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A New Metric

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Project Images Various (courtesy of *M Moser Associates, Lendlease and Surbana Jurong Consultants Pte. Ltd/ Serie + Multiply Pte Ltd*)

What will it take to create a world where you leave your workplace healthier than when you came in? We brought together Dr Christine Bruckner and Stephen Lyon (M Moser Associates), Professor Lam Khee Poh and Bertrand Lasternas (National University of Singapore) and Simon Wild (Lendlease) to discuss the emergence of the WELL Building Standard in the region and its potential to help shape a healthier, more people-centric working culture.

Opposite: Clockwise from left: Simon Wild (Head of Sustainability Asia at Lendlease), Bertrand Lasternas (Associate Director – Energy Manager, School of Design and Environment [SDE], NUS), Professor Lam Khee Poh (Dean of SDE, NUS), Stephen Lyon (Regional Director, M Moser Associates), and Hong Kong-based Dr Christine Bruckner (Director, M Moser Associates) photographed at the M Moser Singapore studio.



Simon Wild (SW) We're starting to see WELL being requested in Singapore. I think it's a reflection of where health and wellbeing is as a focus here, particularly among companies. It's not as embedded within the corporate culture like it is elsewhere in the world. But change is coming.

Stephen Lyon (SL) I agree with Simon. I'm not seeing many clients in Singapore wanting to go through the full accreditation process. They're taking note of the standard and maybe trying to achieve a better result than they would have done before. I don't see any traction at all in countries like Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. They have only just started thinking about sustainability and they're quite a long way behind. As they see Singapore take it on board and start driving it harder, I think the awareness will grow.

Prof Lam Khee Poh (LKP) I think one of the important elements of a standard of this kind is the client being aware that there is such a thing to start with. Then after the buy-in, you need to have a professional team to deliver that. The building industry is constantly being challenged with finding sufficient numbers of WELL-qualified people who can participate and deliver these projects. This is so new in terms of the formal certification system that it's going to take that effort to build a critical mass of people that can filter in to the practice and take on those challenges.

Dr Christine Bruckner (CB) As people's awareness of WELL rises, I believe the uptake will be quite fast. In my experience it's already embedded in what we do as designers because we design for people. It's important we make sure that professionally and holistically we're training architects, interior designers and engineers to implement integrated solutions and to clearly understand that this is not an add-on, designing for human health and well being is fundamental.

SW I think it's very similar to the journey we've gone on in terms of green ratings and sustainability ratings. A lot of the points for credits within WELL are very similar. It's just benchmarking so you can, as a tenant or as an employee, compare the wellness features of the company or the building you move into.

CB It speaks volumes that those of our M Moser projects being

recognised and awarded by the design industry are inclusive of human-centric ones focusing on WELL metrics. Clients are always looking for what's going to attract people. They're asking, "How can I transform my business with this? What makes it unique?" And when they are being rewarded for doing what's right, that's when they embrace the transition to human-centric design.

LKP Christine is right. The idea has been around for decades. But it's only very recently with Delos and IWBI (International WELL Building Institute) that this has become concretised at the level of engaging the medical profession in a very detailed way. In the past, we would just survey the outcome. It was a more simplistic idea without much basis of scientific and medical knowledge. Now we've got to the point that this knowledge is available and people are becoming much more engaged. I think that's the single most powerful shift and it lends a lot of credibility into this discussion.

SL Sustainability is now moving from doing less harm to doing more good. I think in terms of WELL, that's the shift that we're seeing. Think about the sick building syndrome that emerged in the 1970s and '80s; that was all about "We need to stop harming people," whereas now it's much more about things that can drive positive impact as much as reduce harm.

CB Yes, it'll be wonderful if you can leave the workplace healthier than you came in. We had a project in Shanghai that made staff want to go to work because it was the healthiest place they could be. Those areas we designed with WELL metrics were popular to such a degree that we were asked to design other floors with the same qualities.

The IWBI's guidelines should be suitable for all types of projects. But it's started with the low-hanging fruit – the office environment. Our clients were looking at how to transform their businesses and how to attract people, and WELL has become a metric. It becomes very understandable, achievable and explainable.

