FUSION

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A new approach to working

May 2000

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Introduction

Foreword

The ever increasing pace of change in science, technology and communications has led to a correspondingly rapid growth in specialisation among those whose working lives are touched by it.

Where once it was possible for individuals to master a whole range of subjects, technologies and methods, today we can become out of touch in just months or even weeks, as new discoveries, developments and inventions flood into our lives.

The industrial revolution marks the beginning of the transition from general master to specialist, with succeeding generations breaking down systems and processes into activities and tasks, in an attempt to recapture mastery of at least one topic.

In today's world, we become engrossed in our own specialisation and often enslaved by the pace of development. Yet by focusing on just one component, we fail to understand the whole system and its effects on others.
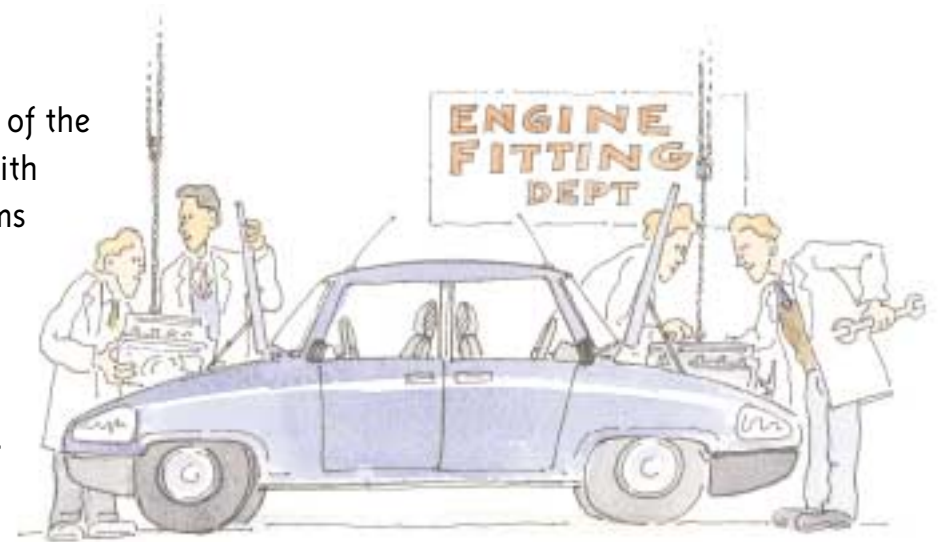
By focusing on just one component, we fail to understand the whole system and its effects on others.

However, society has begun to realise that the days of the individual master are past. We now need to find ways of breaking down the barriers and collaborating to see the whole system, perhaps for the very first time.

These are the objectives of FUSION, an ethical and equitable approach to working, which creates an environment in which all parties have an equal opportunity to contribute for the mutual benefit of everyone concerned.

Projects already completed using the FUSION approach delivered flexible and adaptable facilities, on time and on budget, to the complete satisfaction of end users. They not only met the original needs, but were also able to incorporate changing requirements throughout the life of the project. All of this was achieved in a culture of mutual support and encouragement, innovation and enjoyment, with profit being made by every party.

Be warned that this is no panacea. In order for FUSION to be effective, it requires all parties to believe in the value of collaboration for the benefit of all. Once this matrix is established, the opportunities are almost endless and mutual success and reward can become a way of life for all.

The FUSION philosophy

As part of a FUSION project, you are a member of a single team with a common purpose, set of goals and objectives. To enable the team to achieve this, it is essential that there is a mutual understanding of how these goals and objectives are achieved for each member, as well as for the team.

This will enable them to develop strong relationships, based on complete trust and openness in dealings with the Client and with each other, which is the fundamental basis of FUSION.

Adopt the word itself as a mnemonic for the principles and actions used in dealing with all team members:

Fairness   Fair treatment and reward for all parties.

Unity   A single team with common aims and values, focused on delivery of clearly understood objectives, for the benefit of all.

Seamless   No barriers between team members. All are responsible and willing and take action on behalf of the whole team.

Initiative   Everyone contributing to the creation of the best solutions. Decision making delegated to people closest to the problem.

Openness   Honest and open communication by every member of the team at all times.

No Blame   Trusting the team to do what it believes is best to achieve the objectives. Resolving problems without recrimination.

A set of values that turns theory into practice. There cannot be individual success unless there is team success.

We know that every individual, properly motivated within a single team and acting in accordance with FUSION, is capable of achievements that have no boundaries.

About this guide

The purpose of this guide is to assist individuals and organisations wishing to benefit from FUSION, by providing an insight into the values, methods and processes required to adopt it. Essential for those new to the concept, it can also be used as a reference at the commencement of each new project.

A project team will operate more successfully once all members have embraced the values of FUSION. This guide is neither prescriptive nor all encompassing. It places the FUSION values within a practical context, while leaving the detailed operation of the procedures for the project team to develop.

As with all the issues discussed here, it will prove beneficial if the procedures used on a project have the full agreement of all parties.

An overview of FUSION

FUSION is a collaborative approach to working in partnerships of any kind. It is based on fundamental ethical and equitable values that create an environment in which everyone can perform in a spirit of support, encouragement and enjoyment, where success and achievement are available to all.

Although it is primarily about values and behaviours, FUSION is supported by some fundamental changes, which unlock the potential of this cultural change. The most significant of these is re-engineering of the project process.

Traditional project process

(NEED)   (DEVELOP)   (PROCURE)   (IMPLEMENT)
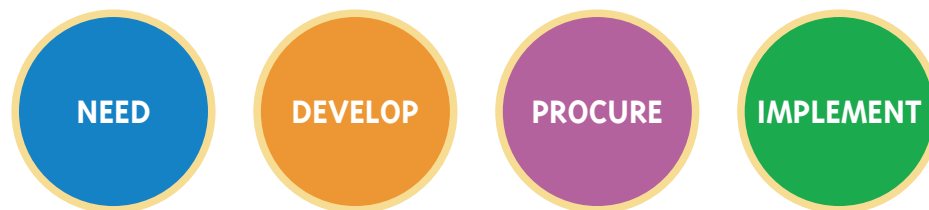
The traditional process is based on the principle that one group is capable of fully defining, in advance, the outcomes that another group will subsequently implement. However, it does not offer 'implementers' the opportunity to participate in defining these outcomes and is therefore fundamentally flawed.

