

A TWO DIMENSIONAL VIEW OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN ON CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

Subcontracted trades undertake most of the physical construction work in construction projects. While many research projects have examined relationships between designers, developers and head contractors, there has been limited focus on detailed analysis of the relationships between subcontractors. Where relationships in the supply chain have been examined it has tended to be along the dimension of contractual relationships between subcontractors and their suppliers.

This paper looks at the relationships between subcontractors in a second dimension where they build on each other's work on the construction site, but are not contractually related, except through the head contractor. Initial investigations carried out during this research confirm that subcontractors focus on the head contractor as their primary customer, and hence attention on the following trade as a customer is minimal. This paper proposes a shift in focus, whereby a subcontractor (preceding trade) attempts to meet the product and service quality expectations of the trade that will be building upon that subcontractor's work (following trade) leading to an improved project culture and better overall project quality outcomes. Tools were developed to increase the interaction between preceding and following trades and communicate product and service quality expectations. These were implemented on three construction sites in Sydney, Australia while three other sites were monitored for changes in customer focus and culture without any interventions. Results to date show that the tools developed have in fact increased focus on following trades resulting in improvements in overall project characteristics.

KEY WORDS

Construction, supply chain, process relationship, subcontractors, service quality, customer focus.

INTRODUCTION

Quality and productivity issues plaguing the construction industry are well documented. The quality problem, particularly in relation to defects and rework, has

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