Learning legacy

Lessons learned from the London 2012 Games construction project

Impacting change – a fresh approach to the successful delivery of employment and skills

The vision during the construction of the Athletes' Village was to create a place of inspiration and opportunity using the iconic status of the London 2012 construction programme to drive employment and skills outcomes. The supplier, Lend Lease, created a robust approach leading delivery and creating social change through a new and innovative skills strategy – over 150 disadvantaged people completed bespoke pre-employment training and over 100 secured employment.

Focus

Integral to the London 2012 construction programme was providing local employment and improving skills for the benefit of both individuals and industry. The greatest impact was achieved by making employment and skills a core deliverable of the project and ensuring it was embraced by the supply chain. Coupled with this was looking at how it was possible to tackle both the skills challenge and provide opportunities where they were needed most – targeting those furthest away from the job market. Other elements of delivery recognised the value of employer-led training for the workforce through the National Skills Academy; and an efficient local brokerage service.

Successful delivery – three Ts: Team, Targets, Trust

Key to the success of gaining supply chain buy in was gaining comprehensive recognition of the importance of the Employment and Skills Strategy. This was achieved with senior management cascading high profile support mirrored by all levels of the project team, delivering these messages to the supply chain, mobilising relevant contractual obligations and facilitating engagement in the right forums.

Targets were added to contracts which were tangible and real, and internal targets were also put in place to drive performance on the individual Athletes' Village plots; each procured their own supply chain. Communication of project obligations and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were communicated pre-tender and monitored regularly. Contractors also saw the benefits of an employer-led model demonstrating different delivery interpretations of use for their own recruitment and upskilling requirements.

A new approach: tackling worklessness and a new way of upskilling

The construction industry has a history of working with apprentices and investing in skills, but what was missing was a real dedication to looking at inner-city worklessness and tackling issues around social inclusion. The vision and delivery mechanisms were conceived and BeOnsite, the supplier's not for profit company, led the way. BeOnsite was set up to respond to community needs and build local partnerships, providing those with barriers to employment (for example, the homeless, ex-offenders, serving prisoners, the long-term unemployed and those with disabilities) with industry relevant training and sustained jobs within the property sector.

Amirah Gaija, Electrical Design Engineer at the Olympic Village

BeOnsite graduate David Peters

BeOnsite graduate Giancarlo Amato

BeOnsite benefits communities by supporting disadvantaged people into sustainable employment as well as addressing industry skills gaps. Key to this was a culture of fairness and opportunity for all by providing a foot in the door for trainees and then on-the-job learning, leading to formal qualifications as people progress in their careers.

Steps to success – the training journey

The promise to all candidates was the guarantee that training would be linked to a job and career development programme once in work. With BeOnsite, no-one started training unless there was a job at the end of it. The supplier then supported the individuals, ensuring they had the best possible chance of success both pre- and post-employment. This started with the pre-employment programme which focused on technical skills for the role, delivering training in line with industry needs and also the behaviours and characteristics that are required to gain and maintain a job. From the selection process on, focus was turned to employers' requirements and the behaviours linked to success.

As technology develops within the property sector, new skills are required, therefore relevant trades and skills that contractors will really need in the future were identified and delivered. An employer-led approach was taken to understand what these were and the best mode of delivery. This gave individuals enough exposure and background to the trade and products before they reached site. Successful candidates then started on-the-job training following contractors' commitment to individual learning plans for the candidates. Where needed, BeOnsite also funded and organised elements of training, and ensured individuals and contractors had the tailored support they needed for both individual and corporate success.

Success

Over 150 individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds completed bespoke pre-employment training and over 100 secured subsequent work. Over 90 apprenticeships were provided within these areas and other core trades, and the contractor's on-site brokerage team filled over 600 jobs for local people.

Success is realised through contractors buying into a new approach and creating a sense of pride and ownership in making a difference in people's lives. A strong communication strategy, both in terms of contractual requirements and nurturing relationships, made this happen.

Lessons learned

- Clarity and communication of the delivery model is key once aligned to the vision and partnered with defined deliverables clearly communicated across all levels.
- Clear governance measures need to be put in place at all levels of the project when monitoring success. KPIs are very useful, but can be hard to monitor on a vast project with a complex procurement strategy. A strategic approach to identifying key opportunities is also important to get right.
- Selection and recruitment events need to be carefully planned and managed to ensure the processes are effective, fair and accessible. Subsequent programmes focused on people with learning difficulties.

Project

Employment and Skills

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