

CLIENTS

- They already have a 9–5 job
- Unclear vision
- Quick-fix solutions
- Inadequate briefing and project definition
- Think they know what is going on – the 80 / 20 rule
- Understanding the roles of the client
- Understanding the processes
- Delegate then monitor, or delegate then meddle?
- Signing off and change resistance

What can we say about clients? But what would we do without our clients? However, many of them already have a nine-to-five job. I anticipate that most people who are involved in arts building have worked with a client who has already got a job. You might be working with the principal of an organisation, or the artistic director; they've already got a nine-to-five day job, so you've got to take account of that.

Clients' visions tend to be unclear. They sort of know what they want, but they're not quite sure how to bring it together. They often look for quick-fix solutions – same meat, different gravy.

Clients can offer inadequate briefing and project definition. Someone speaking earlier said that one of the key issues about briefing is actually getting sign-offs. It's very difficult to get sign-offs if there's not enough information there in the first place.

Clients often think they know everything. Sometimes they know 80% of 20%, and unfortunately you need to keep them informed. They also don't understand what their role is; it's not just the approver of design and the receiver of the building; they've also got to be paymasters, they've also got to be takers of risk, which a lot of clients forget. They're actually taking great risks, and these need to be managed on their behalf.

Clients don't often understand the design and construction processes, and unfortunately they don't delegate and monitor – they delegate and meddle. I was very fortunate to have very clear delegation from RADA's Council during the course of the RADA project and they didn't meddle – they allowed a very clear delegation and gave clear instructions as to what was required.

And finally, if you sign off all the stages of the brief during the design phases of the project, change, usually, is something that doesn't happen.

THE UNEXPECTED

- Problem: Drama: Crisis: Panic!
- Knowing context to problems
- Being surprised when adverse things happen
- Contingencies of time and money; resources and management
- Risk handling
- Closing out options too early
- Layering of hiatus.

Common day-to-day difficulties will arise. A lot of clients are surprised when such events happen. A project manager's role is to take over something that's a problem. We get paid, hopefully, a lot of money to manage problems. What we don't get paid for is to turn problems into a drama, crisis and even panic – but it sometimes happens.

We also need to know the context in which problems are happening – “Good God, the plumber's brought the wrong fittings. Let's tell the chairman!” Is this really necessary? In fact, Lord Attenborough (who was, at the time, the Chairman of RADA) is not very knowledgeable about Yorkshire fittings!

Contingencies of time and money: Something that is often forgotten is the fact that associated with a project there is a lot of work in the management of resources. Time is the issue that's often forgotten, but so is the managerial resource that's needed to make a project work.

Handling of risks: this is very important but is fairly well covered in other seminars.

Don't close options too early: it's very possible to design more than one solution to a problem, to get these costed, and then to decide on which option to pursue at the latest possible date. This worked very well on RADA thanks to some help from the quantity surveyors, who've taken a bit of a bashing in earlier Conference sessions, I have to say!

Finally it's important to understand how to layer a hiatus: what is actually the nature of the problem, who do we take it to, and at what stage?

Project managers are both admired and hated. Here three experienced managers describe what they do, how they do it, and why. There is more to this role than many understand and it is important to remember that good teams are necessary to achieve good projects.