

CAPTURING BEST GREEN PRACTICE

The BDL Group - one of the UK's largest dryliners long committed to strong delivery - also recognises the growing business value of professional procedures, via Fast-Track-14's (FT-14) six month journey to ISO 14001 and rising operational efficiency.



As an established sector leader with a turnover of circa £50 million, pedigree clients such as Barrett Developments PLC and projects that include Heathrow's Terminal 5 and Wembley Stadium, the Uxbridge-based BDL Group is confident when it says 'when we work, we work better'.

It also realises that in a competitive industry, expertise and know-how honed on site must be transferred to accountable, demonstrable and transferable systems and processes.

This is the view of Group Services Director, Jim Robinson, who led BDL Group's Fast-Track-14 (FT-14) environmental initiative on a six month Laing O'Rourke (LOR) supply chain programme preparing for early ISO 14001 compliance and increasing gains in operational efficiency.



"It's all about procedures, full-stop! Frequently in construction, crucial knowledge and experiences rests in peoples' heads. Increasingly, it is a matter of insisting that, OK, I know you have the expertise but how do we capture it," explains Robinson.

"That is the goal of FT-14 and one of my responsibilities, which is to keep an eye on cutting costs and making more money. Although we are in the early stages of environmental management, this ties in directly with my brief to ensure that the company operates professionally."

Limbering up for 2012.

The FT-14 approach has a topical ring in sustainable construction. "For the 2012 Olympics, being more productive is a pre-qualification," Robinson continues. "However, the same drive is now essential through all projects, large and small, and resonates with major clients.

"I know that one of the first reactions to environmental improvement is that it simply relates to practical issues, such as cutting plasterboard waste. These are very crucial consideration but environmental performance goes much further, particularly with regard to a swathe of new legislation. The corporate implications are so important that Environment is now a mainstream item on the BDL Group's Board's agenda."

However, Robinson did decide to introduce the concepts of structured environmental management at a practical level until the principles and benefits became familiar. "I started slowly at site level, auditing everything we do," he explains. "We are very much a company of 'do-ers' with experience filtering up from site." In practice, this has included a radical review of the traditional profile of plasterboard losses in the light of new pressures, such as Site Waste Management Plans (SWMP).



Sharing the environmental message

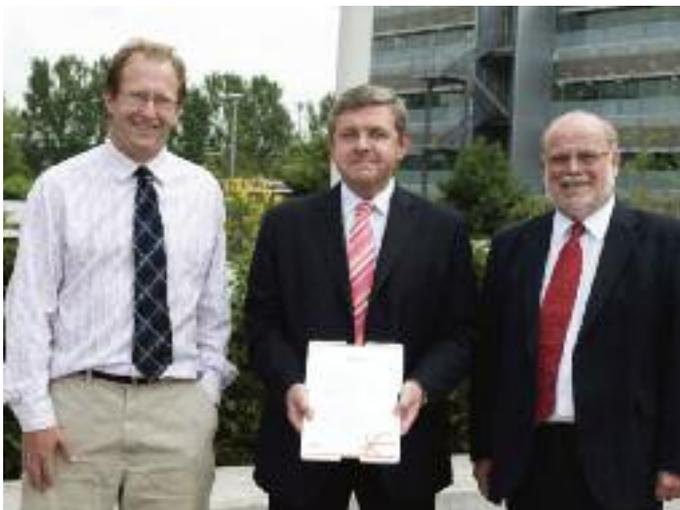
"I very much welcome everything that ISO 14001 implies. Through FT-14, we are passing the environmental message around site and quickly accelerating it further along the chain, especially to younger people. They are very aware, interested and most likely to make positive environmental suggestions that will then inform the Board," he adds.

He believes that FT-14 provides the essential framework and catalyst for change. "Personally, I feel that FT-14 is structured to allow you to sit back and think the process through, carefully examining all the outputs and impacts. That was useful as it did expose any weaknesses in our general procedures.

"Very importantly, it also flagged up the whole topic of legislation, which was an eye-opener. And I appreciate at the time that this was only at a minimum base level.

Systematically efficient and effective

FT-14 provides expert information and detailed step-by-step EMS implementation guidance via a highly-interactive online portal, supported by seven, half-day workshops, where groups of suppliers meet to share experiences and best practice, discuss problem-solving approaches and receive individual advice.



In so doing, the programme offers companies a streamlined route to ISO 14001 environmental compliance by methodically bridging information barriers that often hold back many hard-working companies. This means they can focus very sharply on resolving the real effects of their operations on the environment and stakeholders. More importantly still, systematically paring down inefficiencies removes negative pressures from profit margins, cuts waste and allows companies to confidently control risks associated with new commercial opportunities, especially in turbulent and competitive markets.

Environmental enterprise

BDL has made an ambitious start that has caught the imagination of its employees. "We set ourselves tough environmental objectives and are continually refining our new environmental management system (EMS). It is an active working document that our people come in to read, care about and action," says Robinson.

He believes that in future environmental concern and best practice will be driven in the construction sector by innovative companies and entrepreneurs who increasingly see that the cheapest option may no longer be the most appropriate.

Meanwhile, the company is keen to demonstrate where and how it is adding value. "More contractors are not only asking us about our environmental management but also wanting to check. Being able to tick the correct pre-qualification boxes with the right substantiating documentation in place is a clear benefit."

The philosophy works both ways, he adds. "We now routinely ask to see our own suppliers' environmental policies and procedures."

www.bdl-group.co.uk

Director, Jim Robinson (centre) receives The BDL Group's FT-14 successful completion certificate from Laing O'Rourke Construction South Director, Chris Scutt (right) and Environment Leader Eddy Taylor.

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