

Views from young professionals towards the future of their professions

In this issue, chances have been given by the President to several young surveyors to express their views towards our profession. Their view points in the 5 main streams - Building Surveying (BS), General Practice Surveying (GP), Land Surveying (LS), Quantity Surveying (QS) and Property and Facility Management (PFM) are summarised as follows:

1. BS:

Chances of career development for Building Surveyors in the Mainland are now much bigger than that in Hong Kong as the role of project manager in the Mainland is different with that in Hong Kong. Since BS is a multi-disciplinary expertise, professional knowledge of BS is very suitable for real estate development in the Mainland. For example, a project manager working for a developer in the Mainland needs to take care of a wide range of works such as contract management, design coordination, coordination with various government departments, flat owners, etc. On the contrary, the chances of career development for Building Surveyors in Hong Kong are relatively narrower. The works are more concentrated on existing buildings such as building maintenance, renovation and heritage conservation. Owing to the stiff competition within the market and among other professionals, most BS projects become less profitable. Professionals are faced with more challenges and difficulties than before. The professional status has not always been respected by the public. There is a trend for surveying graduates to choose non-BS professions in ASP industries. The unfavourable situation pushes young professionals to be more money-oriented, and their original long-term career goal is being devastated.

What can Building Surveyors do?

In order to cope with the changing environment, Building Surveyors should focus on the need of the society and should diversify their scope of works and services, for e.g. fit-out analysis, interior design etc. Furthermore, Building Surveyors should be more willing to adopt advanced technology, e.g. Building Information Modeling (BIM), so as to provide better services and more value-added deliverables. Besides, Building Surveyors should further strengthen their professionalism by providing professional judgment and decisions, rather than focusing on procedures.

2. GP:

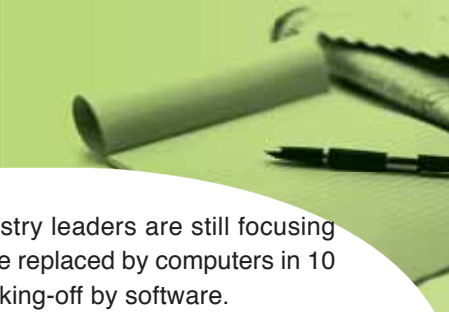
There has been more demand for the GP professional input in recent years and the GP profession is now exposed to a rapidly changing environment. The new challenges and expectations on GP have increased while the status of the profession is not being protected. The professional status has not always been recognised and respected by the society and government. Unlike other professions, General Practice Surveyors are not fully exempted from the Estate Agents Authority (EAA) licence exam, but ironically, professionals from other industries, such as solicitors, can work as an estate agent without getting the EAA licence. In addition, the job opportunities for General Practice Surveyors are still limited and the professionals in both the public and private sectors are currently faced with acute competition. The GP qualification is considered to be the entry requirement in the GP profession, and the working experiences after getting the qualification is more critical in developing the career.

What can General Practice Surveyors do?

Due to the current limited job opportunities, General Practice Surveyors should explore and develop new business. In addition, in order to cope with the changing environment and the challenges, General Practice Surveyors have to possess a wide variety of professional knowledge apart from their individual expertise. "Specification" together with "Diversification" will be the trend and General Practice Surveyors should be trained as an all-round professional. Furthermore, as GP qualification is just an entry requirement to the profession, continuous learning and sustainable development is essential to develop a better career in the industry. General Practice Surveyors should have knowledge in cost control, agency, finance, contract law, facility management, sales and marketing etc. New investment approach such as IRR and DCF analysis, which will be the future trend in real estate, should be adopted instead of the traditional investment approach.

3. LS:

The market of Land Surveyors in Hong Kong has been shrinking for the past ten years since the construction industry suffered from the downturn period. Also, due to



the advancement in Information Technology, one can easily create its own desired surveying products, rather than use the professional services provided by Land Surveyors. Moreover, the scope of services cannot be effectively broadened in order to absorb the intrusion of LS graduates to the society every year, which result in an imbalance of demand and supply of Land Surveyors. In addition, there has been lack of recognition of the LS profession, the significance and job nature. The job opportunities for Land Surveyors, which can easily be ignored, should be of high level and be substantially promoted and advertised. The professionals in both private and public sectors are facing various acute competitions. Also, due to various hindrances, the expertise of Land Surveyors cannot be fully exerted to serve for a better society.

What can Land Surveyors do?

In order to cope with the fast evolving changes, Land Surveyors should broaden their scope of services by applying their professional knowledge to create and expand business. For instance, in construction sites, more professional Land Surveyors should be recruited to provide professional LS services on earthwork estimation, progress monitoring and its approval, as-built survey. For building construction, the Mainland system should be implemented in Hong Kong. All flats should have plans with dimensions and areas certified by Land Surveyors before sale. The verticalness and site plans of buildings should be certified by Land Surveyors, etc. In parallel, Land Surveyors should equip themselves with professional knowledge and business mindset by sustainable learning and development, so as to capture all the opportunities locally and internationally. Land Surveyors should also have creative thinking and should not be conservative and procrastinated anymore. Land Surveyors should adopt new technology, skills and promote themselves aggressively.

4. QS:

Different professions are generated because the world is becoming more complex and division of labour is required, and professionals are those equipped with the skills to solve problems for other people. The challenges currently faced by Quantity Surveyors are that most of the business owners are cutting the professional fees, which lead to encouraging unreasonably low tender bidding. Many QS firms are thus suffering from "cut-throat" competition instead of creation of value for their clients. In addition, Quantity Surveyors are facing more challenges as there has been competition from surrounding countries and developing countries. Quantity Surveyors find difficulties in their career development and pursuit of better prospects. Furthermore, professional consultancies are very traditional and have very

narrow mindset. Many industry leaders are still focusing on basic skills, which could be replaced by computers in 10 years time, say, 3D model taking-off by software.

What can Quantity Surveyors do?

In order to cope with the challenges and difficulties, Quantity Surveyors have to develop more skills so as to create value for clients and to solve clients' problems. They should continue exchanging with international bodies to maintain an edge. At the same time, the QS profession should be promoted to the public, to let the public know the value of QS; and to the more elite who should be encouraged to join the QS industry.

5. PFM

As the PFM Division is a newly formed division, there are still relatively few recognisable PFM members in the industry. In addition, there has been no recognition of the PFM profession from the society as members of Hong Kong Institute of Housing (HKIH) have already dominated the market. PFM members are not eligible for the Registered Professional Housing Manager (RPHM). It seems that the professional image and status of PFM is inferior to the other surveying disciplines, i.e. BS, GP, LS and QS. Apart from the above, young PFM members are faced with difficulties in passing the professional qualification examination as it is difficult for them to find a PFM member in their company to be their supervisor or counsellor. Furthermore, as the first APC examination is being held in 2008, APC candidates cannot make reference to previous exam materials for their study and preparation of the professional examination.

What can PFM Surveyors do?

PFM surveyors should join hands to proactively fight for better prospects. The scope of services should be broadened. In parallel with promoting the status of PFM, the image of surveyors as a whole can be further enhanced. Intrusion of Green Management concept can even be a way out to show the professionalism of PFM surveyors. Moreover, the PFM Division should aggressively seek more mutual recognition in the industry. Our expertise should also be extended to the Mainland industry, of which is still under-developed, and we PFM professionals can help them to upgrade their living standard. The high quality management of the Beijing Olympic Village for athletes is a good example. PFM members should seek for eligible recognition as Registered Professional Housing Manager (RPHM). More references should be made available for APC candidates.

Views from other members are most welcome.