

From where I sit

What ADP's vision means to me, by Craig Cullimore



I have the honour of being the chair on the board of a great employee-owned architects practice, ADP, and collaborating with so many talented co-owners and friends across our studios.

While I have some influence in our strategic direction, it's important that our purpose is a shared ambition with all co-owners, so together we can make a bigger difference. I believe in our purpose, so I focus my time helping to 'create more joy in our world', through our projects, our communities, and within our studios.

As I sit and reflect the impact an architect can have on our built environment, and that of a purpose-driven practice, this has to be a positive impact to address real world issues, whether they are environmental, or social, or empowering others to act. Gone are the matrices of financial performance, we need to measure our outputs in terms of benefits - how our acts benefit others and the environment.

I regularly travel to all our UK and international studios, or meet my colleagues and clients for a coffee (or wine) in one of the great cities we have studios in. I enjoy the diversity within the regions we work, our team, and the exciting project opportunities our clients have trusted us to deliver. The last two years has confirmed to me the benefits of working together in a shared space. I go to our studios, and clients' buildings, to sit, observe, listen, and to really understand the needs before working to deliver our combined goals with empathy.

Purpose has to be at the forefront and guide our behaviors and mindsets, with ambition, creativeness, and drive to challenge the everyday! ADP uses the lens of Sustainability, Belonging and Engagement to make a difference. So, what does this mean to me?

Sustainability – This has to underpin everything, and we must continue to take the long-term view for the benefit of all people, communities and the planet in all that we can influence. As architects we must take our responsibility to minimise negative impact on the environment. As a practice, we care deeply about our employee co-owners and need to maintain our long-term perspective, so that we can pass a resilient, relevant, and evolved practice to the next generation. lead by example, however our greatest impact can be achieved through our projects.

This all starts with asking 'why'? Why build, why not repurpose, why do you need that much space, and what problems will this solve? We then need to address the confirmed needs by creating flexible spaces that can be easily adapted over time so there is no need to replace. We should use materials that stand the test of time and consider whole life embodied carbon, and look to minimise their use, without adding unnecessary architectural statements or building volume. We should always look to utilise the existing and natural gifts of a site and its context. This includes orientation, placement, nature and things that can be repurposed. Taking this approach will add longevity, which in itself is sustainable, before adding technology.

Belonging – We create a true sense of community and place, a sense of identity, and feeling of being part of the fabric. In our projects and in our own studio and practice communities. Our studio culture is a creative, celebrative place to work, and we want our colleagues to come to their workplace not because they have to, but because they want to. Our buildings should achieve the same, they belong in their setting, demonstrating awareness of their context, and people want to use them. Both our natural and built environment define our outlook and how spaces are used. An architect must collaborate and listen. While we can demonstrate our

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vision, creativity and influence behaviours, these need to be based on the desires and needs of the project's community. Co-designing will create ownership and a deeper understanding of what is possible and define belonging. For example, how a school's dining or library space will influence the importance of social learning and coming together in a shared space to enjoy the environment, human interaction, and being in the heart of the community.

Engagement - We aim to enrich everyday life by bringing optimism and positivity within the spaces and communities we help create. The spaces and places need to be inspired by, and inspiring for, the people who use them. We must see the world through the eyes of the people who use our buildings, and design to challenge but improve their everyday. This is relevant both within our work and our workplaces. Everyday experiences can create emotional and a deeper enjoyment of going about our life (it's where we choose to sit). While we need landmarks and spiritual places, our everyday should also add joy to our life – through spaces that benefit our wellbeing, inspire and influence our mindset, enrich our creativity and make us engaged.

We want be working on projects that are challenging, interesting and that tackle real world issues - it's what gets us up in the morning and motivates us to go further and be better. Part of my role is to make strategic decisions about the work we compete for, which always starts with a question about whether the project aligns with our vision.

We work hard to find out what drives our co-owners so that they achieve their ambitions with us. We are all different and have different strengths and experiences, and if we really respect, trust and work as a collective we can achieve so much. We need to be listening to understand our diverse approaches to problems and have empathy with everyone's needs. Without this approach we are not living and breathing sustainability, belonging or engagement. ADP's purpose is 'to create more joy in our world', and I truly believe in this cause and ambition. As architects, we are creators of human interaction so we must inspire positivity. We also have a responsibility and influence for a better future, so we have to take the long-term view in everything we do.

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