UPDATED FOR 2023

CPD FOR YOUR BUILDING PRODUCT COMPANY

A WHITEPAPER

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insynth

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Where are we now?

INTRODUCTION

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has been a successful route to market for building product manufacturers for many years, whilst providing construction professionals with career development in relation to the latest practices, products and legislation within the industry.

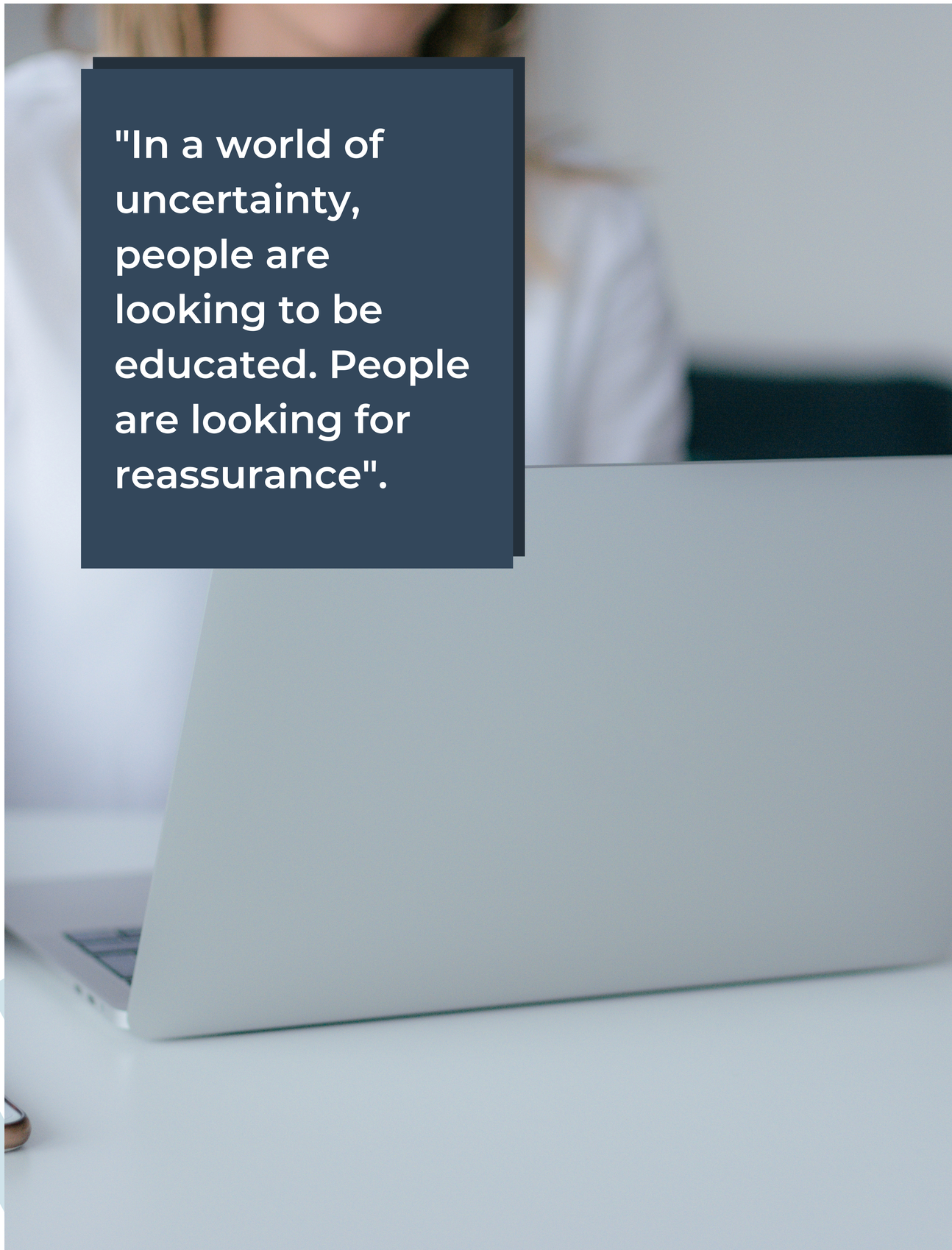
The Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 saw the rise in remote and distance working, which has forced building product manufacturers to adopt a more digital approach to CPD delivery.

This ‘new normal’ has enabled CPD providers to broaden their reach and solidify their relationships with those involved in product selection, allowing access to a larger market share.

