

# Securing Future Prosperity - Case Study 1

*Chartered Members of the Royal Institute of British Architects have the longest education and training of any profession but this does not mean that their practices are immune from business pressures. In this case study we follow the story of an Architect and his Guide from the Securing Future Prosperity project as they come to terms with the impact of the Covid Pandemic on the practice and seek new revenues. For commercial confidentiality we have not used the real names of those involved in this case study.*

Becoming a Chartered Member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) is one of the longest qualifying processes of any profession. Having gained RIBA Parts 1, 2 and 3 qualifications after 8 years Frank was recognised to apply and register as a Chartered Member of the RIBA. He then spent 16 years working in various architectural practices before founding his own practice in 2012.



His practice is based in an East End borough close to the City of London. Over the years the practice has operated with Frank as its sole employee, working as architect, expert witness and project manager. Frank develops and delivers projects with private and public sector clients, consultants and contractors, with different levels of complexity and methods of procurement. His experience comes from a range of architectural sectors and types: private and public sector mass housing, hospitality, education, one-off houses and apartments, refurbishment, regeneration, conservation, and healthcare.

In March 2020, the COVID 19 pandemic struck, and Frank found his work drying up. He wanted to make sure there would be a constant supply of work. At the same time a consensus was reached that the livery movement would have a big part to play in supporting the City of London during its economic recovery. In response the Management Consultants Livery Company launched [Securing Future Prosperity](#) (SFP) in May 2020 as a pan-Livery project, seeking to harness the considerable capabilities of Liverymen and Freemen to guide Recipients, who are typically millennials leading impacted small and medium-sized businesses, in and around the City. Guides provide structured, impactful, and quick guidance to the Recipients. Guidance is defined as answering the question 'Who do you know who can help with this?'

Frank had attended various networking events for SME's hoping to find support for the way forward for his practice. Frank learnt about SFP at an event he attended in July 2020. He decided to apply as a Recipient. SFP found Frank a Guide liveryman, Matthew from one of the City Livery Companies that had received its charter in 1657. After a long career in business, Matthew now works in Central Government as an advisor. Matthew and Frank met on a Zoom call on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and their first session was a helpful introduction. Frank remarked, "Matthew was engaging and warm from the very beginning" Matthew suggested that Frank look at the Government's Contract Finder portal and register for free tender alerts. Frank said, "Conversations with Matthew gave me a broader perspective about the Government's support of small businesses, specifically the procurement process within the construction sector. Matthew provided a good sounding board and his capacity as a Board member of a leading hospital trust meant that he could offer direct and indirect introductions".

The second Guidance session took place three weeks later. Frank noted that, as with many sole traders, "he appreciated the ability of the Guide to discuss with someone unconnected his issues and challenges, and to bounce ideas off". Matthew thought this second Guidance session was particularly important as he was able to discuss, "general approaches to business, the challenges for sole traders, winning new business, and

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maintaining a supply chain of future work". He spoke to Frank about, "the importance of networking, being part of professional trade associations, and 'working' your membership". The conversation then became more specific and Matthew, "outlined the Government's approach to capital spend over the next Parliament, the Prime Minister's Build, Build, Build strategy, where there would be opportunities for Frank, based on his experience, in the health sector - 40 new hospitals". After the Guidance session Frank said, "Being connected with Matthew is of tremendous value and what made it easy is that he is an affable person". He particularly appreciated Matthew's ability as a Guide to discuss his business situation and to bounce ideas off someone unconnected to his issues and challenges.

The third one-hour Guidance Session took place a month later, on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Frank agreed to develop a short brief on his experience in the health sector for Matthew to broker an introduction to Crown Commercial Services. They also discussed formal planning. Matthew felt as a sole trader Frank just needs to react quickly to opportunities as and when they arise. It is about working his contacts in the industry, as well as dedicating time to review tender alerts from the Contracts Finder. They held a long discussion on the tender processes in the public sector together with guidance on the "do's and don'ts".

The next Guidance Session took place four weeks later. Frank was even more concerned about his order book, so the Guidance centred on the future order book and prioritisation including three potential projects - a Warehouse development, a Club refurbishment in Victoria Park, and a speculative overseas project. Frank said Matthew, "had a big-picture, industry-wide view as opposed to a view on any specific challenge". For Matthew, the relationship was reciprocal as Frank had been able to share his perspective on what causes problems for sole traders like himself. Frank also made some introductions to Matthew – people who could support the Government initiatives in which he was involved. Both Frank and Matthew remarked that talking about both their workloads and the challenges they both faced in our jobs made the relationship work well.

The fifth Guidance Session took place in early December and once again Frank was focussed on his empty order book. The Warehouse development project was going well, and Frank thought he was very well placed to get this work which would last six months. The speculative overseas project had also developed, and it was clear that this would be a tough project management role as well as providing architectural services. The project would take up to ten years, so it was decision time for Frank. Matthew also took the opportunity to guide Frank on the Government's Construction Playbook and gave a briefing on Social Value.

The final Guidance Session took place on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021. There had been a break-through in Frank's search for new work with the speculative overseas project, as by using his extensive contacts in the sector, he had won a unique opportunity to design and project manage a complex overseas project, involving a hospital, housing, and enterprise zone. Now that Frank had secured new work Matthew was able to discuss scaling up his business and the value of his 'time' in delivering such a project. Matthew said, "Frank should not be using his time to type up minutes from meetings. He should take on some administration support". Frank and Matthew discussed employment agencies and the possibility of taking on someone for 16 hours p/w (possible return to work candidate). Now that Frank was well on the way to securing his major overseas contract, Matthew has asked him to provide a short document, to register with Crown Commercial Services as when this contract is completed, he can pick up the links from there.

Matthew summed up the SFP project, "Frank is very enthusiastic and keen to make a success of his business. Many of the topics we discussed he already appreciated, but, as with many sole traders it is about seeing over the parapet. He is clearly an astute business person, but as a sole trader, he just needs someone to bounce ideas off and to test his thinking. I was able to provide him with a lot of technical pointers on public sector procurement, which he found very helpful. I intend to continue to keep in touch as his practice develops".

Frank too was complementary and said, "I intend to refer other businesses to the SFP project".