

HOW TO MAKE SMALL COMMERCIAL PROJECTS WORK:

THE 5 STEPPING STONES YOU NEED TO GET IT RIGHT



TURN has worked with a number of small business and commercial property owners over the past years, and we have come up with a series of 'Stepping Stones' to help get you started with your project and guide you through.

STEPPING STONE 1 - Starting out – Your Vision for your Business Space

You will need to draw up a brief. Think about how your new space or building will fit into your vision for your business. How will it become an integral part of your brand and represent it at every level? How will it help sustain your business and show it in the best possible light?

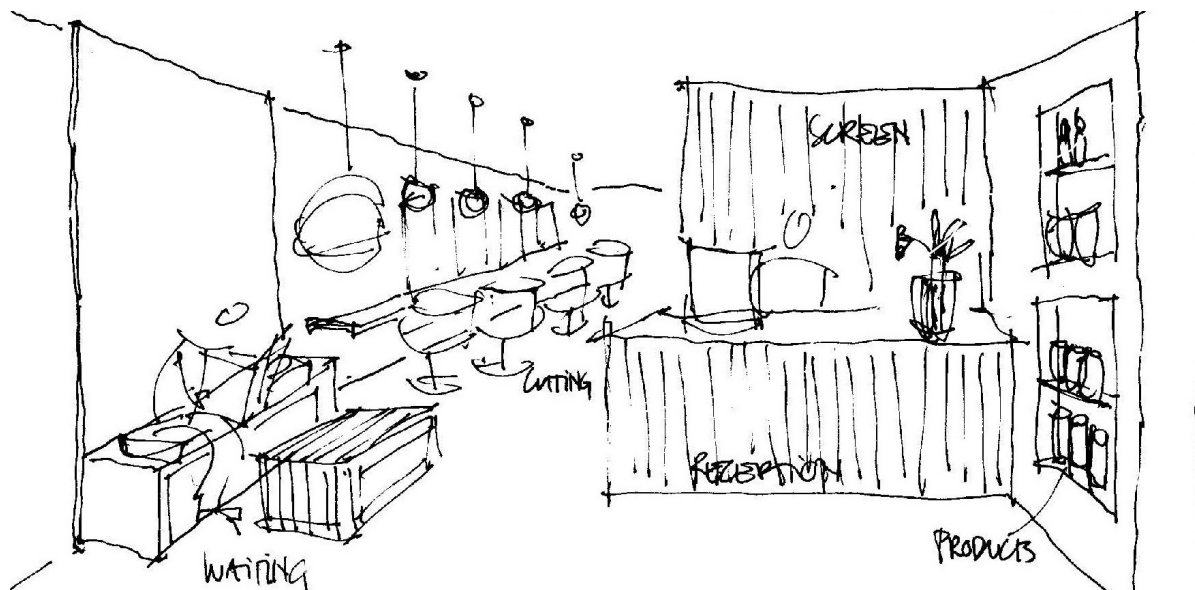
A 'basic' list of points to consider could be:

- How are your brand values communicated to the outside world and how do you invite, attract customers, clients or potential tenants? You may only have limited ways of expressing yourself on the outside of your space, so every aspect needs to be carefully considered - colour, lighting and signage are all vital elements of communication of your brand;
- How do you receive your customers / clients / employees? First impressions count and the 'reception', whatever it consists of, needs to make the best possible impression and convince people that they are 'invited'. For large commercial projects such as office buildings the reception area is where no expense is spared, this is the window to the world – this applies equally to small businesses – no matter how small!
- How does your space work best and hardest for your business at every level, ie consider the work processes that you or your staff go through on a regular basis,

required services, spaces and 'kit' such as data cabling and points; and what do you want the public to see / not to see?

- Good lighting is absolutely vital to commercial spaces; it sets the mood when entering the space, it has 'sell' for you and literally show everything in the best light. Do think about all the different jobs that you want the (electric) lighting to do for you; it is worth having a lighting concept and lighting layouts produced; and do ask suppliers for samples of light fittings, which you can test in your space before making your final decisions;
- What are the ancillary spaces and facilities that your business needs to work well? Don't forget to make cleaning, maintenance, storage and back-of-house processes that are needed on a regular basis as easy and as safe as possible. Regular maintenance becomes more expensive if it isn't practical and hasn't been considered early on in the design process.

Some clients have come to us with just a magazine clipping or even just a ceramic tile to give us an idea of their vision. TURN can put together a team of specialists and suitable suppliers for you to turn your vision into built reality.



STEPPING STONE 2: Budget and Timing

The build budget on a commercial project is often finite. Borrowing is difficult in these times and there is a limit on what level of expense may be feasible for a business. Prioritising - and keeping your priorities once you have set them - is key. Drawing up a realistic cost plan, which separates between build cost and other business setting up costs, e.g. furniture, fittings and starting up costs, is a good idea as these can often get 'muddled up'.

At TURN we can give you an indication of your likely budget from the outset, which is then worked into an outline cost plan. We can suggest clear priorities for you – ie where it's most important to spend your money – and keep a list of these. We usually obtain prices from a number of good contractors after the feasibility stage of a project. This ensures a good degree of cost certainty for our clients BEFORE money is spent on fees for detailing the project.

