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The Architectural Discussion

Ideas/ Activities/ Events/



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ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

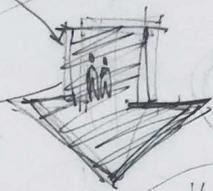
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Cheryl Jones
"what's going on"
Monday mix.

ASK
PART.

INFLUENCE AREA.

1st of Dec



SUPPOR.

On - and - to

[ORGANISATION.
MANAGEMENT.] (frequent).

[Staff (supported) associates] (maintains the frequ.)

↓

[1 person.]

EVENT →

→ Backcom

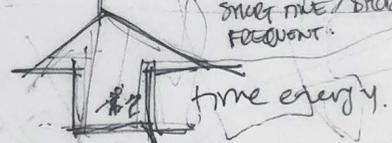
Healthy lit

INNOVATION WEEK. TIME (frequency) PIN-UP
INNA. INNA. → WEEKLY MEETING

FEEDBACKS. ONE TIME LEARNING → WEEKLY?

PRODUCT RELATED.
PRACTICE.
SHORT FILE / SHORTER
FREQUENT.

inc.



time energy.

BOTTOM UP

DEAS

ILLUSTRATION

(CA).



THE ARCHITECTURAL DISCUSSION/

Project Goal/ Method/

Goal/

In order to stay innovative (and competitive), it is crucial that we keep asking ourselves the disruptive questions, which form the basis of great architecture. The basic idea behind this study is, that the more we talk about and discuss architecture on a daily basis, the more likely we are to remain critical and come up with innovative solutions. Our claim is that the best way to ensure a constructive and continuous discussion is to create and maintain a platform that allows everyone to be heard and great ideas to permeate through the organizational layers.

This project aims to analyze the platform and activities we currently have at the different Perkins and Will studios and present the overarching ideas and examples.

Method/

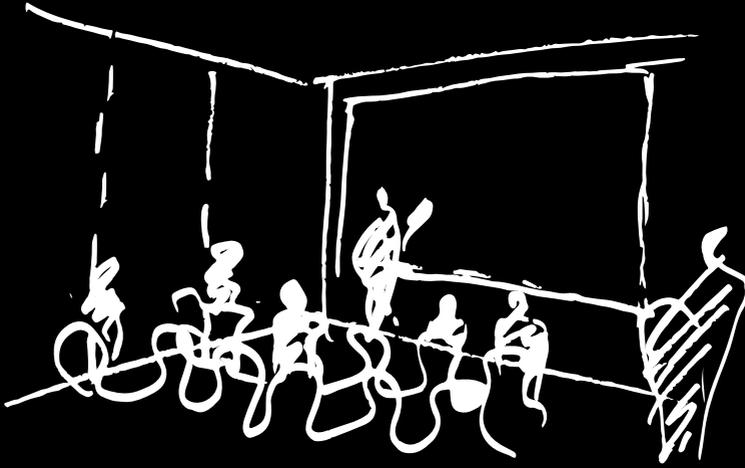
The findings of this booklet are based on an analysis of the responses we got from interviews with a number of Perkins and Will's studios. When planning these interviews, efforts were made to ensure a good geographical spread and offices doing different types of projects. In the end, however, it also depended on who responded to our inquiries and on the time available to us. The majority of the people we interviewed were either Innovation Incubator champions or design directors/principals, which can potentially have skewed our results. This is of course something to consider if a more detailed analysis was to be made at a later stage.

The interviews were conducted on the basis of a set of questions and categories we wanted to map throughout the offices. The character of our conversations were, however, more an open discussion than a questionnaire.

We do not claim that any of our conclusions are verifiable fact, but rather a qualitative assumption based on a relatively small set of empirical data. However, as our aim is not to present facts, but to start discussions about our design culture, we do not see this as detracting from the value of the study.

While talking to the different studios, it quickly became clear, that while there are many overlapping efforts and similar events, there are subtle differences, which can have a great impact on the success of an activity. Keeping the focus on how, what and why every activity is being done can be helpful to understand these differences and to do that we have categorized the activities with different functional themes, frequencies, and a description of who is planning, supporting and executing an event.

While some of these differences are based on culture and geography, we have tried to present the examples in a way, which is generic enough to apply anywhere, but still specific enough to tell the story of how they have applied where we found them.



Every project should begin with the question “what would make this into a better place for people?” This is what makes architecture exciting! It is asking these questions and searching endlessly for an answer, which can never be proven “correct” but can nonetheless be absolutely perfect.

PROJECT RELEVANCE/

Essay: Speaking about Architecture/

The building industry is becoming more and more complex, and architecture is seen ever more as a commodity to be traded on equal terms with other service-providers. This of course means that we as architects must be able to prove our relevance, in order to make a living – and preferably a profit. Even as a young and relatively inexperienced architect it has become clear to me, that one of the greatest problems facing the architectural profession is that of explaining our worth to clients and stakeholders.

The buzz-word of the day is “story-telling”. But while boiling down a concept into a few well-crafted visualizations, bold statements and brightly colored diagrams, may make a project easier to sell – the architectural merit of the project suffers if they stand alone and are not backed up by serious discussion. It can easily end up as packaging without content. Everything that cannot be shown in a diagram or a hazy ‘money-shot’ visualization, stands at great risk of not making it into the final built project. High quality craftsmanship and materials, as well as more abstract pursuits such as the interaction between space, form, light, materiality, etc. and their profound effect on human behavior and emotions cannot be quantified and are therefore displaced by other equally abstract, but at least measurable data such as daylight factors, life-cycle analyses, etc. The logic being that, if we cannot satisfactorily quantify the value of our ‘product’ it becomes difficult to sell.

A lot of effort has been put into trying to

unravel that Gordian knot; into trying to analyze and design architecture in terms of comparable data. However, while this undertaking can have a great positive influence on e.g. the environmental sustainability of a design, I fear that we are shooting ourselves in the foot by relying too much on this way of thinking. My reason for saying this is, that the aspects of our work that we can define in terms of numbers and data, tend to be the necessary, but mundane. They do not touch the core of what we (wish to) do. This is why, when we try to explain architecture on the same “double underline the total” terms as engineering, we will inevitably lose out. Our diagrams and spreadsheets will very rarely convey as much value in terms of money per square meter, as the diagrams and spreadsheets that an engineer can produce. Consequently, the weight of our arguments will be less compelling and our fee not as high. So here we are, back at the beginning of our problem. We cannot really define our ‘product’ in terms of value for money.

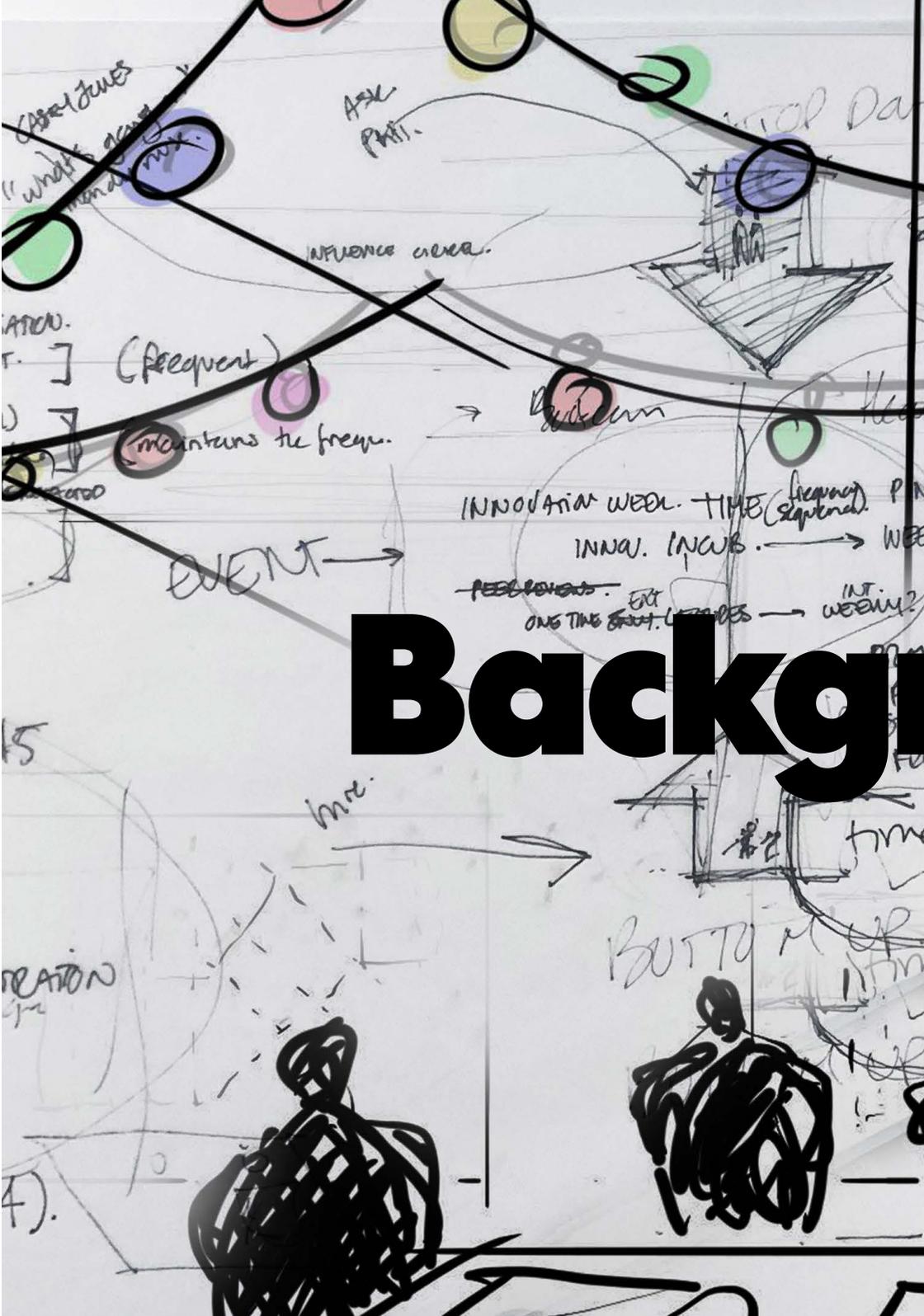
I believe that the crux of the problem is, that Architecture is not a product at all. Architecture is a process and, at its best, an art form - and art must be experienced, rather than explained. That is why I believe that to stand out and prove our value, we must present architecture on those terms. Not as the final answer to a clearly defined question, but as an open discussion about designing the spaces which in turn shape human existence. “How do we want to live our lives?” “What is a house?” “Why don’t

