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**ARCHIPRENEURS IN THE XXI
CENTURY, BY URBAN MATTERS**
ENRIQUE IBÁÑEZ
Director and Founder at Urban Matters



ENRIQUE IBÁÑEZ GONZÁLEZ

AN ARCHITECTURAL NOMAD WITH A WORLDWIDE REPUTATION

Enrique Ibáñez González, founder and director of Urbanmatters, started his career in the Netherlands, but he's worked all over the world. When he joined us for the latest in the IE NextGen program, we knew we were in for some fascinating insights from the cutting edge of the architectural profession.

His award-winning studio has produced stunning work in Segovia, where he graduated with our Bachelor of Architecture in 2003, as well as Paris, Madrid, New York and Mexico to name just a few. Heading an entrepreneurial and innovative practice with a thoroughly international outlook, he has spoken at industry events in Russia, Qatar, the United States, Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Holland, Bulgaria and Spain. He took the time to speak about his work and offered some sage advice to aspiring young architects.

DIFFERENT PROJECTS, AND A DIFFERENT RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

From the start, Urbanmatters have operated on a different business model to traditional architectural practices. For one thing, they combine actual architecture with setting up tours for construction-sector professionals, teaming up with other offices to spread knowledge around the industry and keep themselves up-to-date. They also provide project management services, particularly for LATAM, where Enrique told us business is booming.

Taking on projects of every imaginable scale, from office refits for advertising giant WPP and new urban master plans for Washington DC to residential projects and parks, user experience is their focus. "At the end of the day, the scale does not matter," he said. "The details around you are what make a project special. It's all about the users' experience and how you make a place special for people to be."

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE AND AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET

Enrique's motto for success in business is, "As an entrepreneur, look for your market niche." He's certainly found his. "I listen to the client's needs, context and lifestyle, and will customize a project that will make the user happy. I will always listen to who's behind the project, whether that's a municipality or a music association."

It's an approach that's helped him and his practice survive some challenging times. "The ability to navigate rough market conditions and being resilient is key; being able to stand up when you fall. Stay motivated and know that you can offer what people need when you're selling a project or doing a competition," he told us.

When proposing a business model, he maintained that a global perspective is critical. Only by having his eyes open to the bigger picture, he explained, can his practice stay ahead of the market to offer their clients the latest world trends in project performance and thereby provide them with a competitive edge.

SOME ADVICE FOR UP-AND-COMING TALENT

Enrique closed a fascinating discussion with some insight for architects at the beginning of their professional journey. "Travel," he urged them. "Work for big and small offices, try and test, take risks, learn from other systems. There is more world than your house and your city." Open-mindedness and curiosity are important qualities for success in the sector, he pointed out, encouraging his audience to test their own limits.

He has certainly done that in his own career, and it has paid off with some stunning, innovative projects around the world. Our thanks to Enrique for an illuminating and inspiring interview—keep your eyes open for more in the NextGen series.