

High Team Performance in the Nuclear Sector

Acorn's continued work with the UK nuclear sector over recent years has seen our involvement in three high profile projects, each in very different areas of activity: new build, procurement and decommissioning.

Each project has achieved impressive results: cost savings of many millions, completion ahead of schedule and glowing health and safety records.

A common thread throughout all projects has been Acorn's ability to improve the performance of teams comprising supply chain contractors and internal resources, and to unify them around shared project objectives.

The approach is one which builds on leadership style and Acorn's Team Dimensions Model, a proven dynamic toolkit which reduces the time it takes for any team – internal or in collaboration - to become a fully effective, high performing unit.



Silos Maintenance Facility

Affectionately referred to as the 'Formula 1 Pit Lane for Sellafield' given the role the facility and its teams will play in supporting the remediation and decommissioning activities, the SMF is located adjacent to the Calder Hall power station and its Magnox reactors

A fundamentally important facility, the SMF is a purpose-built workshop where the equipment used to empty the two most hazardous silos - Magnox Swarf Storage Silo (MSSS) and the Pile Fuel Cladding Silo (PFCS), both priorities for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority - is maintained and stored.

At a cost of £250 million and taking nine years to complete, the construction project was hailed a resounding success by collaboration partners Cavendish Nuclear and Balfour Beatty, along with client and co-collaborators Sellafield Ltd.

Highly dependent upon the ability of personnel from the three partners to work cohesively, the SMF project was completed on budget, to the agreed timescale and also able to boast an impressive safety record throughout.

Although progressing at a satisfactory pace, Acorn were introduced at a time when the project was experiencing a number of delays and frustrations, with teams siloed and KPIs in danger of being missed.

This set three programme objectives for Acorn:

- Deliver a common culture to be cascaded throughout the project
- Create a single unifying purpose as a senior leadership team (SLT)
- Creating the right behavioural environment for the project to be successful

Keith Longney, Founder of Acorn Coaching & Development: "All three teams knew that performance wasn't at the level envisaged and that there were a number of causal issues running throughout the project. Shared commonality would highlight what needed improving and how this could be implemented."

"Understandably, Sellafield is a highly procedural organisation but there are very real instances in large organisations where procedures can act as a brake on project delivery or hinder the adoption of new approaches and ways of working."

The key was to gain a real understanding of the procedures which would have a bearing on the SMF project teams and initiate a 'proportionate procedural' approach which allowed the project's senior management team to be more pragmatic.

"Helping the SLT act as coaches instead of enforcers enabled the teams under their command to be more effective, and the project to run better." adds Keith.

"Working with the senior project leads, we were able to start cascading responsibilities down the line, interrogating issues and devising resolutions in partnership."

The SMF Project was completed on budget and ahead of schedule and with the huge achievement of zero lost time accidents throughout the project lifespan. To put this into context, the SMF Project accrued 3 million man-hours with a workforce in excess of 250 people involved.

This impressive record has in large been attributed to the actions and commitment of the high-performing teams.

No less than 23 awards have been won by the SMF Project over its lifespan, most notably being the most 'Outstanding Project' and the prestigious 'Chairman's Award' at the NDA's Safety and Wellbeing Awards.

"The most important thing for the success of this project has been the level of collaboration between Cavendish Nuclear and Balfour Beatty, and the client. We really have worked together as a fully integrated team." Paul Furness, SMF Project Director, Cavendish Nuclear

Our full project case study, 'The Silos Maintenance Facility - Sellafield's 'Formula One Pit Lane'', can be downloaded from our website, www.acorncoaching.com



Balfour Beatty





LLWR PCM

LLW Repository Ltd (LLWR) provide a range of waste management services to the UK nuclear sector including neighbours Sellafield and the wider nuclear estate.

Commencing in 2013, the legacy Plutonium Contaminated Materials (PCM) programme was tasked with decommissioning five 'magazines' – concrete bunker-like structures originally constructed during World War II and where contaminated materials from operations at the Sellafield site were later stored before purpose-built storage facilities were commissioned.

