

WHAT CAN OUR MEMBERS LEARN FROM OTHER SECTORS?



Highlights from the Major Projects Association event held on 25th February 2020

Why is it that productivity growth in manufacturing is so far ahead of other industry sectors? Why does the automotive sector invest so much in research, development and innovation compared to other sectors? How does the tech sector manage to experiment with and then deliver a stream of new applications or products in relatively short timescales, when compared to others?

At this Major Projects Association seminar speakers from the automotive, mega-events and tech industries offered a series of lessons that might be transferred to major projects as we seek to introduce new approaches or to overcome persistent project performance challenges.

Despite their apparent differences, all three of the different industries shared common lessons, reflecting the need to: recruit and manage the right people in the right way; assure project delivery and resilience in the face of uncertainty; recognise the engagement of different stakeholders as front and centre to any project.

- The Ford Motor Company established Ford Valencia as a complete industry park, with suppliers and services on-site, to provide a sustainable platform to support the just-in-time manufacture of a new product: the 1998 Ford Focus.
- As part of a £160bn dollar enterprise, Google Cloud Services developed a culture of 'Googleness' to support a highly innovative, very dependable and 'best in class', flow of products and services delivered using agile techniques.
- Mega-events, such as the London 2012 Games, plan and manage logistically very complex networks of suppliers, regulators, operators and volunteers, all of which are required to deliver a single, short and extraordinary cultural event to an (immovable) end date.

RECRUIT AND MANAGE THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT WAY

The importance of recruiting and managing the right organisational partners and the right people in your own team is common to all projects.

Select partners on the basis of strategic capability. Ford plans and selects the suppliers for a project on the basis of their capability, quality history, cost-effectiveness, global footprint, financial stability, innovation capability, senior management alignment, available capacity, project expertise and skill set. They establish the right mix of these capabilities based on the product strategy.

'The Ford Global Product Development System means that whilst we develop products around the world with people from multiple countries, everyone speaks the same engineering and project management language.'

Alan Draper, Managing Director, Alan Draper Automotive Consultants Ltd

Google has a dedicated recruitment team, who do all of the recruitment for its workforce of 106,000 employees. On the one hand, they aim to take individual bias out of the process by using a transparent and consistent set of questions; on the other, they place great emphasis on the successful candidate being a good cultural fit with a set of values and mindset they describe as Googleness.

BUILD PROJECT RESILIENCE

Every project faces its own source of uncertainty, and different industries have different ways of building resilience to enable a project team to deliver, whatever unexpectedly comes their way.

Plan in detail but remain flexible. When working on a mega-event, Trivandi use a detailed Event Delivery Plan that covers the whole process from strategic planning to dissolution and legacy after the event. Their operational planning covers 30–60 functional areas, everything from Arrivals and Departures to Volunteer Operations, which break down into up to 250 services.

This exceptional level of planning allows those involved to understand exactly what is going on and adapt or be flexible to any particular situation, secure in the knowledge that they have understood the implications of any change.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE IN THE DELIVERY OF MEGA-EVENTS?



(James Bulley OBE, CEO, Trivandi Ltd)

Bring your supply chain as close to the project as you can. Ford Valencia is a supplier industry park that started with the Ford Factory but then provided the facilities for the suppliers to build their sub-components on site, with delivery conveyors connecting the suppliers directly to the main factory. This sense of working in the same space, of partnership, underpins the whole Ford operation. Shared goals and targets between Ford and its supply chain help ensure the shared success of the project and an enhanced global reputation for all the organisations involved.

ENGAGE INDIVIDUALS AS WELL AS ORGANISATIONS

Educate your key stakeholders. Stakeholders influence every aspect of the planning and delivery of a project, as well as the nature and amount of value that is generated. The ministries or government departments who are often funding mega-sporting events are unlikely to be intelligent clients when they struggle to understand the scale and complexity of what is to be delivered.

Trivandi insist on educating their key stakeholders by taking them through the detailed Event Delivery Plan and explaining how it works. The stakeholders for these events need to be just as aware of the risks and the logistical challenges as the delivery team, if they are going to be able to provide effective oversight and support.

Create the conditions for every team to be high performing. The Google Cloud has to be an extremely fast-moving and objectives-driven business. It has to stay ahead of its competitors. Yet it achieves this by enabling its delivery teams to set the objectives and key results. It provides a culture of psychological safety to encourage innovation and ensures its people are given time to reflect on what they are doing and what they bring to the business. At Google 20% of an employee's time is 'thinking time'. The culture of transparency that runs through the business encourages teams and individuals to experiment, secure in the knowledge that they have the leadership team behind them.

THREE LESSONS FROM LONDON 2012

The right people – the 2012 team very deliberately decided to recruit 50% of people who had mega-event expertise and 50% who did not. They drew people from the West End Theatre and other creative communities, who had transferable skills, yet who shared experience and could empathise with the normal citizens of London and beyond.

Resilience – 'rehearse, rehearse and rehearse' again was the 2012 mantra. The ambition of the event put everyone under pressure. The rehearsals enabled everyone to understand their role and how to respond in the event of the unexpected. Most importantly, they also allowed the team to identify when the demands of the creative team might put stress on wellbeing of those involved, and to adapt accordingly.

Engagement – treating staff as you would treat volunteers, ensuring transparency in what you are asking them to do, and respecting them as individuals allowed the team to push everyone to the edge of their comfort zones, bring everyone along on the journey and deliver the extraordinary event that was asked of them collectively.

'Treat staff as you would treat volunteers, with respect.'

Sara-Ellen Williams, Head of Events, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London Legacy Development Corporation

POINTS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Which are the 'we have always done it like this' elements of your project delivery process and how could you imagine them differently?
- What would your design, procurement and handover processes look like if the main driving factors were user-value and successful delivery rather than cost?

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With grateful thanks to [Moorhouse Consulting](#) for their help in shaping this event..

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