

FACE-TO-FACE

SCHOOL DAYS



IAN APSLEY

Broadway Malyan, Director



MICHAEL CORB

Burt Hill, Senior Associate

CW TALKS TO TWO PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

HOW ARE YOUR EDUCATION PROJECTS PROGRESSING?

We have been working with the Abu Dhabi Education Council (Adec) since around June this year. Construction is scheduled to start in June 2010. From the first phase of the model schools, of which there are 18, we are delivering nine.

Currently, we are in the concept design phase for a UK public school located in Abu Dhabi. We have two additional designs that are under construction in Dubai. However, Burt Hill is not responsible for the post contract services.

HOW HIGH IS THE DEMAND FOR EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

We get a reasonable amount of enquiries from the private market to build local and international schools to support communities. Also, the education council plans to start building 100 schools over the next three years. Consultants who we share information with also have received a reasonable amount of enquiries.

Education projects continue to be in high demand throughout the MENA region. With many communities coming on line, we are now seeing the need to provide community schools. Additionally, the Abu Dhabi Education Council has been very forward thinking and aggressive in its plans to provide 21st century schools for Abu Dhabi.

WHAT MAKES BUILDING A SCHOOL DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER PROJECT?

I think you need to have the ability to think like a child and imagine how they would want to experience things. From doing so, you should be able to think about how your building should be designed. It is all about using our experience from other markets and making sure we make the right choices.

Schools need to be highly responsive to how each person learns. Burt Hill does extensive research into the latest theories on learning and pedagogy, which in turn influences how we approach each educational project.

HAS THE DOWNTURN HINDERED ANY OF YOUR PLANS?

Not really. From a contractor's point of view, it has probably put pressure on build costs and the market is very, very competitive at the moment, which should mean that clients get better value for money.

No, the downturn has allowed us more of an opportunity to expand our portfolio in the education market, for which we have a lot of expertise.

ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING ANY SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES IN YOUR SCHOOL PROJECTS?

Yes. They are all designed to comply with the three pearl Estidama rating and there is another private school that we are currently working on in Abu Dhabi, which is part of the Estidama pilot scheme.

At Burt Hill, sustainable design is integrated into every project we do. As a charter member of the US Green Building Council and a member of the Emirates Green Building Council, we take sustainable design very seriously.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR 2010?

I hope that we complete our programme for Adec successfully and that we that we are engaged to start the next phase of its project.

We are exceptionally optimistic for 2010. Due to over 30 years of experience in K12 and higher education design, we feel we are uniquely positioned to offer the value clients will demand in the coming year.