

## Enhancing performance through collaboration webinar

28 March 2018

### Q&A session

Here are the questions that were not answered during the webinar session.

You can find the full recording here: <https://www.neccontract.com/collaborationwebinar>

**Q: A big problem with collaboration in the industry is that it requires effective communication and for me that is lacking in a lot of companies. We had better communication 20 years ago, prior to emails etc.**

**A:** This is very true. Collaboration requires a variety of behaviors around personal communication and interaction to be really effective. Nothing beats face to face if you can do it, or at least picking up the phone. More emails is not the way to foster collaboration.

**Q: A successful project will deliver on time, to budget and scope, bringing value to the client's business; we are not doing that now, so we need a different way. The digitalisation of the AEC industry is a unique opportunity to improve outcomes which will only come with both collaboration and BIM. The form of procurement is chosen by the client. If we can prove that we can deliver better quality from BIM, then the Clients may be more willing to collaborate.**

**A:** To get the full range of benefits from BIM collaboration is required. What is important to remember that collaboration is an enabler of BIM (and many other tools) and not an output from it.

**Q: Any advice on how to include collaboration in the bill/activity schedule**

**A:** Collaboration should form part of the way of working and be included in your activity schedule. It is not something you do in isolation, it has to be part of how you deliver your function, role and meet your responsibilities and accountabilities.

**Q: Are the low margins and high risks, in the construction industry, driving the non-collaborative behaviours?**

**A:** This has been the case for 20 years or more. It does drive adversarial non-collaborative behaviours. However delivering higher margins and mitigating risks are two of the many benefits of collaboration.

**Q: Are there any behavioural training tools on implementing/understanding collaboration?**

**A:** There are many - far too many to list. The best are ones that focus on helping people and teams to understand in an experiential way what they will need to do in the day-to-day to get effective collaboration working.

**Q: Are there processes within NEC4 which promote and incentivise collaboration or is it more of a mindset change within the project team?**

**A:** It is definitely a mindset change. In terms of processes, often what hinders collaboration is the inclusion of significant numbers of Z clauses, which strive to pull apart the very structure of a contract.

**Q: Can the presenters actually explain how they think the NEC promotes and enhances collaboration? What actual, tangible steps does the NEC have such as the clear language, and accountability.**

**A:** The NEC sets out a Principle "in a spirit of mutual trust and co-operation". So it starts out to create the right environment. This is supported by the correct use of early warnings and compensation events. These type of events provide maximum opportunity and value to both parties if their actions, behaviours and intentions are in line with the Principle of mutual trust.

**Q: Do you agree that companies have to provide the right collaborative communication tools to their organisation in order for the project management team to be effective?**

**A:** Yes. Communication is a vital part of successful collaboration. Teams and Individuals need coaching and training to be able to consistently deploy collaborative behaviours. The whole team needs to understand the collaborative expectation that are on them but of course they need to be given the right tools, training and environment to succeed. This invariably requires real leadership input.

**Q: Do you agree that contractual relationships have the biggest effect on the collaborative relationships on projects?**

**A:** Contractual relationships can have a big effect on collaborative relationships but they are not necessarily the biggest single factor. There are others such as the right type of project leadership and attitudes as well as the ingrained behaviours that people bring with them from previous projects and relationships.

**Q: Do you have template that teams could use in order to have the right discussions at the start of a contract? E.g. - how will we deal with compensation events, how will ensure we are on programme, what are the success factors etc?**

**A:** These are indeed all key discussions that need to take place at the start of a contract. There is no definitive list - but the key is getting everything out in the open and having a joint plan to address them all.

**Q: Do you think that the results to the accountability poll might be related to the degree to which on many projects the roles and responsibilities of people in the team are not too well defined?**

**A:** This is a possibility. Having clarity on roles is a key requisite for effective collaboration. If people are not sure what is expected from them in terms of roles and responsibilities as well as personal behaviour then how can they be expected to deliver effective collaboration within that environment?