SL Businesses will ask questions like, "What it's going to cost me?" It depends on the level you want to achieve. But now that you've done some projects with WELL, Christine, how much percentage over the base cost does WELL introduction bring?

Opposite, top: The M Moser Singapore studio, helmed by Lyon, will move to a new location soon and plans to look into WELL certification. Opposite, bottom: Both Professor Lam (representing SDE NUS) and Dr Bruckner (representing M Moser) have strategic alliance with US-based wellness real estate and technology firm Delos, which founded WELL. Pages 52-53: Designed by Serie Architects, Multiply Architects and Surbana Jurong, SDE NUS's new net zero-energy building aims for Green Mark Platinum and WELL Gold certifications. Image: Surbana Jurong Consultants Pte Ltd / Serie + Multiply Pte Ltd.





Conscious Coupling Connecting Indoor and Outdoor

“Singapore does have seasons – inside and outside,” says Wild, referring to the nation’s penchant for air conditioning that, more often than not, creates a jarring thermal gap between indoor and outdoor spaces. How you couple the two, says Professor Lam, is a crucial issue. Slated for completion in August, SDE’s new net zero-energy building (designed by Serie Architects, Multiply Architects and Surbana Jurong) will maintain a comfortable 27-degrees Celcius indoor and outdoor temperature using natural ventilation, high ceilings and fans. The building will be a living lab for SDE to continue its research, including its collaborative research with Delos on the effect of our indoor environments on human health and wellbeing.



CB In our experience, it's been less than one per cent of the construction budget.

LKP If you include these requirements into the design early, a lot can be done to optimise the design and the cost so it is not seen as add-on.

SL That's great when you're building up from the ground, but we often deal with old buildings that were constructed 25-to-30 years ago. It's going to be quite hard to bring every older building up to the same standard.

LKP Retrofitting is a whole different thing.

SL When we went through the process of doing this space [M Moser's Singapore studio], we decided that we'd try to achieve a LEED Gold sustainability accreditation. We had to change some of the landlord's fittings as well as the elements we put in ourselves. When we move office soon, we'll be looking to achieve a green sustainability rating as well as WELL, and that's part of our consideration in choosing the building. I'll be putting on my client hat as well as my designer hat.

CB One of the things we do, is to help clients find the right building. If they're not building it from scratch, we can work with the existing shell and find out what will make it healthy with technology, day lighting, acoustics and beyond. A lot of the metrics are made even clearer using WELL as an integrated part of the brief.

Offices are the easiest type of environment to start with because people spend so many hours there and thus, they affect so many people. Fundamentally, WELL also works with residential projects and the educational environment, where we're designing for the youngest and most susceptible individuals.

Bertrand Lasternas (BL) Our net zero-energy building at NUS [for the School of Design and Environment, SDE] is going to be WELL certified. Like Christine said, this is the best way for architecture students to be able to experience a WELL building. We're aiming

for WELL Gold. We're also going to renovate two out of the three existing SDE buildings, through which we'll investigate what it would take to retrofit buildings from the '70s.

LKP for decades we've been working on this concept of a holistic approach that Christine was referring to. And so when we came across Delos and IWBI, their serious collaborative effort with the medical community caught our attention. It was a natural growth point for R&D and also education.

We need programs to train incoming students. So we are using our own building, as Bertrand said, as one of the starting points for learning – we're walking the talk, so to speak. It's also important to feed research into our teaching in real time. With the new building and with the environment we have, we can really feed new data and new discoveries into our classes straight away. That's the way to speed up the process of building up that capacity to fill the industry, which is fragmented and typically very slow moving.

CB I think the wonderful focus on sustainability, energy efficiency and resource management have given some people a false sense that their buildings are also wonderful for them. But often the research shows that the indoor air is not the healthiest.

We're in buildings more than 90 per cent of the time and we need another metric that is not only about the planet, but is focussed on people. These two are not in opposition; "Should I do green or should I do WELL?" The answer is, both - we have a responsibility to our shared resources on the planet, but fundamentally, we're creating places for people.

LKP Designing the building and constructing it properly is only a part of the story. Operations and maintenance are important considerations, and WELL does address them. For example, all your materials may be WELL specified, but then the cleaning crew comes in, bringing all kinds of crazy stuff to do their cleaning with.

