ResoLex

Changing Behaviours in Construction: A complement to the Construction Playbook

Practical advice on how to create and lead strong project teams to deliver a step change in construction project performance

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Contributors

Kelachi Amadi-Echendu, Richard Bayfield, Karen Fugle,
Tony Llewellyn, Edward Moore, Dana Skelley, Bill Taylor,
Wendy Westerhoff.

Introduction

The release of the UK government's Construction Playbook in December 2020 has the potential to be a 'game-changer' for the construction industry in the UK. It sets out a series of steps intended to accelerate the delivery of public sector projects, releasing greater value whilst improving the mechanisms for planning, procuring, and delivering construction projects. The Playbook provides a mix of old and new ideas, reminding us of some of the best practices from the past whilst recognising the potential that new technology can bring.

In some ways, the Construction Playbook can be seen as part of a long series of government sponsored initiatives, from the Simon report of 1944, through Latham (1994), Egan (1996), Wolstenholme (2009), to the Farmer Review in 2016. Each of these worthy documents made a series of observations and recommendations for change, urging the industry's participants to adopt a new set of behaviours. The problem, however, is the recommendations in these reports do not explain *how* we can achieve behavioural change. Consequently, the construction industry appears to suffer from a form of collective madness, whereby we continue to repeat the same mistakes, hoping for a different result. To move to a new level of performance, we need to add some new ingredients into the mix.

The Construction Playbook requires all public bodies who commission construction projects to 'comply or explain'. The document is not, therefore, merely a series of recommendations. The intention is to deliver a step change in project performance. Many property teams and their advisors will need to consider the changes required to adopt much of the best practice identified in the different sections of the Playbook. Compliance in itself will, however,

make a limited difference to the outcome. To truly generate a step change in performance, we need to remember that people, not machines, deliver projects. Furthermore, it is the ability of people to work together in teams that makes the difference.

Consequently, there is a need to shape the project participants' behaviours to form effective teams, focused on working to a shared purpose that achieves a satisfactory outcome. This document is intended to act as a supplement to the Construction Playbook, providing those tasked with implementing the new procedures with some practical advice on how to create and then lead strong project teams.

The ideas and practices set out in this paper are based on extensive research into team performance and our experiences in supporting teams engaged in the design and construction process. We know that people are messy; human behaviour changes according to the environment we work in and we usually revert to individualistic behaviours under severe pressure or conflict. However, when the culture is right, we can achieve amazing results.

> By adding the behavioural element to the best practice areas identified in the Construction Playbook, we can enable project teams to perform to a significantly higher level than current norms in the UK construction industry.

Influencing behaviour in a construction project

The core theme that underpins this document is the recognition that it is possible to achieve significant improvements by putting in place some practices and procedures to build the right relationships at the right time.

It is important to recognise that how individuals behave cannot be mandated as a top-down directive. Each individual involved in a project will act according to their personal motivations within the environment they find themselves in. Part of the change process is to create a project culture where people can reveal the best of themselves, holding back the darker tendencies for self-preservation.

Construction projects bring together people from multiple organisations, each with their cultural values and personal interests. They are tied together formally by a series of contractual arrangements which set out what activities each party must undertake. A common mistake is to assume that contractual obligation equates to emotional commitment. Individuals create a far stronger bond when they find a shared sense of purpose, which is great enough for them to subsume their personal interest in the pursuit of achieving a collective goal. This shared sense of purpose is the fundamental basis of all teamwork. The question is how to accomplish this shift in motivation and commitment.

We have picked out eight themes which consistently arise when we look into the difference between successful and unsuccessful projects. These are:

1 **STRATEGIC PLANNING ▶**

2 **COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP ▶**

3 **FLEXIBLE CONTRACTS ▶**

4 **PROJECT CULTURE ▶**

5 **COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS ▶**

6 **ALIGNING THE TEAMS ▶**

7 **INGENUITY AND INNOVATION ▶**

8 **MANAGING CONFLICT ▶**

The following pages offer some practical suggestions on how to use the opportunity presented by the Construction Playbook to make your projects achieve their intended outcomes.

Front end loading

Before getting into the detail, it is worth considering the opening statement in the Construction Playbook on '*getting projects and programmes right from the start*'. Much of the content of the document sits under the heading of 'Preparation and Planning' and identifies the need for Front End Loading (FEL). This is a project management concept where time is prioritised at the start to think through the project's implications and its needs. This is unquestionably a good idea and yet one that we rarely execute well.

