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The architect, the client and effective communication in architectural design practice

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Abstract

Communications related to architectural projects have become more complicated due to more complex design projects, the growth of technology and design information management systems and different backgrounds of stakeholders. These issues have had a significant effect on how buildings are designed and evolved Architecture to combine technical and social aspects of design. This study reviewed and focused in Design and facilities management, behavior and communication as well as interfaces issues. This study introduced the approaches and strategic methods of effective communication in architectural design practice from the view of technological and humanistic characteristics to manage communication challenges in architect-client relationship.

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1. Introduction

Ambiguity is a problematic issue that can lead to mistrust and damage communication. In order for the societal benefit of the built environment to be fully realized, the issue of communication must be addresses (Cole-Colander, 2003). Fleming (1996) and Roxburgh (2003) examined how clients and designers used proprietary knowledge to either bridge or exploit the gap between these two cultures. Communication that is not clear can result in unsatisfactory

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design results for the client (Ayodele Elijah Olusegun, 2008). Thamhain (2013) identified different circumstances that lead to poor performance. All of these categories are similar because they are the result of humanistic concerns (Xie, Thorpe, & Baldwin, 2000). Settling semantic differences requires communicative efforts, especially when communication between the people involved had disintegrated. In terms of design, most communication problems are the result of the behavioral process that create it's foundation as organizational and people-oriented components that have a strong influence on the final design result (Coughlan & Macredie, 2002). Several socio-technical methods have been developed to explain how the people-oriented or human element affects communication (Coughlan & Macredie, 2002). Shen (2011) and Yu, Shen, & Chan (2005) proposed the following reasons for communication difficulties between designers and their clients:

- The client's viewpoint was not fully considered
- There was not enough communication between stakeholders
- Design requirements were not sufficiently managed
- The needs expressed by the clients often change
- There is a lack of feedback from the client

In an attempt to better communication between designers and their clients, (Shen, 2011) proposed the following solutions:

- Permit the client to feel as though their contributions are valued and Involve stakeholder
- Effectively administer changing design requirements
- Employ appropriate and easy to understand visualization technique

Communication problems between clients and architects can be categorized as technical and social. Solving communication issues that are based on social matters require a socially oriented approach. One possible framework for managing communication problems that can be categorized as social in nature is the development of techniques to allow the participation of users in every step of the design process (Sarvarzadeh, Lamit, Norouzi, & Shabak, 2013). Coughlan & Macredie (2002) suggested encouraging the participation of stakeholders through interactive and communication activities and creating supportive design tools and techniques.

2. Architect-client Interaction and communication activities in architectural design practice

Techniques for understanding client requirements that are socially oriented lead to the development of a collaborative environment. This allows the architect and the client to communicate as equals and decisions satisfy all parties (Coughlan & Macredie, 2002). Successful relationships between designers and their clients are commonly based on socially oriented models where knowledge can be more easily shared. The better level of communication seen in these situations, which means that understanding between stakeholders, is increased, and ambiguity decreases. Communication activities can be used to resolve requirement issues and facilitate the flow of information (Coughlan & Macredie, 2002). A communication activity is an activity where the end user participates in the development of the product (Hartwick & Barki, 2001). Productive communication activities attempt to acquire information, share and combine tasks (Walz, Elam, & Curtis, 1993), and coordinate efforts (Kraut & Streeter, 1995). Walz et al. (1993) proposed that the following behaviors should be a component of any communication activity:

- **Knowledge acquisition:** A relationship must be established between the knowledge and experience of the designer and the client. The technical options available for facilitating communication and creating a common goal must also be established.
- **Knowledge negotiation:** Knowledge negotiation is also known as sharing. Iterative processes contain requirements that must be understood by stakeholders and negotiated.

When these communication activities have been completed, they provide a framework for managing communication challenges. However, this framework must take into account the techniques used to facilitate communication.

3. Definition of Communication in architectural design practice

Communication finds its origins in the Latin word, "communis". In its broadest sense, communication is the transmission of information from one person to another (oann Keyton, 2006). (A. F. den Otter & Prins 2002) stated

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