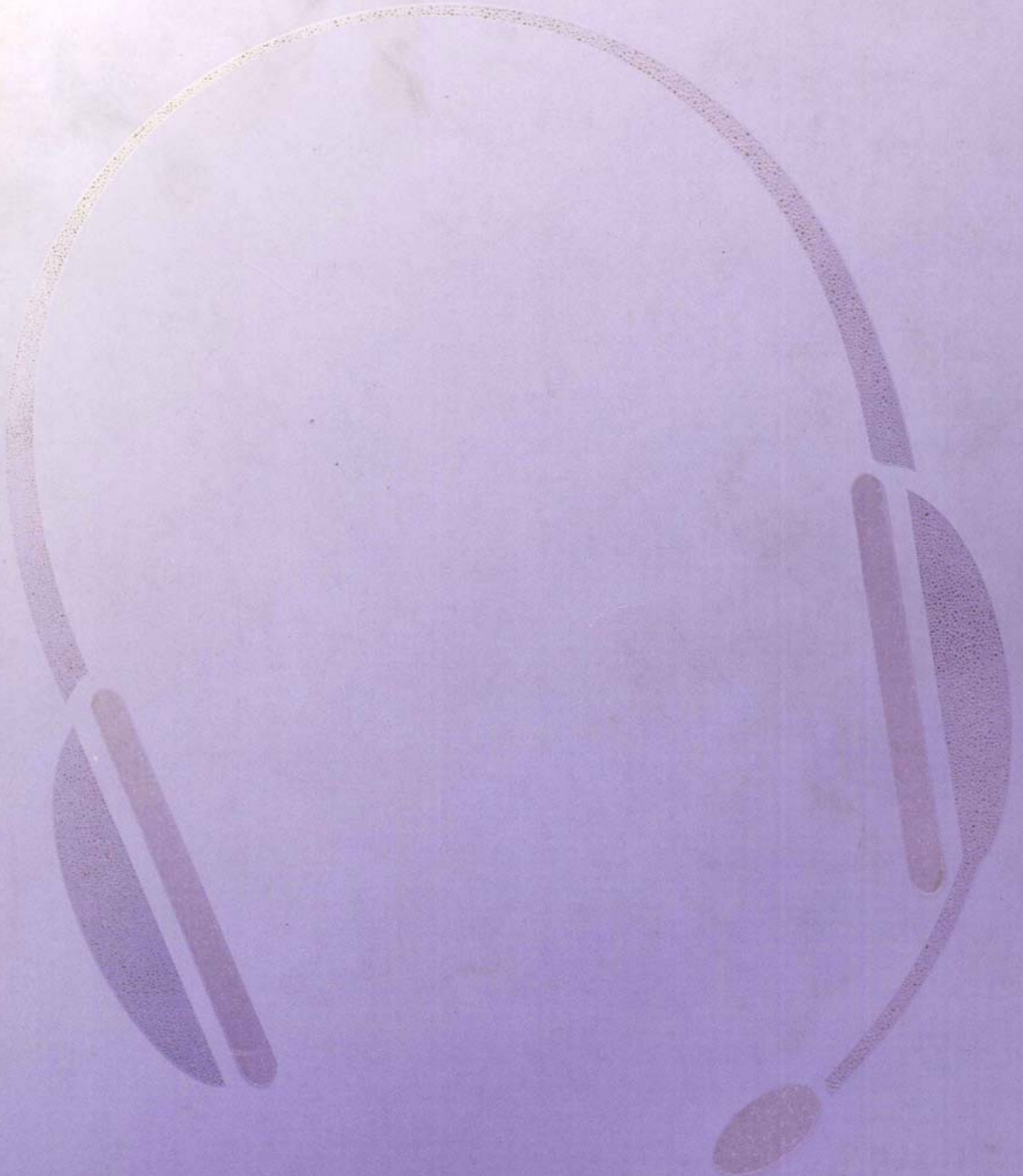




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Despite enormous business volumes, no one's taking anything for granted. Competition is frenetic and has everyone in grab-the-last-piece-of-cake mode, despite the fact that the party's just begun.