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This leads to misunderstandings, lack of commitment and ownership, redesign or reselection of components and wasted opportunities. Decisions are made at times when those most affected and/or knowledgeable are not available to assist and where the circumstances are not fully known. This is usually compounded by the selection of the parties on the cheapest price at the start, leading to confrontation, delay and escalated costs at the end.

The FUSION process is an obvious response to these problems.

FUSION project process

NEED   PROCURE   DEVELOP   IMPLEMENT
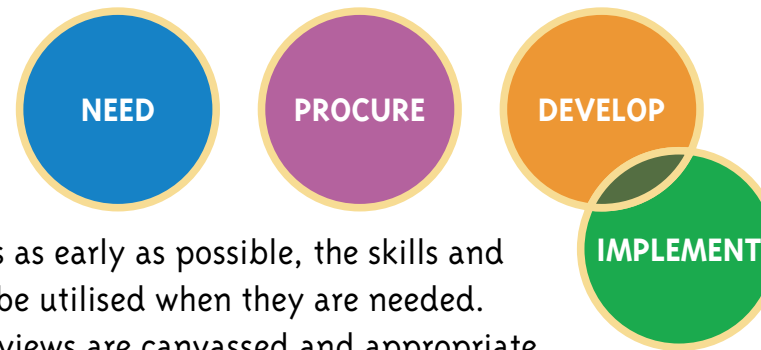
By selecting all the parties as early as possible, the skills and capabilities required can be utilised when they are needed.
The team can ensure that views are canvassed and appropriate decisions made when they are necessary. Development can run as a bow wave ahead of implementation, with the team agreeing what information they require and when. Opportunities for improvement and innovation can be exploited when they arise, subject to their being achievable within the programme and budget.

With all partners being involved much earlier in the process, many right from the start, a much greater focus and ownership of common goals and objectives is provided, enabling value judgements to be made by all. The outcome is a better end product, being delivered earlier for a lower cost, with everyone benefiting from a rewarding and enjoyable experience. It's that simple!

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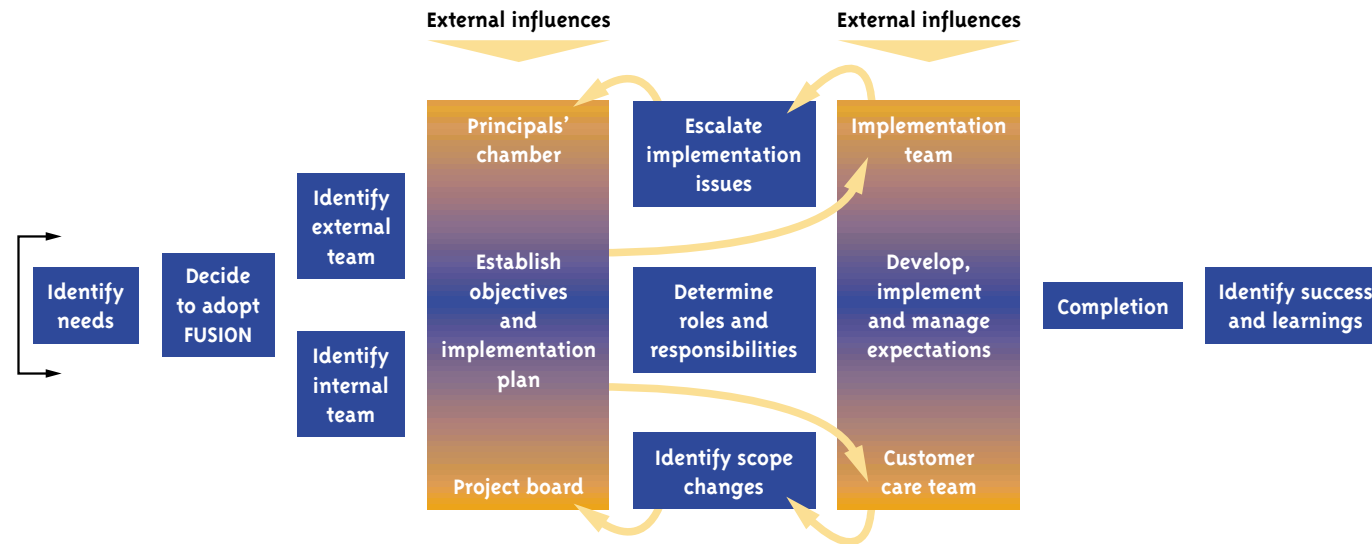CONSULTATION

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Applying the FUSION process

The following is an example of how the FUSION process is put into operation. It contains terms that you will find explained in this guide and is a useful illustration of how a FUSION project works and is organised.

External influences   **External influences**

| Principals' chamber | Escalate implementation issues | Implementation team |

Identify needs → Decide to adopt FUSION → Identify external team / Identify internal team

Establish objectives and implementation plan

Determine roles and responsibilities

Develop, implement and manage expectations

Completion → Identify success and learnings

Project board

Identify scope changes

Customer care team

The starting point is the identification of a fundamental need that has to be met. From this point, a decision as to whether the project should be undertaken by a FUSION approach has to be made.

FUSION is not a 'one solution fits all' concept, nor is it a panacea. It can be applied to any partnering relationship where benefit can be gained by collaborating to deliver an unknown solution. It is particularly powerful where the needs and drivers are regularly changing and a complex solution is sought which involves the co-operation of many different parties. However, it first requires all participants to understand and support the values and behaviours that are required and to be prepared for the openness and honesty that this demands. Furthermore, they must be prepared to trust and be trusted and, finally, to work in an environment where fair treatment for all is paramount.

