

## PROCURING INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Working on an international project can be very rewarding, prestigious and marketable for your company if done successfully.

However, if done poorly you may never be given another chance.

The purpose of this document is to share Davis Langdon's experience in specifying projects around the world and to raise the awareness of Australian architects working overseas.

### Be Aware of Local Conditions

Working outside Australia can present a number of difficulties for Australian consultants and requires special consideration and planning. In such circumstances, design firms are often required to work with local practices, and indeed operating abroad can be almost impossible without local knowledge, expertise and political contacts. When producing documents for buildings abroad, particular attention should be paid to

language and law, codes and standards, local protocol and design responsibility. Other factors including climate conditions, levels of workmanship and testing procedures should also be researched and taken into consideration. If the above questions and considerations are taken into account, working overseas should not hold any illusive secrets or surprises. Obviously, if consultants and specialists can use past experiences overseas then this gives an upper hand, but working anywhere in the world follows the same basic rule: clear, concise, unambiguous documentation results in better working relationships and results on site.

### The Language Barrier

Producing specifications in a foreign language is fraught with danger. The consultant is being asked to underwrite a document which, in its final contractual form, they do not understand.

To protect themselves, the consultant has two options. The easier one is to persuade the client to produce the project in English.

If a lot of imported goods and materials are required for the project, or international tenders are being sought, English is used as the common language almost without exception. What, however, if tender and/or contract documents are required in a foreign language? In these circumstances, the second option is to produce specifications initially in English and have translations made of the final document by the local partner as part of its scope of works.

This should make the local partner the guarantor of accurate translation.

It is important to remember that only the translated documentation has legal status. The consultant should therefore ensure that all clauses comply with the laws of the country in which it is to be used. For example, there is no point specifying materials from a country with which the host nation has a trade ban, or placing design liability with a contractor to find it is not legally permitted.

### Local Protocol

No one reacts well to being told by foreigners that they know best, so this should be avoided. The trick is to adapt to local protocol. The consultant should identify local procurement,

contractual and documentation formats prior to commencement and produce documents that suit local practice. Any changes should be explained and restricted to critical design elements. If people understand why they are doing something they are far more likely to agree to it.

Special attention should be paid to contractual and tendering terms and procedures. If the consultant feels that the project will benefit from some alteration, then the earlier they make their point the better. To succeed, however, they need to back it up with a good reason!

### Design Responsibility

Consultants should try to avoid producing an outline document that is simply handed over for the local partner to produce the final specification. To maintain design intent, it is often necessary to complete the specification in conjunction with the local partner.

Foreign design firms tend to be selected by clients that recognise a style or innovative design. This has to be maintained by the local partner.

One of the quickest ways to lose control is simply to pass on the specification (and detail design drawings) to the local partner. To retain control of design intent, the consultant should ideally complete the

full document and leave only translation to the local partner.

This does not mean work in isolation or avoid the local partner – far from it. But it does mean maintaining control and working with those who have local knowledge of materials, standards, costs and so on. Always circulate drafts on a regular basis and take note of comments received.

## Commonly Used Specification Structure and Content

Australia does not have the structure of a common arrangement of works sections, but this is standard practice in many other countries. For example, in the UK, the Common Arrangement of Works Sections (CAWS) was first published in 1987 by the Construction Project Information Committee (CPIC). CPIC is responsible for providing best practice guidance on the content, form

and preparation of construction production information. It also makes sure this best practice is disseminated throughout the UK construction industry. This working convention is designed to promote standardisation of, and coordination between, BOQ and specifications, so the two work seamlessly together. To avoid confusion, variations and costly delays, the local arrangements need to be adhered to.

At Davis Langdon we have developed our own UK baseline specification, which is managed and updated by our UK specification team. Examples of UK projects using UK CAWS system format include:



Wembley Stadium, London  
*Image courtesy of Nigel Young and Fosters*



1 Hyde Park, London



Swiss Re Building, London

## Working in the Middle East

Our involvement in overseas work tells us that a large percentage of major projects use UK or US based contractors.

When UK based companies tender, the preference is for the UK CAWS system to be used as a numbering platform for the documents with British Standards (BS) as the base. When US-based contractors tender the works, the preference is to use the American Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) MasterFormat, with American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards as the base.

This is a general rule but it is important to define which way the client wants to document the project.