As the world regains a sense of normality in the wake of the pandemic, we are seeing the evolution of a hybrid approach to remote and office-based activities, giving individuals across all industries and disciplines a greater degree of flexibility, facilitating a more efficient and productive attitude to work and education.

And this has filtered through to the delivery of CPD, whereby manufacturers can create and deliver both in-person and digital CPD to suit the diverse requirements of their audience.

Whether you are new to CPD or seasoned in the delivery of CPD, one thing is for certain: everyone is talking about it. In a world of uncertainty, people are looking to be educated. People are looking for reassurance. The construction industry has been plagued by, as Dame Judith Hackitt calls it, ‘mistakes of the past,’ and you have a prime opportunity to demonstrate how your product, solution or service can enable a safer built environment for now and the future.



Chapter 1

WHAT IS CPD?

It is essential to define CPD, as a clear understanding will produce better results for your building product company.

Continued Professional Development (CPD) within the building products and construction industry can be described as activities undertaken by a range of professionals to ensure their knowledge and skills are kept up to date with the latest industry developments.

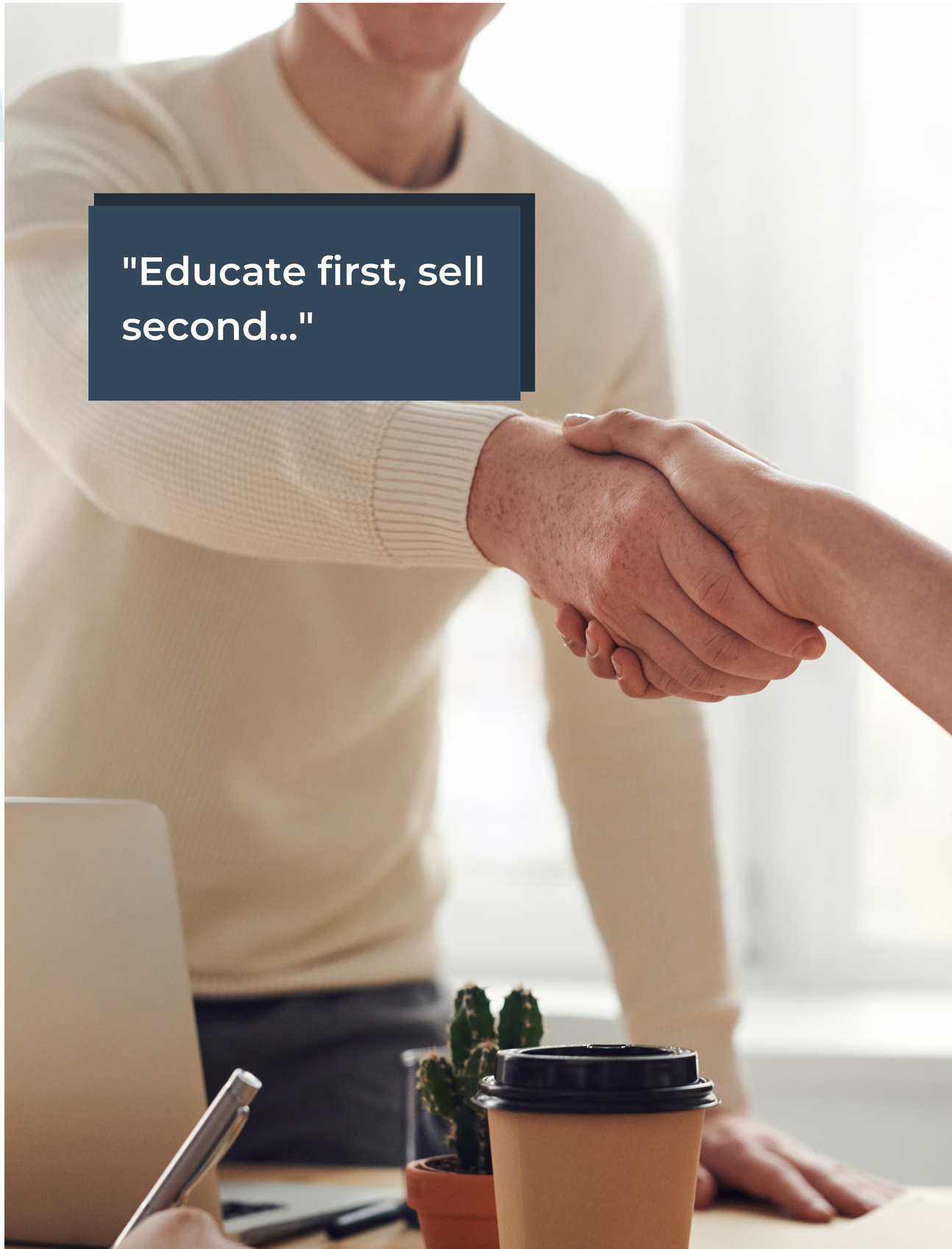
Generally, CPD is split into three categories: structured, reflected or self-directed. In other words, recipients can attend a session or event or carry out independent learning.