we build like that?” Our role should be that of the composer, the conductor and the journalist. We are and must remain inquisitive generalists, knowing enough about the rest of the orchestra, to be able to point to them and ask for a solo at the right moment. In short, we know how to lead a design process. We should pride ourselves on our ability to analyze a situation, communicate with stakeholders, and amalgamate all kinds of different factors into a seemingly effortless whole. It is these skills, rather than their by-products of visualizations, diagrams and plan drawings that we must point to, as our special area of expertise.



It may be naive to believe that soft values such as these stand a chance against cold hard data, but while we of course need to show that we can play on the other side of the ball court, we must also recognize the fact, that the way we develop architecture is invariably affected by how we seek to portray and ultimately sell our ideas to our clients. The sense of a building and its context merging into a sublime, inseparable whole will never be put into a spreadsheet, but that does not mean we shouldn't aim for it! Every project should begin with the question “what would make this into a better place for people?” This is what makes architecture exciting! It is asking these questions and searching

endlessly for an answer, which can never be proven “correct” but can nonetheless be absolutely perfect. It's this excitement that we must train ourselves to convey to our clients, stakeholders, and most of all the future users. This is why we need to talk about architecture.



Backgr

- library root.
↳ shape

support

over-credibility

work

up

MEETING

to

equivalent

energy.

TIME

ENGAGEMENT

DAY TO DAY

round...

WHO'S ORGANIZING
WHAT'S THE INTENTION.



WHY PEOPLE SHARE/

How do we create an environment that compels people to share?

Social cohesion/ “We’re in it together”/

Throughout our research we have found that while some events may be specifically planned to encourage the discussion of architecture, the truth is that everything that happens at an office feeds into the on-going discussion between colleagues, which is not planned, but happens at the desk, the coffee machine, or when picking up the kids from soccer practice.

In other words, anything that can be done to increase team spirit and social cohesion, also has an effect on how much people will be discussing architecture. And if this is coupled with relevant new knowledge and ideas being shared office wide - people will have something valuable (to the firm) to discuss and get excited about. Simply put, people speak more freely with people they know and like.

Intentions/

To build a platform that supports and encourages the sharing and discussion of ideas, we also need to understand why people chose to share - and cater to those needs.

What motivates people cannot easily be put into a formula, but there are a number of motivating factors that should at least be considered. For instance people will participate; to further their own agenda, to make life easier by improving work-flows, to promote an idea they believe in, to help a colleague they like - maybe even to help achieve the vision of the firm, because they believe and have ownership in it.

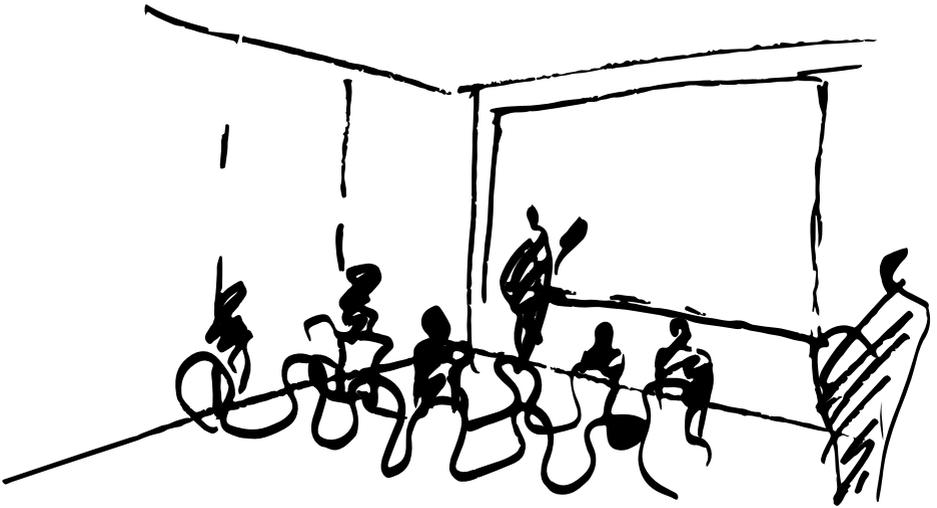
Mediums/ Context/

Different types of knowledge require different mediums for sharing. One-way communication tends to be more effective for sharing in large groups, whereas open 2-way discussions and deeper knowledge sharing happens more naturally in smaller groups.

In the same way some people are more comfortable sharing and receiving in some forums, than in others. If we want to make sure that important knowledge, comments and ideas are not lost, we need to provide opportunities for all these different types of sharing and be mindful of people having different preferences for learning and, not least, sharing.

Structure/ Culture/

There can also be cultural differences to how information is most successfully shared (and received). It might be that in a traditionally more hierarchical work-culture such as in the US, there is a lot of focus on presentation skills and getting things polished and ready for the next meeting. Conversely, in many European and especially Scandinavian countries, there is traditionally a more flat structure and people are more compelled to just walk over to their superior’s table to talk things through. This also means that polished and final presentations may not be well received in all situations, because they are perceived to be “superficial” or more about packaging than content.



VISION, PEOPLE AND STRATEGY FIRST/

Activities and events second/

Strategy for events and activities/

In an ideal world all the activities and events that are happening should adhere to an overall strategy for the firm - which in turn points towards a vision for where we want to go next, in 5 years, etc.

This in itself also means, that in order for activities and events to add the maximum amount of value to the studio and staff, there must be a clear and visible vision of where we want to go. However, This does not mean that all the events have to be meticulously planned to fit within a strategy matrix.

Generally events planned by leadership are intrinsically part of a strategy and a vision for the company, require a lot of hours to plan, are formal and professional in their character - and have a very high degree of staff participation. Whereas, events planned from the bottom tend to be based on personal interests and are more informal, spontaneous and social in their character.

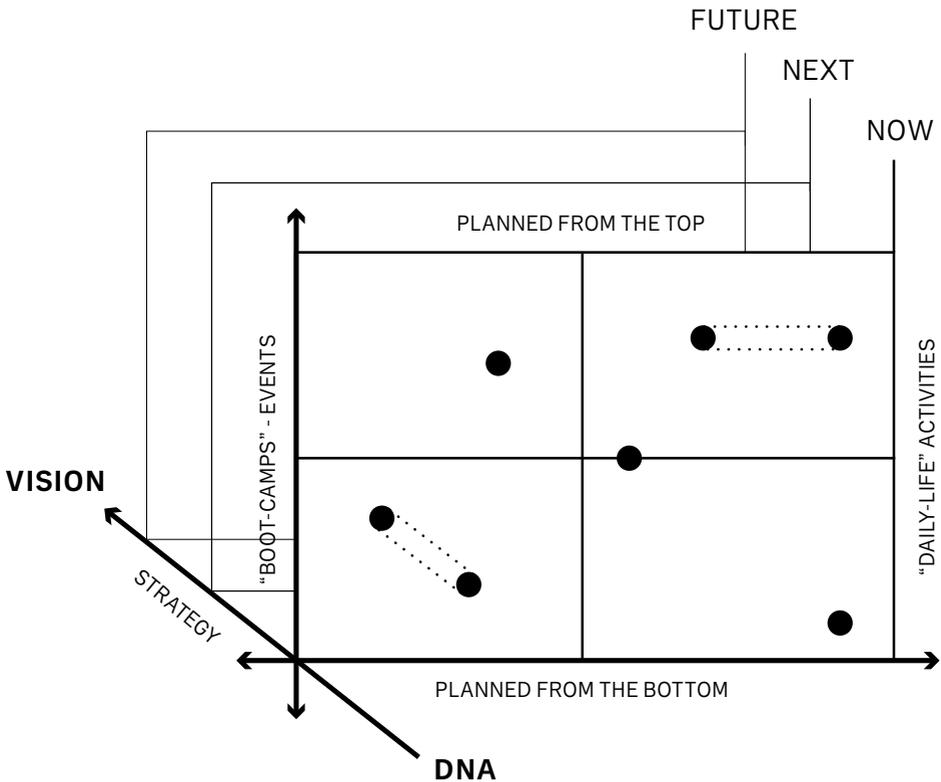
When the vision of the firm is clear and the staff feel they have ownership in the goals and strategy of the firm, the events planned from the bottom up will, also support the overall vision. Not only by creating more team spirit, but because people will tend to also take more initiative and pursue ideas that they feel will help the company. More support from the top and ownership from the staff leads to more activities, more cohesion and in the end - better projects.

