



Sharing goals: the Holy Grail

Commonality of purpose is often sought but seldom achieved.

Personally I found the Major Project Report on the 2012 Olympic Games, enclosed with my *NCE*, a really good read (*NCE* 28 July). It is great to hear about a complex construction project, involving many different contractors, social, governmental and environmental bodies, that appears to be going well on all fronts. A change of government and a global financial crisis have caused no destabilisation to the programme.

To the outside world, the 2012 Olympic Games construction programme is a sea of stability and calm. Even more amazing, for a construction project of this scale, it is on budget and on schedule. It is hard to find a single dissenting voice, everyone from the environmental lobby to the Treasury appears happy. What differentiated this project from others like the Millennium Dome, the Channel Tunnel and Wembley Stadium is a commonality of purpose, a desire to make the 2012 Olympic venue worthy of what is billed as the greatest show on earth.

While doubts about other aspects of the Games may linger, such as the ticket allocation process or the ability of the transport and telecommunications infrastructure to cope with demand of the games, the venues themselves tick all the boxes.

Nearly every business seeks to achieve a commonality of purpose, a vision which all employees strive to achieve. Behind the facade, however, divisions quickly become apparent,

often driven by a combination of poor communication, competing interests, fear of change and inefficiency. This is why operational excellence is so vital to the health of any business and any construction project. It eliminates or at least mitigates the impact of these factors and enables the workforce to do a good job in which they can take personal and collective pride.

Very few employees want to do a bad job but in order to do a good job they need clear direction and communication, an opportunity to contribute to the success of the project and to feel suitably trained and rewarded. This is exactly what operational excellence achieves and yet in many companies operational excellence may be the stated aim but very few of the tools and approaches such as Lean, Six Sigma, 5S, Kaizen, and Visual Management are used effectively.

The 2012 Olympics construction programme has demonstrated that all parties, construction, political, environmental and governmental can work together to achieve an outcome that they can all be justly proud of and the nation can celebrate. Hopefully the construction industry and others can take this learning and apply it to other programmes, such as high speed rail. Am I hoping for too much? I suspect I am.

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