GRAU EN CIÈNCIES I TECNOLOGIES DE L’EDIFICACIÓ
TREBALL DE FI DE GRAU

PRÀCTICUM (EMPRESA 4ARK): TASQUES DE REHABILITACIÓ

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRESENTATION

This project is based on the knowledge acquired at the firm 4ARK, where I took a work placement from 3/3/2014 to 31/7/2014.

I worked in the firm for five months, four hours a day, and I carried out a variety of tasks connected with building restoration.

The tasks described in detail in the following sections of this report were performed under the supervision of, or in collaboration with, the Construction Managers of the firm, with whom I had a first-hand contact at all times since I worked in the Building Works Department.

On the other hand, I acquired a general notion of the work in the Project Planning Department although I did not get to know the specifics.

The main reason for choosing and offering a work placement for graduates is for them to have an opportunity to acquire hands-on experience with regard to the subject matter discussed in class. From my viewpoint, practising is always the best way of acquiring the knowledge and skills which are relevant to any subject.

Through this experience I became fully aware and I learned every aspect related to this job; namely, the different types of documents and procedures involved in it, the relationship with the subcontractors and clients, and also with the building managers, the relevant technicians and so on.

The months I spent working in this firm were really worthwhile, since I was made to feel as part of the team at all times, and I was given careful explanations of all the work in progress while I was also able to clarify any doubts I might have.
1.2 4ARK limited company

4ARK is a building firm mainly devoted to restoration projects, but it also offers a wide range of solutions in the areas of building restoration, interior design and express interventions in all kinds of buildings as well as maintenance jobs.

The firm was established in 2007 and is managed by two female professionals, something unusual in a sector which is traditionally led by men.

The following chart shows how the firm is currently organized and it provides details of the staff and their roles.

The firm is owned by two partners, a Commercial Manager and a Technical Manager, and it is divided into two departments:

- **BUILDING WORKS:** It is responsible for the completion of the works and deals with all the relevant documentation procedures. Three construction managers work in this department, where I undertook the work during the work placement.
• PROJECT PLANNING: This department is in general responsible for securing new projects for the firm. Three commercial work in this department.

All the members of the departments hold a degree in Architectural Technology, along with the firm's administrative staff.

All of the works are subcontracted with other specialized firms of the sector depending on the type of work which is required in each case (rope access work, scaffolding, roofs and so on), thus allowing for the provision of a highly specialized service. This entails the preparation of the documentation specifically needed to deal with both the planning aspect and the completion of the works, all of which will be described in detail in the following section.

On the other hand, the firm offers the following quality brands:

CONSTA is a private foundation created to ensure compliance with existing legislation in the construction sector of Catalonia. It is a roster of firms which aim to promote the values of training and continuity of their labour force, to undertake risk prevention actions or to duly resolve any customer's claims or complaints.

It is a not for profit organisation made up of businesses in the construction, restoration and maintenance sector of Catalonia which aim to gain recognition for their professionalism.

RiMe is the Building Restoration and Maintenance Commission of Catalonia. It is a joint initiative of the Barcelona Region Builders Association and the Official Chamber of Building Contractors of Catalonia, established in January 2005 with the aim of promoting quality in this speciality of the construction sector.

The Association is a not for profit organisation created to assist building businesses. It mainly watches over builders' interests and responds to their needs while it acts on their behalf before governments, social institutions and other bodies linked in some way to the construction sector. The Association acts in support of the activities carried out by its affiliates throughout the wide range of services provided by them.
1.3 CONTENTS

This section outlines how this report is organised in order to be able to relate all the concepts referred to and guide the reader along the line of our argument.

Firstly, we briefly introduce the context in which the placement was undertaken, along with a description and the rationale of the project.
This is followed by a brief description of the work placement, including the firm's aims and objectives, which also provided the framework for my role in the firm during the months I was there.

Next, we focus on the core tasks which the project entailed throughout the work placement period. The descriptions include the administrative tasks related to the preparation of the documentation as well as the work site visits.

Finally, some conclusions are drawn with a summary and an appraisal of what is described and of the experience of working in the firm, accompanied by a timeline of events, some final conclusions, acknowledgements and the assessment of the firm's tutor.

All the documents drafted during the work placement period are enclosed as Annexes to this paper.
The photos are included in a project CD, classified by building works and dates of visit.
2 TASKS PERFORMED: DOCUMENTATION AND BUILDING WORKS

2.1 DOCUMENTATION

DOCUMENTATION PROCEDURES CHART

Following the General Survey on Safety and Health drafted by the architects, a Health and Safety Plan is submitted for the architect's approval, who issues an approval document. The architect must also apply for the building permit before the start date of the building work.

In addition to the drafting of the Health and Safety Plan, the building firm must give notice of the opening of the work site, and draft the relevant documents of acceptance of the Health and Safety Plan, the agreement and the subcontractor's book which are to be signed by the subcontractors of each of the building works. Finally, the building firm must notify the property owner the date of start of the work.

Control of all the documents regarding the subcontracting firms is of great importance in order to ensure that the work is carried out properly, in full compliance of payment dates and cash flow needs.
Therefore, a follow-up report of all the documents concerning the firms involved as well as the employees' status and personal details is included in the relevant annual or monthly or periodical report.

The following is a list of documents which every subcontractor must submit in order to be eligible to do business with the firm.