If the activity is straightforward and easy to define in advance, FUSION may not be necessary. If it is complex but the principles and values are not right for the individuals and organisations proposed, then FUSION should not be adopted — it will not succeed.

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Identifying external partners

FUSION partners should be selected according to their suitability to carry out the work in question. It follows that all interested parties should be involved in the selection process, to ensure collective ownership of the decisions and 'buy in'. This should include consulting with appointed partners on the suitability of others yet to be selected.

Where possible, external partners should be chosen from an approved pool of suppliers and contractors. This should be sized to allow repeat business, so that the benefits of reduced learning curves are gained and FUSION progress is reinforced and improved. At the same time, people are not kept hanging on without a realistic chance of regular work.

People are not kept hanging on without a realistic chance of regular work.

The list should also:
- Cover as many areas of regular activity as possible to aid business continuity
- Be categorised for capabilities and value of work
- Have reserves to enable replacement or addition, as necessary
- Be reviewed on a regular basis for pool size, categorisation and performance of nominees
- Be configured as a common database, available to all who participate

Selection criteria

Not everyone is able to adapt to a FUSION project and experience has demonstrated the importance of selecting team members carefully. This applies to the selection of individual practitioners as much as it does to corporate partners for a particular project. It is important that selection is on the basis of merit, so that partners are chosen who are best suited to the project in mind and have the right approach to undertaking it.

In addition to the normal acceptance criteria for selection, such as experience, location, safety record and available resources, there are a number of areas for consideration, which are key to success in a FUSION environment. Potential partners should show that they are able to meet these criteria before they can be selected.

- Accepts and supports the need to do things differently
- Has experience of working in a collaborative team environment
- Shows a flexible and supportive managerial approach
- Devolves decision making to those most appropriate
- Applies FUSION or similar principles to own supply chain
- Is willing to work open book, disclosing profit and overhead and working to achieve maximum value for minimum expenditure
- Has the ability and systems to work in a collaborative financial environment
- Has demonstrated the ability to perform in a continually evolving environment
- Exhibits the ability and desire to contribute to the overall project
- Supports the allocation of work to the most appropriate partner or individual

For the FUSION process to fulfil its potential, those involved must be fully committed to and supportive of it and of each other. The following characteristics should therefore be regarded as highly desirable in FUSION team members, whether as part of a corporate culture, or exhibited by individuals:

- Approachable and confident team player
- High level of integrity and sincerity
- Self motivated and self disciplined
- Able to contribute to the overall project
- Shows commitment and enthusiasm for working openly
- Values working collaboratively
- Already applying FUSION principles to existing activities
- Willing to adapt to changing circumstances

● Enjoys and responds positively to being challenged
● Has the courage to do things differently
● Enjoys being creative
● Has the courage and honesty to state the facts
● Can empower others to take responsibility and make decisions
● Will support and challenge others to develop and make choices
● Prepared to adapt behaviour for the benefit of the project or team
● Relaxed and able to put others at ease

Identifying internal partners

The principles of selecting internal partners should be similar to those above.   Individuals who display the appropriate attributes should form the basis of the internal team. No matter how much the external partners wish to be collaborate, the client group must create the environment in which the FUSION culture can thrive, or it will die.

Financial principles

The selection of partners should be based on the value they can deliver, rather than lowest cost and all relevant factors should be taken into account. It is essential that partners are prepared to adopt the FUSION principle of financial transparency, through willingly working 'open book'.

Appropriate levels of profit and overhead should be agreed at the onset. Once partners know that by adopting FUSION principles they are financially secure, they can focus on the project itself and how they can best contribute to it.

Contracting

Appointing partners as early as possible in the project is critical. FUSION brings together at the start all the skills that are needed throughout the process, so that people can maximise their input and expertise, in order to deliver a successful outcome.

All partners are considered to have equal status under a FUSION contract. By contracting directly between client and partner in every case, no-one feels isolated from the client and all are reassured that they will be dealt with in the same way.

Some members of the FUSION team will become Principal Partners. This will vary from project to project, selection being based on their relative contribution and value to the success of the project. It is not fundamental that the Principal Partners will have the highest cost element of the project. A key player may well be one whose cost element is relatively low, but whose input is crucial to the overall success of the project.

Using adversarial forms of contract does not help in creating the culture of trust and collaboration.

Where involvement is through a sub-contract, it takes the form of an appointment via an addendum to the contract, so that terms are consistent. Payment terms are set for all participants and will generally be similar.

Although FUSION is not primarily about changing contractual terms and conditions, using adversarial forms of contract does not help in creating the culture of trust and collaboration. Since no such standard contracts currently exist, two new forms of contract have been created for use on FUSION construction projects:
● Consultants' appointment (staff cost, overhead and fee)
● Partner/trade contract (agreed profit, overhead and open book cost)

Future projects
For each new project, selection should be made from the relatively small pool of partner companies that has been created. Essentially, the pool should be 'mixed up' so that different teams work on succeeding projects. In this way, teams will bring a variety of expertise, knowledge and experience from other projects, thereby constantly re-engineering, refining and improving FUSION practices. As the pool is small, its members understand that they will continue to be offered opportunities to participate, if not today then tomorrow, or the day after.

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Formation

Establishing the team

A FUSION team should be formed that allows all parties to have an equal voice. Individuals who are like-minded should be brought together as early as reasonably possible.

In order for the FUSION process to achieve its potential, everyone must be fully committed and supportive of each other, with every member empowered to contribute and assist other members. Each person becomes a cog in a wheel, with the same overall goals and objectives. Individual company politics and procedures must be left behind, as these may hinder the progress and success of the FUSION project.

