

Meeting Customers' Needs – from Design to Management

C.N.BROOKE
Brooke International
Hong Kong

a) **New World Environment**

Market driven by fundamentals and end-user responses and reaction. Growing sense of ownership and less emphasis on capital gains, but nevertheless owner needs to be assured that his investment will maintain its value and over time appreciate in value. Bricks and mortar seen as hedge against inflation.

Drivers of Change

Technical Revolution – centred on information technology and the establishment of new networks connecting people from the local to global level.

Ecological Awareness – greater understanding of the importance of sustainable development and a growing interest on the part of the community to participate in determining its future destiny, not only politically but also in terms of the urban fabric, the environment, etc.

Social Transformation – changing life patterns reflecting increased life expectancy and the development of new life style choices.

b) **Initial Starting Point**

Need to know and understand customer's expectations and aspirations. Often presumption by developer and his team that they know what is best for the customer. Role of research, consumer surveys, benchmarking, lessons learnt from both successful and unsuccessful flagship projects.

c) **Positioning of Project**

Identification of target market vital at outset. Will dictate all actions thereafter.

d) **Planning and Conceptual Design**

Time well spent. This is the stage that dictates not only the economic success of any scheme but also the likely response/reaction of the potential purchaser. Need to integrate project/scheme into overall community.

e) **Detailed Design**

Layout, choice of materials, services and facilities all need to be very carefully thought through with not only purchaser in mind, but also from maintenance, operations and up-keep perspective. Flexibility v permanence also a key issue. Use of value engineering to examine alternatives.

f) **Construction**

Challenges of ensuring quality and adequate standards of workmanship. Different options and solution.

g) **Management**

The need for a caring and cost effective approach. It all boils down to service and value for money.

h) Areas for Obvious Improvement

- i. Planning** – too piecemeal, not comprehensive enough. People expect to live in communities not enclaves. Lower rather than higher plot ratios. More emphasis on open space and community facilities.

A commitment to quality and creativity in the way in which we design buildings, public spaces and transport networks will form the basis for the sustainable city for the future.

Housing by itself does not make a neighborhood. Neighborhoods need to comprise a mix of uses, which work together to create sustaining activity throughout the day and serve to strengthen social integration and civic life.

Hong Kong's compact urban form highlights the need to give priority to the provision of public areas for people to meet and interest. To do this most effectively means putting the pedestrian first and ensuring that walking is the preferred and most convenient option in accessing different facilities within an area.

The planning system needs to be one, which is strategic, flexible and accountable, i.e. a strategic planning system which adopts a pre-active approach to land use planning rather than being perceived as a reactive means of controlling development.

- ii. Design** – not enough variety and vision. Need to review Buildings Ordinance. We have the flair, we should use it. We also are moving into the "Smart Home" Environment.

Raising the Quality of New Housing

Long Life – Durable Materials and Efficient Systems of Fabrication. Bear in mind that use of a building changes much faster than the life of a building.

Loose Fit – Designing for changing user demands and life styles by providing flexible and cost effective layouts, finishes and materials. Fixed elements such as kitchens, bathrooms, wall and flooring materials could be excluded or left raw, allowing occupants to make their own functional and aesthetic choices. Also flexible partition walls so that internal space can be reconfigured to meet changing needs of household.

Low Energy – ensuring resource efficiency by reducing energy use through building massing and design. Also need to consider overall environmental performance.

- iii. Construction** – Industry is lagging behind the times in terms of technology and management. Also need for change in attitudes – it is more than just a contractual relationship. Industry has to accept it has a duty to the community to play its part in raising standards.
- iv. Management** – Much greater attention to detail will be required, and the services menu will have to be expanded significantly. A pro-active approach rather than re-active will also be expected.
- v. Facilities** – Once a luxury these are now essential. Quality of life and growing value put on leisure time are key factors.

BUT In final analysis, all the trimmings will be irrelevant, if the product is not priced competitively. Also aspiring purchaser will be seeking to purchase as many quality sq. ft. as possible within the constraints of his budget. Attractively packaged and priced projects with favourable lending terms will continue to attract the greatest interest.

All rights reserved. No part of this paper may be reproduced, published or transmitted without the prior permission from the copyright owner.