**Q: Does collaboration need to be ingrained into processes? For instance the RIBA promote sustainability... is it time to push collaboration within these work methods?**

**A:** The answer is yes, but where organisations commonly go wrong is by thinking that collaboration can be entirely driven by processes alone. Collaboration starts with individual behaviours but having the right processes around it can be a great support. It is all about creating a collaborative environment through a variety of building blocks - of which process is just one.

**Q: How can we have mutual trust where there are different benefits form each party involved (e.g. contractor, concessionaire, client/state)?**

**A:** It's not different benefits that are the problem with trust - it's not being open about these benefits. Different parties in a collaborative arrangement will never have equality in terms of potential benefits, but they need to open with each other about the realities of the situation - otherwise the danger is that people just pretend to collaborate.

**Q: How important do the speakers believe the introduction of BIM is to facilitate collaborative working within the industry?**

**A:** To get the full range of benefits from BIM collaboration is required. What it is important to remember that collaboration is an enabler of BIM (and many other tools) and not an output from it.

**Q: I do not feel that collaboration is the secret factor for project success, but rather the ethical behaviour of the parties. If the parties act ethically, won't collaboration be the natural result? Ethics is the starting point, then collaboration is the result?**

**A:** Behaviour is a really important word to use here. Effective collaboration is about individuals consistently delivering the right behaviours. A lot of these behaviours, such as openness, honesty, giving and receiving effective feedback, making sure there are no surprises etc. are ones which you might also associate with ethical behaviour. It's a bit of a chicken and egg situation. What is vital is that all parties involved agree up front what collaborative and ethical actual mean in terms of how people need to behave in their day to day roles.

**Q: Is there a module in NEC4 Engineering and Construction Short Contract to include a model for collaboration in an invitation to tender?**

**A:** No, we have not produced such a thing at present.

**Q: I've noticed that a lot of people in construction have a problem with terms like behaviour, empathy, support etc. Have you had to overcome this before and what strategies have you used?**

**A:** This is very true. In our experience you need to move the language away from the scientific and towards the every-day so that people can understand what the actual nuts and bolts of collaboration are and what they need to be doing to get it going. Lecturing people on collaborative theory will get you nowhere. Rather you need to approach it experientially, for example by getting people into situations, perhaps in a workshop environment where together where they need to collaborate for success and then drawing the clear links to the real world.

**Q: Often clients treat collaboration as something that consultants/contractors should do but then don't change themselves. How do you get clients to change?**

**A:** This is about Joint planning with the client in terms of how you are going to collaborate with them and also on how the relationship is going to work. You have to be able to challenge a client - otherwise you are just pretending. It is the client leadership that need to grasp and deploy the collaborative behaviours - we start off by getting the business to articulate in a business case, why collaborate and what the benefits are. Following which we can do a capability gap analysis between the desired behaviours to drive the business case and the behaviours currently evidenced in the business.

**Q: We often, within both supply chain and client organisations, try to achieve more than we originally set out to do (e.g.: make more profit, reduce programmes) or have unrealistic goals in the first place.**

**Do you think this prevents us being truly collaborative?**

**A:** Stretch targets are good, but there has to be a realism in there too. Collaboration is not a panacea or a magic bullet, but is a hard business decision that requires commitment and real work to get going. If targets are unrealistic to start with the risk is that failure just breeds recrimination and non-collaborative behaviours.

**Q: You mentioned the dichotomy between collaboration and competition. Do you have examples of where competition has been used to drive forward collaboration in a typical macho environment such as construction?**

**A:** Competition is fine if it can be directed towards programme challenges such as quality, time, safety etc. so it can result in clear win-wins for all organisations involved. Where it becomes damaging is when it is between organisations and results in win-lose outcomes, thus damaging collaboration.

Answers by [Simon Vaughan, Director at JCP Consultancy Ltd](#), and **Robert Gerrard**, NEC Consultant and NEC Users' Group Secretary.