There is something in our industry's collective psyche that creates a compulsive urge to press on and 'get a spade into the ground' as soon as possible. Yet, the opportunity to influence behaviours primarily exists at the start when behavioural norms are still forming. We would therefore emphasise the need to engage with the concept of FEL and allow more time as the project commences for thinking clearly and articulating how to achieve the desired outcomes. This early investment will have a big payoff further downstream, but only if you spend time asking the right questions of the key participants.

The process involves pulling key individuals into a series of discussions where the multiple issues that generate complexity can be worked through. This type of 'slow thinking' can be counter-intuitive for those with a predisposition towards action. It requires a different set of skills that are associated with *Social Intelligence* as illustrated on page 6, and an underlying mindset that doesn't push every difficult issue 'down the road, to be sorted out later'.

Social intelligence

There are three primary elements to every construction project, each requiring a distinct area of competence:

- **Technical competence** – the knowledge and awareness of how the project components are designed and assembled.

- **Commercial competence** – the knowledge and awareness of issues around money, contracts and the identification and management of risk.

- **Social competence** – the knowledge and awareness of how humans behave in groups and teams.

The illustration in figure 1 shows the three competencies as interlinked rings, which cannot be separated. They are irrevocably intertwined. To be successful, you cannot focus on one at the expense of the others. All three must be worked on to establish the balance required to ensure a satisfactory outcome.

In reality, traditional project management practice focuses primarily on the technical and commercial aspects of project delivery, leaving the social element largely to chance. As many project teams subsequently discover, this is a dangerous strategy.

The step change in team performance comes when project leaders also develop and use the skills and capabilities associated with social intelligence. These include:

- Understanding group dynamics

- Motivational drivers

- Systems thinking

- Balancing trust vs control

- Conflict resolution

- Team resilience

Figure 1
Illustration of the three competencies

The three competencies: social, technical and commercial, are present in each of us but rarely in equal proportions. Some professions, particularly engineering, will have a strong focus on technical intelligence and will often show limited interest in the commercial and social aspects of a project. Lawyers and commercial managers will, as their role requires, be more focused on commercial opportunities and constraints. The question that you must ask yourself as a team leader is:

> **"Who within our project team will maintain the balance by ensuring the critical elements of social intelligence are in place?"**

1
Strategic Planning

Observations

The playbook sensibly recommends the use of 'Opportunity Framing Workshops' as part of the process of getting all of the parties on the same page. These early-stage meetings should focus on a strategic agenda. Our observation, however, is that without support, technical people will quickly jump into the challenges of task delivery, spending little time thinking about the bigger issues that will affect project performance. There are many important (and often quite challenging) questions that are often left unanswered, based on the assumption that they will somehow or other be resolved downstream.

One critical element of strategic planning, particularly for major projects, is to identify the sources of complexity that are likely to create uncertainty in the project as it progresses through the cycle. The construction process is merely *complicated*, in that whilst many interacting elements must be connected and sequenced, those with knowledge and experience broadly understand the mechanics. The *complexity* in construction arises from the multiple sources of interactions between individuals and groups, with either a direct or indirect interest in the project.

There is a tendency to ignore many of the 'people' issues, hoping they will resolve themselves somehow downstream. Strategic thinking requires zooming out from the comfort zone of detailed task planning and taking a broader perspective across the project. So, whilst you cannot control complexity, you can manage it. Therefore, the challenge is to anticipate the sources of complexity and work through the steps to reduce potential disruption.

Strategic Planning

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

STRATEGIC ELEMENTS	THE BIG QUESTIONS
Articulating a Shared Purpose	What is our vision for this project and how do we explain it in a way that aligns all of the teams?
Business Case	Are we clear on the implications of the business case and the parameters they place on the project?
Project Culture and Values	What type of project culture do we need and how do we mitigate any potential cultural mismatch between the key parties?
Stakeholder Support	Who are the critical stakeholders we need to keep engaged?
Leadership	What are the leadership needs for this project and how can we recruit and develop the right people to lead?
Decision Making Structure	How can we delegate authority to ensure fast decision making whilst maintaining effective governance?
Alignment	How do we get all of the teams involved in the project aligned to our Vision?
Enablers	What are the key enablers we are going to need to make this project work?

Each project will have its particular areas of potential complexity. We have identified eight key elements that are useful to cover as part of an early-stage strategic discussion. The primary questions are set out in the table above.

