

## What is Respect for People?

Constructing Excellence partners seek to achieve radical improvements in performance within the construction industry. Change and improvement will only happen through people, in particular the efforts of the workforce. Providing respect and the right conditions to support their endeavours are essential.

Ultimately, Respect for People is a two-way thing; showing respect to our workforce, while simultaneously winning respect from them and from the general public. The results will benefit everyone.

## Why have a Working Environment Toolkit?

The physical working environment has consistently been shown to have a major impact on productivity and an individual's sense of 'worth'. It has a major impact on retention, which affects performance in customer service and ability to develop effective teams. Teams that stay together lead to better predictability in cost and time. The quality of working arrangements contributes to the public's 'image' of construction as an occupation.

This toolkit is designed for EVERYONE in the construction process, in both site and off-site environments. Originally, the site and off-site elements were presented separately. But the two-year trial of these toolkits indicated that the industry should aim for the standards of the site and off-site working environments to converge. Most of the value of construction activity is on-site, yet workers in that environment are often exposed to the worst conditions.

The toolkit supports the achievement of national and international standards, should you choose. Please see "*Reaching the Standard*" included in your pack.

The toolkit has four parts:

- Instructions for use.
- Working Environment Early Planning Checklist – for those establishing a construction activity, e.g. a project team of clients and designers, and those setting up a company.
- Working Environment Checklist – on site – for regular use throughout the 'active' phase of the activity, e.g. a project running on site or functional office.
- Help Sheet to assist you in improving weaknesses identified in the checklists.

**Managers' perceptions frequently differ from those of their workforce and poor (often expensive) decisions are made as a consequence. The Working Environment Questionnaire is provided in the *Workforce Satisfaction Toolkit*.**

This toolkit is one of six toolkits designed to be used together:

- Equality and Diversity in the Workplace.
- Working Environment.
- Health and Safety.
- Training Plan.
- Work in Occupied Premises.
- Workforce Satisfaction.

## Why should I be interested in the Working Environment? – The business case

The physical environment in which people are expected to work tells them a lot about how important they are in the eyes of their employers and supervisors. Mutual respect is shown by fair pay and conditions but especially in good management practices. A valued, respected workforce has been consistently shown to be more loyal – leading to less disruption, lower replacement costs though staff turnover and higher levels of customer service. It is better motivated – with consequent effects on quality of workmanship, effort and willingness to go the extra mile – and more willing to be innovative and work efficiently.

## How to use the Working Environment Toolkit

This toolkit is intended for use in a company or project situation.

There is no right or wrong way to use the checklists. The method shown below evolved during our trials. You should amend the processes to reflect your circumstances.

### **Step 1: Establish what stage the activity is currently in.**

There are two phases:

- The planning, design and setup of a project or company (or perhaps a merger, split or relocation).
- The 'active phase' when construction is taking place on site or when the company is operational.

In the early stages it is recommended that you use the Early Planning Checklist. If you are in the 'active' phase you may start with either the Personal Checklist or the Working Environment Checklist. The trial has shown that using the Working Environment Questionnaire (in the *Workforce Satisfaction Toolkit*) produces valuable results at anytime.

### **Step 2: Review every section to ensure that all questions applicable to YOUR circumstances are included.**

Make sure you consider which questions you want to examine. If you are not sure leave the question IN. All other questions should be ruled through so they are not answered.

The checklist may be photocopied for re-use.

During the trial, some companies attempted to develop an in-house guide to the toolkits, providing more detail than in the current checklist, but this was found to be unnecessary.

### **Step 3: Score each question.**

The method of scoring varies, so use the key to the scoring system as a guide.

There is a notes column for you to jot down any areas of concern. This will help in planning actions.

#### *Early Planning or Working Environment Checklists*

A range of people should complete the checklists, answering from their own experience, and the results combined to give an overall score for your company or project.

### **Step 4: Work out your score for each section:**

$$\text{Score for section} = \frac{\text{total score for the section}}{\text{number of questions answered in the section}}$$

Boxes are provided for this purpose.

### **Step 5: Plot your scores on the radar chart.**

See the Checklist and Scorecard for further instructions.

### **Step 6: Examine the radar chart for areas of strength and improvement and communicate the results.**

Once completed the radar chart should be reviewed for strengths and weaknesses and circulated to all those who completed the checklist, and others, so that they are aware of the current performance. Typically this may be by posting on a notice board, Intranet, company newsletter and face-to-face discussions, etc. Managers often find it useful to have an action plan developed to which they can refer in the event of questions about the scores presented. Remember it is acceptable to include things that cannot be dealt with at that time, provided a valid reason exists.

The Help Sheet can point you in the right direction if you need further assistance.

### **Step 7: Measure your progress.**

Benchmarking existing performance with others and examining progress over time tells managers how well their practice measures up and whether actions are delivering results.

### **Step 8: Repeat the process regularly.**

The trial suggests that the checklist should be scored at least bi-monthly. More frequent intervals are beneficial to establish progress and to see whether any resulting changes are producing better results.