CB In our own WELL Platinum Pre-certified space, we've watched

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Dr Christine Bruckner



Above: A good 20 per cent of the points required for SDE's targeted WELL Gold certification are already accounted for. Most are attributed to the air quality generated by its natural ventilation. Opposite: The new SDE building will generate its electrical power through 1,200 photovoltaic solar panels on its roof. Images: Surbana Jurong Consultants Pte Ltd / Serie + Multiply Pte Ltd. Pages 56-57: Paya Lebar Quarter by Lendlease is the first development in Singapore to register for IWBI Core and Shell Certification for nearly a million square feet of workspaces across its three office towers. Image: Lendlease.





how once a month on Saturdays there'd be a sudden massive spike in the VOC levels after the cleaning crew came in. So we purchased our own cleaning supplies and we train whoever uses them. It's healthier for everyone including the cleaning staff. It is through 24/7 RESET monitoring and measurement that we ensure a continued healthy environment for people.

SW Movement is another important aspect of wellness at work. Only about 16 per cent of the jobs now have physical activity as part of the everyday workday. In the '60s it was something like 45 or 50 per cent. So the nature of our jobs become less and less active, but we can design features to encourage people to move during the day.

At one of our Lendlease sites in Australia, we created a walking and meeting track around the core of the building. Three laps take 15 minutes. Staff were given instructions: on the first lap, define the problem; on the second lap, discuss the solution; and on the third lap, decide on the solution. If you still haven't decided at the end of the third lap, then you can sit down in front of the fish tank and think of a solution. The budget to create that track was only 200 dollars.

CB We created a neighbourhood walking-meeting route within our GTB [Global Team Blue] office project in Shanghai. We've also created maps for projects that show the routes for 15-minute or 30-minute walking meetings in the neighbourhood. For example, one route could take you through the garden across the street, making greenery and activity that part of your walking meeting experience and enhancing oxygenation to the brain.

SW We're doing the same thing at Lendlease. Back in Sydney, we don't sweat too much during walking meetings! In Singapore, one of our guys came up with the idea of walking in a shopping mall. He starts on level one and takes the steps to level two, and that's his walking meeting.

CB I think that's fabulous and we should be able to incorporate these holistic solutions more. We need to raise the awareness of it, trust employees to make those choices, and then collect and

share feedback. There needs to be a change of culture from the management level to encourage success.

SW That cultural shift needs policy change. And the WELL rating goes into policies quite a bit. It's about how you operate as a company as much as it's about the design.

CB Yes, a lot of what we are doing with WELL is this organisational transformation. How do you create places that allow people to reach and exceed their own potential? We help clients envision their next steps in a world that's changing quickly, and accept that they can transform. It's inclusive of business goals and aspirations, firmly founded on the productivity and well being of people.

SW Good workplace design is an enabler of change but it doesn't, on its own, create the change. You need to raise awareness within people; you've got to change the culture and the behaviours. I think the good thing about WELL is that it doesn't just focus on design; it also focuses on behavioural change in terms of raising awareness, and on policy – it's tactical. That's the bit, to me, that makes it human centred.

BL There is a four-stage behavioural-change model by E. Scott Geller. The first stage is when people don't know and they don't do; the second stage is when people know and they still don't do; the third stage is when people know and do; and the last stage is when they forget but they still automatically do it. We did an experiment in the United States. It was to teach people in a bank to save energy at their workstations. It was interesting to see all these different stages, which you can measure, and then find the best way to bring people to the next stage. Eventually, it became natural. Change takes time and a lot of education.

lendlease.com
mmoser.com
sde.nus.edu.sg
wellcertified.com

Above: The democratic working culture at M Moser Hong Kong allows employees to decide how they would like to use their workspace. The space between the glazed windows and the storage cabinetry, for example, is used for yoga classes in the morning. Opposite, top: Thanks to its superior air quality and amenities, the breakout areas of GTB Shanghai (2016) designed by M Moser were so popular that the company commissioned M Moser to create another floor and half with the same qualities. Opposite, bottom: The GTB Shanghai office is the first (and to date, the only) WELL v1 certified office project in Asia Pacific. It features a walking meeting track. Photos: courtesy of M Moser.