CONSTRUCTING EXCELLENCE

Selecting the Team – a system for picking the best companies

Mill House Office Development

Client: Matune BV
'Selecting the team' model: Construction Management Research Group, University of Southampton
Contractor: Benson Ltd
Architect: FM Modern Design Ltd

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Sector: Offices
Theme: Procurement

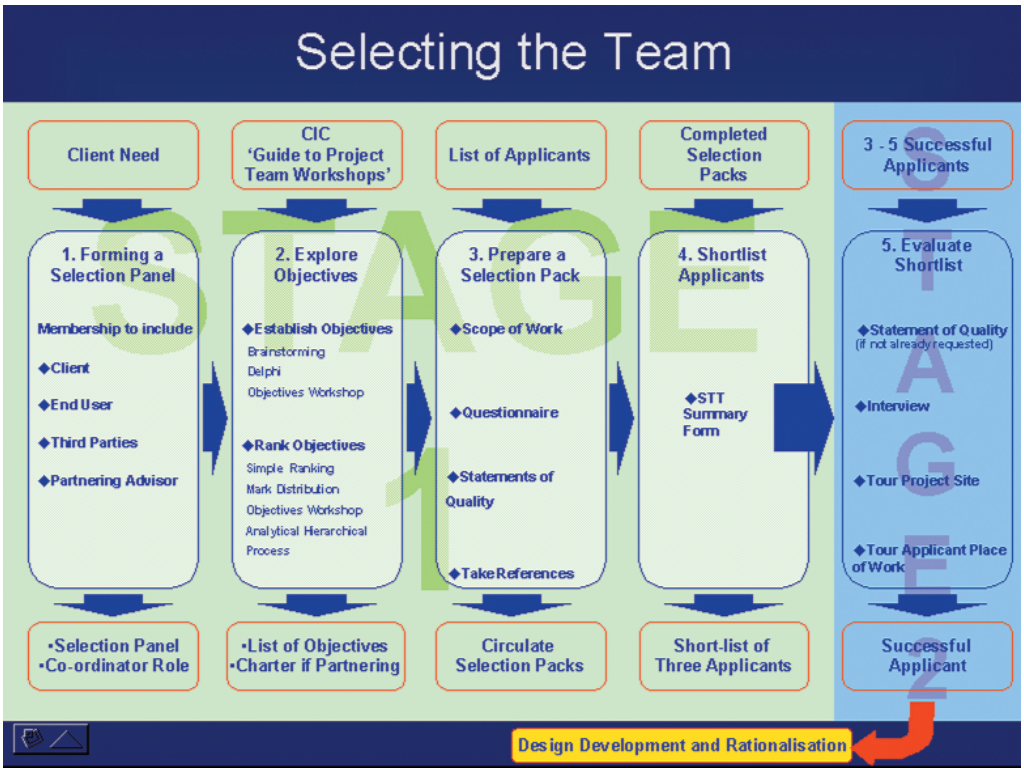
Selecting the Team (STT), a versatile tool for selecting members of a collaborative project team, was trialled on the £1.8m Mill House office development. Other best practices were also applied at Mill House, with mixed success. The Construction Management Research Group at the University of Southampton advised and facilitated the implementation of STT and monitored the outcomes of the best practice trials. The Strategic Forum for Construction has endorsed STT which was written by the Construction Industry Council Partnering Task Force and will be published by the Construction Industry Council in the near future as part of its suite of partnering guides.

Key benefits

- Selecting the Team helps clients to identify clear project objectives and communicate them to the project team.
- The tool then keeps these objectives at the centre of the process for selecting team members.
- STT leads to the selection of team members who are willing to collaborate and work towards achieving aligned project objectives.
- The tool illustrates the improbability of achieving lowest price, best quality, quickest results and safest working methods

Lessons learned

- STT provides a systematic framework for selecting team members according to any specified criteria.
- Smaller projects can take advantage of STT's modular nature so that the level of detail is appropriate to the value and risk.
- Innovation fatigue sets in when too many new ideas are trialled in one project.
- Collaboration can be time consuming. This is a particularly sensitive issue for small companies.
- Small projects with large numbers of specialists may be better with a small core team using PPC2000 and specialists using SPC2000, because the 'critical mass' required for everyone to use PPC2000 may not exist.



simultaneously, and it focuses attention on achieving the right balance of these criteria for the project.