Team members should come from various disciplines, such as:
- Designers
- Managers
- Specialist trades
- User representatives
- Company advisers
- Administration
- Production
- Procurement
- Legal

Identifying objectives

Key objectives need to be identified as early as possible, although many could change as the project progresses. Each member may have a variant from the whole, but all should have a single overall aim: a project finished within time, within budget and fulfilling all the needs.

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Objectives that could be considered include:
- Health, safety and environmental issues
- Budgeting, profit and payment on time
- 100 per cent customer satisfaction
- Resolving issues quickly
- Job satisfaction
- Zero defects
- Opportunities for repeat business

Strengths and weaknesses

Teams of people are brought together to carry out specific functions. They should be assigned roles where skills are most relevant to the task. In a fully effective FUSION team, strengths will be maximised and weaknesses will be minimised.

Agreeing roles and responsibilities

Nobody should be given a job description that identifies their roles and responsibilities to the exclusion of other roles. All parties should know what part they are to play on the early stages of establishing the team and that each individual has equal status.

Although an activity may be the key responsibility of one party, it is the duty of all who are involved to ensure that the project moves forward within the understood constraints.

The roles and responsibilities of all parties should be agreed. This will ensure that everyone takes ownership and feels able to carry out their duties willingly. Roles should be developed with the following aims:

All parties should know what part they are to play.

- They should not be dictated
- People should feel comfortable with their duties
- Each individual should have equal status
- Appropriate skills should be used in specific tasks
- Workloads should be attainable
- Everyone should agree
- Duplication should be avoided

Roles identified at the start of the project need not be fixed for the duration. The project will inevitably change, requiring individual roles to adapt. Individuals will develop, or new people will join the project, bringing new and different skills. Training additional project members will ensure that they quickly become familiar with FUSION principles.

It is important that leadership roles are also identified and clearly understood, whilst the objective of FUSION is collaborative, it doesn't follow that all decisions will be made by consensus.

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Consultation

Sharing information

A key element of a FUSION project is the way in which information and decisions are shared.

The team is a group of individuals with relevant skills and experience, brought together with a common aim. Four distinct disciplines can be formed:

Project Board

Drawn from end users, company specialists, advisers and practitioners. Responsible for project scope, including authorisation of contingency fund expenditure for necessary changes.

Principals' Chamber

Drawn from the principals of partner organisations and led by a project manager. Responsible for establishing common objectives, determining the implementation plan and authorising 'growth' changes as implementation issues arise.

Customer Care Team

A small team drawn from operational functions and customer-focused 'completers'. Responsible for managing expectations to ensure they are understood, remain realistic and are escalated as necessary. Continues beyond completion of the project, until the operation is fully proved.

Implementation Team

Designers, specialists and practitioners, responsible for detailing, installing, providing and proving the end product. Also responsible for problem solving and escalation, as appropriate.

Each discipline should meet regularly to share information, discuss the project plans, any issues raised and ideas generated. These forums, populated by individuals with similar aims and objectives, will become a rich source of ideas that moves the whole project forward.

Fundamental openness is the key to consultation, ensuring that all information is shared, nothing is held back and that everyone understands what is required and by when. Open communication by all ensures that information continues to flow, enabling the project to become truly FUSION. In the event of problems occurring, the issues should be openly discussed to achieve a resolution.

Interested parties

A project touches an organisation at many levels. The team must recognise this and communicate at appropriate stages in the project.

Separating needs from wants

The sharing of information does not imply a process of consensus, so much as collaboration. The ultimate objective is to meet the business needs, as opposed to individuals' or companies' wants or desires. One of the great skills in FUSION formation and consultation is identifying individuals who have the mentality, wit and diplomatic skills to challenge in a way that establishes the business needs through the wants and desires, thereby keeping the focus clear.

Exploring ideas

Diverse skills within the team enhance the project, providing opportunities and identifying new directions, while exploring ideas. It is essential to explore ideas right through the project and especially in the early stages. The more radical of these often lead to fundamental changes or improvements in the process, so it is necessary to consider them at an appropriate level and for as much time as required.

Sometimes, ideas can be discarded quite quickly and the team should not be frightened of throwing something out that later proves to be a valuable idea. Such decisions can only be taken on the basis of information that is available at the time.

The team should not be frightened of throwing something out that later proves to be a valuable idea.

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Collective understanding
An idea will sound even more radical or unrealistic if those considering it don't understand what is being discussed, what the idea is and what are the issues. It is therefore important to take time to achieve collective understanding by listening to what is actually being said and ensuring that everyone realises what they are agreeing to, or discarding.

Agreeing programme, budget and standards
The project programme must reflect the constraints that apply to all participants, be collectively agreed and be realistic, while ensuring that opportunities to reduce the length of the project are fully explored. A FUSION project involves enthusiastic individuals and a time-scale that is unnecessarily long will diminish this enthusiasm just as much as one that is too short.

All aspects of the project must be discussed with the various disciplines within the team, in order to avoid operational pitfalls. For example, having a lead time that is shorter than the time in which supplies can be procured will lead to dissatisfaction, recriminations and, possibly, a missed project date. Being realistic will ensure that the various disciplines can work within the time-scales, budgets and standards being set.

Any project is likely to come into being with an outline budget that will have been set by a client department, in order to get things started. It is then necessary for the Principals to study that budget and agree whether it can meet the need or, indeed, whether it more than meets it. This should happen collectively and at an early stage, so that everybody understands what are the budget criteria that are being applied to the project.

Team members are then able to take value decisions on what should be included, what should be left out and what needs to be changed, in order to meet the needs at the start and as they change throughout the project. This includes any contingency or risk elements, which should be clearly identified for all to see.

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The same principle applies to the programme, the standards and the specifications. Everyone must understand the criteria, why they are important and what their value is in terms of the successful completion of the project.

Generating a rolling brief
One of the fundamental differences of a FUSION project is the adoption of a rolling brief. Needs and expectations will change during the life of the project, so it is pointless to take decisions affecting aspects that will not arise until much later. For example, the steel frame of the building is important from the start, whereas the nature of many internal fittings is not.