Measuring and comparing?/

Think of the diagram on the right as a snapshot of all the activities and events that are happening at a PW studio at a given time.

To be able to understand how different activities might impact the situation of a studio or its strategy, we used this matrix to categorize each of the examples we came across (along with a set of parameters found on the next spread). The Matrix displays how often an event happens and whether it is a formal event planned from the top or an informal one planned from below. In theory, if this way of working was systematized firm-wide, it would be possible not only to compare a current snapshot of an office to a historical one - or a plan for the future, but also against all the other PW offices.

In the "Further Perspectives" section at the end of the booklet, we elaborate more on how such a comparative system/tool could look and function.



Boot-Camps vs. Daily-Life Activities/

A boot-camp can be a great way to get started when trying to make changes in one’s personal life - the real difference, however, only happens when it becomes a lifestyle change - every day. This analogy works well for work-related activities. Because, to innovate or make positive changes, a kick-off event which requires planning and coordination may be needed, but it’s only when the new idea is implemented in a consistent way and becomes part of the routine, that the positive impact on the behaviour and culture in the office is really felt. So there

needs to be a balance in activities ranging from “boot-camps” to “daily-life” routines.

Frequency/ Consistency/ Planning/

We also found, that the more frequently an activity took place, the shorter both the preparation time and the duration of the event itself tended to be. It was also evident, that when the frequency and consistency of an activity is increased, the agenda for the event becomes less packed. This in turn allows for a less formal atmosphere and more space for social and architectural discussions.

CONSISTENCY AND RENEWAL/

How to achieve high frequency and consistency in activities?

There will never be a situation where good ideas are not dependent on people, but it seems that there are certain recurring strategies to make sure that people don't "burn out" when trying to keep ideas alive and juggling other necessary tasks at the same time.

High Frequency/ Less planning/

It may seem counter-intuitive, but continuing on the theme of boot-camps and daily-life, upping the frequency of an event will make the people planning it less busy. This is the case because the agenda and therefore the planning time will be shorter each time. When the agenda is less packed there is also most likely more time for discussion and a less formal atmosphere.

Shared responsibility/

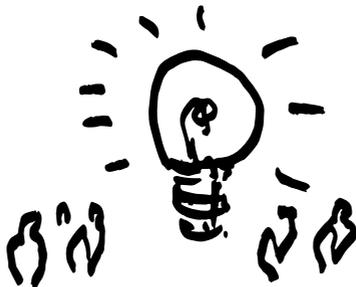
While the advantage of having these same people planning and doing certain events is that it may take less time to plan and there will be a consistency in the format and execution - there are, however, a lot of reasons why it can be a good idea to spread out responsibility for organizing and implementing the best of our ideas at our offices.

Firstly, the most senior and experienced people tend to be responsible for planning and running events, however, these people are typically also tend to be the most busy. This means that "extra-curricular" events may be sacrificed when trying to meet other deadlines and demands.

Secondly, whenever someone keeps doing the same thing, it follows naturally that it is unlikely to change or be disrupted. New ideas and innovation come from having new eyes on a subject and an open discussion - put together with the experience and knowledge of people who have worked with it for a long time.

Thirdly, to keep a healthy professional growth of younger colleagues, it is important to let everyone try themselves at new challenges. Practicing planning and presenting internally, in front of people you know and like, can be a much safer forum to learn these skills than being sent out to do it to clients and stakeholders. Eventually this will also mean that more responsibility for those things can be passed on to new people, taking strain off the most senior people's shoulders.

Fourthly, to ensure group ownership. If an idea becomes "owned by the group" it ceases to be vulnerable to the issues mentioned above. Ideas such as the "Home Rooms" in San Francisco where each group organizes its own meetings or "15 minute discourse" events in New York, which are no longer only planned by leadership, but open to all.



ACTIVITY PARAMETERS/ SCORING SYSTEM/

What role do events or aspects of events play/

Activity Parameters/

To add more depth to the analysis, we have also scored each activity based on how much they contribute to four different aspects of office life. This was done because almost every activity has benefits and effects outside of its main purpose.

1/ Office Related/ “The Machine”/

How does the activity/event add value to running the office “machine”. Making sure that bills are paid, that people hand in their time sheets, that we meet new requirements. Basically - that the information which is necessary to keep the company running is shared.

2/ Project Related/ “The Product”/

How does the activity/event add value to the we work on projects on a daily basis. How do we present our work, how do we keep each other up to date about what we are making, how do we structure a good design process and how can we implement and share knowledge that we gained during projects? These are the activities that have to do with the everyday life of most employees.

3/ Social related/ “The Team”/

To what degree does the activity/event help tying the office and project teams together. Fostering team spirit and mutual support between colleagues is crucial to all the other categories as well, as a feeling of belonging to the team and pulling towards a common goal together creates engagement and involvement on all levels. It's what makes it fun to go to work.