These are big questions, each of which will take some time to work through. As a suite, they will provide the project leadership with a set of principles that then inform all subsequent decision making, making it much easier to manage complex problems as they arise.

Suggested actions

A great way to stimulate a high-level strategic conversation around the project's needs is to use a version of a strategy planning canvass. The canvas identifies eight key areas, each of which prompts a series of questions the senior team needs to discuss. The idea of a canvas is that it can be printed off in large format and stuck to a flat surface. The team assembled to think about the project strategy can then use the different areas to assemble notes, ideas and concerns around the eight key elements. The doughnut shape encourages the identification of internal and external factors which might create complexity.

Download further guidelines on the use of the project Strategy Canvas from the ⊘ **ResoLex website**.

Figure 2
Project Strategy Canvas

Strategic Planning

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

Avoiding the Collaboration Fallacy

In our conversations with senior construction professionals, we have found a tendency to assume everyone on a new project that is about to start will adopt a collaborative approach. This assumption is despite the fact that most of their previous experiences demonstrated the opposite to be true. This unduly optimistic view is a form of cognitive bias, which means clients are not inclined to invest the time needed at the start of the project in a range of activities that are known to help build effective teams.

A major construction project requires different organisations with different organisational objectives, cultural drivers, and stakeholder pressures to work together irrespective of the potential conflicts of interest. Added to these organisational challenges are the instinctive behavioural challenges created by human tribal tendencies. Whilst humans are genetically wired to co-operate with other groups for a short period, it is our nature to withdraw into the perceived safety of our home team when we feel threatened or under pressure.

It is better to assume that the factors present in the project environment will lead to inertia rather than collaborative momentum.

2
Collaborative Leadership

Observations

The behaviours of any group of people will be directly affected by the patterns of behaviours they see in their leaders. In a construction project, the client has a potentially huge influence on how everyone engaged in the project interacts, for better or worse. Leadership must begin with the client but extends to the senior individuals chosen by the design and delivery partners.

Many project leaders make the mistake of assuming that construction is the application of a technically complicated process that requires the completion of a series of linear tasks. The reality of construction in the 21st century is that it is a complex process in which the physical building work is just a component. Whilst we often hear about the need to 'drive performance', the reality is that success comes from leading from the front rather than pushing from behind.

Research highlights that project success comes from having a selection of effective leaders working together, rather than relying on the 'heroic' individual who believes they must be the centre of everything. We believe the commissioning client can significantly influence the type of leadership adopted by a project team. Together with their technical and commercial skill set, the selection of the right leadership structure and the individuals who will make up the senior team must consider the social intelligence component in equal measure. Some suggested actions for how we approach building a collaborative leadership structure follow.

Collaborative Leadership

Suggested actions

Our recommendation is to consider the specific leadership needs of a particular project and then take the time to find the right people to do the job. As a starting point to stimulate discussion, over and above good interpersonal skills, EQ and resilience some of the needs typically required on a major project are below.

The leader's ability to satisfy these needs will have a more significant impact on the outcome, over choosing individuals primarily on their previous technical experience of having delivered a similar project in the past.

LEADERSHIP NEED	LEADERSHIP SKILL
Strategic vision	Articulate the common purpose that can motivate the wider project teams.
Strategic direction	Create the route map as to how the whole project will play out and where each sub-team fits.
Cultural alignment	Build a shared mental model of the behavioural norms that must be common to every sub-team within the project
Connections	Facilitate the development of the network within the wider team-of-teams. This includes the active creation and management of cross-boundary interdependencies.
Guidance	Support decision making in times of crisis or uncertainty.
Data	Collect, analyse and disseminate key data.
Stakeholder paradox	Manage the conflicting demands of stakeholders.
Physical environment	Where appropriate (and if at all possible), provide the physical space for co-location, project meetings, workshops etc.
Digital environment	Ensure distributed sub-teams have the appropriate facilities and equipment to be able to easily connect over digital links.

3
Flexible Contracts

Observations

Page 27 of the Playbook provides references to a range of contractual mechanisms that anticipate the contractor's early involvement in the design and delivery process. In the modern world, political and social pressures create a strong sense of urgency. There is not always time to fully design and tender a contract to gain some approximation of a fixed price before starting construction. The outcome cost is, therefore, going to be uncertain at the start. Many large projects now begin with the parties engaged around an open-book model where costs and an agreed level of profit are reimbursed.