For the purpose of this whitepaper, we will be focussing on **structured CPD**.

CPD IS NOT A SALES PITCH

Whilst in the introduction, we described CPD as a 'successful route to market' for many building product manufacturers, it must be noted that CPD is **not a sales pitch**. Many building product organisations see CPD as an opportunity to highlight their products' unique selling features in a way that is one-sided and biased in hopes of getting specified.

Whilst getting specified is a key goal, CPD should firstly present information with transparency. This way, you will build trust and authority.



Digital & Face to Face

THE DIFFERENCE

The hybrid approach to CPD is something that we will touch upon throughout this whitepaper and the differences between the two are worth noting for practical and strategic purposes.

FACE TO FACE CPD

This is described as the 'traditional' approach to CPD. A building product company will host an in-person event, either at their premises or at the participants' practice (or other relevant setting).

This method of CPD is often referred to as a 'lunch and learn' session where it is not uncommon for providers to bring along a series of light bites, refreshments and even merchandise as a sign of courtesy, and to leave a lasting impression.

Covid-19 impacted in-person events for a period of time and its future was uncertain. Yet, the return to normality in the wake of the pandemic is enabling architectural practices and other locations to once again play host CPD events, providing both parties with benefits, including:

- Networking opportunities.
- The chance for decision-makers to see (and feel) products.
- An opportunity to answer any queries, questions or concerns that specifiers may have.

Digital & Face to Face

DIGITAL CPD

CPD of this type comes in a variety of formats, but to simplify its definition:

A digital CPD is something that you can access from your computer, tablet or mobile device.

For many years, industries have delivered education in a digital format, from webinars to instant access presentations and modules.

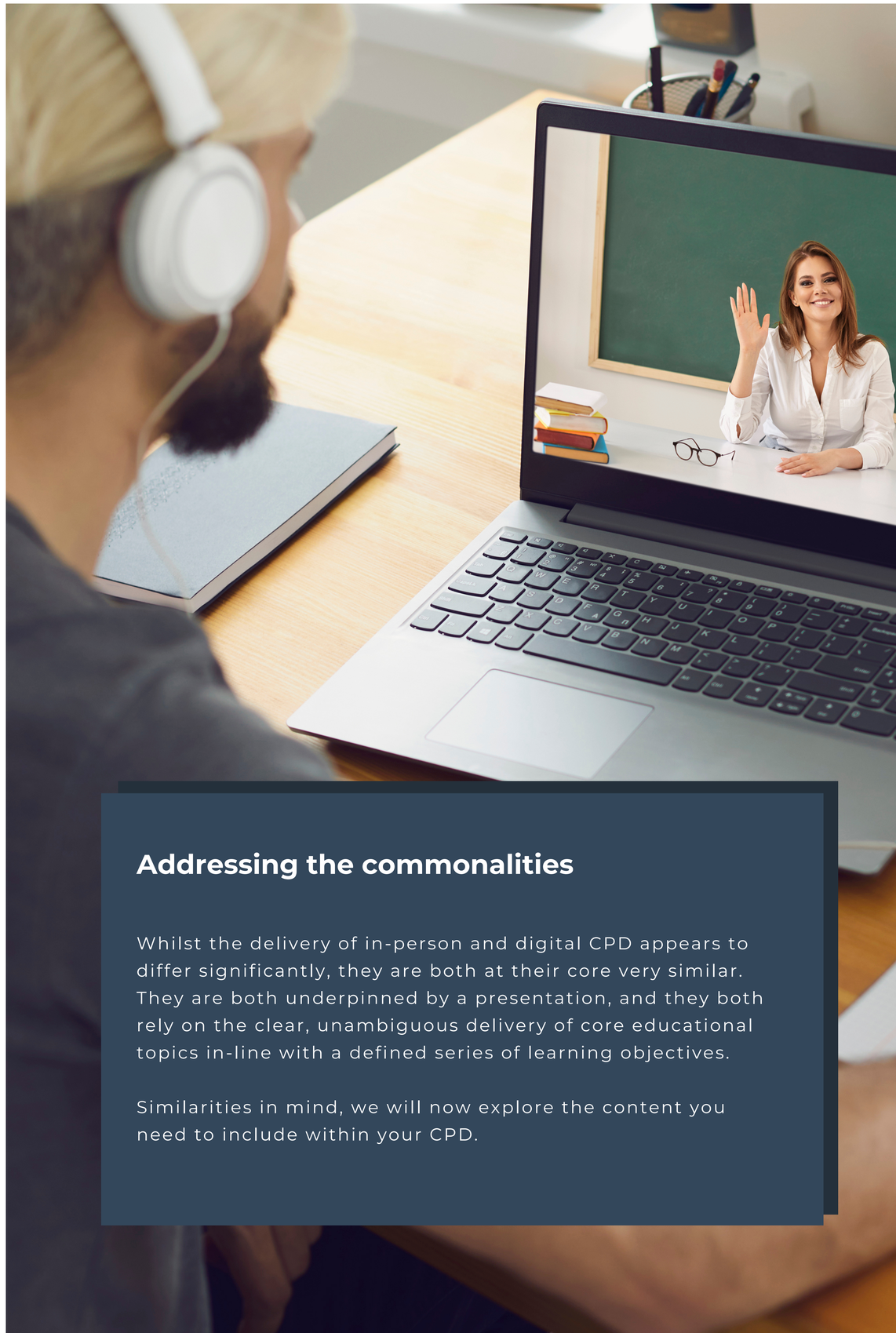
So, whilst digital CPD is not something new, it was only until the coronavirus pandemic that building product manufacturers really started to take notice, propelled by the cancellation of trade shows and other common routes to market that many businesses relied on for networking and lead generation.

