

CASE STUDY: O'NEILL & BRENNAN

BACKGROUND

Established in 1990, O'Neill & Brennan Group is one of the UK and Ireland's leading construction service providers whose services include Site Services and Logistics, Labour and Trades, and Professional and Technical staffing supply. The Group employs 62 staff, with a broad client base including the six main contractor partners to the School, Wates, Galliford Try and Berkeley Homes.

The company has a dedicated Sustainability Manager, John McGrath, who reports directly to the Chief Operations Officer and works alongside colleagues in other parts of the business to help mainstream sustainability through the company.

John has noticed a growing client interest in the sustainability agenda, and believes it is crucial for the company to remain engaged and demonstrate their commitment to sustainability in order to remain competitive in the future. Fortunately John's evident enthusiasm is mirrored by a company Director who is both heavily engaged in the subject and equally committed to continuous improvement in sustainability.

Some of the challenges faced by O'Neill & Brennan revolve around the social issues and the targets that are being driven through the supply chain by Local Authorities, for example the need to engage local communities and demonstrate a percentage of local labour supply on site. However the biggest challenge ahead according to John is about fostering a change in culture, influencing the behaviour of their direct staff, and then cascading this message down to a site level.

INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

John attended the Cambridge Supplier Day in autumn 2012 He found the day relevant and thought it provided valuable insight into the future of sustainability and indeed future client requirements. John thought the Questions and Answers Panel was a key feature of the morning, and found the workshops in the afternoon educational. He was also reassured to discover that most suppliers face the same challenges / problems, regardless of the company size and trade.

John then attended five more supplier days throughout the country, accompanied by different senior level representatives from the company at each event.

SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

John completed a self-assessment before attending the first supplier day in order to gain an understanding of the School. Having attended the Supplier Day he then made a sensible decision to get a selection of key staff from different departments (Procurement, Commercial, Health & Safety, Operations and Department Managers) throughout the business to work through the self-assessment as part of a group exercise so as to gain an accurate picture of general company knowledge and competence.

At first John was surprised by their lack of knowledge regarding some of the questions that were asked, however rather than getting side tracked by these questions, they focused on working through their action plan and using this as a prioritisation tool. The Action Plan signposted to several of the face to face workshops and e-learning modules resulting in their attendance at five workshops – Carbon Footprinting, Sustainable Construction, Selling Sustainability, Sustainable Procurement and TRADA Chain of Custody. Again, John attended each of these workshops with a colleague from a relevant department so as to ensure that real actions would come about as a result of attendance – the impacts of which are detailed below.

The e-learning modules have been a key resource for O'Neill & Brennan. According to John McGrath, *"They have proved to be an effective tool to help engage further within the company, and have been of particular value regarding the development of ISO14001 and other company policies and procedures"*.

IMPACT

As a result of engaging in the School, O'Neill & Brennan has:

- ✓ Committed to the development of a 5yr Sustainability Policy, Strategy and Action plan and is using the School as a sole resource to provide key steer and advice. Resource has been dedicated to its development and progress is already underway.
- ✓ Run a series of local employee engagement days, particularly around the 1 Tower Bridge development.
- ✓ Set up waste management framework agreements - this opportunity was identified as a result of attending the workshop on sustainable procurement.
- ✓ Set up FSC trackers on timber orders and deliveries – this was set up after attending a workshop delivered through the School by BM TRADA on Chain of Custody. Previously they left this job to the clients, however as they are growing as a company and are now doing a lot of building work, materials are becoming increasingly important.
- ✓ Become more proactive in monitoring sustainability on site regarding issues such as Section 106 agreements, Section 61 Pollution Control and CO2 monitoring.

- ✓ Taken a more proactive approach to communicating their sustainability credentials to customers, suppliers and wider stakeholders. The company Director has been pro-active in communicating their engagement in the School to key clients, both face to face and via email, and they have encouraged their own supply chain to register with the School. There are also plans in place to market their sustainability credentials more on the company website. This is a direct result of having attended the workshop on Selling Sustainability.

BENEFITS

New business opportunities – O’Neill & Brennan believe their increasing success rate in winning new work is directly linked to their investment in addressing the sustainability agenda. The Chief Operations Officer leads on bid development and is noticing an increasing focus on sustainability in PQQ’s and tenders, and since engaging in the School is now much better equipped to provide suitable and detailed responses to such questions.

Increased efficiencies – the School provides a one stop shop for O’Neill & Brennan. They value the School as key information / educational resource and prioritisation tool which provides all key sustainability resources for free, saving the company both time and money. John McGrath explained that, *“The School has provided us with a focus and a clear starting point – it’s a prioritisation tool which is supported by a wealth of relevant and quality resources.”*

Increased internal buy in and awareness of sustainability – A key challenge faced by the company is to embed sustainability throughout the business and across all staff. The School’s resources and events have helped secure internal buy-in and spread sustainability knowledge throughout the business.

Better placed to meet client requirements – John believes the School provides a market insight into client requirements. It has helped raise awareness of some of the priorities and challenges faced by their customers, and an understanding of how O’Neill & Brennan can help clients meet these challenges.

Networking opportunities – John has found the supplier days and workshops an ideal platform for networking and knowledge sharing / learning from companies facing similar challenges.

LESSONS LEARNED

A clear focus and starting point are essential when addressing sustainability in a cost-effective and time efficient manner. Until an organisation understands its own priorities and targets, it is difficult to know where to start.

Good sustainability credentials won’t win more work for you unless you know how to communicate these credentials effectively.

Most suppliers are at the early stages of their sustainability journey – this helped provide O’Neill with reassurance that it’s OK to be at beginner level in a number of the key sustainability themes.

THE FUTURE

In order for the School to continue to be of benefit to O’Neill & Brennan it is important to:

- ✓ Continue to use the School as a news sharing portal about the latest industry news related to sustainable construction – this provides key market insight.
- ✓ Find a way to recognise and reward the School’s more active users.
- ✓ Continue to run face to face workshops and develop new e-learning modules.
- ✓ Consider organising practical site visits to help demonstrate best practice.
- ✓ Promote the School to a wider range of main contractors and clients.
- ✓ Continue to provide all support at no cost to the supplier.