Changing needs and expectations must be monitored through the teams and changes to the brief must be communicated and agreed on an on-going basis. This will ensure that everyone has understood and appreciated any new requirements and will change their approach or workload accordingly.

Reaffirming goals and objectives
After the consultation process has been agreed, it is necessary for the Principals to reaffirm the goals and objectives. Are the needs that were identified still being met? Are the budget and the programme still correct? Finally, will the specified time frame allow the project needs to be delivered?

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Task force approach

One of the most important aspects of the implementation process is to use a 'task force approach', which means assembling the entire project team in the same location. If the scale of the project can support it, this should be on-site, as close to the activity as possible.

This allows the free and easy use of face to face communication, one of the most effective methods. It enables people to build relationships, to understand the culture that exists and to become immersed in the project's activities, its problems, opportunities and solutions.

A 'task force approach' means assembling the entire project team in the same location.

Selecting additional members

The earliest stage of implementation is also the time to consider where additional skills and capabilities, not viewed as sufficiently significant to assemble earlier, are now required.

For example, those who will be responsible for producing the operation and maintenance guides should be involved in order to define the way information and documentation is going to be collated and collected. This will ultimately lead to a much better way of delivering the final documents.

The same point can be applied to quality assurance. It is important to begin the implementation process by deciding how quality is going to be measured and how it will be reported. These decisions will change the way in which aspects of the project are undertaken, monitored and recorded.

Communication

Without doubt the key to successful implementation is ensuring that appropriate communication methods are in place. Effective two-way communication processes will highlight how well the culture is developing and where there are failures and weaknesses that must be addressed. It is therefore vital that they function up and down the process.

Potentially large numbers of new people are now going to be involved in the programme, all of whom need to understand FUSION, its values and why working this way is different. In particular, they need to realise that confrontational and contractual methodologies are not being applied.

Challenging and questioning

Even though the consultation process should have been characterised by challenging and questioning, every member of the team must continue to do so. The workforce should be empowered to use their skills and capabilities to make critical evaluations, on the basis that those actually carrying out the task will know how well it will work.

Inevitably, there are going to be changes and variations. The business needs are going to develop, so there will be new requirements. Challenging and questioning will establish whether there is need to change, if it is viable and whether the result will be an improvement. All of this is so much more constructive than carrying on with a task, with a belief that it is not going to work.

Mistakes

Implementation can only work properly if everyone involved remains focused on the key objectives. When a mistake happens, or something doesn't work properly, it is important that the issue is raised immediately, because it can't be resolved until it is known about. Owning up to a mistake, failure or lapse of memory isn't always easy, but it is nevertheless a principle of FUSION. Right from childhood, we all learn by making mistakes. As we become experienced, we learn how to avoid most of them, but when we try something new, we learn again in the same manner. FUSION is a different way of working which creates an empowered learning culture and therefore mistakes should be expected and accepted as part of that culture.

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Encouraging initiative

The evidence of a few mistakes being made is a very positive sign, because it demonstrates that people are continuing to use their initiative. The proportion of correct decisions that a person takes increases as they gain experience. If they are criticised on the first occasion, all that will happen is that they will stop using their initiative.

Such criticism might avoid one or two mistakes being made, but it could also be responsible for undermining many good and viable ideas that would otherwise have made a positive contribution to the project. Instead, people should be encouraged to be realistic about where they can take risks and where they can apply their initiative. This should not be mistaken for being negligent, naïve or reckless.

The evidence of a few mistakes being made is a very positive sign.

Delegation and empowerment

It is to those people who understand how to assess risk and apply initiative that responsibility should be delegated as widely as possible. Every member of a FUSION team should feel empowered, know they are trusted and that it is recognised they have the capabilities to deliver what is required of them. In this way, those people who are closest to a problem will be able to recognise it, determine the solution and, after appropriate consultation, ensure that it is implemented.

Without such an approach to delegation and empowerment, trivial decisions will be passed up the line to people who are more remote from the problem and who, in any case, should not be spending their time dealing with such matters.

Focusing on goals and objectives

Care must be taken to focus on the goals and objectives throughout the implementation process. Everyone is involved in the project for the same reason: to ensure it is completed as early as possible, for the lowest cost, in order to satisfy the needs of the business when they need to be satisfied.

If that is achieved, everyone's objectives are met, for all wish to do their job right first time, meeting an appropriate standard of quality and for a fair price.

Working together

The goals and objectives will only be met if the members of the team work together in a mature environment for the benefit of every single person involved in the process, helping each other, sharing information and experience. This is the only way to work effectively on such projects and it is what FUSION is all about.

Quality

The purpose of quality systems is to ensure that the finished product functions correctly, complies with user expectations, provides a valuable asset and a fault-free facility for ongoing operations.

Operating during the construction, hand-over and after-care phases, quality systems should be geared to improving quality standards throughout the project. Their success can be measured in a number of ways, including:

● *The percentage of works completed correctly first time*
● *The number of issues outstanding at the time of hand-over*

Health and safety

Efficient management of health and safety depends on a coherent and systematic approach by the whole team, applying similar procedures and a set of agreed minimum standards for achieving common objectives. A combined strategy, which promotes the earliest involvement of each element of the team, should be put in place.

Document quality

A key objective of FUSION is to cut down on superfluous paperwork, but this must not impede the provision of high quality documentation at project completion. It should be delivered in a format allowing regular revision or updating, and conform to agreed standards.

Since team members are paid for their contribution and issues are resolved when they arise, there is no need to record discussion or debate, but only the agreed decision once it has been made and communicated.

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Change

Welcoming and challenging

To suggest that there is too much change in industry and that, perhaps, 80 per cent of a requirement should be fixed before implementation begins, is to miss the point.