Digital CPD doesn't have the traditional perks of its face-to-face counterpart. You cannot 'break the ice' with a selection of sandwiches and it is a little impractical to send over a titanium water bottle with your company logo in the post (although, not impossible).

Disadvantages aside, Digital CPD offers benefits to both the provider and recipient. For the recipient, it is a convenient way to access free, educational content any time, any place, anywhere, offering allowing participants to complete a session or seminar at their own leisure.

For the provider, digital CPD can reduce the expenses associated with travel, food and merchandise whilst providing access to a greater market share. No longer are you limited by location since recipients can access your resources regardless of where they are or what time zone they are in.

To be successful, Digital CPD requires investment from the provider in ensuring their technology stack enables the efficient delivery of the session. Additionally, a successful digital CPD will require alignment between sales and marketing to promote the event and follow-up leads once the CPD has been completed.



Addressing the commonalities

Whilst the delivery of in-person and digital CPD appears to differ significantly, they are both at their core very similar. They are both underpinned by a presentation, and they both rely on the clear, unambiguous delivery of core educational topics in-line with a defined series of learning objectives.

Similarities in mind, we will now explore the content you need to include within your CPD.

Chapter 2

WHAT DO YOU TALK ABOUT?

Deciding on a topic to cover can be a source of frustration for building product manufacturers. For those who haven't delivered CPD before, it may feel like you don't know where to begin. During the initial stages of planning your CPD, it's important to delve into the issues and pain points that your audience faces, and how your product and/or solution can help to solve them.

We recommend reflecting on the conversations that are happening in the marketplace right now; even better if you can interview some of your clients to get a greater understanding of key topics and talking points.

The key is understanding your audience. And your audience will be a diverse crowd of building professionals, ranging from postgraduates seeking education at a more basic level to experienced decision-makers looking for a unique and fresh perspective.

Remember, CPD can range from a structured, sit-down session to an in-depth discussion with an experienced colleague. So, above all else, always seek ways to add to the conversation and aim to deliver helpful guidance every step of the way.

We often use the term 'trusted advisor'. This should be your aim when delivering CPD.

Chapter 2

CPD TOPIC AREAS

Effective CPD has structure. In the same way a fairy-tale must have a beginning, middle and end, so too should your CPD. Engaging participants for 30-60 minutes is a challenging prospect, so you should have a clear understanding of what topic areas to cover.

In this section, we turn to RIBA's CPD Core Curriculum Topics. A RIBA-approved CPD is not a mandatory requirement, but the **RIBA CPD Providers Network website** provides resources to help with the delivery of CPD. Included in this (amongst other things) is an overview of the ten mandatory RIBA CPD Core Curriculum Topics.

Regardless of whether you get your CPD RIBA approved or not, these curriculum topics do provide sources of inspiration around the topic areas that architects are required to learn from.

Later on in this eBook, we will take you through an overview of a typical CPD approval process, should you wish to gain approval from a professional body.

EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES

There are more than 150 associations and institutes within the construction industry. Below, we outline just a few:

CIOB (builders), RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors), CIBSE (Chartered Institute of Building Service Engineers), ICE, ARB, CIAT, CEDA, IPAF, BCSA.

EXAMPLE TOPIC AREAS

1. Architecture for social purpose
2. Health, safety and wellbeing
3. Business, clients and services
4. Legal, regulatory and statutory compliance
5. Procurement and contracts
6. Sustainable architecture
7. Inclusive environments
8. Places, planning and communities
9. Building conservation and heritage
10. Design, construction and technology

Source: RIBA Core Curriculum

Chapter 3

FORMATS FOR STRUCTURED DIGITAL CPD

We have discussed the difference between in-person and digital CPD in a previous chapter, but CPD comes in a variety of formats, which we will aim to uncover in this part of the eBook.

We will be focussing on:

- Webinars
- Modular learning
- Instant access video CPD

Chapter 3

WEBINARS

Webinars are the ‘digital’ version of an in-person CPD event. They are delivered in a live environment and the provider is likely to use a presentation to help illustrate their points.

The main difference between a webinar and face-to-face CPD is that recipients won’t get to touch the product physically, and you are limited on the level of interaction and networking available to you pre and post-session.

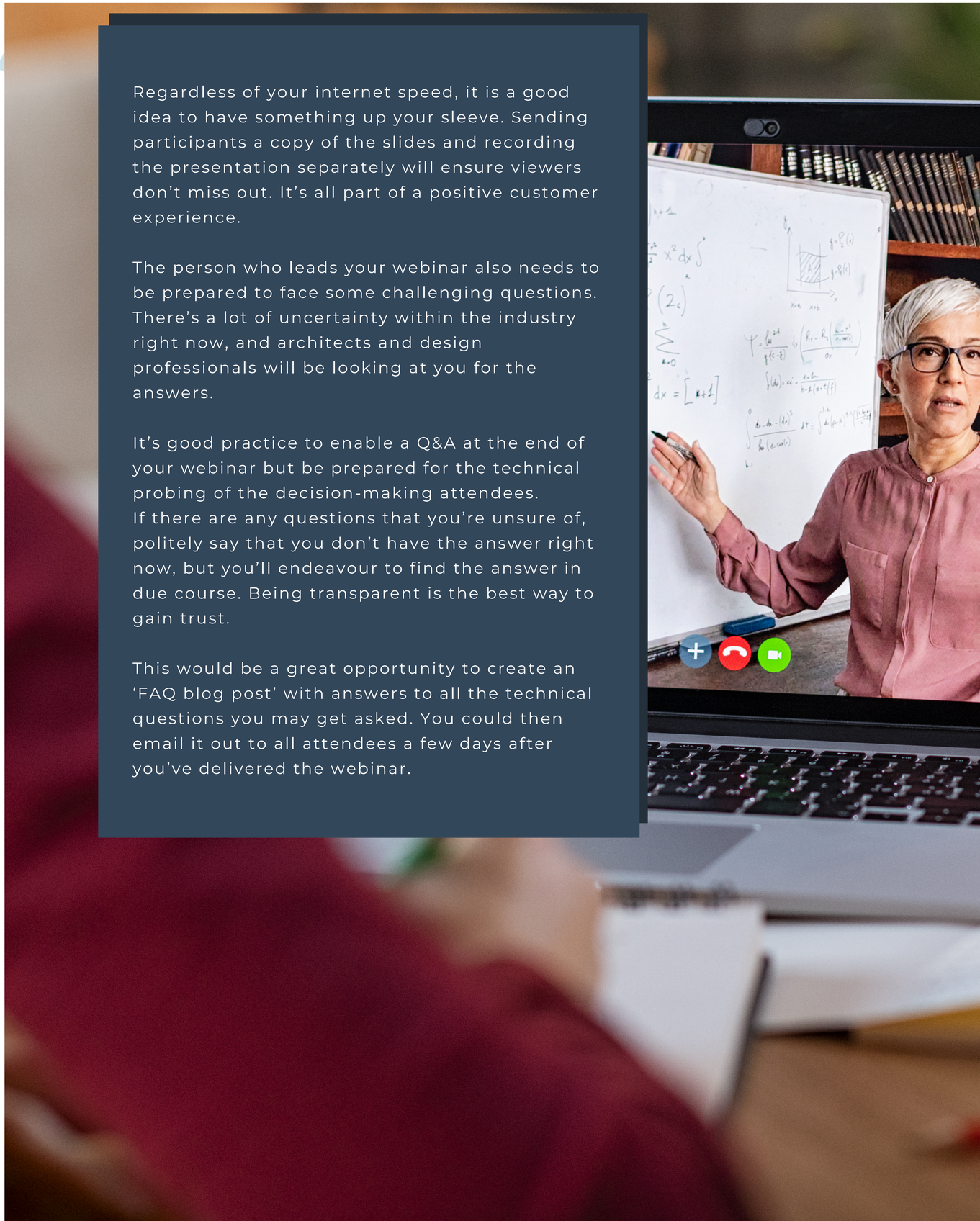
Instead, webinars rely on the attendee to be more self-sufficient, giving them the option to log on (and indeed, leave) if they so wish.

