

THE GOOD CLIENT

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INTRODUCTION

The best companies attract the best services and products from the best contractors and suppliers, and therefore create a virtuous circle of continuing growth and well-being for everyone in the system. This cannot be done unless there is recognition by the leadership of the organisation that they are in system, and behave and create policies accordingly. Good Clients believe in cooperation, because they understand the principle of *interdependence*.

They therefore need to operate out of a System Paradigm, and not a Hierarchical Paradigm, i.e. not to be concerned so much about who is in charge as what best needs to be done. They also need to appreciate that it will not happen overnight; that they are on a Journey.

Good examples of clients who are trying to work in this are those parts of Smithkline Beecham, BP and BNFL where we have worked or are working.

A general model will be drawn from our experience in these corporations, and others, in defining the Good Client.

THE MODEL

The human being has three principles mediating the way they interact with the world. These are:

THINKING perceiving, conceptualising: *TRUTH/REALITY*

FEELING relating, using emotions as sensors, empathy: *VALUE(D)*

WILLING doing, producing, right purpose: *GOOD WORK*

Organisations need to employ the same qualities if they are to succeed in getting the best from an FM partner.

Our research indicates the following in Good Clients, beginning at the beginning:

Phase One

THINKING

- ✍ Knowing what the organisation wants from the FM relationship, and why it wants it.
- ✍ Researching the area, identifying benefits and principles.
- ✍ Producing a clear brief, which focuses on the “what”, not the “how”.

BP International's strategic intent, in relation to its Sunbury site, was to “move” internal management focus from activity and resources to performance and relationship management. It wanted, *inter alia*:

- ✍ **A lower and more variable cost base**
- ✍ **A more flexible and responsive delivery**
- ✍ **Access for staff to development opportunities not available within BP**

FEELING

- ✍ Testing the feelings around this new idea, sensing where it could be very sensitive.
- ✍ Checking your own feelings about it. Where are the feelings of uncertainty? What are they telling you?

The Engineering Director at the SB laboratory site had an uneasy feeling that somehow they were not optimising the services of their FM partners, so he used a workshop to test these feelings, and to see if there was a culture gap, or mixed expectations. A new level of serviced has emerged.

WILLING

- ✍ Produce a project plan for the implementation, in the event that it takes place (with the help of an experienced consultant).

BNFL Engineering produced an “engineers” project plan for the implementation of their partnering initiative. JCP modified it to include the relationship element. This simple critical path which emerged then allowed the idea to be circulated and understood by all the senior people, mainly engineers, who could then begin to get an idea of what it would take to actually launch a strategic partnership.

Phase Two

THINKING

- ✎ Get the data about the best practice in FM to meet your need, including contracts.
- ✎ Get information on the best suppliers, including internal.
- ✎ Assemble the data for a good brief.

BNFL Engineering did a tremendous amount of research and benchmarking, constructing a model relationship which allowed them to attract real informed interest, internally and externally.

FEELING

- ✎ Communicate and consult, including with the possible suppliers. Use the Waste Model (Figure 3). Shell originated this with JCP; and BNFL and SB, amongst others, use it extensively to illustrate why they are going for cooperation. It is simplistic; but very effective in conveying the rational reason for cooperation, as opposed to the “me too” principle.

WILLING

- ✎ Produce a clear, well thought-through brief. This is a real cry from the heart from contractors.
- ✎ Go and talk openly to your preferred contractors, using the brief and the Waste Model. They will then believe it is real (true), and feel you are attempting to get the right relationship at the start, and that you have the right purpose.

BP is brilliant at this, and has gained enormous credibility right at the beginning that their managers are walking the partnering talk.

This Thinking, Feeling and Willing model is used as a Plan - Do Check Act Cycle through the life of the relationship.

MANAGING THE RELATIONSHIP

Basically the Good Client understands that having the right FM relationship is all about trust and trust relates directly to efficiency. The best way to deal with your partner once you have selected each other is:

- ✎ Exchange and measure expectations, as BNFL do (Figure 4).
- ✎ Involve as early as possible in everything you do as which could affect the relationship (Figure 5).

Trust is not what you say; it how you behave. Having a successful relationship is about being clear about your intentions and about valuing your colleagues - to the extent of challenging them and being challenged by them. This is what Smithkline Beecham wanted above all else from their FM contractors, because they knew that if they were trusted enough to be challenged by them, then they were getting that very special intellectual capital that less trustworthy clients were not getting.

In terms of Thinking, Feeling and Willing, it means that everyone is working with something that is **true and real**; the purpose and the people are **valued**; and the outcome is **good work**.

At the end of the day, that is what makes the real difference to the Good Client, and it is how the Good Client makes a difference.