



## Consultation

### **Sharing information**

A key element of a FUSION project is the way in which information and decisions are shared.

The team is a group of individuals with relevant skills and experience, brought together with a common aim. Four distinct disciplines can be formed:

#### ***Project Board***

Drawn from end users, company specialists, advisers and practitioners. Responsible for project scope, including authorisation of contingency fund expenditure for necessary changes.

#### ***Principals' Chamber***

Drawn from the principals of partner organisations and led by a project manager. Responsible for establishing common objectives, determining the implementation plan and authorising 'growth' changes as implementation issues arise.

#### ***Customer Care Team***

A small team drawn from operational functions and customer-focused 'completers'. Responsible for managing expectations to ensure they are understood, remain realistic and are escalated as necessary. Continues beyond completion of the project, until the operation is fully proved.

#### ***Implementation Team***

Designers, specialists and practitioners, responsible for detailing, installing, providing and proving the end product. Also responsible for problem solving and escalation, as appropriate.

Each discipline should meet regularly to share information, discuss the project plans, any issues raised and ideas generated. These forums, populated by individuals with similar aims and objectives, will become a rich source of ideas that moves the whole project forward.



Fundamental openness is the key to consultation, ensuring that all information is shared, nothing is held back and that everyone understands what is required and by when. Open communication by all ensures that information continues to flow, enabling the project to become truly FUSION. In the event of problems occurring, the issues should be openly discussed to achieve a resolution.

### Interested parties

A project touches an organisation at many levels. The team must recognise this and communicate at appropriate stages in the project.

### Separating needs from wants

The sharing of information does not imply a process of consensus, so much as collaboration. The ultimate objective is to meet the business needs, as opposed to individuals' or companies' wants or desires. One of the great skills in FUSION formation and consultation is identifying individuals who have the mentality, wit and diplomatic skills to challenge in a way that establishes the business needs through the wants and desires, thereby keeping the focus clear.

### Exploring ideas

Diverse skills within the team enhance the project, providing opportunities and identifying new directions, while exploring ideas. It is essential to explore ideas right through the project and especially in the early stages. The more radical of these often lead to fundamental changes or improvements in the process, so it is necessary to consider them at an appropriate level and for as much time as required.

Sometimes, ideas can be discarded quite quickly and the team should not be frightened of throwing something out that later proves to be a valuable idea. Such decisions can only be taken on the basis of information that is available at the time.



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### **Collective understanding**

An idea will sound even more radical or unrealistic if those considering it don't understand what is being discussed, what the idea is and what are the issues. It is therefore important to take time to achieve collective understanding by listening to what is actually being said and ensuring that everyone realises what they are agreeing to, or discarding.

### **Agreeing programme, budget and standards**

The project programme must reflect the constraints that apply to all participants, be collectively agreed and be realistic, while ensuring that opportunities to reduce the length of the project are fully explored. A FUSION project involves enthusiastic individuals and a time-scale that is unnecessarily long will diminish this enthusiasm just as much as one that is too short.

All aspects of the project must be discussed with the various disciplines within the team, in order to avoid operational pitfalls. For example, having a lead time that is shorter than the time in which supplies can be procured will lead to dissatisfaction, recriminations and, possibly, a missed project date. Being realistic will ensure that the various disciplines can work within the time-scales, budgets and standards being set.

Any project is likely to come into being with an outline budget that will have been set by a client department, in order to get things started. It is then necessary for the Principals to study that budget and agree whether it can meet the need or, indeed, whether it more than meets it. This should happen collectively and at an early stage, so that everybody understands what are the budget criteria that are being applied to the project.

Team members are then able to take value decisions on what should be included, what should be left out and what needs to be changed, in order to meet the needs at the start and as they change throughout the project. This includes any contingency or risk elements, which should be clearly identified for all to see.



The same principle applies to the programme, the standards and the specifications. Everyone must understand the criteria, why they are important and what their value is in terms of the successful completion of the project.

### **Generating a rolling brief**

One of the fundamental differences of a FUSION project is the adoption of a rolling brief. Needs and expectations will change during the life of the project, so it is pointless to take decisions affecting aspects that will not arise until much later. For example, the steel frame of the building is important from the start, whereas the nature of many internal fittings is not.

Changing needs and expectations must be monitored through the teams and changes to the brief must be communicated and agreed on an on-going basis. This will ensure that everyone has understood and appreciated any new requirements and will change their approach or workload accordingly.

### **Reaffirming goals and objectives**

After the consultation process has been agreed, it is necessary for the Principals to reaffirm the goals and objectives. Are the needs that were identified still being met? Are the budget and the programme still correct? Finally, will the specified time frame allow the project needs to be delivered?