Legal experts have spent much time searching for a contractual mechanism that will encourage collaboration in construction projects. Our experience is that contractual mechanisms will always create a transactional distance between two parties. There are no mechanistic levers that can force people to work together. Still, the new procurement routes such as Integrated Project Insurance and framework contracts such as FAC1, establish an environment where resolution cannot be achieved by blaming the other party. For an industry that is culturally addicted to blaming others, it takes the parties some time to realise they must solve the problems between themselves rather than use the threat of litigation. However, for those that can make the transition, the benefits are genuine teamwork and better project outcomes.

Suggested actions

We are strong advocates of flexible contractual mechanisms but would emphasise they only work where there is a high degree of trust between the parties; that everyone is working towards their shared purpose, rather than their individual benefit.

These arrangements have the advantage of flexibility and potential speed. They also have the potential to waste large sums of money if slow decision-making creates delays. To achieve the value sought through flexible contracts, clients and their key partners need to focus on building strong relationships as early as possible. Building trust is essential, and so, as mentioned in earlier sections of this paper, time must be set aside for exchanging views through a series of structured questions. This should not be seen as an expense. When done effectively, it is a significant cost-saving measure.

Before you get into a detailed discussion on the type of contractual mechanism, a beneficial question to be put to your design and construction partners can be paraphrased as:

"This is what we think we need, and this is how much money we have. How can you help?"

This simple question sets the tone required to draw the parties together to establish a collective endeavour. The humble nature of the question allows for a much more open discussion whereby the parties are not being judged on their initial answers. Instead, you are asking an open and honest question that seeks to begin a true partnership.

4
Project Culture

Observations

One of the gaps in the Playbook content is a lack of reference to project culture. Culture is often regarded as a 'soft' or 'hazy' topic that does not fit well with the practical task delivery focus of the construction world. Culture nevertheless impacts on the very 'hard' measurements such as performance, retention, innovation, agility, competitiveness and profitability. When we interview successful project leaders, they will nearly always describe the great culture that existed throughout the project.

Organisational culture develops as a natural consequence of humans working together, whether the organisation is permanent or temporary. Project culture is essentially a set of unspoken rules that those involved develop as being 'the way things work around here'.

Culture cannot be imposed, but it is very heavily influenced by the values, behaviours and beliefs of the leaders, whether or not they have a formal leadership role.

There are a range of activities that should be introduced to help shape and monitor the right project culture. The table below provides a useful framework to move a discussion on culture from the theoretical to the practical. Working through each of the cultural elements, it is easy to distinguish the default culture on a major construction project against the aspirational. The question is then 'how to avoid falling into the default culture?'

Project Culture

CULTURAL ELEMENT	DEFAULT INDUSTRY CULTURE (What will happen unless we change it?)		THE CULTURE WE NEED
Common purpose	Deliver on our promises (get stuff done)	▶	Deliver on our promises (get stuff done)
How we solve problems	Individual or group self-interest (self-protection)	▶	Thrive together (collaborate)
Team selection	Homogenous teams based on recruitment bias (white, male, common interests, known)	▶	Best people for the project (heterogenous teams/EDI)
Working methods	Stay with what worked in the past (fearful)	▶	Pursuit of operational excellence (expansive)
Mindset	Closed mindset (stick to what we know)	▶	Open mindset (how can we improve?)
Sub-groups	Siloed (desire to maintain control)	▶	Connected (recognise the value of the network)
Relationship with client	Master-servant. Segregated (transactional boundaries and confrontational interfaces)	▶	Integrated (client/contractor/supply chain working towards a common purpose)
Relationship with supply chain	Master-servant. Coercive.	▶	Integrated – seeking to tap into innovation and specialist knowledge
Problem solving	Seek to blame and avoid ownership of the solution	▶	Seek to understand and find resolution
Time frame	Short term	▶	Long term

Suggested actions

There are several active steps you can take to establish the right culture, but the bottom line is that people will ultimately adopt the behaviours they see in their leaders. These following three activities will provide a good start:

1 Communicate what is important.

Particularly where multiple organisations are involved, spending time together to understand different drivers, desired outcomes, and what is important to each person or organisation is key. Identifying and communicating areas of alignment (and cultural differences) right from the start ensures that the effective functioning of the team does not rely on assumptions.

2 Provide support and enablers.

Once expectations around behaviour have been set and communicated, project leaders must work through some important questions to ensure the team has access to the tools that will help them succeed.

