

Case study: Sir Robert McAlpine



You can overlay programmes side by side so people can see which parts of the different approaches are faster or slower than the other. Then we can present the advantages and disadvantages in text, to support the visuals.”

Reporting in this way also helps eliminate any potential areas of difference of perspective on the programme: “Each fortnight I submitted a jagged drop-line and re-sequenced drop lines against that programme. By continually doing that, it became undisputable that this was the programme that everybody was measuring and reporting against. The reason that’s important is that whenever there are applications for extensions of time, there is often some dispute as to exactly which programme we are supposed to be following – but not in this case.”

The critical path analysis formed an important element of client project reporting. Joseph explained: “In addition to the normal drop-line, we included a critical path analysis in our reporting. It helped us show how we identified opportunities to recover time through allocation of additional resources, decouple dependencies and justify our notifications of delays to progress which could then be used to agree extensions of time. An example of that was where we accelerated works around the ground floor concrete slab and installed the level 2 steelwork concurrently.”

Joseph also used Powerproject as part of managing and communicating with sub-contractors: “We exported sub-contractor package programmes from the master programme to include in original sub-contract orders, rolling up the activities tightly so that milestones are clear – then our subs can come back to us and be clear on how they intend to meet them. We can then take their working detail and easily re-integrate them back into our working programme.”

Confidence brings compensation

The excellent lines of client communication and good progress management also created a situation in which the client felt confident to instruct further works during the contract, adding another floor slab, altering additional rooms in the building. This was compounded by the arrival of a new party. The client had made efforts to secure a tenant for the space during the build, and just before a main sectional completion date succeeded in signing a major fashion retailer. It made some specific requests to its new landlord. “They wanted lift shafts, escalator pits, staircases and many other things in advance of occupation. There were specific requests around the screeding specification and power requirements

to supply the eventual retail display units. The client decided to give us all this work while we were on site, since they were confident that we would deliver. It was such a volume of work relative to the original contract sum it added more than 30% to the overall value.”

Joseph related the impact on the programme itself: “There was really no way that the original contract programme could be followed. With each instruction the sequence drifted away from the original intentions. The original sequence of working from the basement upwards versus all these variations made the programme unrecognisable. In all, we estimated that we received more than 200 instructions during a 14-month period.”

The software was in regular use. He continued: “Every other day we were running variations to the target and contract programme, to assess the impacts. We were doing a dropline report not just every Friday but almost every day of the week. We got it down to a very quick process.”

At the same time, keeping the team and sub-contractors up to speed with the immediate work implications was important: “We ran many short term look-ahead programmes of two weeks or four weeks, as well as printing out the activities for the next six weeks as a visual aid that people could see and follow on site. It was very useful so that site managers could ensure the right method statements were done, or that areas were cleared ready for new work to start.”

Win-win all around

The outcome of such good programme and client management has paid dividends for every party involved. Not only did the client gain its development as agreed, it was snag-free and defect-free. The tenant was able to take possession of their space ahead of schedule, and so start trading earlier than expected, while Sir Robert McAlpine gained additional revenues on an unexpectedly regained project opportunity. Joseph McNeil has not only gained a significant professional award but has been appointed as the team leader for a new group aiming to deliver further opportunities for the same client.

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