

CASE STUDY: LINKLINE MAINTENANCE SERVICES

BACKGROUND

Linkline Maintenance Services is a major provider of road marking services, and both manufacturer and supplier of road marking materials. Established since 1994 the company has 90 employees and operates throughout the Midlands and the South East. Linkline are a part of the WJ Linkline Group with further depots in Stoke, Taunton and Elland.

Approximately 70% of their customers are main contractor partners to the School, with the end client being organisations such as Transport for London and the Highways Agency.

Paul Aldridge, Managing Director of Linkline Maintenance Services is the sustainability lead for the business, supported by a QA and Environment Manager and an HSE Manager and is responsible for embedding sustainability into the company's operations. Paul has a personal passion for sustainability, but also firmly believes that being a responsible and sustainable business is key to being a profitable contractor. Sustainability is a core value within the business and has been for many years.



INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

Linkline were invited by Kier to attend the Cambridge Supplier Day in 2012. Paul attended the event and was impressed by the senior level buy in from the main contractors, and pleased to see key customers aligning with School and agreeing a common approach. It struck Paul that this fitted in within the company ethos, and with a rapidly growing interest from stakeholders in this agenda, this was something that the business could get to work on immediately.

SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

Paul's initial enthusiasm for the School was evident in that he completed a self-assessment on behalf of the company immediately after the Supplier Day. Since this initial assessment Paul has re-assessed four times, and uses the tool as a mechanism to ensure continuous improvement within the business. At times Paul works through a re-assessment alone, and other times with representatives from other parts of the business.

'The Action Plan always throws up something new and interesting that we can look at, and it's encouraging to use my progress dashboard to monitor our increase in scores and see how we compare to others in our trade'.

Paul Aldridge, Managing Director, Linkline Maintenance Services

The resources and training recommended through the action plans have resulted in Paul attending face to face workshops on Carbon in Infrastructure, Carbon Footprinting, Equality, Meeting Client Needs and Sustainable Procurement. Paul has been impressed by the quality of delivery and content for all workshops, and has appreciated the opportunity to engage with other School members as well as main Contractors at such events.

IMPACT

As a result of engaging in the School Linkline has:

- ✓ **Developed a new Equality and Diversity policy** – Paul attended a School workshop in London which was 'superb', which provided him with the knowledge and skills to develop a policy tailored to his business.
- ✓ Forged links with organisations specialising in rehabilitation of Young Offenders with a view to **employing disadvantaged youths** on their apprenticeship scheme in London in early 2015.
- ✓ **Developed a more proactive approach to embedding sustainability considerations within the procurement process. Worked with a key sub-contractor resulting in them signing up to the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS)** which is all about encouraging sustainable best practice for LGV fleet operators in London and protecting vulnerable road users.



- ✓ **Invested £0.5m in new vehicles** designed specifically to increase efficiency and reduce emissions on the TfL Network and waived their exemptions to equip all LGVs with vulnerable road user safety equipment.
- ✓ **Developed the knowledge and competence of the business** in Infrastructure, Carbon Footprinting, Equality, Meeting client needs and Sustainable Procurement as a result of attending School workshops.
- ✓ **Plans to use the e-learning modules to engage and train relevant internal staff.** Some of these have already been shared with the Safety Officer and QA Manager, but Paul plans to roll these out throughout the business in 2015.
- ✓ **Been invited by Kier to talk about their experience with the School** at the Kier Supplier Day in December 2014. Kier were so impressed by Paul's presentation at the Sheffield Supplier day and about how they are using the School that they invited them to speak at their supplier day.
- ✓ **Used the Ethical Business e-learning module to help prepare for Achilles Audit.**

BENEFITS

Learning the 'customer' language – Representatives from the School's contractor and client partners often attend supplier days and training workshops and network with attendees. Paul finds such events valuable platforms on which to gain insight into the priorities and issues of their customers. This helps Linkline to 'speak the same language', of which there are clear commercial benefits.

Enhanced reputation and good client relationships – Linkline's commitment to the School has resulted in Gold membership. They use the 'Gold' badge on their website, on email signatures and they often talk about the School and their membership to other suppliers and indeed potential and existing customers. Some key clients have recognised their involvement in the School, and encouraged them to continue to engage. Linkline understand that being a 'Gold' member of the School won't guarantee any work, but it will certainly help enhance their reputation as a responsible business, particularly when working for end clients such as TfL, where sustainability is a huge priority.

Cost and time savings – Linkline trust that the resources that sit within the School are high quality resources, relevant to their industry. Paul uses the School as the 'go to' place for sustainability related information and updates, saving the business significant time and money searching the internet, trawling through hundreds of resources.

Informed clients – Linkline appreciate that the School's partners are committed to the sustainability agenda and are looking to raise the knowledge and competence within their own organisations as well as within the supply chain. Paul is encouraged to see that representatives from the School's partners often participate in training courses – this all helps to create a more informed client who is more likely to issue the work in a sustainable fashion.

Triple Bottom Line – Linkline is a firm believer in 'triple bottom line'. For example reducing diesel usage through more efficient delivery results in immediate cost savings, reduced impact on climate change through carbon emissions, and health benefits related to a reduction in air pollution.

'We are great believers in the School and very pleased it continues to grow. Sustainable development is the foundation of The School and key to our future as an industry. It is no longer enough to consider our economic needs without consideration for our clients, employees, communities and the environment. Sustainable, efficient, collaborative companies will prosper and those that aren't may struggle'.

Paul Aldridge, Managing Director, Linkline Maintenance Services

LESSONS LEARNED

It is important to recognise that it is good to be a responsible and sustainable organisation, but this becomes irrelevant if the business isn't making a profit. **The sustainability objectives of an organisation need to be intrinsically linked to their overarching business objectives**, which should in turn, be-aligned to client expectations.

Trust is a key to successful client relationships. Clients are increasingly reliant on their supply chains to develop work streams and deliver efficiencies – being a responsible and trustworthy contractor is key to being a profitable contractor.

THE FUTURE

In order for the School to continue to be of benefit to Linkline it is important to:

- ✓ Ensure the School has a range of resources at 'intermediate' and 'advanced' levels.
- ✓ Continue to run face to face workshops, particularly issue specific peer learning forums aimed at those companies who have good or expert knowledge of particular issues.
- ✓ Grow the School's partners. Linkline is keen to see more client involvement, particularly the Highways Agency and Transport for London.