Not every client organisation will know exactly what it wants at the start of a project. The business of such companies may change almost daily and it is impossible for them to identify an absolute requirement at the beginning of, for example, a two-year project. Flexibility and adaptability are the keys, because the clients need to be able to change their minds as they go along.

Not every client organisation will know exactly what it wants at the start of a project.

What this requires is a process that allows those involved to understand differing needs, so that appropriate changes can be made in what is being implemented.

This does not mean change for its own sake. What is different should still be challenged and questioned. What is it about the needs of the business today that suddenly requires change in what was happening in the project yesterday?

Any suggested change also needs to be put in the context of the stage the project has reached. Does the change make a difference? Can it be implemented? Will it cause a delay or even prevent some objectives being met?

Change therefore needs to be welcomed, but also challenged and questioned, to ensure that it is appropriate, beneficial and capable of delivering something of more value.

Managing expectations

Expectations of the people who have an interest in the project, but who are very much less familiar with it, need to be managed, so they understand what they are getting and why. Principally, these people are the end users — those who are actually going to own the end result when the project is completed.

For example, the traditional construction industry is poor at this essential aspect of communication, with the result that users all too often take over a facility that does not match their expectations for one or a variety of reasons. Users have probably been asked to agree a design using drawings that they don't fully understand. They may not even realise that they won't get what was initially described, because there isn't enough money in the budget.

The users have hardly been involved in the process, yet they have had to agree to what was offered and will only realise that it isn't what they asked for after completion. No-one has helped them to understand that it will be different and why it will be different. Perhaps there was a misunderstanding about the requirement, or a failure to understand why it was so important or, possibly, that the users were asking for something that they couldn't possibly have.

Frequently, misunderstandings arise because the vocabulary is different. End users do not have the experience in project delivery to describe what they are imagining and project personnel do not understand the business needs enough to realise they have heard something different.

Managing expectations is simply about helping people to understand. This starts at the very concept of the project and continues through and beyond its completion. It includes initiatives such as establishing a customer care team, which is involved in the project from the earliest point. As soon as a project is sufficiently advanced to be meaningful, end users should be invited to visit and preview what will be theirs. This process should continue throughout the project.

By managing expectations, it is almost certain that critical issues will have been raised at a point when it was possible to do something about them, or to explain why it was not appropriate to do so. There might have been elation or disappointment at the time, but there certainly won't be shock or anger when the project is completed.

Discarding valueless methods

There is no room in a FUSION project for methods and approaches from the past that fail to add value. If it is clear that a practice does not add value, it should be discarded, just as anything that is appropriate should be adopted if it does add value — whether or not the idea has been borrowed from another industry.

Understanding issues

Openness and honesty must apply in the Change process, just as everywhere else in a FUSION project. The team has to understand collectively what is different, why something has happened, and what the implications of various resulting actions will be. This is where collaboration has to work at its best, so that not even one person goes away without understanding the issues, risks and benefits — and does something different as a consequence.

Consultation

Whenever an issue of change arises, it is necessary to consult everyone who is going to be affected by the eventual solution, in order to determine what that solution should be.

Decisions should be made on a level of information commensurate with the significance of the decision. Seeking more and more views instead of deciding what to do at the appropriate time is in no-one's interest. An effective structure to ensure that decisions are made at the appropriate time is essential and should be put in place at the outset.

New ideas

New ideas should be sought throughout the entire project, by emphasising the empowerment and encouraging the creativity of the entire workforce.

Traditional construction industry methods give little opportunity for the generation or suggestion of ideas. People should be encouraged to offer ideas, whether they have been nurturing them for a long time, or thought of them five minutes earlier.

Learning from mistakes

As acknowledged in Implementation, mistakes will happen and it is important to learn from them. The culture of a FUSION project is not to engage in recrimination, or the allocation of blame, but rather to understand how the mistake happened, how to share the learnings from it and then ensure that the greatest possible benefit is derived.

New ideas should be sought, by emphasising the empowerment and encouraging the creativity of the entire workforce.

Obviously, people must remain responsible for their own actions and be prepared to take the consequences for negligence or ill-judged decisions. If, on the other hand, they act in good faith, using the best information available and the result is not appropriate, they should be thanked for their effort, rather than blamed. The lessons should then be shared for everyone's benefit.

Implications for goals and objectives

Changes will have an impact on the goals and objectives of the project. It is essential to identify where the impact will be made and to ensure that all team members understand the implications of the proposed change, before it is implemented.

Collective problem solving

Once again, the message is one of collaboration. An individual may be able to see a way of solving a problem, but nothing can be solved as effectively by one person as it can by a whole team. This is not consensus, so much as asking for opinions, taking the best ideas and then delivering a better solution.

Meeting the objectives

The project is not complete until it has satisfied its goals and objectives. For this reason, the customer care team will interface with the end users until all the outstanding issues are resolved. By adopting methods that help to manage individuals' expectations, work can be completed which is free of defects and meets the business needs at the time of completion.

As common goals and objectives exist, all parties are able to determine what changes can and cannot be incorporated towards the end of the project. Collective decisions can therefore be made about whether further change should be made, or be held until after the project has been finished. By involving end users throughout the process, changes that frequently occur at the end, because individuals are surprised by the outcomes, are virtually eliminated.

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Training

Understanding principles and values

The purpose of FUSION is to bring together diverse groups of people and combine them into a seamless team for the pursuit of common goals. Everyone involved therefore has to gain a thorough understanding of this collaborative culture, which is likely to be fundamentally different from any previous way of working.

Training in this area is designed to give individuals and teams practical opportunities to acquire the skills and develop the behaviours that will translate the FUSION concept into a successful and enjoyable reality.

Consistent induction

Every time new people join a FUSION project, they should undergo a properly structured and consistent induction, geared to meeting the following challenges:

The purpose of FUSION is to bring together diverse groups of people and combine them into a seamless team for the pursuit of common goals.