At Davis Langdon we have developed our own US baseline specification managed and updated by our US specification team. Examples of Middle East projects using an American CSI MasterFormat include:



Qatar Science and Technology Park



Masdar, Abu Dhabi  
*Image courtesy of Fosters*

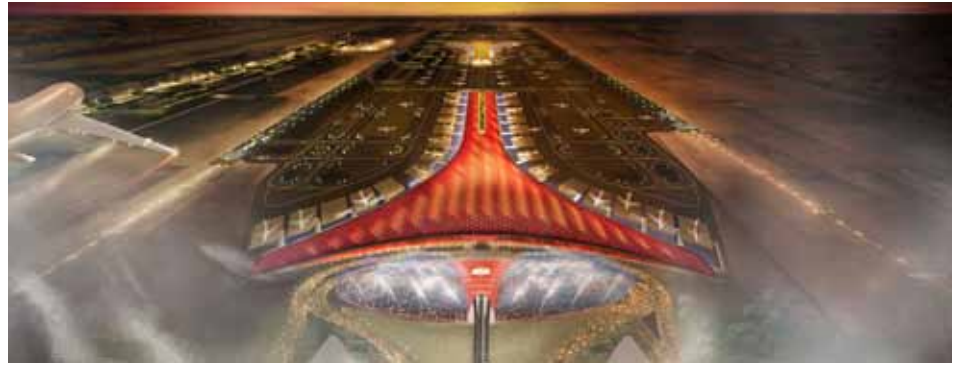


Alexandria Library, Egypt

## Working in China

Chinese projects generally rely on the Chinese construction industry. There are strict rules on the qualifications for contractors, both main contractors and subcontractors. All contractors should be registered under 'Special Grade', 'Grade A', 'Grade B' or 'Grade C' categories. Currently, there are no UK, US or Australian based contractors qualified to these grades. According to Davis Langdon, more than 99% of the contractors in China are local Chinese. The remaining contractors are from Hong Kong.

Davis Langdon has been working on Chinese projects for more than 20 years and has developed a set of Chinese standard tender documents for the main contract and all the specialist subcontracts which are accepted and approved by the local authorities. Apart from the general contract conditions, there are also special contract conditions designed to meet the local Government requirements. Some examples of Davis Langdon's involvement are:



Beijing Airport, Beijing



Beijing Yintai Center, Beijing



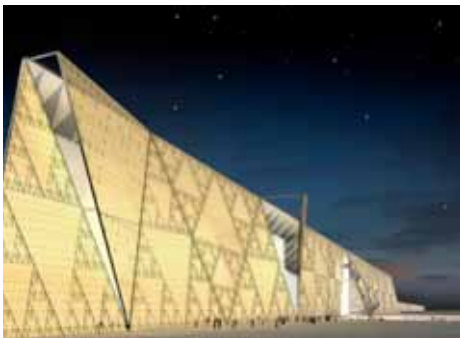
CCTV New Site and Development Program, Beijing

## Managing the Design Process

Davis Langdon's Specification Consultancy and expertise have naturally progressed to a service of Design Management (DM), which provides the next level of certainty.

We use our international understanding of the design process, contract forms, construction procedures and procurement routes to assist architects, design teams and clients in managing the design process.

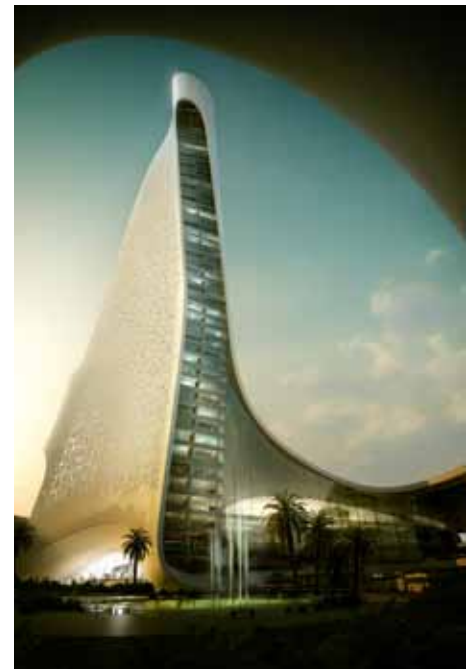
The growth of DM in recent years has been built upon strong client relationships based on trust and our ability to deliver wherever and whenever required. Some of our recent projects include:



Grand Museum of Egypt, Cairo



Library of Birmingham, Birmingham



RAK Convention and Exhibition Centre, United Arab Emirates

Please click [here](#) to view our Design Management Capability Statement

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