

Newsletter Article, How Collaborative Working can Help Deliver Successful Projects, 23 November 2021.

Martin Gosden, SWWE Branch Co-Chair, introduced the webinar on 23rd Nov where he welcomed our presenter Dave Hawkins from the Institute for Collaborative Working, (ICW).

Dave introduced the ICW which was set up in 1990 by the then Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), now BEIS and the CBI. Its aim is to assist organisations to develop collaborative relationships for competitiveness, through developing, sharing and promoting best practice business relationship management. It is not for profit and has an executive knowledge network with 80+ members.

The theme for Dave's talk was collaboration in sustainability. In today's world we are interdependent on each other, it is impossible to execute any major project without multiple organisations working together to manage challenges such as complex supply chains, environmental issues and social responsibility.

Global warming is a fact and cannot be ignored. The UNs 17 global goals include partnerships as the other 16 are not achievable unless we work together.

Skanska provided a useful case study to show the benefits of collaboration throughout the supply chain to spread the benefits as wide as possible. By working together, we can solve more problems. But we have to get real. To get investment to develop solutions to address sustainability to protect the future of the planet, we have to create the wealth to do so. Sustainability is all of our problem and we need to collaborate to work together to achieve this.

The project environment increasingly is highly complex, with global partners, different time zones, different languages and cultures. Perceptions of collaboration can vary between a team hug to synchronised swimming with sharks! To be able to collaborate successfully we need a consistent view, a consistent approach. David discussed some myths, monsters and magic behind collaboration.

Research by Cranfield highlighted that people identified that socio-political complexity, such as people, politics, hidden agendas were the most difficult to manage, whereas in reality, training was focussed on structural complexity, such as systems and processes and little time was spent on the socio-political / people and relationship aspects. Forgetting that people make things happen. No wonder there is room for improvement.

Warwick University Business School research highlighted 12 benefits of collaboration, including better problems solving, increased customer satisfaction and surprisingly to them, lower operating costs. But as Dave pointed out if the other benefits are realised then cost benefits will follow.

A pan industry collaborative framework standard offers many benefits, and in particular a common language, better engagement and stronger processes. It saves reinventing the wheel each time and offers a neutral starting point for collaboration.

The ISO 44001 standard series started with the ICW CRAFT model in 2004 and has developed through British Standards to International standards covering principles, requirements, guidance, which includes specific guides for micro small and medium enterprises and for larger corporates dealing with MSME organisations.

The principles include: relationship management, visions and values, objectives, governance, behaviours, trust, relationship measurement and exit strategy.

ISO 44001 is a global movement and is making a big difference in how collaboration is being managed in projects across the world.

The webinar concluded with a lively and engaging Q&A session.

Martin Gosden

SWWE Branch Co-Chair