The Demonstration

Surrey Place and Mill House are two and three-storey offices adjacent to the London to Portsmouth mainline, near the railway station at Godalming, Surrey. Construction constraints included exceptional planning restrictions because of close proximity to a listed watermill and the need to avoid disrupting occupants in nearby offices. The demonstration, running from August 2001 to November 2003, attempted to address all the drivers, processes and targets for improvement in the original *Rethinking Construction* '5-4-7' model.

The aim was to set up an ideal partnered project team and trial various initiatives in Mill House, then repeat and improve all the processes in Surrey Place.

Other best practices on trial included:

PPC2000 – This multi-party partnering contract had just become available at the time. SPC2000 (the sub-agreement for specialist contractors) was not yet published.

Project based secure website – This online document server made contract documents, sketches and brochures available to all the project team.

Design Quality Indicators – The DQIs, calculated at the 'ready for occupation' stage, became one of the methods for evaluating the project's performance.

Project tracking tool – This tool, developed by Benson Ltd (see Demonstration Project 294) was used throughout the project.

Multi-project partnering – The client on the adjacent Surrey Place project agreed to adopt the entire Mill House team, lagging the programme about six weeks behind Mill House. This had the advantages of using a pre-selected team and saving set-up costs.

Selecting the Team

The origins of the STT tool lie in the Hurst Spit stabilisation scheme undertaken in 1998. Although planned as a traditional civil engineering contract, an unforeseen contraction of the time available to do the work led the parties into a successful, collaborative way of working. Academics from the University of Southampton analysed the project and produced a methodology for partnering in one-off projects. Gosport Borough Council subsequently trialled this on its award winning Millennium Bridge (see Demonstration Project 112). STT is the third generation of this methodology.

STT is a two-stage process containing five steps in all, as illustrated. It involves a selection pack for evaluating all the bidders in stage 1 and identifying a small number to progress to stage 2. The tool starts with the formation of a selection panel. It then assists the panel to define the mutually agreed project objectives for translation into a set of selection factors and descriptors. A questionnaire, based on this list, allows a comparison of selection panel's and bidders' profiles.

The STT process is modular and flexible in the level of detail, recognising the trade off between the amount of effort used in selection and the value and risk associated with the package.

The process is iterative. It can be repeated down the supply chain by bringing succeeding appointments into the selection panel. STT has the option to use a numerical model, based in Microsoft Excel, which enables the client to set a qualification score for the questionnaire to eliminate reliably submissions that do not meet the project criteria.

STT on trial at Mill House

The project team at Mill House used the STT toolkit to select the specialist contractors. The selection panel consisted of the entire professional services team including client, architect, structural engineer and project manager/QS. As each appointment was made the new member of the project delivery team joined the selection panel. When selecting bidders for each package, the panel considered their potential for integrated working and value engineering. They also looked at buildability issues.

It took three months longer than expected to get planning approval and there was a further six-week slip due to the consequences of work delivered in a non-partnering manner. (To expedite early work, the piling contractor was appointed quickly, without the benefit of the STT process.) Despite these initial setbacks the team pulled together and recovered four weeks in the 30-week programme.

The project was probably over ambitious in terms of the number of innovations. Everyone, especially the smaller contractors, had difficulties with the amount of time needed for the selection process and subsequent collaboration.

What happens next

This demonstration was not the final development of STT; further improvements have been made. Mill House raised questions about using the full STT tool on smaller projects, as it can become time consuming. The modular nature of STT means that it is possible to select elements of the tool to be used without the need for the full-blown analysis. This makes it more suitable for smaller projects. The University of Southampton is doing further research to determine the cost-benefit threshold.

All of the areas for further development, as identified at Mill House, have been addressed in the final version of Selecting the Team, which has been recognised by the Strategic Forum for Construction and published by the Construction Industry Council.

Next steps

- **About Selecting the Team:**
  - Read A guide to project team partnering, A guide to partnering workshops, and A guide to quality based selection of consultants which are all available from the Construction Industry Council at: www.cic.org.uk.
  - Read Effective teamwork: a best practice guide for the construction industry at www.constructingexcellence.org.uk.
  - Use the Integration toolkit at www.strategicforum.org.uk.
- **Constructing Excellence has:**
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