- What systems and practices are in place that empowers or inhibit the desired culture?

- How are people rewarded and recognised? Which behaviours does this drive?

- Where can team members go to find help when things go off course?

3   Measure cultural development.

The Playbook suggests using a project scorecard, setting out various measurements in the form of KPIs. The challenge is to find ways of measuring the subjective factors that indicate positive and negative behaviours. As with any form of measurement, this requires data capture and assessment against defined metrics regularly over time. Although the process relies on qualitative data, there are key areas of focus that can demonstrate the development of the culture, for example: measuring alignment of behaviours with values, measuring the consistency of practice, measuring the relationship between cultural components and performance, and so on. Measurement also ensures that what is important remains in focus throughout the duration of the project.

The ⌀ **RADAR process** created by ResoLex is a good illustration of the type of feedback mechanism that can be used to monitor cultural development in a project.

5
Aligning the teams

Observations

Chapter 4 of the Playbook recognises the importance of creating alignment and clarity between the project team, primary decision-makers and key stakeholders. When dealing with the complexity of a major construction project, this can really only be achieved by a facilitated process, usually in the form of a workshop.

We cannot emphasise enough how important early-stage workshops are in shaping project culture and downstream behaviours. The industry has lost the habit of budgeting for a compulsory two-day off-site workshop where the team could start learning about each other and begin building trusting relationships. The predominant view is that there is insufficient time or budget to cover the cost of such events. This is a classic example of the collaboration fallacy in action, where project leaders assume that trusting relationships are already established, so there is little need to waste time on their development. This assumption typically comes back to hurt the project as soon as cost or performance pressures arise, and selfish transactional behaviours emerge.
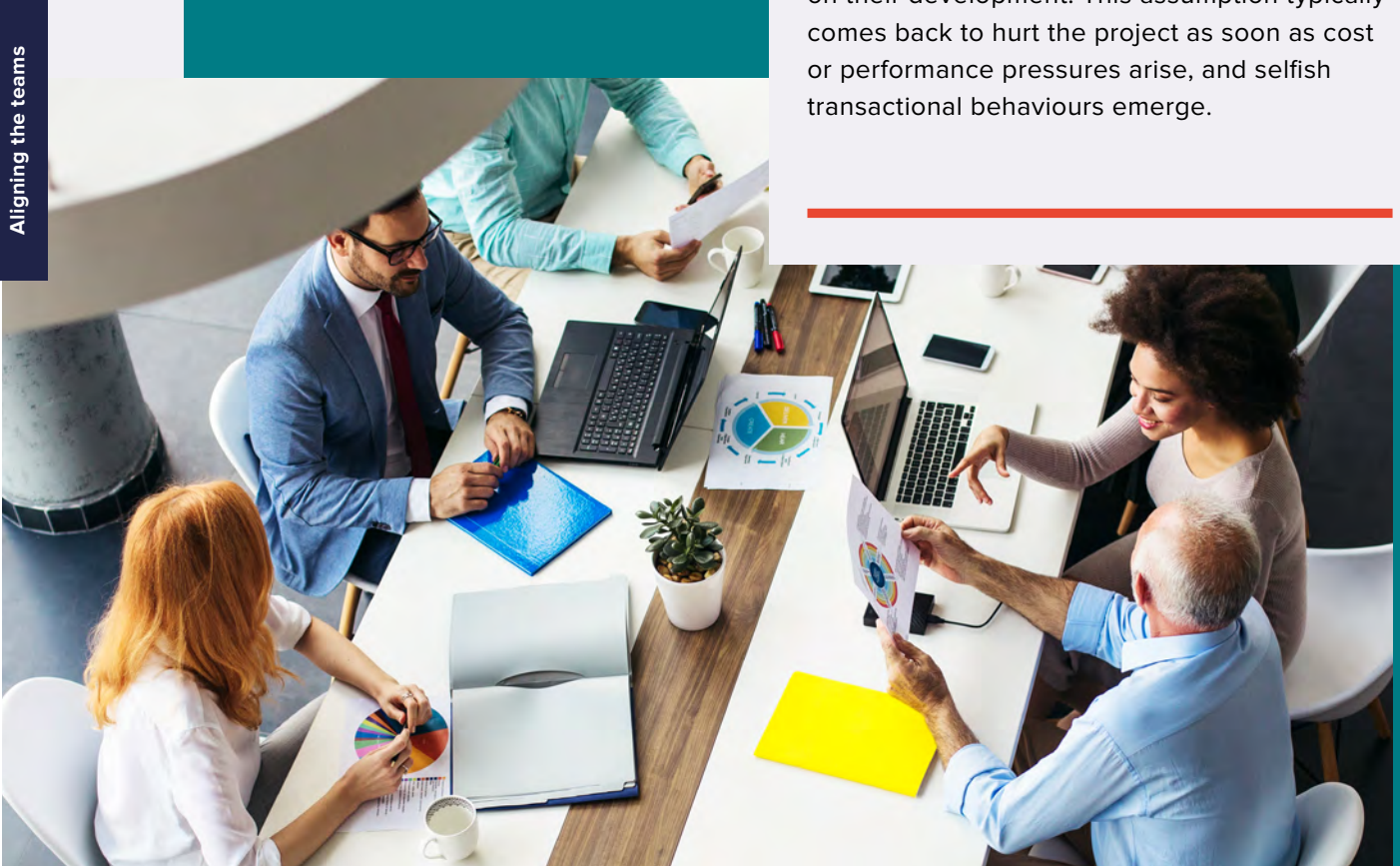
Suggested actions

