

The value of Early Engagement

Our latest blog sees Clare Moore and Mike Page discuss the importance and benefits of early engagement and what that means for you as a customer.

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Thank you for joining me today, Mike. Let's start with what you think are the current obstacles that our customers are encountering and how is early market engagement beneficial to these challenges?

Thank you for having me, Clare. In the current market of uncertainty on costs and supply chain, early engagement can be a key element for all stakeholders to get an early insight into a project and can help the customer to achieve their desired outcomes. As a contractor, we can view a scheme before the design has progressed too far to innovate and look at all the technologies such as modular/Passivhaus/MMC also 'cutting edge' ideas before the physical design starts. This is not just beneficial for the contractor; it can help all stakeholders.

What about budget?

Budget is obviously hugely important to the customer, not that it is always the only driving factor on any project, but it cannot be overlooked. Improved efficiency and innovation through strategic use of Early Supply Chain Involvement (ESI) as defined in the Construction Playbook and referenced in the Constructing the Gold Standard. * is key along with improved contributions from SMEs, including local and regional businesses, and their timely commitment to control outcomes better, efficiency savings for customers and industry through consistent, transparent documentation. We can do continual market test target costs with agreed supply chain partners, who may ultimately be part of delivery.

From the conversations, we can give input into cost savings, efficiencies, planning, proposed layout facilities, and look at the whole estate to see if other efficiencies can be brought forward. There may also be a need to look at opportunities to create income and funding streams.

So, the view on value is not just around money?

No, it isn't, we can develop and agree on what value means to the customer from an early stage, and how success can be measured such as streamlined relationships with consultants, the opportunity to see costs reduce through efficiencies. Better, safer, faster, and greener outcomes from projects and programmes of work. Give a view on and buy into net zero carbon and social value targets through agreed joint actions. These topics can trigger the customer to have conversations internally that they didn't know they needed.



Working closely with the customer, the contractor can be fully involved in community engagement, listen and respond/adapt proposals to address community concerns and aspirations, and to win hearts and minds as one team.

So how do you think all parties can learn from the discussions that have been had?

Willmott Dixon record what has happened at each stage of the conversation, known as 'Black box' thinking, which encourages a shared learning environment that will lead to continuous improvement for all and records lesson learned for the whole team.

Thanks, Mike. It has been great to hear the viewpoints from a contractor's side. I have taken a lot from the conversation but some of the key points are:

- Customers don't need to be afraid of starting conversations with contractors early, it often leads to improved predictability which can only be beneficial to all.
- By having early engagement conversions, customers will encourage a truly collaborative and inclusive whole team solutions-focused mindset, aspiring to construct to the Gold Standard, underpinning investment in people, technology, and capacity leading to measurable improvements in productivity.
- It gives the opportunity to implement Construction Playbook policies for delivering better, safer, faster, and greener projects.
- And the opportunity for more holistic community engagement from an early stage, to listen and respond to do the right thing, and win hearts and minds through improved health and wellbeing.

*[Constructing the Gold Standard \(constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk\)](https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk)

*[The Construction Playbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)