

- PRODUCT development
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- PRODUCTION of components

PROJECT 43

Movement for Innovation M⁴I



MAY 2000

Fit out accomplished by multi-skilled team

Continuity meant 50% fewer operatives

Slough Estates' project manager Kim Reynolds is delighted with the multi-skilled fit out team supplied by Cirus for the Meggitt Mobrey factory at 158 Edinburgh Avenue, Slough. "We have finally nailed the previously intangible waste due to various trades coming and going," he claims.

Fit out Contractor Cirus has been developing its multi-skilled teams for some years. "Recent changes in tax law have had a surprising benefit for us. We find that we can deliver a better result by developing the talents of employed operatives instead of the main Contractor constantly hunting around for specialist subcontractors and all the associated disjointed work practices," says Simon Carey of Cirus.

This project involved fitting out offices and toilet cubicles. One team of 17 multi-skilled operatives completed drywall core walls and partitions, glazed dividing wall, carpentry, joinery, suspended ceiling, toilet cubicles and fittings. Reynolds says, "We have been developing multi-skilling with claddings for several years and are now looking at other processes such as services installations to apply the lessons we have learned with Cirus."

Surely there is deterioration in quality when operatives are not 'experts'? Slough Estates is quite satisfied with the results which actually have fewer defects than similar work done elsewhere on the estate.

Benefits of multi-skilling

This was the first project where Slough Estates employed *Calibre*, the productivity toolkit from BRE. *Calibre* measured two key indicators - 'added value' and 'making the building grow' on this and an adjacent site where traditional arrangements were used for fit out. Overall, the results were equivalent, but Reynolds and Carey are sure they are onto a winner. "If we could match the experienced subcontractors next door with our new multi-skilled team, it would only be a matter of practice to overtake them," insists Carey.

Multi-skilling has these advantages:

Reduced turnover of operatives on site means better co-ordination and orientation of personnel

CASE HISTORY



"We have finally nailed the previously intangible waste due to various trades coming and going"

Kim Reynolds, Slough Estates



Fit-out at Meggitt Mobrey, Slough

Having **fewer interfaces** means fewer operatives in confined areas, reduced set up and down time between operations and less supervision required.

Having operatives on the fit out package from start to finish improve **job satisfaction** and **ownership of defects**.

Productivity increases as there is less time wasted waiting for materials.



CREDITS

End user – Meggitt Mobrey Limited
 Client – Slough Estates plc
 Contractor – Cirus Limited

Fit out accomplished by multi-skilled team

The Challenge

For Slough Estates, building high quality products at an economic cost was the issue. Cirus had been finding it increasingly difficult to recruit skilled operatives. Also, legislation governing self-employment in the construction industry favoured an employed workforce. It became apparent that many operatives were capable of more than one trade. An opportunity existed to extend their skills.

Solving problems

The first problem in multi-skilling is identifying compatible trades. Cirus look for concurrent or sequential activities requiring similar skills. They have found that carpentry, joinery, suspended ceiling and erection of partitions are a good match, while plastering and painting are not.

Developing suitable operatives is the next problem. Cirus usually train multi-skilled operatives by working in pairs; for example a carpenter with a drywall fixer, each teaching the other. Experience shows that carpenters pick up the other fit out trades more readily than vice versa.

Early in the development of a new team, some tasks took longer than with dedicated operatives but this is offset by overall project efficiency.

Implementation

On this project, Cirus supplied 17 multi-skilled operatives compared to about 30-40 in a conventional fit out project.

On-the-job training is essential to the implementation, complemented by NVQ certification of operatives. Cirus now use multi-skilling on all their fit out contracts.

Future development

Slough Estates is now seeking to apply this innovation to services installations as well. For Cirus, future investment will be focused on training and increasing off-site fabrication.

Slough Estates intends to use *Calibre* again to monitor performance.

Innovation case history

This case history is a snapshot of just one innovation making construction in the UK more profitable for the supply chain and the Client. Further details will be found in the Knowledge Exchange or you should contact the Innovator directly or M⁴I.

How to make this radical change in your business

Clients wishing to take advantage of multi-skilling need to:

- Make the decision early to gain the maximum benefits
- Plan the project with multi-skilling in mind
- Use value-based sourcing and negotiate a price following collaboration on the design.

For the Contractor, multi-skilled working requires a long-term view because the implications for logistics and training are substantial.

Contact the innovator

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Links

Slough Estates:
www.sloughestates.com
Cirus: www.cirus.co.uk

Related Topics

Visit the Construction Best Practice Programme: www.cbpp.org.uk/cbpp/themes/theme_list.html

Our vision

is for the whole UK construction industry to create self-sustaining continuous improvement leading to **world class performance and better profitability**



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The M4I Strategy Model applied to this innovation