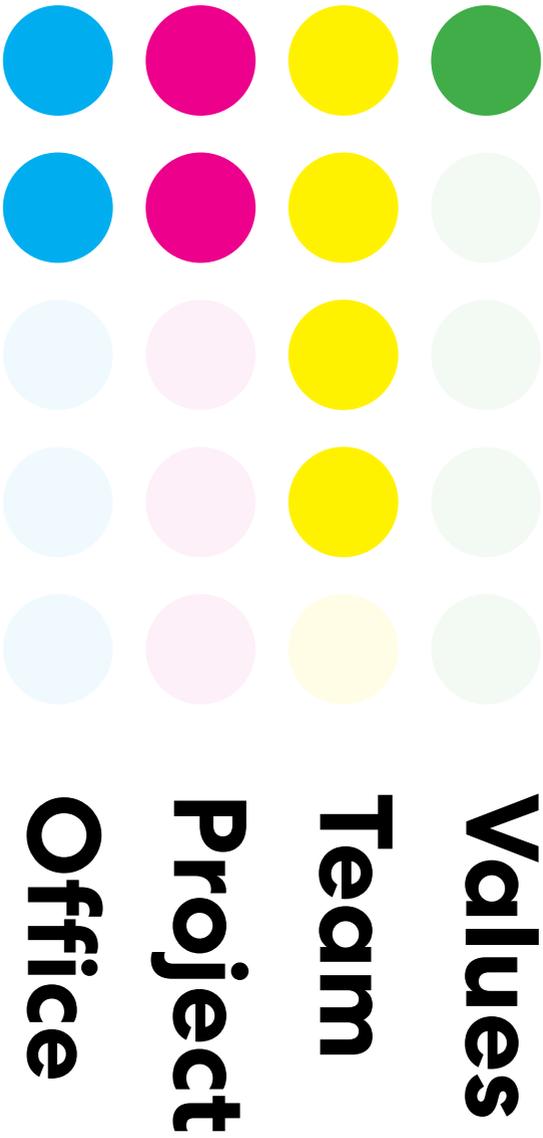
4/ Value Related/ “The Discussion”/

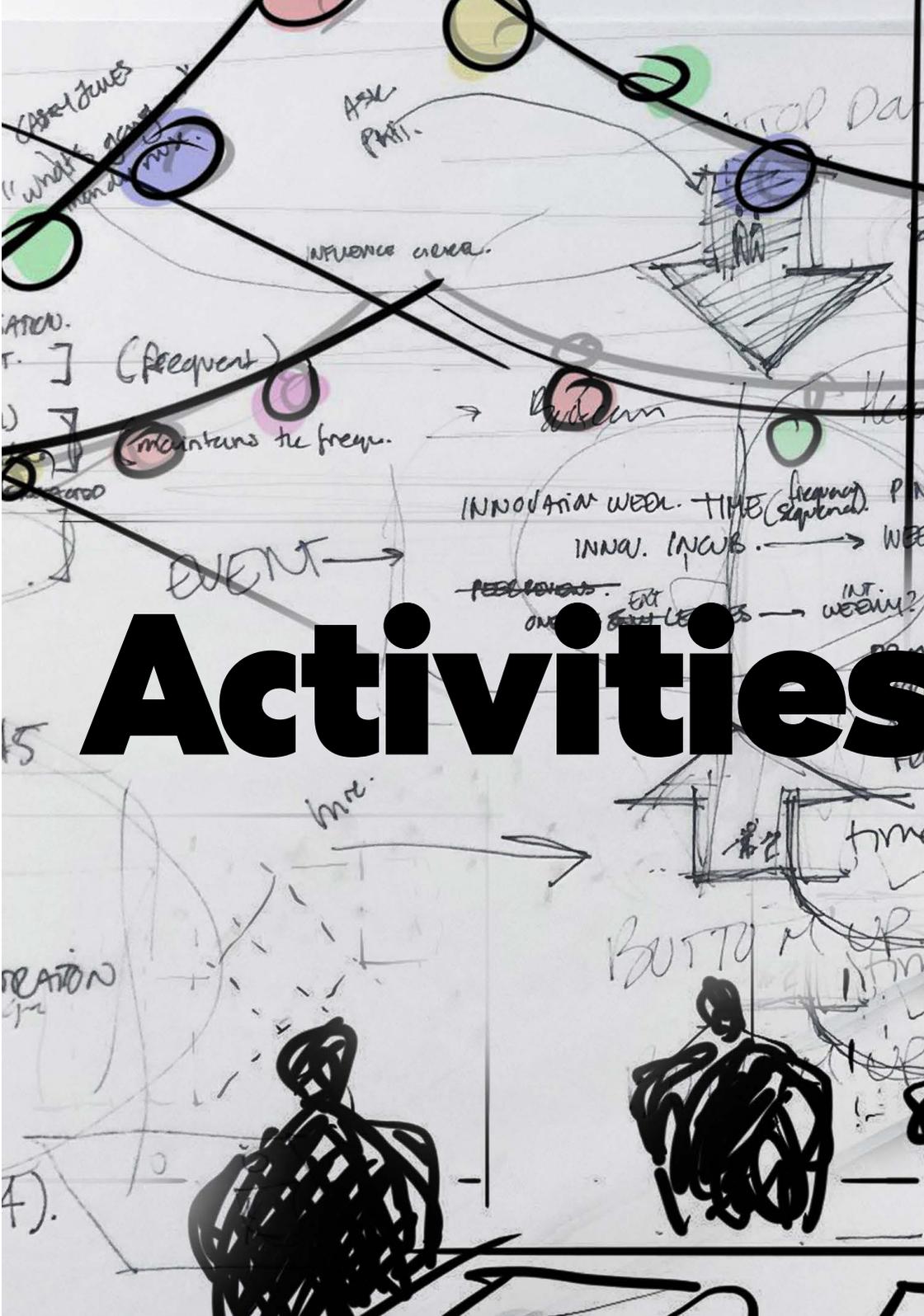
This category relates strongly to the “vision/ strategy” axis of the diagram on the page last page. To what degree does an event/ activity spur discussion, and new thinking about our values, approach and design philosophy? To what degree does it inspire and excite us about our work as architects?

This is perhaps the most important, but also the most difficult and fragile aspect to “get right”, because it relies on all the other three categories to exist - But conversely, if we don't know why we are doing something, and it is not up for discussion, we are not motivated to innovate.

Further parameters & Perspectives/

As the research we have done is just a snapshot of what is going on at around half of the PW offices, it has not been possible to thoroughly examine every event and include all the parameters that might be relevant. Some of the parameters we see as potentially important, but did not have time to examine, are enumerated and described in the “Further Perspectives” chapter, at the end of the booklet.





Activities



- library root.
↳ shape

support.

an-credity

J-UP

MEETING

energy.

TIME

ENGAGEMENT

DAY TO DAY.

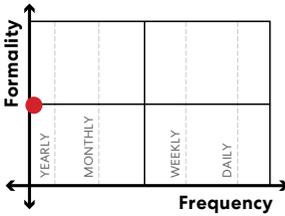
KNOWLEDGE

WHO'S ORGANIZING
WHAT'S THE INTENTION.



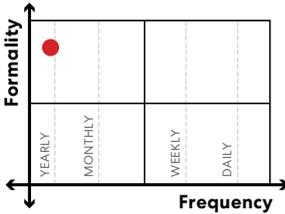
OFFICE MEETINGS AND SYMPOSIUMS/

On-going updates and a social agenda/ From low to high freq./



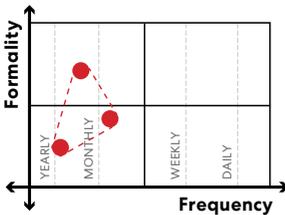
SHL DAYS, SHL

Once every two years the whole company is invited for a retreat/trip. Either to one of the office locations or sometimes in the past on a study trip abroad. The idea is to thank the team, create great common experiences and to talk about strategy, vision and the future. It also always includes a big party.



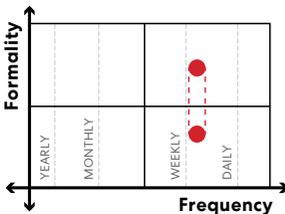
ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE, Boston

Each practice and project group present their work and the projects they have delivered since last meeting. Done rarely because of the expense to the office. **Duration:** ½ day // **Participation:** All staff // **Inter-office sharing:** Design directors from NYC and DC participate to share some of their best/most relevant projects. // **Planning:** Administration + presenters.



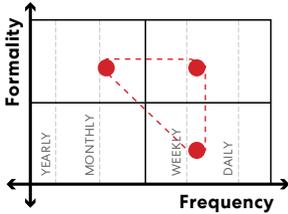
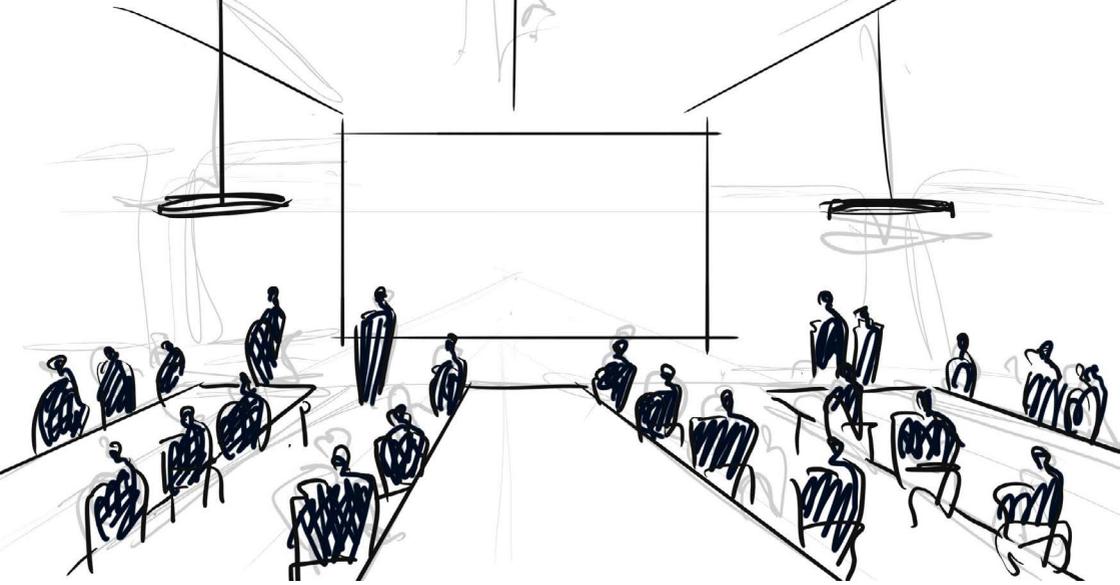
“ON THE HORIZON”, Chicago

Monthly office meeting with a full agenda covering 2-3 projects milestones / staff updates (private and professional) / local events with PW participation. Input is gathered from all practices and focus groups. // **Quarterly meeting (every 3rd meeting)** Includes financial/budget information. Intern class present their work - Practicing presentation skills and ensuring the office gets to know them. // **Annual meeting - Project open house.** Project groups prepare boards at their stations and people walk between the tables/floors to learn about all the work that has been going on. **Duration:** 1-1.5 hours. // **Participation:** All staff // **Planning:** Administration + presenters



FRIDAY MORNING MEETINGS, Atlanta

Office, Marketing, financial and project related updates. Case studies, good examples of presentations, feedback from clients, etc. **5 on 5 (5th floor) - new person each time** Pecha Kucha, 10 slides 30 seconds about i.e. private or professional travel, Exams that staff have studied for, research from the labs, etc. **Duration:** 20-30 minutes // **Participation:** All staff // **Planning:** Administration + new person for 5-on-5 presentation each time.



MONTHLY STAFF MEETING, Los Angeles

Longer and more highly attended than the weekly meetings, but also slightly more formal. These meetings include information that is necessary for everyone to know, such as financial updates, staff updates, etc.

MONDAY MORNING MEETING, Los Angeles

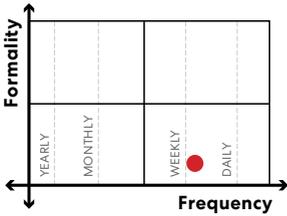
In all the weeks when there is not a staff meeting, administration picks new person to plan and run a smaller meeting. This person is responsible for collecting information and people to present from the office and for creating the agenda. This ensures that the person gets to know the whole office and improves his/her planning and presentation skills. The meeting always ends with the week's planner doing a personal presentation about her/himself (work and personal)

Weekly meetings are shorter and happen early in the morning. This means that fewer people attend, but the information is very up-to-date and the tone is less formal. This allows for open discussion and comments about project updates. It also puts less pressure on people less used to presenting.

Duration: 30-45 minutes / 1.5 hours // **Participation:** Weekly 40%, Monthly 90% // **Planning (monthly):** Administration. **(Weekly):** Administration picks new person to gather information, run meeting and do personal presentation each time.