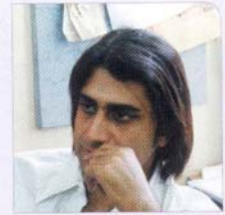
## the scuffle for business – and time

The new industry segment has brought a whole new ethos of work culture with it. An interesting anomaly that's everywhere in the BPO related construction and interiors industry is that there is a lot of business, but no one is taking anything for granted and competition has become frenetic. As in most things, the fallout has been of both kinds; while professionalism has certainly improved, the competition is sometimes gruesome, with aesthetics and design being the first casualties. The industry that turned time on its head for the staff of the BPO services industry has also had an effect on the timelines associated with set up.

Architects and builders across the board exclaim over how quickly projects are put together. Regarding the fit out, Ar. Ashish Gupta, Senior Architect, Design Plus, Delhi says, "The time taken to set up a BPO is 35 days to 3 months. Completion to an extent depends on the size of the project but not much. If it is about 500,000 to a million square feet, it can be done in 3 to 4 months."

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*"BPOs have completely changed the landscape of interior construction industry. The scale of projects has gone up tremendously in terms of area and the budgets available have increased. BPOs, call centers and such big projects demand different kind of office buildings which comply with their requirements."*



kalhan mattoo  
planet 3 studios architecture pvt. ltd.

The explanation lies in another outcome of the BPO industry. Manufacturers and suppliers of furniture have become far more organized as well as professional; several have set up large-scale mechanized manufacturing facilities using German or Italian machinery to do the job better. Prakash Gurbaxani, CEO, TSI Ventures (India), Bangalore says, "Deregulation in imports of material has helped. Today, things like furniture and high-end equipment can be easily imported. There are Indian companies who are in collaboration with foreign manufacturers and manufacturing in India; so there is an efficient technology transfer."

## construction and changing norms

One of the more significant developments in the industry is the fact that architects are getting their fingers dirty and moving away from the pristine environment of the drawing board and setting up their own manufacturing and contracting facilities. The integration of all activities is carried to its logical conclusion with the Design-Build concept which is seeing a resurgence of popularity in this century. (see box) Several architect firms either have their own in-house manufacturing facility or a sister concern that does the job. Ar. K. Jaisim, Jaisim Fountainhead, Bangalore sub-contracts his manufacturing requirements to a sister concern, Jaisim Fountainhead Projects Pvt. Ltd. While ensuring a customized solution, this method also offers the client the high degree of confidentiality the industry demands. Sankalpan, Mumbai has taken specialization to a whole new level with business development, space management, design development and project management teams and an end to end solutions company called Sankalpan Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd.



prakash gurbaxani  
tsi ventures (india)

*"Things have changed dramatically over the years in the construction industry. The quality of workmanship and equipment used have changed drastically. Today we use laser technology to level the ceiling which was not there twenty years ago."*

Ar. Venkatesh, C R Narayana Rao Architects and Engineers, Chennai, says, "I believe the construction industry is completely dependent on what IT wants. There is a vast improvement; more mechanization, product delivery time has crashed and there is an emphasis on good technology, that's why we find that PT slabs, large span structures etc. are on the increase. A lot of people from the construction industry in India attend trade

fairs abroad to buy equipment, look at the latest trends in concrete mixers, plants, air conditioning." Prakash Gurbaxani echoes this saying, "Things have changed dramatically over the years in the construction industry. The quality of workmanship and equipment used have changed drastically. Today we use laser technology to level the ceiling which was not there twenty years ago."

## design-build: a classical notion revisited

### the concept

Design-Build (also known as Design/Construct and Single Source Responsibility) is a method of project delivery in which one entity forges a single contract with the owner to provide architectural/engineering design services and construction services. The process was thought to be virtually abandoned by modern designers and constructors, but now, there seems to be a resurgence of this concept. Studies reveal that about 70 percent of the non residential projects in the European Union, 80 percent in Japan and 40 percent in the US are serviced by Design-Build.

In the Design-Build process, the entire project is handled by a single entity, there is a single point of responsibility for quality, cost and schedule adherence. With Design-Build, the owner is able to focus on scope/needs definition and timely decision making, rather than the coordination between the designer and builder.