**Documents to be submitted before the start of the work:**

**Subcontractor's documents:**
- Contract and receipt of annual risk assessment
- Accident insurance coverage and receipt
- Liability insurance policy and receipt
- Certificate of the Catalan Register of Accredited Businesses

**Employees' documents:**
- Construction Manager's qualifications
- Worker’s qualifications
- Delivery of protective equipment (EPI)
- Appointment of the Union representative for protection
- Submission of the eligibility reports
- Union representative's clearance for the use of machinery
- Registration in the Social Security

**Monthly Documentation:**

**Firm's documents:**
- Nominal list of employees (Spanish Social Security TC2 Form) and amount paid (TC1 Form) with evidence of payment
- Certificate of the Social Security
- Certificate of salaries paid to workers
- Insurance history of the worker (ITA)
- Certificate of the Tax Agency

**Freelance workers' documents (when applicable):**
- Registration in the Social Security and payment
Machinery:
- Certificate CE
- Factory Manual
- Registration number, technical inspection of vehicle (ITV) and so on

On the other hand, the following documents (prior to the start of the building work) were drafted during the work placement period.

Documentation:
- Safety and Health Plan
- Notice of the opening of the work site
- Subcontractor’s books
- Commercial contract with subcontractors
- Budgets and Annexes

Safety and Health Plan
The contractor’s Safety and Health Plan is based on the General Survey on Safety and Health, and it sets forth additional provisions according to the methodology adopted to complete each building work. The document must be approved before the start of the work by the relevant Health and Safety Coordinator or Authority. (Template of Annex 3)

Notice of the opening of the work site
A work site is defined as an autonomous production unit which provides a service to a specific organisation. Therefore, each new building site is regarded as a work site. It is mandatory for all companies which open a work site, or which resume activities, to notify the Business Management Unit (OGE). Notification of the opening of each work site is the responsibility of the building firm. The documentation can be submitted online or delivered in a hard copy to the relevant centre. (Template of Annex 3)
Subcontractor's book
The subcontractor's book is a document addressed to all the firms domiciled in Catalonia who wish to subcontract building work.

Prior to the subcontracting, the building firm must request a book from the local labour authority of the region in which the building work is to be carried out.

The document is a regulatory instrument for subcontracting work in the construction sector.

Document of acceptance of the Safety and Health Plan
The document of acceptance of the Safety and Health Plan is signed by the subcontractor. Although it is not a statutory document, it is commonly accepted practice in all building works.

In addition to the existing subcontractor's book, this document is an instrument by which the delivery date of the Health and Safety Plan is made known in order for all subcontractors to be informed and comply with its terms.

In this case, the firm believes this document of acceptance is convenient and necessary, and so they request it from the relevant subcontracting firm before the start of each building work.

(Subcontractor's commercial contract
The commercial contract is a formal agreement between the parts; it establishes the start date, the term and cost of the building work, the amount of penalties for late delivery and so on. It also includes the subcontractor's and subcontracting documentation, and the purpose of the outsourcing.

(Budgets and Annexes
While the budgets are prepared by the Project Planning Department, all the budget annexes are prepared by the Building Works Department as agreed in advance with the client. The annexes are additional documents or modifications of the initial budget; all of them are done with the Presto software.
3 CONCLUSION

3.1 CONCLUSION

This paper is an account of the work placement which was undertook in 4ARK, a large building firm. The staff’s flexibility and dynamism are two of its most outstanding qualities, and I have come to realize over time that these qualities are of great help in daily life.

Since I joined the Building Work Department, and throughout my time there, I alternatively worked in the office or at the work site. I first had some induction training to become familiar with the firm’s procedures and schedules, the documentation handled by our department, as well as the use of the computer system and the staff involved. This allowed me to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the ways in which a building firm operates, and how the different parties involved relate to each other.

As regards the documentation of the firm, I spent about a month updating and keeping the records of all the subcontracting firms. Although this was a task which was eventually assigned to the administrators, the fact that I was asked to do it during my work placement was of great help. I came to realize the amount of documents that need to be processed daily, and this allowed me to get to know the subcontractors since I needed to check if the relevant documents were up to date; this also helped me to identify the members of staff when I visited the work site.

As for the visits to the work site, initially I accompanied the construction managers, who provided explanations of the work carried out at the site, the procedures that were adopted, the reasons for it and so on. They also drew my attention to any conflicts between neighbours that may arise in each building or with the building firm itself, thus allowing me to understand each situation. Later on, I was able to do some follow-up site visits on my own, and I realized how important it is to interact with the subcontracted employees and with the neighbours, the building managers or even the doorman of the building.

I also did a four-hour course on how to install EPDM waterproof rubber roofs. It took place in Terrassa on a Friday morning. In addition to the theory part, we had a practice session to
learn about the material and its installation, something which we had been unable to do in any of the work sites we visited before. There are also other materials that have a very similar installation method, and this allowed us to have a general idea of how they worked.

Towards the end of my work placement, I began to prepare some of the budgets for clients. I received induction training on the Presto office software, which allowed me to draft some of the smaller Annexes to the budgets, such as modifications or adding jobs which were commissioned at a later stage by the client.

It definitely was a very useful thing to do, since I had never before used this programme which is currently employed in the preparation of budgets.

Overall, I believe this was a remarkable field experience for me, which allowed me to delve into the everyday work of a building firm while doing office work and also work site visits. I was free to move around at all times, and also to propose ideas, give my opinion and ask questions. Despite the workload they have, I was always made to feel as a member of the team, which I am a part of to date, since I am still doing my work experience in this firm.

The only objection I can point out is that there is no clear description of some of the firm’s work positions (in the face of the public); in some cases, there is a lack of internal communication, and some subcontracting firms or architects do not know who they should address or send the documentation to, which in some cases is requested by four different persons.