- *Enabling individuals and teams to understand what makes an effective FUSION team*
- *Exploring ways for teams from different companies, disciplines and backgrounds to come together and work as one team*
- *Stimulating enthusiasm for FUSION and the benefits of collaborative thinking and working*
- *Developing the potential for an atmosphere of trust, openness and no blame*
- *Achieving all this in as short a time frame as possible, with minimal or no reduction in individual or team performance*

The following **targeted training** has been developed and applied with proven benefit to FUSION projects.

All projects should commence with **The Start Process**, which introduces team members to the FUSION concept and focuses the team in determining a common set of goals and objectives.

Workshops accelerate the team's development. Values are brought to life through a series of practical projects and reviews, giving an opportunity to experience FUSION in action. They enable participants to:

- *Create new approaches*
- *See things differently*
- *Become energised to achieve extraordinary results*
- *Discover unrealised potential*

Cross company training events should be run throughout the project. Training should be targeted to have direct relevance to specific FUSION benefits and/or problem areas and should include the opportunity to explore relevant issues in greater depth, to exchange ideas and best practice across a broad range of companies and industries.

Changes in team dynamics

Remember that team dynamics will change as the make-up of the team changes. There must be sufficient flexibility and adaptability in the ways the project is managed to recognise that when someone new joins, or a new activity begins, it may have an effect on the way the team is organised and on the dynamics that are necessary. Processes or procedures may have to be changed in order to accommodate the shift in dynamics.

Taking stock of cohesion

It would be a natural tendency to focus most of the training effort on a small group, so that it becomes fully aware of the FUSION values and culture, while the rest of the project team is largely ignored. This can be monitored through regularly taking stock of team cohesion.

Everybody who is going to be involved in a project must be trained and developed. Opportunities must be incorporated for people who are only going to come into contact with the project occasionally. Even those based in the same company, but who are not directly associated with the project, should be given an idea of what the culture is and how it is applied. When they then come into contact with the project, its nature will not be a surprise to them.

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Feedback on performance

Appropriate feedback mechanisms should be used so that team members throughout the project can receive feedback on how well they are performing, on an individual and a team basis, against the values and expectations of the rest of the project group. Everyone is then able to see how they can change, adapt and develop.

It is also important to take stock of the project itself and make sure that everyone understands the position that has been reached. This may well affect the training needs and these changes must be fed back, to ensure that the loop continues to operate.

Feedback procedures include:

The FUSION team stock take, which offers a team an opportunity to examine the extent to which it operates according to FUSION values. It can focus real issues for the team and remove blocks to progress. The stock take can be implemented several times during the life of a project, to review and maximise team output.

The FUSION 360° Profile gives the same opportunity to individual team members. It can also be used in the selection assessment of potential team personnel.

Personal development coaching and support training should be offered to those who are charged with creating and sustaining this new environment. Furthermore, it can be especially effective in helping individuals at any level who may experience difficulty in adapting to the FUSION culture. It can be drawn upon at any time during the life of a project.

FUSION training solutions have been collaboratively developed with specialist partners DDA Consulting. For more information, please contact DDA on 01476 572333 or e-mail on DDACon@aol.com.

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Celebrating success

Finding opportunities to celebrate success helps team members to see that being part of the FUSION process enables them to deliver superior performance and additional value, meeting needs in a way that previous projects were unable to do. Success should therefore be celebrated externally, as well as internally, so that more people are able to understand FUSION and its values — and gain from its benefits.

Finding opportunities to celebrate success helps to deliver superior performance and additional value.

This can mean promoting individuals and teams who are delivering within these principles and methodologies, as well as going to industry and talking about the success of a project and of FUSION in general. There are few more powerful drivers for change than success, either because people want to be associated with it, or want to know why it was achieved, where other approaches failed to do so.

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FUSION values

Trust

A significant weakness of any industry is a contractual and confrontational culture. In general terms, this manifests itself in a lack of trust between the various parties involved in a project, each viewing the others as adversaries intent on doing them down and minimising or removing their profit.

One of the most fundamental differences in the FUSION approach — and one of the values to which people experience great difficulty in adjusting — is the requirement to trust other team members and recognise that they are trying to achieve the very best results of which they are capable.

It is easy to leap to the conclusion that, because someone is doing something that it is difficult to understand or value, they must be engaged in a clever 'game' of some kind. While that may occasionally be true, the first principle of the FUSION approach is that people are doing what they believe is best for the project and for the whole of the team. If this is supported by the other values, it will almost certainly result in success.

Collective ownership

It is entirely possible for one individual to perform well while the rest of the team performs badly, but it is not possible for that individual to achieve success if the project fails. That is the principle of collective ownership: all succeed or all fail together — but there is more.

Anyone who has worked in a team environment of any kind knows that the potential for success is significantly greater for the team as a whole than for any one individual. They also know that every member of the team has an important role to play. Looking at motor racing drivers or athletes as examples, while one person is the focus, the greatest achievements are only available to those people who are part of a team with clearly defined goals and objectives. When that team performs to its maximum potential, the resulting success can be astounding, often far exceeding the team's expectations and giving every member the chance to enjoy success not previously thought attainable.

This is why collective ownership is one of the cornerstones of the FUSION approach.

Personal responsibility

Individuals working on FUSION projects have to be prepared to exercise free choice and freewill in order to take personal responsibility for their contributions. Often, there are organisational and structural pressures that suggest certain rules of behaviour, which people use to deny or deflect responsibility. Once the spirit of these rules is closely examined, they should be entirely compatible, as long as FUSION values are applied as the guiding principles.

Individuals can exercise free choice and freewill by refusing to act in ways they believe to be wrong and by admitting their mistakes — to take just two examples. In essence, they must be open and honest with themselves, before this can be so with others.

The path to greater self-respect and higher responsibility begins with taking personal responsibility for the principle of commitment. Saying that a task will be undertaken must mean exactly that, without allowing room for procrastination or prevarication. If individuals do not believe in a course of action, or are asked to do something that is beyond their capabilities, they must say so.