### history

The Design-Build concept has been embraced by the world's greatest civilizations. In ancient Mesopotamia, the code of Hammurabi (1800 BC) fixed absolute accountability upon master builders for both design and construction. When the citizens of classical Greece envisioned their great temples, public buildings and civil works, master builders were engaged to both design and construct those monumental structures, who accepted full responsibility for integrating conceptual design with functional performance. Throughout each massive logistical undertaking, they commanded skilled craftsmen, procured time-tested materials and controlled

every aspect of the project. A master builder was the chief architect, engineer and builder molded into one. In succeeding millennia, cathedrals and cable-stayed bridges, cloisters and corporate headquarters, have been conceived and constructed using the Design-Build paradigm. Enduring structures such as the Parthenon and the Theatre of Dionysius are testimony to an age and a process that are greatly admired.

### design-build in india

Though the Design-Build concept is getting popular in other parts of the world, the traditional mode of construction, Design-Bid-Build, still remains the primary option for construction in India. Planet3 Studios Architecture Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, industry partners with Design Build Institute of America (DBIA) have taken the initiative in implementing the Design-Build concept locally. Kalhan Mattoo, Director, Planet3 Studios, says, "The idea emerged out of need, but later we came to know that Design-Build is an emerging way of doing such projects all over the world." Planet3 Studios, who have already done over sixty projects and are currently doing projects for several industry biggies, say eighty percent of their revenue comes from Design-Build projects. The largest Design-Build project in India is a Royal Indian Raj International Corporation project of about 500,000 to 600,000 square feet of construction. Mattoo believes that globalization has unified the needs of markets all over the world and these needs will push a large component of Design-Bid-Build towards Design-Build systems.



e-serve : somaya & kalappa consultants, mumbai

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## design issues

Architects as well as property management consultants play a vital role in the selection and fit out of the property in line with the international face of the international principal or to maximize the efficiency of the facility for a given activity profile.

In the case of an overseas principal, their architect would work in tandem with an Indian team of architects and designers, to create spaces in India that provide continuity in ambience and environment, to that existing globally. Ar. Kalhan Mattoo, Director, Planet 3 Studios Architecture, Mumbai says, "This is known as a 'Virtual Offshore Office' where you make virtually the same office at another place and a person working in such offices will not know whether he is working in the US or Mumbai unless he looks out of the window."

Ar. Kushalappa describes the project they have done for SAP, Germany in Bangalore, translating the company's corporate look into a more Indian vocabulary. The campus in India conveys German culture. She says, "It's all white, steel, glass and very subtle colors; the Indianess comes in terms of the central courtyard." Ar. Somaiya adds, "We don't just want to ape the West. Our own Indian ethos must come through. I hope that they (BPO staff) know where they are, that they have a sense of place." Though design appears to have taken a back seat, Ar. L Venkatesh says the brief depends on who the client is, with the younger Indian companies being more adventurous and showing more interest in making a statement through design and the larger multinationals following the same corporate line, worldwide.

*"People are moving out of the single office culture to their own building which will help them retain their employees, because the attrition rate in a BPO is very high."*

ar. asha kushalappa  
dwp interiors

What then of creativity? Is it as simple as replication? Architects all agree that it's much more than just replication. Ar. Mattoo says, "We are replicating the essence of it. We have to deconstruct that and find out the elements which create that look. It's an instantaneous feel which has to be broken down to its components like the flooring materials used, the partition systems, the wall finishing and the ceiling systems which together constitute that particular look. We also try to find the key element which, they think, makes their offices distinct from other offices. Sometimes it could be the feel of openness or sometimes there would be huddle space in the middle; sometimes there could be a certain kind of reception area or sometimes they must have frozen on a particular material palette or a color scheme which you have to identify and work on that basis, so not necessarily you have to replicate it."

For builders and developers of commercial spaces, the shift to creating somewhat more specialized spaces for the BPO or call center industry did not involve a paradigm shift. They just needed to incorporate minor changes to accommodate the new industry. The dominant norm in the industry is leasing. While this does create a demand for space, the need for a dedicated construction does not exist with property managers adapting existing spaces with the help of their architects, to suit their current client's requirement.

us technology resources : atelier, bangalore



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