

SEAB

SOUTHEAST ASIA BUILDING



Jeju Shinhwa Theme Park

Jeju Island, South Korea

PROJECTS Theme Parks

TRENDS Playground Equipment

ARCHITECT'S CORNER Interviews with Mapei & SAA Architects

PLUS Impact of COVID-19 on architecture & engineering firms and flexible workplace operators like Arcc Spaces

ISSN 2345-7066





COPING WITH COVID-19 CRISIS

Architects, engineers, and construction professionals tell us how they are responding to the crisis.

The global building and construction industry has also been hit by the outbreak of COVID-19. Delays in construction projects and labour shortages are some of the many challenges that building and construction professionals are facing right now. At the heart of these challenges is addressing the safety of their staff and clients as well as ensuring that business continues with minimal disruption. In this issue, architects, engineers and designers tell us how they are responding to the COVID-19 situation and what kind of impact will it leave on their business and on the architecture industry as a whole.

Lambert Ma, Director, LWK + PARTNERS

Your firm's response to COVID-19

Our firm's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been phased due to the constantly evolving nature of the situation. Flexibility is key to our approach by which we have adopted remote office in the first instance followed by flexi-hour work arrangement when the situation has become less volatile. Being a global practice, the timing and level of implementation vary from office to office depending on the office locale. But overall as a practice we have suspended business travels and encouraged using video conference as the prime means of communication with clients and collaborators in lieu of face to face meetings. We understand this is uncertain and anxious time for many people, it is therefore important to communicate and listen to the feedback and concerns of our staff in our response to the pandemic. It is also our duty as a practice to stay educated and proactive in implementing health and safety measures for the wellbeing of our staff in the workplace.

Changes in office working patterns

The call for social distancing as a means to hamper the spread of viral infections has affected how and where we work in response. Remote access and communication



Lambert Ma. Photo: © LWK + PARTNERS

capabilities are the two key areas of high demand in our effort to adapt remote office where we have to ramp up our facilities and support quickly. The ability to access to files and digital drawings is essential to staff working from home, which is achieved by cloud servers and private VPN network. The implementation of remote office has created a variety of disruptions to usual workflow. Certain staff have cited slowness and instability of internet services as a major drawback working from home. This results in their spending more time completing certain tasks. Remote office has also altered the normal teamwork dynamics in which an additional layer of communication such as phone calls and social network is needed to maintain the connectedness and synergy among team members.

Team leaders may find it necessary to adopt different managerial protocol in order to maintain the discipline and work pace of their teams. Video conferencing has been a popular alternate to face to face meetings. With the advent of more sophisticated telecommunication software, the results have been largely satisfactory to clients and collaborators alike. We feel that this is one possible area which will become habitual even after the decline of the pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19 on your business and the architecture industry as a whole

The outbreak has no doubt posed great challenges to the architectural industry as a whole but as a business

it has presented us a tremendous opportunity to rethink the accepted norm and traditional modes of working that may require a proper shake up. The disruptions caused by the outbreak does come with a positive aspect by which the transitioning of our business to a full-on cloud based and mobility enhanced infrastructure will inevitably be accelerated. Remote communication capabilities, cloud-based files storage and access and BIM applications are just a few ways that architectural offices should come to adapt and upgrade to meet the challenges of the modern era such as the pandemic crisis that we are now facing.

In an effort to stem the spread of the Coronavirus, mandated quarantine, banning of non-essential travels and closure of borders imposed by authorities around the globe have become commonplace. Border crossing especially in mainland China where we have a large number of projects has become a problem thus making restrictive working on remote projects in which meetings on location and site visits are required.

As a global practice with many offices and diverse teams, we have managed effectively to negate this "border" problem and thus render it "border-less" by relying on our local representatives in different offices to cater to the needs of being physically available to clients and projects. In moment of crisis such as this, it makes inter-office collaboration all more relevant and we believe we will see an increased effort in this to tackle the challenges ahead.

应对 2019 冠状病毒病

建筑师、工程师及建造业界诉说企业如何应对疫症危机。

(节录)

新型冠状病毒病来袭，全球建筑业同受冲击，受到项目延误及劳动力短缺等诸多挑战，其核心在于如何妥善保障员工及客户安全，同时将对业务造成的影响减至最低。本期访问了几位建筑师、工程师和设计师，听他们分享业界如何回应疫情，以及本次疫症对业务和行业整体产生什么影响。

LWK + PARTNERS 董事马桂霖：

公司如何应对 2019 冠状病毒病

随着全球疫情不断发展，我们事务所分阶段推出应变方案，并以灵活性为核心方向：首先是启动远程办公，当疫情稳定下来后再实施弹性工作时间。作为一家全球事务所，这些方案的具体推行时间和级别因应工作室所在地而异，但总体来说都暂停了出差安排，并鼓励以视频会议代替会面，作为与客户及合作伙伴沟通的主要方式。我们明白到对于许多人来说，这是一个充满不确定性和忧虑的时期，因此非常重视与员工沟通，聆听他们对目前情况的想法和顾虑。我们也有企业责任紧贴消息，主动更新健康及安全措施，维护员工在办公场所的健康状态。

办公模式改变

为防止病毒传播，各方呼吁保持社交距离，对办公方式和地点都造成影响。远程办公大幅推高了数字技术需求，尤其是远程操作及通信能力两个关键领域，事务所也因此迅速加强了相关设备及支持，例如采用云端服务器和专用 VPN 网络，让员工从家中读取档案和数字化图纸。远程办公影响了日常工作流程，也有员工反映在家工作的主要障碍为互联网服务速度和稳定性方面不足，导致他们需要花更长时间完成某些任务。在团队合作方面，远程办公期间各人需要通过电话、社交网络等工具沟通，彼此的联系和协作多了一层屏障，改变了日常的团队互动。

为维持团队纪律和工作节奏，负责人或需改变管理方式。为减低面对面会议的需求，我们大幅使用视频会议，再配合越来越先进的通信软件技术，结果不论是客户还是合作伙伴都对实际操作大致满意。我们认为这个趋势很可能在疫情缓和后成为新常态。

2019 冠状病毒病对公司及建筑业整体的影响

疫情无疑给整体建筑业带来巨大挑战，但对企业来说，它也同时提供思考空间，重新评估既定的规范和传统工作模式是否需要改革。这次疫情危中有机，势必鞭策企业建设全面云端、有利移动办公的运营基建。对建筑事务所而言，面对当代各种挑战，包括今次疫症，我们需要调整和升级的范畴包括远程通信、云端文件存储及操作的能力，以及 BIM 应用等。

为防止冠状病毒扩散，全球各地政府都已实施强制隔离、禁止不必要外游及关闭边境。而我们事务所拥有大量项目的中国内地尤其受过境限制影响，过境限制下境外人员不能到现场进行会议或实地考察项目，只能有限度地远程办公。

作为拥有多个工作室据点及多元化团队的全球事务所，我们采取的管理手法是依靠当地同事应对客户及项目所需，亲身执行任务，有效解决过境限制的问题，达致“零边境”办公。面对如此逆境，跨工作室合作变得比从前更为重要，我们也相信企业会在这方面多下工夫，以应未来挑战。