The £100million programme to decommission the five magazines on the LLWR Site commenced in 2013 and was originally expected to take ten years, but the programme was completed with four years ahead of schedule and with a saving to the taxpayer of over £20million.

Lead contractor NSG Environmental Ltd (NSG) headed-up a wider team that included Nuvia, PC Richardson, Atkins, Hertel and Studsvik along with internal LLWR personnel.

Acorn were introduced to help the collaboration teams work cohesively and get the project on-track.

"From the outset, it was clear that creating and developing a wholly integrated leadership team was pivotal." says Keith Longney, Managing Director of Acorn Coaching. "The PCM leadership team would need to appreciate all key functions in the programme and understand that project success required each partner to work in a fully interdependent manner."

Although much of Acorn's focus was on the PCM leadership team, Keith is the first to acknowledge that success wasn't solely achieved by the people at the top. Positive engagement with all involved in the programme, and actively managing them to drive project delivery, saw a real focus upon efficiency and the desire to improve performance.

'Learning from Experience' was adopted, with teams drawing directly on their experience of previous nuclear projects and wider industry sectors. This approach quickly started to show tangible progress and when an accelerated schedule was introduced the foundations were firmly in place for the programme to run at increased pace.

LLWR are now held in very high regard across the NDA estate as a direct result of their performance on the PCM project.

"Teamwork has been integral to the PCM decommissioning programme's success. This has been one of NSG's biggest projects... and it's certainly the best we've had in terms of contractor/client relationships." Gareth Wilson, Senior Project Engineer, NSG

"The programme has been a towering example of what can be achieved when a determined and focused group who really want to get the job done, adopt a collaborative approach." Paul Pointon, Managing Director, LLWR

The full case study, 'Team Coaching Helps LLWR Collaboration Save Years – and Millions', can be found on our website at www.acorncoaching.com

 **LLW Repository Ltd**


NSG
legacy management



Shared Services Alliance

In these unprecedented times we have all adapted the way we live and work, but the world hasn't just stopped turning and projects still need to progress.

More than ever, effective communication is crucial with team members operating remotely and the challenges are now all too familiar for many of us. But add into the scenario working with individuals from different organisations, each with their own culture and methods of operation and delivery, and matters become much more complicated

Project collaboration can be an unwieldy beast with conflicting agendas, styles and personalities, but if a team can be united by, and committed to, a common purpose then the output can exceed the sum of the component parts.

With an annual spend in the region of £1.8 billion, the supply of goods and services to the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) estate across the UK is undeniably big business.

However, a constant requirement through all strands of the NDA supply chain is to deliver better value for money for the UK taxpayer and one area identified where this could be improved is through procurement.

Formed in 2009 and comprising nine of the NDA's client organisations, the Shared Services Alliance (SSA) was created to achieve financial and operational benefits from collaborative procurement.

The vision was for a collaborative procurement programme which could source any shared requirements across the NDA estate - from facilities management to travel booking, IT services to radioactive waste management - and procure them from one central team.

However clear that vision might be, there was a major underlying barrier to overcome, as Jonathan Evans of LLW Repository Ltd (LLWR), Head of Shared Services Alliance, explains: "Each of the alliance member companies had developed different ways of doing things to achieve the same outcomes. Feedback from suppliers was often that we are too complex and difficult to supply to. We needed to work together to be a more integrated client."

In 2016 a revised operating model was established which utilised a category management approach across the SSA shared areas of spend.

Previously the SSA team had comprised personnel who were undertaking the role voluntarily and in addition to their day-to-day positions, so an initial task of the team leader was to compile a 'virtual dedicated team' of full-time procurement and contract management professionals who would lead the implementation of a revised strategy.

Recognising the multi-facets to which the team leader would be dealing with across the nine partners, and the potential for many vagaries therein, was an obvious activity to address.