Webinars are a great way to reach out to a wide audience. For example, if you invite a database of 3,000 people to your webinar and 10% of people show up, that’s an audience of 300 people. When compared to an architectural practice of, say, 20 people, you can see that the potential reach is huge.

WEBINAR CONSIDERATIONS

Talking online over a webcam is not an easy feat; you can’t always see the faces of your attendees, and you need to be prepared for any technical difficulties along the way. If you’re likely to get flustered in the event of the WI-FI cutting out, choose a speaker who will remain calm.

Remember: WI-FI connections occasionally drop out, and those attending a digital event will be prepared for this. Your value goes beyond the speed of your WI-FI connection.



Regardless of your internet speed, it is a good idea to have something up your sleeve. Sending participants a copy of the slides and recording the presentation separately will ensure viewers don’t miss out. It’s all part of a positive customer experience.

The person who leads your webinar also needs to be prepared to face some challenging questions. There’s a lot of uncertainty within the industry right now, and architects and design professionals will be looking at you for the answers.

It’s good practice to enable a Q&A at the end of your webinar but be prepared for the technical probing of the decision-making attendees.
If there are any questions that you’re unsure of, politely say that you don’t have the answer right now, but you’ll endeavour to find the answer in due course. Being transparent is the best way to gain trust.

This would be a great opportunity to create an ‘FAQ blog post’ with answers to all the technical questions you may get asked. You could then email it out to all attendees a few days after you’ve delivered the webinar.

Chapter 3

MODULAR LEARNING

One of the most effective ways to engage your audience is by breaking what would normally be a lengthy session into bitesize chunks.

Platforms such as Teachable allow you to create an 'online school', offering short courses that users can access at their convenience.

Modularisation of topics is a widely accepted learning approach, and countless studies have proven its effectiveness.

Allowing the user to reflect on the subject matter through manageable chunks will help them gain more value from their learning experience, whilst providing you with a way to establish trust and thought leadership.

Chapter 3

INSTANT ACCESS VIDEO

This is a pre-recorded CPD session that attendees can access any time of the day, at their own convenience, delivered in a video format.

Video CPD will involve the adequate preparation of content, namely:

- A presentation
- A script
- A voiceover
- Video editing

The delivery of this content will require input from specialists, including video editors, voice over artists and content writers. As you might have guessed, the investment in this format will be greater, but this should also be reflected in its outcome/success.

An effective video CPD has the potential to be used time and time again on multiple online platforms, ensuring a steady stream of qualified leads and referrals for your building product business.

How you provide access to this type of CPD will be crucial to its success. High-value content such as this should be a gated asset. In other words, individuals should only be granted access to the resource if they provide some form of subscription or contact data in return.

When housed on your website, this should be gated behind a landing page and a form, but many companies, including Specifiedby, Barbour and CPDUK will host your CPD on their websites and platforms for a fee. In return, your CPD will be available to their list of subscribers, increasing the number of people gaining access to it.

Should you wish to join a CPD providers network, an Instant Access Video CPD will be the generally accepted format.

We're now going to delve further into a typical approval and accreditation process.

Chapter 3

COMPARING FORMATS

Choosing the correct CPD format can be difficult, with each format having its strengths and drawbacks, respectively.

Here is a visual representation to aid your selection.

	Webinars	Modular Learning Platforms	Instant Access Video	Face-to-Face
Wide audience reach	✓	✓	✓	✗
Audience can see and touch products	✗	✗	✗	✓
Networking opportunities	✓	✗	✗	✓
Low cost to create	✓	✗	✗	✓
Low cost to run	✓	✓	✓	✗
Anytime access	✗	✓	✓	✗
Time effective	✓	✓	✓	✗
Requires specialist input	✓	✓	✓	✓
Requires effective tech stack	✓	✓	✓	✗
Build relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thought-leadership awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foster partnership	✓	✗	✗	✓
Reach senior specification decision makers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enable follow-up nurturing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gain search visibility	✓	✓	✓	✗

*Cost-effectiveness refers to return on investment (ROI). What may appear to be a larger upfront cost will likely produce more ROI.

