

Neo Dimensions Architects

In the business of architecture

Neo Dimensions’ “relentless design energy and dynamic approaches” are powered by Dries Verbeek’s vision of a technologically synchronised future... with his foundations already laid.



It is simply not enough these days to be an accomplished architect catering to modern day mega-urban lifestyles.

While Dries Verbeek may also be tall, handsome, and a happily married family man, he is most importantly a strategic business man with a sharp eye for opportunity. This strategy has led him beyond mere design integrity and into a divergence of business dynamics which stream out of his foundation business Neo Dimensions Architects from which he practises.

A thriving, measured business is not typical within the South African design scenario. More commonly, architects, while brilliant at practise, are often overburdened with work schedules, irate clients and looming delivery date disasters, all which divert them from their creative energy which burns at their core. Without a certain business acumen, talent simply does not deliver returns truly worth their due. Add to this the fact that in any brilliant business there plays the role of the pivotal ‘light bulb moment’. For Dries,

At Neo Dimensions Architects, the memory of Letrasets and khokis, while quaint, are now a distant memory in the slick overlay of the professional Revit presentation.

So how did Dries - of pre-computer era - make the leap? “A young architect in my employ started nagging me about Revit. I looked around in the market place and realised that the principle of Revit, building information modelling (BIM), held the future.



At the same time my competition was delivering major quality presentations and we were still contracting our 3D presentations out. When I looked at the future of Caddie, I realised that it wasn’t moving anywhere in nearly the same direction. So I took the plunge.”

It was a strategic move, and one which allowed his working office to become more productive, with less staff, and yet be fully equipped to get ahead in the competition stakes.

“And I love how Revit evolves the building, BIM appeals because it is a more holistic way of designing a building. We design in totality. It is the way we think creatively and it should be the way we design buildings. From the business aspect,

his came down to a simple power 'on' button that starts with an R for revolutionary, and which in the business of architecture, spells Revit.



we are able to resolve design issues in detail, without having to postpone decisions; it simply becomes part of the process. So when a design is completed, it is finished in all its aspects – this has a major effect on time constraints.”

”And now not only can we visualise it, we can design it in a language that is understood. We can calculate shapes into working drawings that before were virtually impossible. What makes it pivotal to a business is that the shorter path is now the easier path, it makes our ‘work’ cost effective, and ultimately it makes architecture a ‘business’ in the true sense of the word. Now, I am assured of accuracy because with Revit everything is based around accuracy. I have, in a sense, gained control back. I am more attached and in touch with buildings than ever before.”

Way back in 1980 - here Dries has to throw his mind back and is seemingly surprised that 27 years have so suddenly passed – the only hint that technology was being birthed was as Dries recalls: “A mainframe computer at the back office. We sat in rows, hunched over the drawing board. It then progressed to Skok. It was the first drawing software I was ever to see and then AutoCAD arrived. There were only two or three techno geeks in the office who knew how to use it. They rest of us got left to the drawing board.”



Breaking rank and breaking the mould, in 1988 Dries started up his own business with a partner and they bought their own Caddie. “I never went on a training course, I simply learnt by osmosis,” he says.

Fast forward to 2007 and Dries manages his own ‘techno geeks’ on two seats of Autodesk Revit, something which now allows him the privilege of being able to lean back in his boardroom chair and confidently proclaim: “To draw plans now is like playing computer games.”

Every business carries its own corporate culture which can be likened to a tune. You sense it on first walking through the door, by the expression of the receptionist, by the ‘back office’ noises, by the pitch of which daily emotions run their course between four walls. At Neo Dimensions Architects you are immediately soothed by the gentle hum of business ticking reassuringly over. Staff is self-assured, warm and professional. Dries is the conductor. He admits he gets excited about new ways of doing things, and over and above his core



business of designing shopping centres, industrial spaces, luxury lodges and high-density living spaces, some of which are his own developments he also own a company selling standard house plans via the internet and has published a book on this subject, now in its third reprint.

He is the first to credit Autodesk Revit with having grown his business, and when most at his stage of life are spending more time over long lunches at the golf course, Dries is just getting warmed up in the technology stakes.

Maybe he will move over just a little, when his son, already on the architectural fast track pulls up alongside.

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