting others do what they want, an excuse for being nasty, or a declaration.
- Practical steps to achieve psychological safety include trust intelligently, set the scene of psychological safety and role model psychological safety behaviours.
- Psychological safety in business matters because it sets the stage for more honest, more engaged and a more collaborative environment.

Image: Unsplash

## How to uncover the truth about how your team is feeling

Bianca Valido Leach, InsideOut



- The practice encourages members of staff to wear a 'second hat', which taps into their own interests and strengths – eg. a senior designer might be a marketing lead, another staff member will also be a sustainability champion and someone else might monitor quality management procedures.
- InsideOut became an Employee Ownership Trust in 2019.
- The practice wanted to introduce a more focused style of mentorship, and more frequent touch points with staff to find out how they were feeling.
- There are two main reviews a year, but also two more informal ones, which provide a platform for the team to reflect and monitor their own goals and ambitions.
- The practice added a layer of reviews that focus on work and life goals.
- Discusses how wellbeing was added to the practice review structure, and how associates asked staff members to look

at their 'stress containers' – what causes stress, and what their coping strategies are when stress is triggered.

- Describes how directors also undertake reviews with associates in order to look at their own personal goals.
- Tells attendees how there's a team walk twice a year to create an informal and organic catch-up with individual team members and to help with team bonding.
- The practice structure has also empowered associates and/or senior team members to take key business decisions, which percolates into individual project work and helps to strengthen client relationships and improve staff retention.

**Extra:**  
Q&A with Nicola Rich and  
Bianca Valido Leach



Image: Pexels

## The simple secret to buying back your time

George Bradley, Bradley Van Der Straeten Architects



- The architectural profession has an unhealthy relationship with time.
- What architects do is specialised, requires attention, alertness and enthusiasm. These things are hard to deliver when your team is burnt out, or you constantly have to retrain staff.
- Buying back your own time means valuing your own and your team's time and having a vision for a good work/life balance.
- When it comes to time management, have a strategic and systematic approach. This means putting in place an achievable and considered turnover and profit model, base fee bids on a costing model and on resourcing data, collate resourcing data from time recording software, and plan resources based on analysis and team discussion.
- Select clients carefully - analyse new enquiries against a set of criteria, and set good habits early on in a project.

- Discussed why hard deadlines don't get the best out of teams or deliver the best for clients.
- Always try to involve the team in everything - from financial planning to fee bids and setting resource targets.
- Good time planning is a top down process, if the leaders don't believe in it and the practice is not organised to deliver it, you are fighting a losing battle from the outset.
- Always invest in time - whether that is external help (finance modelling consultant) or time management and financial planning software.