Chapter 4

JOINING A CPD PROVIDERS NETWORK

As mentioned in a previous chapter, over 150 associations within the construction industry provide CPD. And whilst joining a CPD Providers Network is not a mandatory requirement, getting your CPD accredited does hold some weight.

Many associations have thousands of members – all of whom are involved in specification within the built environment – from architects, surveyors, builders and engineers.

Members of these associations are obliged to undertake a minimum of hours' worth of CPD a year to maintain compliance, and professionally approved materials could be worth additional CPD points to members.

Here we outline a standard breakdown of what an approval process may look like – should you wish to join a Providers Network.

Phase 1: Consultation

Firstly, you will require an informal consultation. This is to ensure that your proposed CPD is suitable and appropriate. For providers such as RIBA, this may include assessing whether it fits into one of the ten Core Curriculum Topics.

Phase 2: Submission

You will submit your CPD to the Assessments team and they will evaluate the materials, providing advice and guidance on how to improve the CPD in any way. You will then re-submit your amended CPD.

Phase 3: Accreditation

When you have completed the accreditation process, you will receive a certificate to say that you're 'CPD Certified'. This demonstrates that the learning meets the required standards and guidelines. You will then be able to market your CPD as 'Approved' by your chosen association.

The Benefits of Being an Accredited CPD Provider

- Increased recognition and increased brand perception
- A healthy learning culture for your organisation.
- Available on the CPD provider's website, giving you a healthy backlink, increasing your Domain Authority and outreach.
- You get invited to member networking events.
- You get support on how to improve and deliver a great learning experience for all future CPDs.

Chapter 4

HOW TO GET RIBA APPROVED

When creating a brand new CPD for 2023, some key essentials need to be included within the presentation's content.

Generally speaking, these mandatory **specification essentials** must be reflected upon, regardless of the topic area for your CPD. However, not all of these essentials may be required, if they are not pertinent to the product itself.

The seven specification essentials that generally must be included are to the right of this page.

When it comes to updating previously approved CPDs, you need to bear this list in mind. Whether you're simply giving your CPD a freshen up, or changing the content, you will need to resubmit it to the assessment team.

At this point, it's important to consider how long ago your original CPD was approved.

1. Statutory & Regulatory Compliance
2. Health And Safety (CDM) & Well-Being
3. Sustainable Architecture & Construction
4. Inclusive Environments
5. Product Application & Usage
6. Long-Term Maintenance Issues
7. Fire Safety

Chapter 5

ADVICE ON MAXIMISING YOUR CPD POTENTIAL

You can see that CPD isn't just a 'one size fits all' approach. There are many points for consideration, from both a logistical and strategic perspective. For this reason, it is damaging to focus all of your CPD efforts on one method of delivery.

Choosing to carry out a series of webinars (and only webinars) for example, will limit your reach to only your database unless you put a lot of effort and resource into promotion – which can become costly, time-consuming and may even lead to disappointment.

Similarly, choosing to only deliver in-person events will restrict you from reaching out to a wider audience of specifiers from other regions (and even countries!).

That's why it's crucial that you maintain flexibility and variety in your approach. In the next chapter, we explore how your CPD can be adapted.

Chapter 5

DO'S AND DON'TS WHEN WRITING CPD

Nine times out of ten, CPD is seen as a sales tool for Building Product businesses that create them.

It’s clear to see why.

They are a great means of getting your business in front of architects and specifiers, positioning your products and services as the clear solution to the problem your CPD discusses.

However, it’s very important you let this happen organically and don’t lose sight of the main goal of delivering quality CPDs.

Whilst these do's are important to bear in mind, take particular attention to the DON'Ts. Doing any of the following can result in your CPD not being approved by the assessment team:

- **Don’t Include Branded Product Names Or Ranges – (outside of the permitted company history section)**
- **Don’t Include Company Branding Logos On Videos/Images (one logo per slide is allowed)**
- **Don’t Overuse The Terms ‘WE’ Or ‘OUR’ To Substitute Your Company Name**
- **Don’t Denigrate Your Competition**

Chapter 5

ADAPTING YOUR CPD

Catering for a variety of formats doesn't mean you should produce five or six different sessions. Instead, you should tweak your existing session to match the format, audience and intended use.

