Plan Reviews: Securing operational feasibility for service excellence

by

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Introduction:

In my career I have come across a number of projects where – at the operations phase – I heard: "Why did they do this – couldn't they have seen this before?" or "…they really planned this badly, how are we supposed to do this…?" Sadly, this is a very common statement from the line team delivering the service experience, regardless of the pedigree of the project.

It is the expression of the operating team's frustration that a dedicated service route is not practical, that the design of an area does not support the mission or vision of the project and so on...

MORICON Consultants specialise in this niche between the planning and construction phase where important changes can be made without costing hundreds of thousands of pounds if remedial works are authorised later on – let alone the delay any rectification work has on the tight project schedules.

The following examples highlight the changes in a design at planning stage where correction of the existing plans will have a sustainable impact on the service delivery after the handover. Most of the changes are easily done when they are initiated in the planning phase. Any later changes of course result in high capital expenditure and/or will impact the construction timeline due to changes in the build-program plus management of the change process during the construction phase. Just imagine the cost once your building is complete and you need to swap lift shafts and introduce a two-door lift cabin to enable your service team to function – apart from the cost implications, think of the time this will take and the disruption this will cause to your customers, which in turn might impact your image.

As a last thought - those are costs that are very difficult to wrap into a Section 20 / Capital Project as the building is brand new.

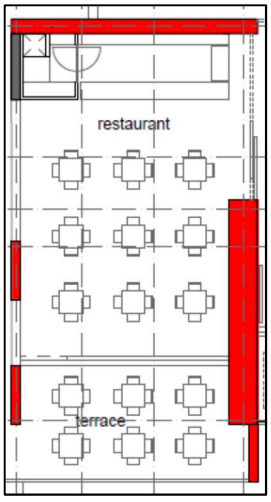
Example 1: Residential Food and Beverage Service

This project featured a quite sizeable food and beverage operation, supplied by satellite a kitchen space one floor below the shown residential restaurant level – the arrangement was set-up to service the pool loungers, sunbeds etc. via the bar / service space. The dumb-waiter in the corner did not only have to manage prepared dishes as well as cleared dishes in the same space, the lift also serviced the pool deck and sun terrace with the following Food and Beverage offering. This would have causes a number of issues for the team operating this space

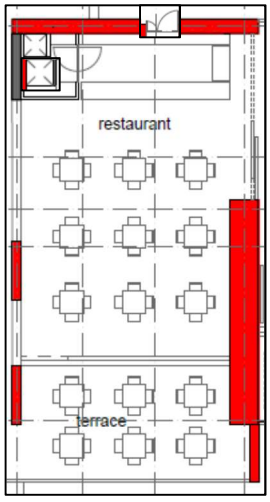
- Very large number of covers distributed over several levels of the building.
- Back-of-House area to support kitchen/storage insufficient.
- Staff requirements to service all areas mismatched the size of welfare facility.
- Issues with flow –i.e. dishwashing station needed re-allocation of space.
- Bottleneck for delivery because of insufficient food transportation from kitchen.
- Bottleneck for service due to access into service spaces.

Location	Purpose/Area		Type
Level 2	Pool Deck	20 Sun Loungers	Covers
Level 3	20 Seat Sun	60 Bar Lounge	Covers
	Multipurpose Room	24 Seats	Covers
	Cinema	24 Seats	Covers
	Restaurant	60 Seats	Tables @ 4
	Lounge 1	18 Seats	Covers
	Bar Lounge	36 Seats	Covers

Before



After



In this instance I suggested a second dumb waiter lift to increase the traffic and to allow for a better separation of fresh food vs. cleared dishes.

As you can see a secondary access door from the hallway allows better flow of staff servicing the restaurant and terrace.

The second lift traverses the service floors to the kitchen and thus allows smoother and better service.

The result was a dramatic improvement of the flow as well as how the service is able to cope with high demand:

- Installation of second dumb-waiter lift to increase output and clearing – reduction of loss of quality because of waiting, cross contamination etc.
- Introduction of separate access from corridors to the service station to improve flow.
- Re-configuration of total number of covers to reflect more realistic operations pattern.
- Re-designing back-of-house space to accommodate staff welfare facilities.
- Re-positioning of dishwashing operation to enable faster turn-around and less risk for breakage.

In all the outlined changes will result in higher customer satisfaction (faster service), higher staff retention (adequate work and welfare facilities) as well as better hygiene and safety records.

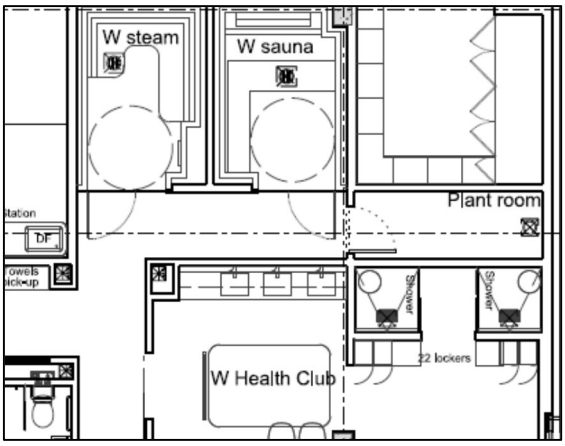
Example 2: Reconfiguration of a Heat / Wet-Zone

In this example we see the female section of a wet-zone area before and after changes – as the area was still in the process of being built the changes were easy to incorporate. The risk of not making the changes would have been an under-utilisation of the heat zones due to awkward access by residents.