For business owners time is money and it's vital to sit down at the very beginning of your project and work out a realistic **programme** for their project. One particularly important aspect is the involvement of other stakeholders such as freeholders or investors. Will you need to obtain their approval for the work? How long will this take?

At TURN we prepare and agree a programme with our clients at the Feasibility Stage of each project. This serves as the 'road map' for your project, against which you can check your progress on a regular basis to ensure that you are on track.

STEPPING STONE 3: Adding Value - Good design pays off

Investing wisely into your space or building pays off, not least by saving you running costs. Most business owners can ill afford to add to the regular running costs of their business as a result of bad design or specification of fittings and finishes that won't last. Make sure you know that everything you put into your building is up to the job, will withstand regular use and that it's easy to replace if necessary. Make sure that it's easy and safe to maintain your property.



STEPPING STONE 4: Taking the Statutory Hurdles

- Planning

With small commercial projects it may be only small things that require Planning Permission, for example an entrance, a shop front, an awning or a sign. Nevertheless the stamp of approval needs to be obtained. Dealing with your Local Authority can be tricky and what you need from them in the end is the sign-off for your project. With planning guidance and regulation constantly changing it can be difficult to know what you can and cannot do. As a start it is a good idea to check and read through the design guides published on your Local Council's website.

With staff cuts and pressures at many Local Councils it can be difficult to obtain sign off on time or to even contact your planning officer to ask questions. On many occasions there is room for negotiation with your Planning Department but this requires a great amount of dedication on your part, replacing drawings in the nick of time as well as chasing Planning Officers, sometimes on a daily basis (and more often than not they will not return your calls). At TURN we closely monitor and manage the planning process on every project. We deal with many of the inner London Boroughs on a regular basis and our track record is excellent- we have never been refused Planning!

- Building Control

Your works must comply with current Building Regulations, even on small projects. There are different ways of obtaining approval. We would always recommend a 'full plans' application for Building Control approval. This minimises the risk of changes you may have to undertake at the last minute and provides your builder with much clearer guidance. However if you rely only on your builder to deal with Building Control on your behalf do make sure that you obtain all certificates from him before he moves off site, particularly the Certificate of Completion, which shows that your works are 'in order' and which you may need for future reference.

Building Control applications form part of our service at TURN. We submit Full Plans applications on our clients' behalf and see them through to approval.

- Health and Safety (The CDM Regulations)

Most commercial projects are subject to compliance with Health and Safety legislation. Broadly speaking the CDM Regulations have been implemented to ensure that works on construction sites and maintenance of buildings afterwards are carried out safely and that injury and death is prevented. Thresholds apply in terms of either type or size of project, duration of works on site and number of personnel on site.

It is absolutely vital that commercial clients understand the Health and Safety legislation and their obligations under the CDM Regulations. More information can be found under:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/cdm.htm>. At TURN we advise our clients what is required of them and we put forward a CDM co-ordinator with whom we work to ensure that our clients' obligations are fulfilled.

STEPPING STONE 5: Finding the right builder at the right price

'You get what you pay for' is true also for building projects. For all of us, and time and time again, it is very tempting to believe that the cheapest builder will do a great job for you on time and on budget. However in reality more often than not this is not the case. When making your decision which builder to use, make sure that you have checked their references and, ideally, seen one or two of their recent jobs 'in the flesh'. Insist that they provide you with answers to all your questions and that you fully understand them so you can be sure that you know what you are getting. Don't be afraid to question them or ask them to clarify what you haven't understood.

An architect will vet builders for you, obtain tenders and ask the right questions. They will ensure that your end result 'does what it says on the tin' and will not let your builders get away with short cuts.

- Having a Contract and Appropriate Insurances in place

For your protection we strongly recommend that you have a written contract in place with your builder. This means you are protected financially and legally and you have 'come back' when there are problems further down the line. Make sure that a programme of works with a clear completion date forms part of the set of contract documents and that 'liquidated and ascertained damages' are agreed to cover your loss if your builder does not complete on time. TURN can advise on the type of contract to be used and act as contract administrator on your behalf, managing works on site and all associated instructions and payments.

Before works start you and your chosen builder must ensure that you have adequate insurance cover in place. The first action to take is telling your insurer that you are about to start building works and to check that you are covered. Do not assume that your builder carries all required insurances - find out what is needed in line with your chosen contract and ensure it is provided with evidence. TURN will always check that adequate insurance cover is in place before the start of project works on site.

WANT TO TALK TO AN ARCHITECT?

We hope that this document is helpful to get you started thinking and to get you excited about your project. Please call or e-mail if you'd like to arrange for a consultation to talk about your project.

TURN Architects llp was established in 2006 by architects Gozi Wamuo and Andrea Jung, who met working together at KPF back in 1996. Both partners bring a wealth of experience from a diverse range of projects to the practice, including large and small scale commercial (office and retail), private residential and social housing, a zero carbon house, childcare, educational and community projects.

Gozi Wamuo

Has been a chartered architect since 1991. She has worked in a diverse and interesting range of practices including Rivington Street Studio, Matrix and KPF before setting up TURN.

Andrea Jung

Moved to London in 1996 after completing her diploma in Germany and working as an architect in Berlin for a few years. She has been a chartered architect since 2001 and was an associate director at KPF until 2006.

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