

# 02 / How to ensure the programme is accepted



By Dr Stuart Kings

**Have a plan or plan to fail – so the saying goes.**

**This is definitely true in construction where it's essential to have a programme to chart the critical path of the project and record a timeline of who does what and when.**

An Accepted Programme will improve understanding by all parties and is fundamental to the successful delivery of your project and adherence to timescales. As the project progresses, this can help with both the early warning process and compensation events.

If you read any project management handbook, it will tell you that the programme is key to a successful outcome. What's fundamental is that the programme is reviewed and updated regularly by the team and shared between the Project Manager and the Contractor.

Section 3 of the Engineering and Construction Contract (Time) defines what a programme should include, the process for updating the programme and the process for the Project Manager accepting the programme. Essentially, these are the key elements that define programme management.

Once again, there are cultural barriers. The programme management under the ECC has been a steep learning curve for the industry. In practice, teams often struggle to understand the importance of the second stimulus to good project management.

Contractors often struggle to produce a compliant programme and Project Managers often fail to respond within the two week timescale. Neither of these support successful project delivery.

*However, there are some simple steps which can help you generate much better awareness and understanding and significantly enhance collaborative working.*



**Tip 1: Spend a day up front to jointly review the programme:**

All programmes are subject to a formal acceptance process by the Project Manager.

If one thing is wrong it might not be accepted. In the real world, it's very easy to find one thing wrong. To avoid this time-wasting setback, why not proactively and collaboratively sit down before the first programme is submitted and spend a day going through it as a team?

Really collaborative teams will invest in a projector so they can display the programme on the meeting room wall and go through it real time. Any suggestions or omissions can be addressed there and then rather coming back to bite you further down the line.

A spin off benefit from this is that the Project Manager gains a better understanding of the pressures that the Contractor faces and the Contractor has a better understanding of timelines and sign off procedures within the Employer's organisation.



**Tip 2: Ensure that the programme is correctly submitted and accepted.**  
(well within the two week deadline)

It's important not to rush this review. Give yourself time to have a really good long discussion. It may take a full day on a bigger project or half a day on a smaller project. Once you have a verbal agreement, all that is required is for the contractor to formally submit the programme and the Project Manager to accept the programme, within the two-week timeline. Ensure that this process is completed properly and recorded (as per clause 13.1).

Two weeks is the maximum – good teams will gain formal acceptance in a matter of days if not hours!

The Sypro online management system has a process for recording all of this activity and has in-built check lists in the software.

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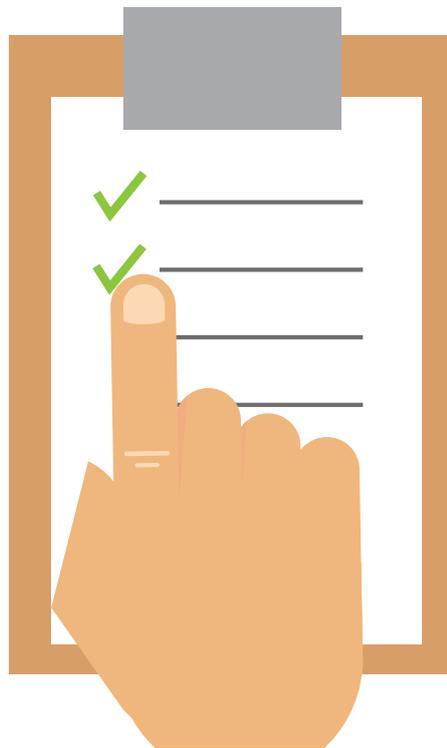
### Tip 3: Repeat the joint review process regularly

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that once the programme has been accepted that's the job done. Teams that want to aspire to project excellence should repeat this process on a monthly basis.

On larger projects this could be done before the next progress meeting. On smaller projects it could be done during the progress meeting itself.

The programme is intended to be a collaborative document that needs to be understood by both parties. Therefore, the updates and revisions also need to be managed in a collaborative way.

Beware - if the programme is managed in a contractual way via email with no dialogue, you won't get the joint understanding that is essential to the successful delivery of the project.



## Conclusion:

**If followed, the steps outlined above will support collaborative working, generate much better understanding and importantly allow a much quicker turn-around.**

It's important to emphasise that the whole process needs to be done in a spirit of mutual trust and co-operation in order to be successful. After all, mutual trust and co-operation is the first clause in the ECC contract!

By achieving a joint understanding you will be able to deal with early warnings more effectively. Another benefit of having an Accepted Programme is that it enables compensation events to be more readily agreed.

The reverse is also true. Without an Accepted Programme, early warnings can be missed and compensation events become very difficult to assess objectively.

I have seen a fair few project teams that have struggled to gain acceptance of a programme but then they have applied the techniques suggested above and turned the project around.

My last piece of advice is very simple - I often tell clients to rip up their minutes of the Progress Meeting. You should be looking at the Programme, not getting bogged down in the minutes.

After all, there is no better document to chart the progress of a project than the programme!