"It's not to say that the partners didn't see the bigger picture or couldn't appreciate the potential for increased savings, but there would inevitably be historical supplier relationships that simply would not work under the new framework." comments Keith Longney.

Using Acorn's Team Dimensions Model as a primary tool, the team adopted and united behind the leader's style and direction. The Team Dimension Model was a perfect solution as it is an approach which also reduces the time it takes for any team to become a fully effective, high performing asset.

Savings achieved by the SSA have been significantly more than originally anticipated - £320 million in 3.5 years versus the target of £175 million over 4 years, along with improved client-supply chain liaison and streamlined procurement processes.

You can read the full SSA case study, 'Exceeding expectations through developing a high performing collaborative virtual team', at www.acorncoaching.com



Delivering High Performance in the Nuclear Sector

Vault 9

The construction of Vault 9 at the Low Level Waste Repository commenced in September 2008 and the project was Acorn's first experience within the nuclear sector.

Working alongside the NDA, Washington Group International and Birse Nuclear, Acorn were tasked with, and successfully created, a more collaborative culture between the client and contractors.

SPP1

Following our success with Vault 9, Acorn was requested to assist with the Sludge Packaging Plant (SPP1), built by main contractors Doosan Babcock and Balfour Beatty to handle historic radioactive waste at Sellafield.

Each organisation had a very different business culture which had the potential to cause major headaches and possibly cause project delays.

Our role was to help the alliance gel, identify with each others' point of view and recommend ground rules for their ongoing working relationship throughout the project's duration. In short, to align expectations.

Acorn also delivered 1-1 coaching for a number of key people within the project management team, to assist in leading the project effectively to deliver to required parameters.

B30

Acorn were asked to support the Joint Venture team tasked with managing the retrieval of highly radioactive materials from the cooling pond in the centre of building B30 at Sellafield, an extremely sensitive legacy from Britain's rapid post-war nuclear expansion.

The project presented a range of engineering and safety challenges and Acorn was engaged at a strategic stage when the major hurdles were establishing a realistic cost, and producing a schedule that was acceptable to all the stakeholders.

Consequently, one of the initial requirements was to support the development of a cohesive team with a unified vision, to facilitate this extensive planning and development phase.

Evaporator D Project (Costain)

The UK's largest nuclear project involving a framework of companies including Costain, Redhall, Interserve and Sellafield.

A complex project with many challenges, aided by Acorn in the latter stages when we were asked to assist in enhancing alignment between the main contractors.

The outcome from our intervention was the creation of closer working relationships between team members, a renewed commitment to achieving progress targets, and increased collaboration to overcome issues.

Nexus Decomm Alliance

Nexus has been confirmed as a delivery partner for the Decommissioning Delivery Partnership (DDP) framework, worth a predicted £500m, and will enter a 10-year agreement to support Sellafield Ltd staff on the decommissioning of Europe's most complex nuclear site.

Whilst still in the early stages, main contractors Costain have asked Acorn to be involved in supporting this framework.

LLWR - Graham

LLWR brought in Graham, a construction, asset management and project investment business with experience in the nuclear sector, as a Framework Provider to work with them to deliver their projects in a cost-efficient, timely manner.

LLWR identified a desire to accelerate performance within their own company, but also in their interface with Graham, if they were to deliver projects within agreed parameters. They identified effective collaboration as the fundamental key to this success.

The business benefits were a significantly greater acceptance of Graham than with previous contractors, where there has traditionally been a hierarchical and 'contractual' relationship.

Assisted by a clear project vision, and with ongoing engagement of key senior personnel, they gained a genuine collaborative approach to identify and resolve potential issues.

This resulted in key areas of the project working in a highly effective manner in jointly problem-solving, resulting in performance improvement.

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COACHING & DEVELOPMENT

If you would like to find out more about Acorn, our people and how we can help develop and improve the performance of individuals and teams in your organisation, then we'd love to hear from you.

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