

judges discretionary award for innovation sustainable design lab



Capita Symonds' Sustainable Design Lab (SDL) is enabling the business to optimise the sustainability potential of developments for clients through the design process.

SDL provides mechanisms for interrogating a brief to establish the full remit of sustainability considerations from an unlimited set of discipline perspectives. The whole business can be canvassed via the SDL virtual forum to participate in design workshops and dialogue.

This means that Capita Symonds can better exploit its resources to advance towards a much more innovative solution. There is a strong research and innovation agenda arising from SDL. This is through the opportunities it provides to identify where new solutions or greater understanding is needed and building relationships with research partners.

The Problem:

The word 'Sustainability' is used as a catch-all for many diverse ideas without fully appreciating, understanding or formulating a concept which would inform their actions.

This often applies to clients, who want to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' or other standards (driven by a stakeholder further up the line such as central government) without understanding the implications and alternatives.

Sustainability must take into account the entire product - the impact of a masterplan, building or structure - in terms of a carbon value, social value, and economic value.



Above: The SDL is launched at the Architecture Away Day in July 2009 through a series of presentations on the corporate, environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability and a panel discussion with (L-R) Kate Nelson, Liane Hartley, Kate Stewart, Colin Campbell and Taariq Mauthoor.

The Solution:

Inspired by the ingenuity, energy and activity that the word 'lab' conjures, the SDL was created to experiment, play, challenge and breed new solutions to an old problem – how to generate truly sustainable designs.

The Lab is a virtual knowledge portal, disseminating knowledge and providing a base for research and feedback.

judges discretionary award for innovation sustainable design lab

SDL:

SDL helps all designers utilise the expertise across Capita Symonds and add to the knowledge base in each project. The fundamental aim of the SDL is to embed a sustainability culture where it is not a separate entity - it just is.

Colin Campbell, Director of Capita Architecture has developed a strategy to:

- Set out our design process in bids
- Develop a project specific brief at inception
- Develop benchmarks and appropriate targets
- Front load expertise in design projects
- Provide design teams with tools / assists to make early design decisions
- Monitor design against the Project Brief through Design Reviews
- Increase knowledge base through dedicated and formal R&D
- Capture and maximise current expertise and experience

Mutual Benefits:

SDL sends a powerful message to our clients that:

- Their sustainability aspirations can be realised and emulated
- The potential for positive brand and reputation recognition is greater for the client (and us!)
- Sustainability does not have to break the budget
- The resultant building/development is "future-proofed" towards social, economic and environmental change

SDL has already received positive feedback and interest from clients such as London Development Agency.

keys to success

- Encouraging collaboration across disciplines, division and staff levels. We are working closer together which is ever more important in the current climate
- Developed with inputs from all levels of staff from a variety of disciplines and expertise – it has been developed by staff and is not imposed on them
- Seemingly esoteric and unrelated services / disciplines have participated on designs and demonstrated new ways of seeing sustainability issues. It demonstrates the value of outside-of-the-box thinking.
- Provided an opportune vehicle for establishing dialogue with R&D partners to develop innovations and research. The potential for improving our R&D credentials and attracting research funding is raised.
- Awareness of sustainability issues, outside a narrow remit of environmental and resource efficiency considerations, has increased both externally with our clients and stakeholders and internally within Capita Symonds. We are progressing from following the leaders to being thought leaders.
- An opportune vehicle for delivering on our SRB commitments by encouraging added value over and above the brief for example through identifying community and social benefits that could be generated through design.
- Client focussed and driven by the need to generate optimum sustainability value

NOMINATED BY:

Emma Herman, Liane Hartley and Kate Nelson,
London