AFTER HOURS/ FRIDAY BARS/ BEER TIME/

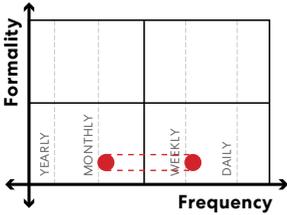
Social or Project Focus/ Informal/ Current events/



BEER TIME, Atlanta

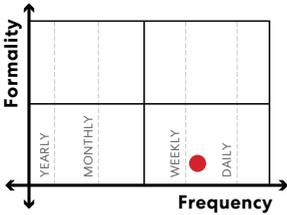
Sometimes strictly social, sometimes with an agenda.

Social purpose (e.g. Habitat for Humanity), things learned at conferences, non-project related presentations. Every Friday at 5 pm



FRIDAY BAR -> PARTY, Los Angeles

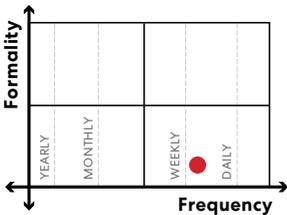
Each week administration asks who would like to plan the week's event and this person/group then goes around the office and collects donations to buy alcohol/food and coordinates other things that need to happen. Every Friday at 4 pm, sometimes turning into big parties lasting all night.



FRIDAY BAR, Chicago

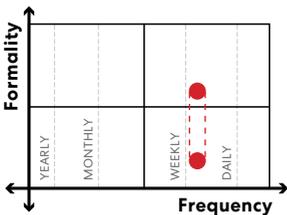
Presentations or discussions about social and current topics such as gay pride week, UN climate summit, etc.

Followed by drinks and snacks. Every Friday



15 MINUTE DISCOURSE, New York

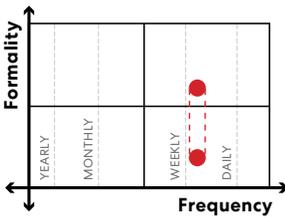
Connected to Thursday/Friday bars, this is a 15-minute discussion (sometimes much longer, depending on participation level) based on a topic that is introduced vocally. Discussion topics used to be decided by leadership, but this is now open to everyone for suggestions. Happens weekly and is open to all, but continuous presence of design leadership shows support and acceptance of people spending time on this rather than project work.



EXCHANGE ON FRIDAY, San Francisco

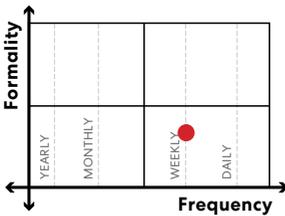
Panel discussions, Portfolio presentations, Panel debates, outside/external guest speakers, design charettes, craft days (office buys materials, do something!), Brainstorming solutions for client work. Every Friday at 4pm

Schedule and events : <https://pulse.perkinswill.com/content/115705>



THURSDAY BEER & SNACKS, Toronto

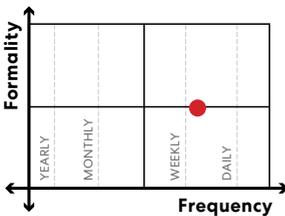
Presentations, workshops, design charettes + snacks and drinks. Every Thursday at 4pm



FRIDAY BAR, Vancouver

Informal office meeting every Friday at 4.30pm.

- Project Updates
- Sharing Travels/Experiences
- Invited guest lecturers
- New Staff



DESIGN DISCUSSION, Boston

Planned social discussion events with drinks and snacks. Each month has an over-arching theme which determines the topics for 4 weeks, e.g. project related, sustainability month, etc.

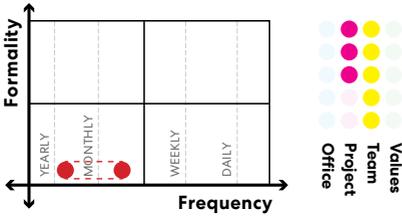
Frequency: Every Monday at 4pm

Monday was chosen because it is the day when most people are in the office.

Always planned a few weeks in advance to make sure that even if things are very busy one week, there will always be a Monday discussion event.

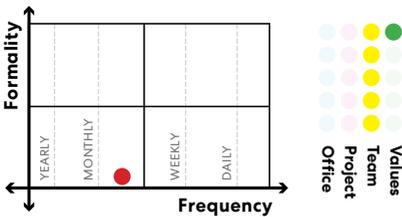
SMALLER GROUPS/ SOCIAL LIFE/

Social Focus/ Keeping different layers informed/ Cross-Pollination/



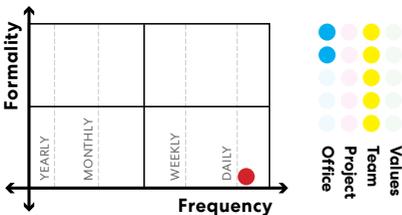
TEAM AND DEPARTMENT DINNERS

When meeting major deadlines, project teams have dinner at the expense of the office/project to thank the team for all their effort and to informally evaluate the process and the project with colleagues. Does not happen for all projects, depends on scope and budget. The department dinners are a social and informal way to show appreciation for effort of the department. Sometimes happens across locations to strengthen ties between Aarhus and Copenhagen.



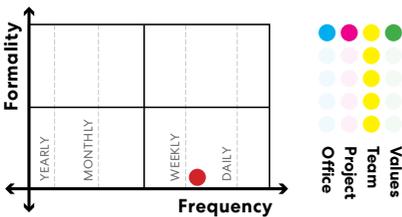
INTER-CULTURAL LUNCH, Los Angeles

Organized by one person and not happening at a fixed frequency. Asking people to bring food from their home country or culture, and in that way sharing stories about their background and having a cultural exchange and a different experience for lunch. (No longer happening)



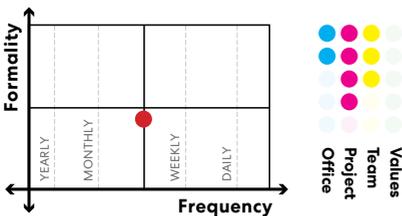
COMMUNAL LUNCH, SHL

The office subsidises a lunch scheme (50%), which means everyone eats lunch together. It's a good opportunity to talk and catch up on social life as well as project work, but it also means that everyone eats at the same time and works at the same time - keeping the break to 30 minutes. This makes it easier to coordinate meetings, as well as getting a hold of someone who might otherwise be out of the office.



FRIDAY BREAKFAST, SHL

People take turns buying breakfast for the people sitting nearby, not related to which project they are working on. The idea is social, but it also offers an occasion for people to quickly discuss what they are working on, interested in, etc.



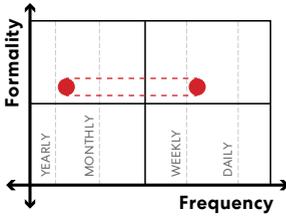
LUNCH BY PRACTICE, Atlanta

Each practice meets separately to discuss:

- QC / QA talk about how we deal with it
- Practice specific meetings
- What are you learning at the moment?
- What are you struggling with?

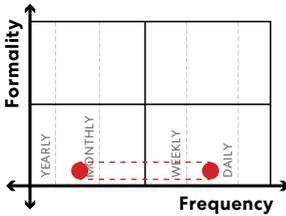
NEW HIRES/ NEW INTERNS/

Welcoming new people into the family/



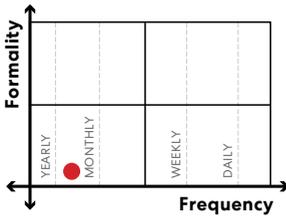
WELCOMING PROCEDURE, San Francisco

A short email with a description and a picture is sent out office-wide by HR welcoming the new person. A welcome e-mail with practical and contact information is sent to the new hire copying champions for different areas. This e-mail includes practical information and details about each of the knowledge groups from where a champion is CC'ed. At the weekly Friday Exchange meeting, new people introduce themselves to the office.



COLLECTING DONATIONS, Atlanta

Following the hiring of a new person, at the first coming Friday Beer time, the new hires are asked to collect money from the whole office for beer (or for donations to charity), and in that way they get to meet everyone at the office. Often it is a group of more than one person hired at once, making it less intimidating. A bio for each of these new people is sent out beforehand.

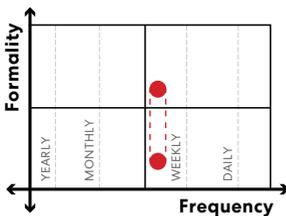


INTERNS DAY, SHL

Twice a year, following the hiring of a new group of interns, all the interns go on a full-day trip to one of the two offices and are given lectures, tours of local SHL projects and a dinner together in the evening. The intention being both to do some team-building, to welcome them to the company, and to introduce the interns from the two Danish offices to each-other.

