

ARCHITECTURAL COLLABORATIONS

According to Samir Serope Daoud, chairman and principal design architect at Diar Consult, international partnering is essential for the delivery of successful, iconic projects in the Middle East.



The design stage and the delivery process of mega and iconic projects present very different challenges to consultants. The skills and knowledge required by an architect in order to start a project are very different to those required to finish it. When those challenges and skills are transferred to a project in a different country, with a culture and economy as contrasting as the UAE, a whole extra level of complexity applies.

An architect who enjoys being number one in the West cannot assume they will be number one in the Middle East. Methodologies and processes do not necessarily translate. However, partnering a great Western practice in collaboration with a great Middle Eastern practice will bring benefits at every stage of the project. The most successful projects have considered the international consultant not as a change, alternative or replacement for a local one, but rather as assistance, help or a boost to the project quality, in collaboration and partnership.

At concept design, the experience and vision of the international architect is a boost to the project. Through the statutory regulation and permit stage it is local knowledge that is beneficial to ensuring compliance. Through detailed design and specification the project quality may be raised by international innovation and technology. During the construction phase local knowledge and experience will be key to realistic programming, contract administration and efficient execution through the understanding of procurement, contractor and sub-contractor capabilities.

It is understandable that clients may assume that by appointing an internationally renowned project manager their

investment is in safe hands, and that a trouble free delivery of the project is guaranteed. However, experience has shown that in the Middle East this is not necessarily the case. What is required is project relevant combination of appropriate skill and experience. This is rarely available from one source.

Given the intrinsic complexity and many pitfalls involved, it is no surprise that the topic of collaboration and partnership was taken up by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) as a conference theme. In association with UKTI, it hosted the Working Internationally Conference "Partnering for Success", at RIBA HQ in London in March 2014. I was invited by RIBA to present a talk at the conference, describing Diar Consult's unique experience in the Gulf Region and sharing my insight into successful partnering with an international practice. The Al Bahr Towers in Abu Dhabi was used as a case study for success between the international design firm, AEDAS (UK) and their Associate Architects, Diar Consult, for the delivery of this project.

