

Avoid conflict with relationship management

By Keith Hampson

Relationship management is a key tenet of successful project management. Traditional systems of procuring construction – which are adversarial and rooted in conflict – are unacceptable in today's business climate.

Far from being soft options, teamwork and partnering are hard-nosed, cost-effective management techniques that deliver value to the client by minimising or eliminating wasteful activities. Successful relationship management requires leadership and commitment from the top down.

It has been very satisfying over the past few years to witness the development and industry uptake of Construction Innovation's relationship management research.

Construction Innovation's original relationship management research project, including a team of people from John Holland Group, Brisbane City Council, Queensland Department of Public Works, Queensland Department of Main Roads, QUT, CSIRO, RMIT, and the University of Newcastle, has now been developed into a two-day relationship management training course which has generated

widespread interest amongst industry and government.

This reflects the recognition by industry (both private and public sectors) that relationship management should be regarded as another risk and included in an organisation's analysis of risk management strategies.

The course was piloted with the Queensland Department of Main Roads in 2006 and has since been adapted and conducted for the John Holland Group. In April, the course was run for Queensland Department of Public Works staff.

Aspects of the course which identify

the human behaviours that drive conflict have been particularly well received by participants. Another of the course's strengths is that it can be specifically tailored to meet the needs of different organisations.

In addition to being rolled out in the construction sector, this course has the potential to adapt into other sectors, such as defence, health and IT.

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