As you can see there is no direct access from the showers to the heat experiences. In order to enjoy the steam and sauna, residents would have had to traverse the locker room as well as the foyer after showering to enter both hot-zones.

In addition, as there was no segregation of the climate zone, each time the area was used the climate system would have changed due to a temperature imbalance occurring on account of the influx of hot and/or wet air. The residents would have faced the same issue, traversing from a very hot environment into a cold corridor back to the showers.

Before



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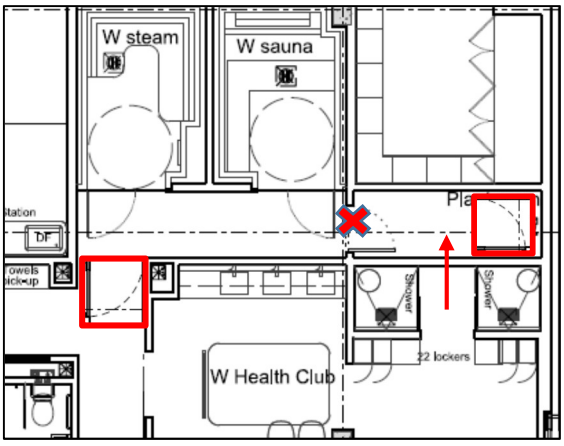


The revised plan included a new door to the corridor, separating the heat experiences from the rest of the area. The plant room – servicing the heat experiences - was condensed at the end of the corridor with the original door moved.

Lastly the wall between the showers and the hallway was not built as planned allowing residents a seamless access from the wet area to the heat zones.

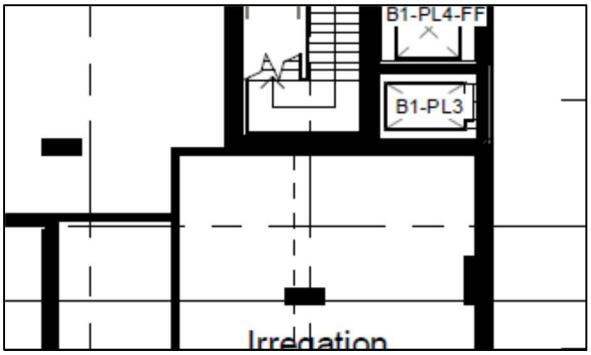
The result of those changes will yield a range of benefits:

- Higher utilisation of heat experiences from female residents.
- Better customer experience because of improved flow of service.
- Acknowledgement of cultural differences mandating different design approach.
- Avoidance of over cooling/over-heating the area because of changed layout.

Example 3: Back of House Plant Access Issue

The plans in this development did not allow access to the plant rooms of a mid-sized mix use development. The delivery route into the plant rooms for maintenance personnel / contractors and materials was only possible through the front of house residential lifts and residential front of house space or traversing the front of house commercial space of the largest retail tenant.

Before



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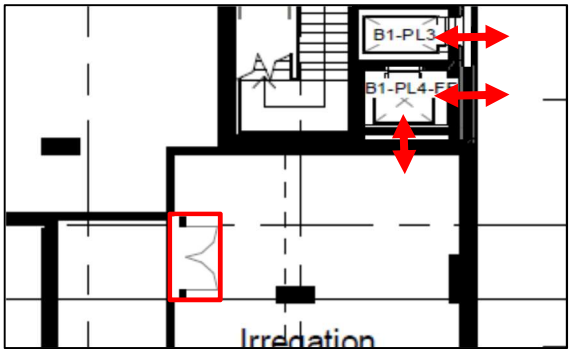

The solution recommended was a re-alignment of the current lift plans to allow a multi-door lift to access parts of the plantrooms directly via the lift cabin.

From there a small corridor and a new set of doors allows the maintenance and contractor team to access the main plant area without leaving the back-of-house area at all.

This change will result in a dramatic shift of how the building will be operated:

- Men and Materials have a secure back-of-house route to the plant-room area.
- No inconvenience of retail tenant and / or access during unsociable hours for deliveries and service.
- Improved health and safety management by risk reduction whilst transiting material.

Conclusion:

Those three examples demonstrate that a plan review can yield enormous benefits for a project and should be used as a sounding board and re-evaluation tool before the heavy construction begins. There are plenty of reasons why an early review can move the needle for your project, though my favourites are as following:

- Alignment with service delivery after completion (you need to know the end before you start – what is your mission & vision for the project).
- Reduction in unnecessary remedial works and overrunning of the project due to those works.
- Increased customer experience as well as higher staff satisfaction (the latter is difficult to measure but think of the cost of churn of your team).

Sebastian has more than 25 years of luxury hotel experience in senior management roles, with a variety of international hotel companies, including Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, Intercontinental, The Hazelton Hotel Toronto and Shangri-La Hotels.

His residential experience covers management roles at One Hyde Park Residences (Mandarin Oriental Group), Ten Trinity Residences (now Four Seasons Hotels) and Belgravia Gate, before founding MORICON Consultants. He currently consults Lodha Group UK on their three London projects – Lincoln Square, No. 1 Grosvenor Square and Kensington Odeon with a combined sales value of £ 1.6B.

He was educated in Switzerland and holds an MBA from Henley Management College. Sebastian has Member status at IRPM and Assoc. RICS and currently studies for B2R Accreditation. http://www.moricon.net/about/