Many years of research into team performance show that group behaviour can be influenced if the individual members bond through a range of exercises designed to tap into the emotional connections that humans need to begin to understand and trust each other. Our view is that the exercises suggested below are compulsory not just for the leadership but every team or sub-team that is engaged through the project. These exercises form the outline agenda for an early-stage workshop that should be part of every team's set-up process.

A set of tools and exercises for building team alignment can be found at ⟲ **www.teamcoachingtoolkit.com** or on the ⟲ **ResoLex website**.

EXERCISE	ACTION
1 Articulate a clear vision	Examine the project vision and how it will have an impact on each sub-team.
2 Actionable values	Agree how the projects values will be applied in practice.
3 Build relationships	Identify the key relationships that need to be developed for the team to succeed and design an action plan.
4 Roles and accountabilities	Clarifying the output and outcomes required for each role, as a mechanism for embedding a culture of accountability.
5 Rules of engagement	The co-creation of a set of internal rules created and agreed by each team for their own use.
6 Test assumptions	A discussion questioning what assumptions the team is making about how the other parts of the project that affect their output are going to work.
7 Conflict management	A discussion on how the team will manage future conflict both within the team and with other teams.

Aligning the teams

6
Collaborative Relationships

Observations

The Playbook identifies the need for contracting authorities to place greater importance on their relationships with their supply chain partners at both organisational and portfolio level. This is a significant shift from the traditional approach, where relationships are predominantly viewed as short-term, transactional and impersonal. The key to all successful projects is to build trusting relationships that can be sustained through periods of pressure. Having a long-term view puts a greater emphasis on finding the right relationships from the start.

Building relationships needs to be considered both at an individual level but also at an organisational level. For two parties who are going to be reliant on each other to achieve a successful outcome, it is worth considering entering into a formal collaboration agreement, for example, as set out in ISO 44001 (see box item on next page).

Suggestion

Having identified potentially compatible partners, we would urge the parties to take a hard look at the practical aspects of relationship building. For example, when considering the right contractor for a two-stage design and build contract, work through questions such as:

- Why do we need to collaborate to achieve the project objectives and what would be the benefits?

- What type of relationships do we need for the different aspects of the RIBA life cycle?

- What is the right procurement approach and commercial strategy that will underpin and support the relationship we want?

- How are we going to work as an integrated team?

- How are we going to share data?

- Do we have compatible IT systems?

- Do we have the competencies and skills to work the relationship we need?

- What are the behaviours and values we want to have?

- What is our approach for risk management and identifying interdependency and relationship risks?

- How do we create the environment for innovation and improvement?

- How are we going to measure the status and performance of the relationship?

- How are we going to ensure the relationship is sustained through change?

These questions should be addresses both within the parties, and then together. Once again, the earlier you start discussing the potentially awkward issues, the greater the degree of clarity you will achieve as to whether or not you are compatible. We often find that these questions are not addressed until just before the parties to go into contract negotiations. At this point the deal starts to fall apart or the tricky issues are fudged.