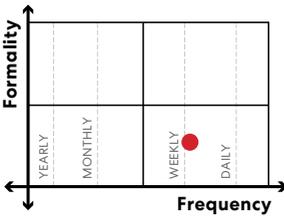
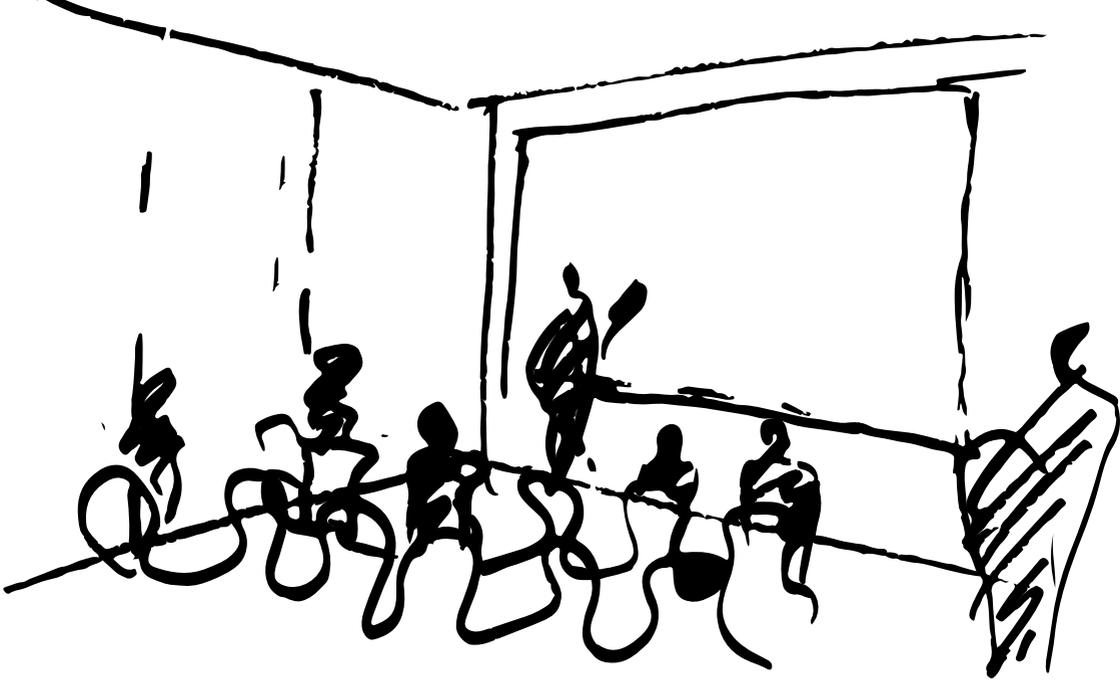
The Lunch Session/

Fast and effective knowledge sharing/



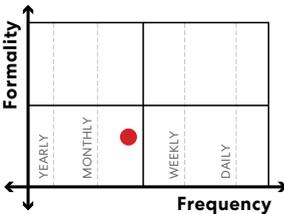
MONDAY DESIGN LUNCH, Vancouver

Group responsible for arranging, includes workshops, guest speakers, presentations, discussions. Every 2nd week from 12-1pm



DIGITAL PRACTICE LUNCH SESSIONS, SHL

Every week there is an half an hour lunch session (which is also recorded). To share tools/ information that can be applied to work-flows into projects. Can improve work-flow and sometimes there is an invited guest. The attendance for these sessions is relatively high, partly because of the common lunch scheme which ensures that everyone is at the office anyway - and just have to take the plate to a conference room rather than the cantine tables.

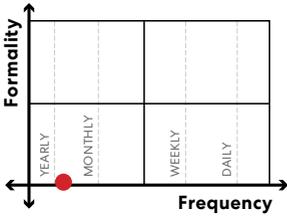


DETAIL DESIGN LUNCH SESSION, Los Angeles

At least one time per month, a session to share how detail design has been solved or problems that someone needs help with. Good opportunity to work from people working in different types of projects, but with the same structural/technical issues. The session is also sometimes used to talk about how a change in the local building code will affect how to do a certain detail. "Always starts a lively debate about how best to realize the design"

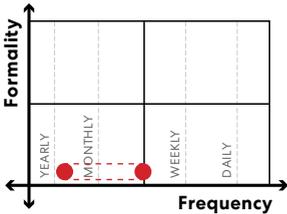
PASSIVE SHARING/

Interests and inspiration from outside the office/



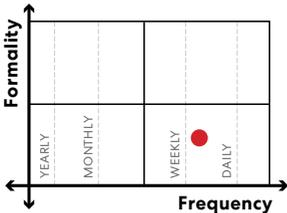
WINTER GALLERY, Los Angeles

Staff asked to bring any artwork they have created outside their practice as architects. Turning the whole office into a gallery. Ran for several months, but only once so far. Opportunity for people who don't normally do creative work to show another side of themselves.



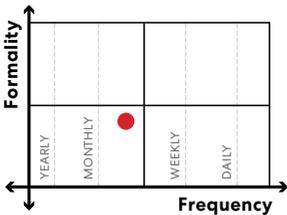
TRAVEL LOG, Chicago

E-mails sent out to share experiences from traveling either privately or for work. Can be architecture related or not. Only sent to a an opt-in mailing list so everyone is not spammed. Presentations are also done in conference rooms.



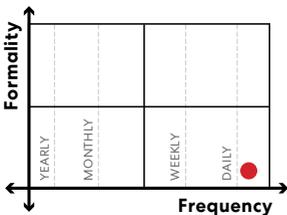
MONDAY MUSE, Chicago

Weekly emails about interesting things to see and do related to art, architecture and design in the Chicago area. In this way leadership can both involve staff what inspires them at the moment, and incite people to go out and be ambassadors for the firm at local events.



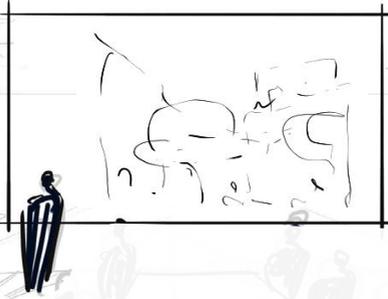
THEMED PICTURE WALL, Chicago

A large piece of furniture/shelves in the common/ lunch are which is full of picture frames, which are updated every 6 weeks with a new theme. People are asked to contribute images and when it is curated an email comes out saying e.g.: "this week: travel, women in design, etc."



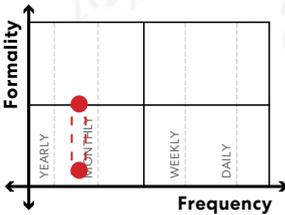
"PHYSICAL PINTEREST", Atlanta

Corridors, escape stairs and other "dead" spaces used to pin up sketches and ideas. The idea is to make the back spaces where clients don't come more personal and inspiring - also to incite people to take the stairs rather than the elevator. "WALKS" series. Design inspiration from the outside. Photography of places you have been and the thoughts that this has sparked from the person doing it. Taking the pictures and creating the posters trains attention and visual skills.



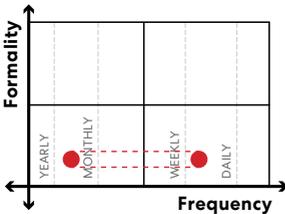
SITE VISITS/ STUDY TRIPS/

Out of office experiences/project focus (site visit)



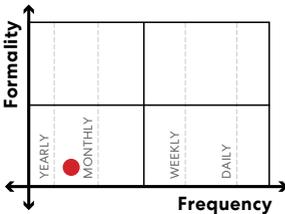
KNOWLEDGE GROUP TRIPS, SHL

SHL has a number of knowledge groups, which facilitate and give financial support for relevant excursions, conferences and study trips that all staff are invited to join. Usually they are one-day bus trips where staff from both offices meet up. The trips can be to SHL construction sites or finished projects, relevant conferences, etc.



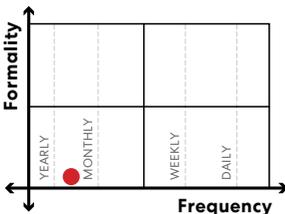
SITE VISITS, Chicago

Not formally planned, but happens when it fits in with work on projects. Some teams are very good at inviting everyone to come and follow their projects, especially if the project site is close to the office. Some projects up to 5-6 times during construction.



“WALKING LESSONS”, Chicago

When there is a quiet moment at the office, 2-3 people are asked to “go around the city and take photos of successful details”. Posters are then made with 2-3 images, sketches of how the details work and a short description. Submitted once a month and sent out office-wide.

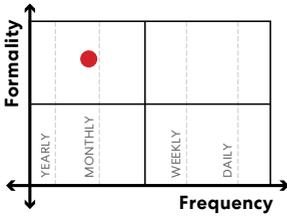


STUDY TRIPS, SHL

Study trips abroad are quite common among Danish architecture firms. The trips are generally paid for by “continued professional development” funds, which is a benefit that is ensured by the collective agreement for Danish Architects and Architectural Technologists. They are a great way to really create strong bonds and shared experiences, as well seeing interesting architecture from different cultures.

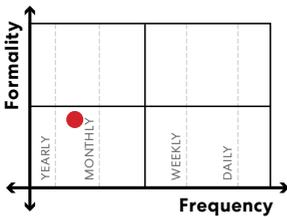
DISCUSSION OF DESIGN/ VALUES/ VISIONS/

Discussion events/ Debate+knowledge sharing as marketing/



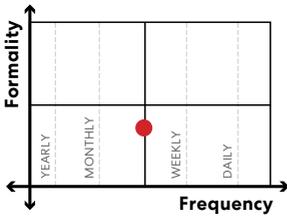
NEXT EVENTS, Boston

After hours, the marketing team invites e.g. external guest speakers, artists or panellists to come and join in a design discussion event. They then also invite existing and potential clients to this event as a way to engage them in current questions and show them the quality the work and ideas of the office can offer them in relation to the issues that are being discussed. Its a round the table discussion that really keeps clients engaged.