For example, let's say you wanted to create an instant access CPD to be housed on your website. The same presentation could be used to deliver a webinar and an in-person session.

Let's say you wanted to create a modular learning platform (as we suggested in chapter 3). The same presentation you used for your in-person event could be cut up and split into modules, complete with quizzes that could be added after each module is completed.

The only instance where significant changes may need to take place is if you want to submit your existing CPD for approval from a professional body. Some professional bodies adopt a stringent approval process, which restricts you from mentioning your product name or being overly 'commercial' in your delivery. Not to mention, you may be required to include a slide tackling each topic area in a prescribed Curriculum. Therefore, you may have to remove and/or add existing slides in order to gain approval.

Chapter 5

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CONTENT

Many businesses fail to recognise the opportunity they have to maximise on the content at their fingertips with a completed CPD. Your CPD session could be repurposed in many different ways to increase your chances of brand awareness, thought leadership and trust within the marketplace.

For example, why not turn your CPD into an eBook? An eBook is a high-value asset that can be gated on your website for visitors to download in return for their contact details. We call this a 'lead magnet.'

Additionally, repurposing the content within your CPD into a series of blog posts that could be housed on your website's news section will provide your audience with free, regular, technical content that (if matched with an effective SEO strategy) will be recognised by Google as authoritative.

With all this added value, you have plenty of content to create social media and email marketing campaigns, increasing engagement with your existing network.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

CPD is at the heart of the Inbound methodology and is an effective tool for providing your audience with helpful content of real educational value.

But, as a building product business, is it time to reconsider your approach to CPD?

In the same way suppliers in the building product industry may have a website and a showroom, a similar approach should be taken with your CPD – where you have a multitude of offerings (both in-person and digital) to cater to the needs of your audience.

The development of accurate CPD material may require the input from specialists – a team of experts who are removed from your product offering – to enable the objective, educational value to shine through. When developed internally, companies often tend to demonstrate their unconscious bias about their product, preventing them from delivering a balanced viewpoint. This could potentially damage the educational quality of your material and may even have a detrimental impact on your reputation as a CPD provider.

For this reason, the development of your CPD – and whom you employ to undertake it – is a crucial step that deserves close consideration.

At Insynth, we have partnered with numerous building product organisations to help with the development of their CPD, utilising our in-house skills in technical content writing, video editing and design to ensure high-quality outcomes and results for our clients. To discuss your CPD requirements with a member of the team, get in touch at insynth.co.uk or email our Head of Client Solutions, Ashley Powell at ash@insynth.co.uk.

SUPERCHARGE YOUR CPD WITH INSYNTH

Whatever your CPD goals are, Insynth is here to help.

Whether it’s revamping your existing CPD or creating a brand new one from scratch, you’ll get access to a team of technical content writers, video editors, and graphic designers to help take your CPD to new heights.

The process is simple. We immerse ourselves in your company, establish your short and long-term goals and produce a resource that you and your team can use time and time again.

Prices start from as little as £1095.

To arrange your in-depth consultation with our technical content team, simply fill out the form on this page.

Contact Us

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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This whitepaper is bought to you by Insynth's Head Writer, Rich Newsome and Senior Writer, Jake Derry.

Rich brings with him his experience in the development of CPD materials for a range of building product businesses. As an ex-teacher, he spent many years in educational environments, which has enabled him to communicate his clients' messaging and learning aims in a clear and concise way.

Jake joined Insynth as one of our Technical Writers & Account Managers after obtaining his Degree in Spanish, Italian & Translation. Now our Senior Content Writer, Jake has helped deliver client success with everything from Technical CPD production to Digital eBooks. Combining his thirst for knowledge and technical writing skills he continues to deliver educational content for our clients, working within a range of construction sectors.

ABOUT INSYNTH

We are Europe's first inbound marketing agency to specialise in construction, driven to Deliver a predictable flow of leads, specifications and customers for your Building Product brand with a data-driven inbound marketing approach.

With 30 years of experience in the construction industry, from specification, tendering through to delivery or even installation, we understand the challenges which hinder building product businesses when growing. However, we have developed the right tools to deliver growth for building brands in this era of digital transformation.

Think of us as your outsourced in-house marketing team, working seamlessly with you to take control of strategy, implementation and delivery. From website design, search engine optimisation (SEO) and CRM implementation to Sales & Marketing strategy, Insynth is ready to help you achieve your ultimate aim: Growing your business and getting new specifiers and customers.

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