



Building successful collaborative relationships on major defence projects

We understand the relationship issues major defence contract teams have because we have dealt successfully with all types

Soma understands first hand the pressures IPTs face first in selecting bidders who they can be sure are able and willing to work collaboratively and then managing the complex mix of government, military and industry cultures to turn bidders' promises into project delivery reality. The issues you face as an IPT will depend on where you are in the project life cycle:

Pre-Delivery

Bidder selection: You need to select bidders who are genuinely motivated to work collaboratively and have the skills and organisational capabilities to succeed. You will know from experience that merely reading the words in a bid document is woefully inadequate when it comes to bidder selection. Fresh and far more insightful approaches are required.

Government and military preparation: You need to prepare those on the government and military to work collaboratively with successful bidders – it is no good starting preferred bidder negotiations with a team made up of highly motivated industry members and military/government representatives ready for an old-fashioned adversarial relationship. You will recognise that this means changing culture attitudes and behaviour and will know from hard experience that this is a tough change management assignment.

Delivery

Project set-up: You need to build teams with a sound collaborative footing. This is not just about teamwork – important as that is. It means understanding and skilfully managing every facet of the project and its environment. This includes crafting project processes that stimulate collaboration and results delivery, understanding and managing complex stakeholders, harnessing and guiding the leadership of parent organisations to support partnering

On-going development: You need to ensure that teams improve the quality of the relationship, that good collaboration translates into on time, on quality project outcomes – and deal with the inevitable relationship problems that are bound to arise on challenging projects.

Continuous improvement: You need to know that results are improving both in terms of the quality of relationships and crucially the positive impact they are having on project delivery. This is where measurement comes in. You will be well aware that measurement of intangibles like relationship quality in a way that convinces hard-nosed project managers of the importance of investing in collaborative relationships is no easy matter.





Soma consultants have been helping clients build develop and repair collaborative relationships for over 20 years. Our expertise is recognised by the NAO who asked us to bring our experience into the public sector:

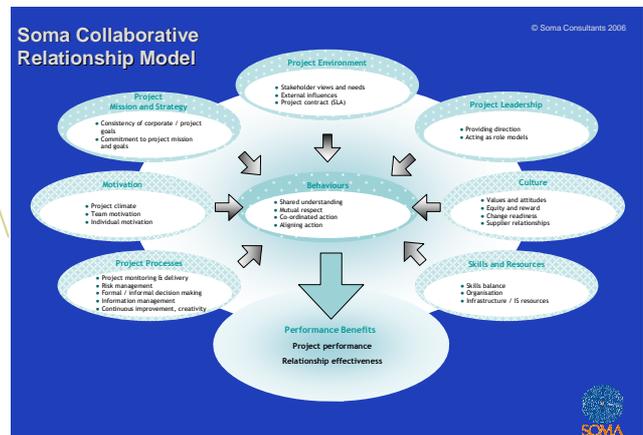
Soma consultants starting working with clients developing collaborative relationships many years before an alternative to traditional defence supplier/Authority relationships was thought possible. It is well-known that most of the early learning came from an Oil and Gas sector, spurred to find new more effective ways of working together to compete in tough markets and operating conditions in the 1980's and beyond.

We were involved in this pioneering work, setting up effective major project teams, building lasting organisational capability and all the time gathering valuable learning that we have applied successfully within the Defence sector.

Joint Soma/NAO research creates a new best practice framework



The NAO asked Soma to research and report on how the Oil and Gas, Construction and Defence industries have delivered project benefits in terms of time, cost, quality and safety through investing in relationships. The results are just now becoming available in a joint NAO/Soma report and will also be published on the NAO website (<http://www.nao.org.uk>). A particularly useful output is a best practice framework that makes valuable learning accessible to Defence IPTs. The report also shows clearly the business benefit of investing in relationships – invaluable to IPTs seeking funding in a tight financial environment. Please contact us for a copy.





Soma has successfully introduced a new systematic approach to assessing bidders collaborative skills on a major defence project: Soma has just spent 18 months working hand in hand with the MFTS IPT to assess the collaborative capabilities of bidders on the 25 year Military Flying Training Services (UK MFTS) programme. What is interesting here is that partnering skills and behaviours had equal weighting with the technical and commercial elements. We went far beyond the traditional bid assessment to include an in-depth organisational assessment of bidders' capabilities, processes, leadership and culture. This created a platform of deep understanding upon which to base a successful delivery relationship.

Soma applies deep change management expertise to cope with the realities of building collaborative skills and the willingness to apply them: We understand that many Military and government personnel are all too keen to show their scars from unproductive project experiences and are often not ready to plunge enthusiastically into a new open way of working with industry partners whose motives they are not wholly certain of. Through our involvement with many projects including MFTS we have found truly effective ways of engaging sceptical people on all sides in what is really involved in collaborative relationships, debunking unhelpful myths that surround the topic. We have helped the most sceptical military personnel not only gain new skills and the will to use them but become enthusiastic exponents of new and better ways of working.

Our approach is practical and comprehensive. Important as it is we don't just work with the skills and attitudes of those in the training workshop – we go far beyond that to examine what in the organisation is reinforcing current behaviours and attitudes. We work with project teams with a powerful change management framework that identifies critical change issues wherever they are in the organisation and creates robust plans to tackle them.