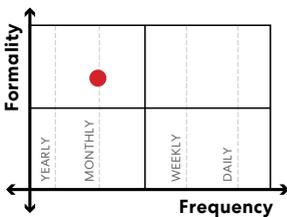
SHL Family Night, (Elif Tinaztepe, Geerte Baars)

Evening discussion (planned 4 times a year)
Specific topic to discuss about. There is a small introduction and people are asked to share their opinion/inspiration/thoughts and experience on the subject. It can be as an across office activity over skype. Always includes drinks and snacks.



DESIGN DIALOGUE, Chicago

Usually with a basis in an ongoing project, but sometimes it could be a movie about a designer, it could be a talk with an internal or external presenter and then a discussion. Open to all.

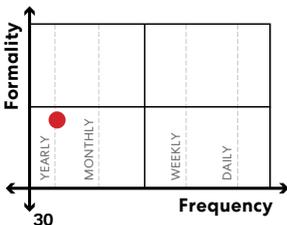


ATLANTA DESIGN FORUM, (Manuel Cadrecha)

Speaking about topics that are relevant to the office at a macro-level. Vision, strategy, design, direction. Everyone is invited to join in the discussion. Happens once every 6 weeks.

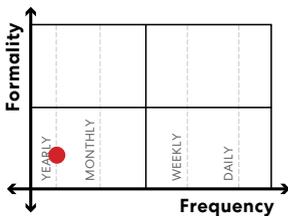
SHARED DESIGN EXERCISE/

Design project/Social focus/Society/knowledge sharing



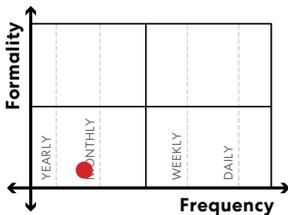
STATE OF PRACTICE, Los Angeles

The whole office goes outside in the summer and has a social gathering. There is always a design charette for some social purpose project that the whole office works on together. "Pulling together for the greater good."



DLC COMPETITION KICK-OFF, New York

When the brief comes out for the year's competition, people who are interested are gathered to discuss the site, the task and potential approaches. Expertise is shared and the typically younger architects who are participating can benefit from this.



IN VINO VERITAS, Los Angeles

Happens at a very short notice on Thursdays, at least once every 2-3 months
Thursday Happy hour w. wine and food.

- Someone who wants to have projects reviewed can bring them, and everyone can discuss the project and the issues that are there at this stage in the process.

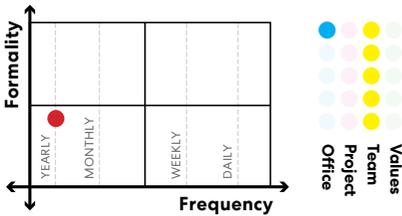
Example: outdoor museum.

Project team presented, and invited everyone to come with ideas for installations.

The idea came from "LA Forward 7", a changing group of 7 people appointed to come up with disruptive, innovative ideas for things to do at the office.

CROSS-OFFICE PARTIES/

Social and professional ties between studios/

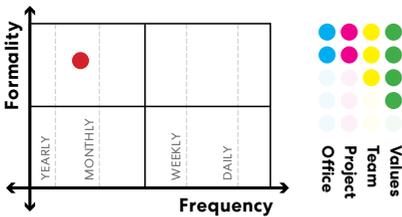


CHRISTMAS & SUMMER PARTIES, SHL

To strengthen ties between the colleagues in the two Danish SHL locations, at least every second major office party is held as a firm-wide party. The staff from Aarhus and Copenhagen take turns to go on a bus together to visit each other's offices before going to the party and then staying the night in the city at the company's expense.

SYMPOSIUMS/ PUBLIC EVENTS/

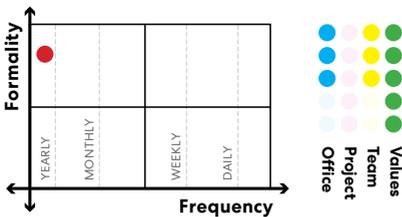
Client participation/ Thought leadership/ Spreading the word/



DESIGN SYMPOSIUMS/EVENTS, Toronto

Examples:

- Heavy timber design, focusing on projects in Toronto, with clients, contractors, and authorities.
- Design challenges facing the higher education sector, held as part of Perkins and Will Convergence event.
- Evening discussion event for BEAT focused on gender equity in the design professions (with speakers from Vancouver and Toronto)
- Weekend design charrettes for high school students interested in architecture and urban design.

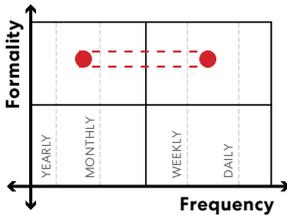


"NATURE'S MATERIALS & ARCHITECTURE", SHL

As part of Aarhus Festival Week, SHL collaborated with local high-end material suppliers for a half-day event starting with tours and receptions of the suppliers' flagship stores and ending with drinks, snacks and a large panel debate at the SHL Aarhus office about the role of materials in the future of the building industry. Clients, politicians, collaborators and architects from other offices were invited. Following the panel debate it turned into a network/ social event.



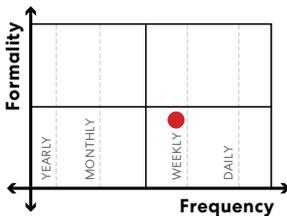
PROJECT START/ Vision/ Team/ Process/



PROJECT KICK-OFF, Vancouver

Before beginning any project, the project team has a kick-off meeting. One function of this meeting is to look into the assignment and identify potentials for research projects (in order to get an early start fundraising).

The other important function is to agree upon the basic Design goals and values for the project. Discussing and writing down the goals also helps to align the project with categories for DEAR and Gazelle (a catalogue that for now is only used in the Vancouver office (Adrian Watson))

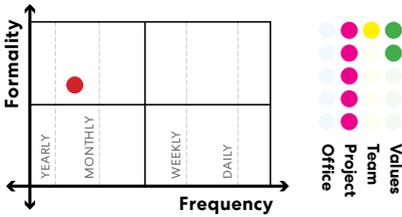


DESIGN CULTURE CONVERSATION, San Francisco

Recurring Conversation – first time targeted conversation about design. How do we want to talk about our designs? What is the process? What is the purpose? The goal is to improve design quality and storytelling.

DESIGN REVIEWS/ CRITIQUES/

Improvement of Project/Long preparation time/Low frequency/



DLC DESIGN REVIEWS, Chicago (Ed Feiner, Casey Jones)

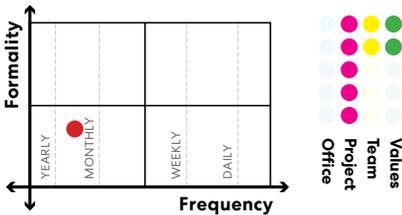
3-4 times a year the DLC including visiting design leaders will do peer reviews of on-going (especially large, significant) projects. Happens when the committee is available.

There are also efforts to start more frequent and informal sessions with the many local Design Principals.

While the idea is for the DLC to review the projects, the review sessions are open to everyone, so everyone can participate, give their inputs, and learn from what is being discussed.

DESIGN REVIEWS/ CRITIQUES/

Improvement of Project/Long preparation time/Low frequency/

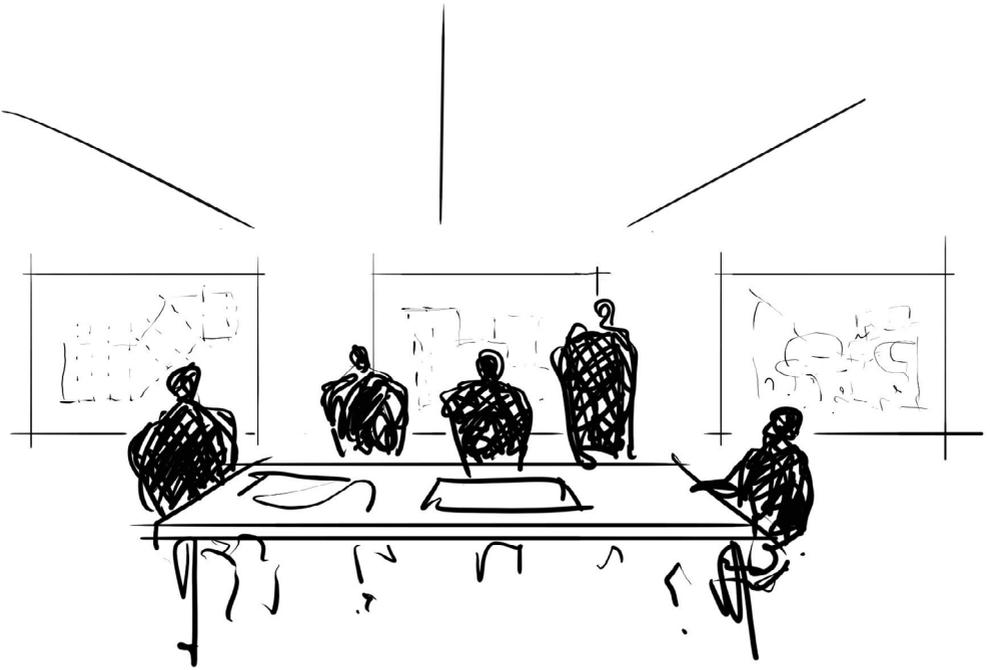


REGIONAL REVIEWS, New York + Boston + DC

North-east office collaboration. Where each office selects 4-5 junior architects to join the event.