ISO 44001
An established framework for building the right relationships

The playbook identifies the standard ISO44001 as a useful mechanism for specifying the requirements for the effective identification, development, and management of collaborative business relationships. Standards can often be seen as overly bureaucratic, doing little more than adding administrative burden. ISO 44001 does however give the parties to a new relationship a set of useful requirements and a framework to build a successful relationship that is not reliant on specific individuals. ISO 44001 identifies 'what' is needed but the organisations decide the 'how' that is appropriate to their organisation and relationships. The ISO 44001 supporting Principles document (ISO/TR 44000) provides 12 fundamental principles.

As with any tool, the value comes from the skill with which it is applied. However, we see too many teams going through the motions, creating charters and, in some, relationship management plans, which are signed off but remain unused and unloved. Experience shows that external factors on the project and partners, for example changes in leadership and key individuals, drive the focus onto commercial and technical issues. The effect is

that relationship management is pushed to the back. Project meetings go over time and it is the first item to fall of the agenda.

To sustain relationships and keep the right balance requires a degree of discipline. ISO 44001, as a formal standard, enables the collaborative business relationship management aspects to be integrated into the quality management systems of the partners and project. Therefore, it can be audited, and assurance given. Those organisations that integrate the 'how' as part of 'Business as Usual' are the ones that are more successful in driving the change needed within their businesses.

Third party auditing and certification by ISO 44001 UKAS Accredited Certifying Bodies will enable the discipline needed to ensure the relationship focus is retained. Achieving and then losing certification can be a huge reputational hit, thereby creating an incentive for transformation. Achieving certification should be a pathway to developing the use of the framework.

Collaborative Relationships

7
Managing Conflict

Observations

In Chapter 6, the Playbook identifies a requirement to adopt the mechanisms set out in the Conflict Avoidance Pledge. The intention is to avoid escalation of conflict leading to litigation, but if an issue gets that far, the damage has already been done. Teams need to learn to manage conflict early so that disputes are contained, managed and resolved by the teams themselves. Conflict management is partly about culture, but also requires a distinct set of skills.

Whilst most large projects begin in a spirit of optimism, differences are inevitable in any large project. Whilst disagreements around the best way to do something can have a positive benefit, when conflict becomes personal or tribal, the costs to the project mount up. Once individuals take an issue personally, communication becomes formalised and collaboration ceases. Problems are escalated rather than being resolved in the moment, leading to delays and increased expense.

The keystone to managing conflict is to override the default mechanism to immediately seek to blame others when things don't go to plan. Frustration and anger are natural emotional responses to complex issues. Still, with conscious effort and the right environment, we can learn to go beyond fault-finding and move quickly to the mature response of seeking to understand what has happened, how to fix it and how to avoid it happening again.

Suggested action

All teams working on a major project should go through a conflict management workshop which helps build a collective approach to conflict management. We like to use a framework based on the following five elements.

ELEMENT	ACTION
Understand	Raise awareness of the difference between process-based conflict and relationship-based conflict. Process-based conflict is created by incompatible procedures, mechanisms and working methods that clash. These should be manageable but frequently develop too quickly into tensions between individuals leading to communication breakdown.
Anticipate	The signals of emerging conflict are often visible long before they break out into open dispute. We recommend putting in some form of feedback mechanism which provides management with early indicators of problems ahead.
Prevent	Encourage developing good working relationships between teams, where they recognise each other as human beings rather than a name filling a particular role. When we have a good working relationship, trust develops, making it much more likely we will find a workaround rather than escalate problems to a higher authority.
Manage	Learning to manage conflict is largely based on developing the maturity to reduce the emotion surrounding an issue and take a dispassionate view. Teaching teams to adopt the No Blame Protocol (below) is a great start.
Resolve	When all the above elements fail, and conflict begins to be disruptive, best practice is to support the parties in finding resolution as quickly as possible before the dispute starts to affect the project. The mechanism for finding resolution will depend upon the nature of the conflict.

Several tools for conflict resolution can be found at ⌖ **www.teamcoachingtoolkit.com** or on the ⌖ **ResoLex website**.

A 'no blame culture' is regularly set as the goal for teams coming together. It may seem obvious; however, it is important to define what that culture looks like and what 'no blame' behaviours are when things go awry. Something like the 'No Blame Protocol' can help set clear expectations to the team on how to approach a difficult situation.

