

checklist: selecting the right fit-out partner

A guide to help you choose the right design and build fit-out partner for you

officeprinciples

All fit-out contractors are not the same.

The selection of the right partner to help you in relocating, refurbishing or fitting out your new space is a critical decision that can't be rushed as it could prove to be very expensive if you get it wrong.

Appoint a professional, friendly company who commit to timescales, budgets and quality and you should have no problem. Get it wrong and you could end up with potential cost overruns, business disruption you never foresaw or a snagging list as long as your arm.

To help you select a reliable fit-out partner, use our carefully compiled check list to evaluate and score the companies that you are considering.

The criteria:

1. Financial
2. History and background
3. Past projects
4. Showroom facilities
5. ISO qualifications
6. Consultancy
7. Design capability
8. Project planning and management
9. Health and safety
10. What else do they offer?

Financial

- Do they have a healthy balance sheet?
- What is their credit rating?
- Do they offer a bank guarantee?
- How long have they been established?
- Are they prepared to discuss liquidated damages?
- How will the size of your project affect their cash-flow?

History and background

- What experience do they have in similar sized projects?
- How many projects do they have “on the go at the same time as yours?” (can they cope?)
- Can they offer client references?
- Do they work regularly in your area of the country?
- Who owns the company?
- Which director / partner will take responsibility for your project overall?
- Do they have a personnel organisational chart?

Past projects

- Have you visited at least two past projects?
- Have you met their project manager for those previous projects?
- Ask the previous customer whether they completed ‘O&M (Operational & Maintenance) manuals’ and ‘as built drawings’ on completion
- Ask whether they provided a detailed project programme and adhered to it?

Showroom / facilities

- Do they have their own showroom?
- Can you visit their offices to see for yourself the kind of organisation they are?
- Does their showroom have a broad range of products / furniture from independent manufacturers?

Iso qualifications

- Do they have ISO 9001 Quality Control System?
- Do they have ISO 14001 Environmental Policy?
- Do they talk about an independent environmental assessment of the fitout proposals?
- Do they have a regulated waste management system for disposal of site waste and who is responsible for ensuring compliance?
- Can they tell you about BREEAM in a way that you understand?

Consultancy

- Can they offer you a workplace audit (to evaluate what space you actually need)?
- Can they organise a staff input summary (to gather staff views)?
- Do they offer building appraisals?
- Do they offer a budget cost plan (to enable accurate cost planning at an early stage)?
- Will they provide technical evaluation of the air conditioning, ventilation, IT and power / lighting requirements?

Design capability

- Do they have an in-house design team?
- Will they undertake full dimension surveys?
- Do they offer conceptual visuals?
- Will they provide professional selection of fabrics and finishes?
- Do they have an in-house adviser to provide in-depth furniture?

Project planning and management

- Do they provide dedicated project management?
- Is the project management an in-house person (or sub-contractor)?
- Do they offer weekly project meetings?
- Do they arrange all the local building control applications and planning permissions?
- What do their project programmes look like?
- Will they liaise with the landlord for you?
- How often will they report regularly to you on cost, programme issues and quality?
- How do they monitor sub-contractors?
- Do they offer a "snag free handover"?

Health and safety

- Do they have ISO 18001 health and safety accreditation's?
- Do they have independent health and safety advisors who regularly report throughout the project duration?
- Do they understand the CDM regulations and give you balanced advice?
- What is their on-site safety record
- Do they have proper insurance policies for your records?

What else do they offer?

- Can they provide security advice?
- Do they have specialist IT and telecoms specialists?
- Do they guarantee your move in date?
- What warranties do they provide?
- Does the furniture have a continuity warranty?