This is what the FUSION values seek from every individual.

If individuals do not believe in a course of action, or are asked to do something that is beyond their capabilities, they must say so.

Developing respect

From self-respect should follow the development of respect for others, in fact for everyone with whom the individual comes into contact. In the past, traditional contractual and confrontational methods tended to encourage the opposite viewpoint, with contractors forced to offer the very cheapest prices and clients trying to get more for their money by increasing the specification. Unsurprisingly, it would often end in conflict.

By discarding these barriers, those involved in a project can try to recognise that everyone with whom they come into contact is doing the best they possibly can and therefore deserves respect. From this point, trust, honesty and openness will follow.

Communicating and listening

The FUSION values insist on constant communication, which must be active and two-way. By accepting that there is nothing individuals can do which cannot be done better by a team, the principle of collaboration automatically becomes the highest of the FUSION values. That level can only be reached by truly listening to other people, on the basis that they have a positive contribution to make.

There is, after all, nothing to be lost by listening, for what is said need only be taken into account if it helps in achieving the solution. The insular approach of the individual, who is only prepared to take what he or she alone believes is the best course, is flawed and inadequate by comparison.

Collaboration

Perhaps not just the highest FUSION value, but that of humanity itself, collaboration must take place at every level and at every opportunity. Its context will always be the search for the very best solutions, innovating and creating new opportunities that are only available by exchanging information and exploring others ideas; producing outcomes that are of benefit to everybody, without there being any need for compromise.

Valuing the team

Simply by virtue of the fact that they are part of a FUSION team, everyone must have something to contribute. Each skill or capability that others possess will help to achieve a successful outcome, so ways must be found to involve all members of the team. Everyone has something to offer — it may sometimes be hard to find, but it is there.

Challenges

Once a person acknowledges that others can offer skills and capabilities that he or she cannot, they must accept and indeed encourage what amounts to a challenge from those colleagues.

Again, there is everything to be gained and absolutely nothing to be lost by doing so. A point of view can be evaluated to see if it improves the solution under consideration and can be dropped if it doesn't. Most people will accept such a position without rancour, once they know their idea has been discussed and they understand why it has not been adopted.

Secrets

There is no place in the FUSION process for secrets, as they run counter to the principle of collaboration and imply that the holder knows better than the rest of the team.
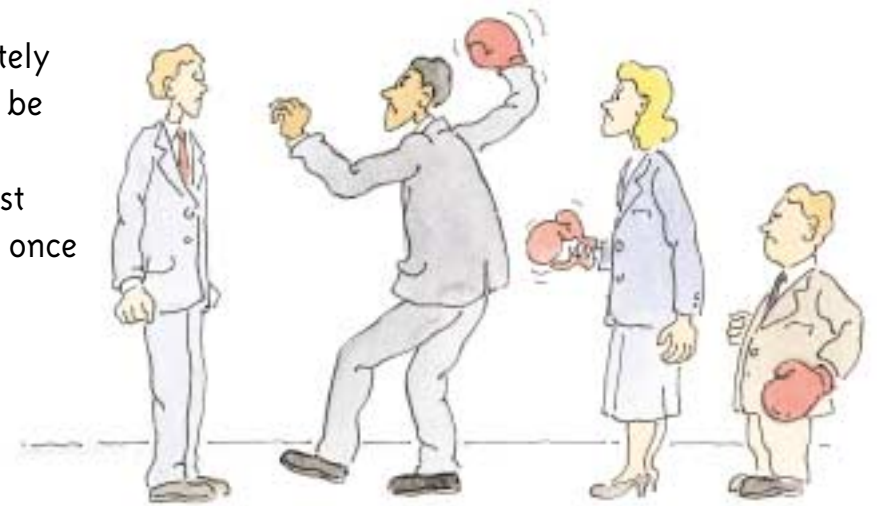
People must accept and indeed encourage what amounts to a challenge from other colleagues.

Secrets are information of value to other people that is deliberately withheld, or told just to a few people, in order to increase the power of an individual. This is not the same as keeping some matters private, for everyone has a right to an inner level of information that is relevant to them, but not necessarily to every other member of the team.

Grudges

It is not appropriate to harbour a grudge if you assume that everyone always does the best they can. While someone might not understand the implications of an action that has a negative effect on others, they obviously won't have set out to cause trouble.

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Working together to resolve such issues will guard against the possibility of a grudge building into a major personality clash. Having got to the bottom of the problem, it might even be necessary to disagree, but that isn't the same as harbouring a grudge.

Inclusive values

Everyone who accepts the FUSION values 'buys' a package. Openness, honesty, using initiative, team work, fairness are all part of it and must be applied inclusively, without any suggestion of selecting and rejecting, according to personal wishes. Only then will participants be entitled to the protection of the 'no blame' culture that is a central pillar of the FUSION process.

Transportability

FUSION is a collaborative approach to partnerships of all kinds. It becomes especially strong when applied to construction activity, but its many other successes demonstrate that it is a truly transportable concept. For more information see 'projects' on the FUSION web site http://www.fusion-approach.com

Shared learning

FUSION embodies many higher level values, one of which is continuous learning. This approach is about challenge, creativity and innovation throughout the life of the project and a desire to discard old methods that add no value. This remains so at the end of the project, and a feature of FUSION collaborations is the sharing of experiences within the team and with other partners and practitioners, who may be embarking on a new FUSION enterprise.

FUSION is a fluid concept. It needs to change and develop, just as the needs it seeks to deliver change and develop. Its practitioners believe that its benefit will not be fully realised until it is available for all to use at will. Therefore, if others decide they wish to adopt FUSION for their own projects, they are at liberty to do so, providing they do nothing to restrict the free use of the concept by any other party. We ask only that they be sure all participants are ready for the challenges this will bring and that they feed back their experiences so that we may all share in the learning.

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