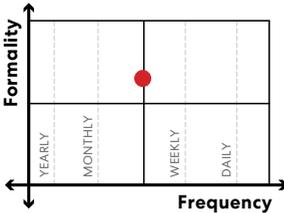
Half-day event where 5 on-going projects are up for review; The projects must be in an early enough stage for the critique to influence the project. Junior designers from the local office present each project (Short general presentation of projects and topics for ca. 15 minute discussions.) Junior Architects from the two other offices are reviewers - both to train them in reviewing and to form new relations between the offices.

Has been a great way to create involvement "from the bottom", as design principals are not involved in the reviews - others take responsibility. At the end of the reviews a summary is submitted to the leadership group.



DESIGN REVIEWS/ CRITIQUES/

Improvement of Project/Short preparation time/High frequency/

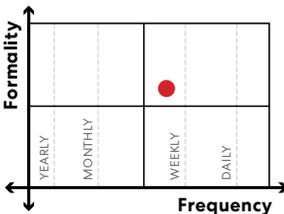


PEER REVIEWS, Vancouver

Every 3 weeks there is an Office-wide Pin-up of ongoing projects. The design principal is present at these Pin-ups.

The high frequency of the reviews ensures that the staff is kept up-to-date and get to see the different stages of each project and the problems the teams are facing.

Everyone is invited to participate and share their insights, ideas and knowledge.

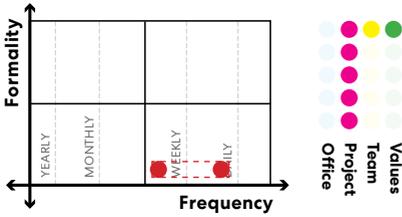


FRIDAY PROJECT PIN-UP, Toronto

Bi-weekly session where two projects are presented. A small jury is selected to review the projects. This jury consists of 3-5 people, including a design principal and an "expert" in the type of project. Colleagues outside the jury are also invited to participate in the discussion.

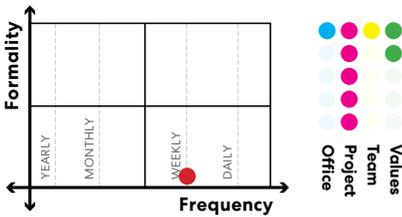
POP-UP DESIGN REVIEWS/ CRITIQUES/

Spontaneous/No (very low) preparation time/Ad hoc frequency/



FLASH CRITS, New York

Project teams are invited to, at relevant times, send out a question or a problem they would like help solving, to the rest of the office. The idea is to quickly be able to get help, to keep a project moving ahead. It doesn't always get a lot of attention, or is made use of, because everyone tends to be busy with their own project work - but there are examples of it being a great way to get new ideas/input.



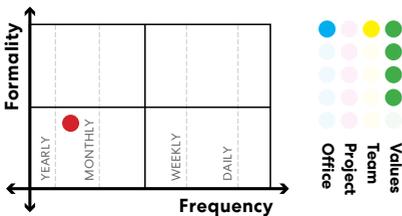
DESIGN POP-UP, Atlanta

At 3 pm a message comes out from an organizing team, inviting the rest of the office for a Design pop-up lasting 15-30 minutes.

The project is quickly presented in the stage it is currently in (+ relevant information about how the assignment was acquired, etc.), and the team asks for input on relevant problems/subjects they are working on at the time. The Project stage doesn't matter. It is about if there is something going on in the process that is interesting to everyone.

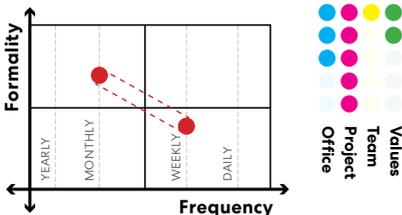
SHARING FINISHED WORK/

Evaluation/ Informal/ Keeping staff up-to-date/



INNOVATION INCUBATOR BEER TIME, Chicago

following completion of latest round of Chicago incubators each project team presents their work and possible next steps and projects are discussed.

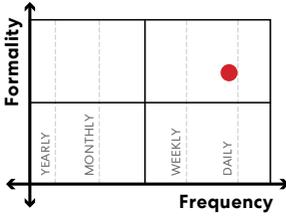


EVERY PROJECT PRESENTED, Los Angeles

No matter the size of a project, it is a rule that it will be presented at either one of the informal weekly meetings or at one of the larger monthly meetings (depending on project scale/importance). Presentation material from client meetings is usually used to save on preparation time. Keeps the office up-to-date about all work going on and ensuring knowledge is shared.

SHARING COMPLETED PROJECT/PASSIVE/

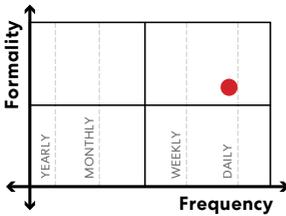
Design project/Passive Sharing/Office Style/Communication



MONOGRAPHS, Boston

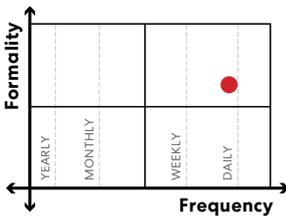
An initiative to make small monographs of the most important projects going on in studio, to be published as a booklet. This booklet can then be used both for marketing, on-boarding and teaching purposes. It's a way to share the knowledge gained from a project (including the process).

The plan is to do it for 2 projects per year, so that over the years a very strong portfolio will be created of the most significant projects.



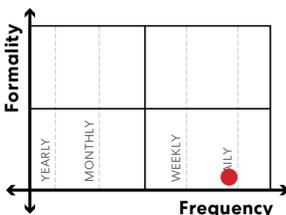
GAZELLE DEAR REVIEWS, Vancouver

The aim is to secure and outline the core (technical) values of a project. Project architects are responsible for filling in a form about their project, explaining the core values, concept and story of the project. This information acts both as a datasheet for the PR department and also a quality check element for the further development of the process.



COMMON PRESENTATION STYLE, Shanghai

Trying to get to the core of an architectural discussion by presenting every project for review in exactly the same way. The aim is to be neutral and only judge the idea/concept on its own merits. This has led to advocating no hand-sketches or personal graphic styles in early stages or when design ideas are compared. This is an attempt to keep the discussion about design and not to get personal about who came up with ideas, etc.



PROJECT PROGRESS WALL, Chicago

Wall showing the progress of all PW Chicago projects currently under construction. Each project has one sheet (template set up and easy to fill out), showing what is currently happening on site, how design details are solved in the drawings and how it is done on site.

Not easy to keep updated, but very valuable.

FURTHER PERSPECTIVES/

What can we do with this data? What's next?

As already mentioned, this project represents a very short period of research and analysis, and while we find that it already shows a lot of potential for interesting ways to improve every-day office life, this project in itself could be seen as a "boot-camp". If the project is to make a difference we need to implement not only some of the ideas that this booklet contains, but the idea of mapping activities across the firm, as a part of our office "lifestyle".

While this booklet is static (whether printed or in PDF), the ideal situation would be to have a cloud based tool where all the offices could add their activities, score them, compare them and ask for help and input from each other on how best to make something work. Sharing and overlaying the "maps" of each office could also be a way to generate cross-office engagement. Imagine having a color-coded calendar of events from across the firm and asking - "would it be interesting if we did this together?".

It may take some extra time, but the act of gathering information and mapping it, is in itself a strong tool for understanding and seeing connections and possible opportunities that may otherwise be lost. Both between offices, as mentioned, but also internally in each office. This is why we believe that it would make sense for each office to have "champion" who

is responsible for mapping the studio's activities. All these champions could then add their findings and comments into the cloud based tool, (the first step could be a new Team in MS Teams (or similar) for people who are interested).

Such a tool would also make it possible to include a lot more parameters, which the activities could then be filtered by, depending on what you need in your own office's planning. Events and activities could be scored on whether they engage clients, whether they share technical knowledge, whether they apply to a specific practice or knowledge group, whether they require specialist knowledge, whether they have helped acquiring new work or talent, how long they take to plan, if there are other related expenses, etc. And they could all be tied to the office, group and individual who came up with the idea, so that it's easier to get in touch and make the ideas useful for everyone.

It could also be, that if your office has used an idea, there would be a checkbox - allowing the tool to map the most popular ideas across offices. For now, we are very happy that you took the time to look through this booklet at some of the great activities and ideas coming from all around Perkins & Will. Please don't hesitate to contact us in case you want some more information or a talk.

CONTRIBUTIONS/

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