No Blame Protocol

1. Acknowledge your emotional reactions to the event and then park them aside
2. Now focus on the facts and seek to dispassionately understand what has happened and why
3. Where appropriate, talk about the situation openly with those involved, using dialogue rather than accusation
4. Consider the options available to rectify the situation
5. Ask yourself and the others in the team what has been learned from the situation
6. Agree whatever changes are needed in the team's process to prevent a similar occurance

Managing Conflict

8
Ingenuity and Innovation

Observations

Any discussion on innovation in the construction industry tends to be linked to the idea of adopting digital technology. In recent years there have been a continuous stream of products and services designed to improve productivity in construction. And yet, there is a slow adoption rate across the industry as a whole. There are many reasons for our slow progress, but a primary culprit is the short-term perspective and risk-averse mindset of many decision-makers.

There is always going to be an underlying problem of trying something new. What if it doesn't work? Someone has to pay for the experiment, so there is always a degree of risk involved. We consequently come across the paradox of clients who like the idea of innovation in principle, but only as long as it is tried and tested elsewhere!

Discussions on innovation rarely make the leap to ingenuity; an attribute that has allowed the human species to evolve and adapt to survive in every part of our planet. In the context of a major project, ingenuity is about enabling progression. Performance is boosted when the team creates new ways of finding shortcuts and workarounds to challenges that were not anticipated at the start of the project. Human ingenuity should be seen as a free resource in that it is not a quality that you can specifically buy or hire. It sits within each of us, and therefore potentially within every team.

Ideas in themselves are not enough to make a difference; it is how to turn those ideas into tangible actions that are the real manifestation of creativity. The power of teams is in the facility to tap into a mix of different team members'

skills and attributes. Creative minds are needed to conceptualise the possibilities, and technical minds are required to explore the alternative mechanisms for turning potential into reality. It is the mix of the dreamer and the engineer that creates something new.

The challenge is that ingenuity does not necessarily reveal itself unless the conditions are right. Studies confirm that innovation or creativity rarely occur when we are stressed. We know that human beings manage personal risk by reverting to fight or flight mode, so the key to unlocking this creative resource is to create the right team climate.

Suggested actions

The implication for the project leader is to create a psychologically safe environment where people can articulate and explore thoughts and ideas in the knowledge that they will be received without ridicule or dismissal. This responsibility is fundamentally a leadership issue and requires the application of emotional intelligence. For team leaders seeking to understand more about the concept, there are many very good articles available on the topic. The linked article below is an excellent example:

⟳ **Seven ways to create psychological safety in your workplace**

Our top 10 suggestions for improving project performance through collaborative behaviours

1   Recognise the importance of project culture – use quarterly feedback questionnaires to monitor the culture that is developing and take steps to adapt your leadership approach where needed.

2   Develop your team's understanding of and maturity in using 'flexible' contracts.

3   Front end loading – take time at the start to work through the strategic issues that will help inform downstream decision making.

4   Think of team development as a commercial issue – recognise the huge potential savings in time and direct expense that will be otherwise be lost through poor communication, lack of collaboration and unnecessary conflict.

5   Don't fall for the Collaboration Fallacy – assume that relationships will be put under pressure and take steps to strengthen them.

6   Consider using the eight-stage collaboration framework which underpins ISO 44001 – this will give your team a structure to build around.

7   Get every team aligned to a common goal and a common project culture through a compulsory workshop covering the seven core team development exercises.

8   Select partners and their leaders on their ability to deal with complexity, rather than historic technical experience. Test them through their skills in building relationships.

9   Adjust the mindset of conflict avoidance and blame to one of healthy conflict in psychologically safe spaces, to build innovation and ingenuity.

10   Get some help. There are a growing number of organisations, such as ResoLex, who have the expertise in how to add social intelligence into your teams.

As mentioned at the start, the Construction Playbook presents an opportunity to introduce significant positive change in our industry. The benefit being sought by the authors of the report will not however fully materialise without the addition of the human factor into the planning and delivery. Addressing the people issues at the start and then implementing the plans through the project cycle will enable the creation of project teams equipped to overcome the challenges of building in the 21st century.

Get in touch to explore any ideas or recommendations contained within this paper.

Kelachi Amadi-Echendu
kelachi.amadi-echendu@resolex.com   07591 384 601
www.linkedin.com/in/kelachi-amadi-echendu/

ResoLex

ResoLex is an independent consultancy specialising in collaborative working, risk monitoring and stakeholder engagement.

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For more information, contact us:

info@resolex.com

020 7353 8000

ResoLex
70 Fleet Street
London EC4Y 1EU

www.resolex.com