

Presentation: Leadership and Worker Involvement

Gordon Crick, HM Inspector, CDM Unit

Construction Division, London

Gordon introduced his subject by telling us that he had been working on the new **Leadership and Worker Involvement (LWI)** project since 2005. The strapline for the **LWI Toolkit**, was **“Reducing harm by learning from the best in Construction”** and nicely sums up, Gordon added, what it is designed to do!

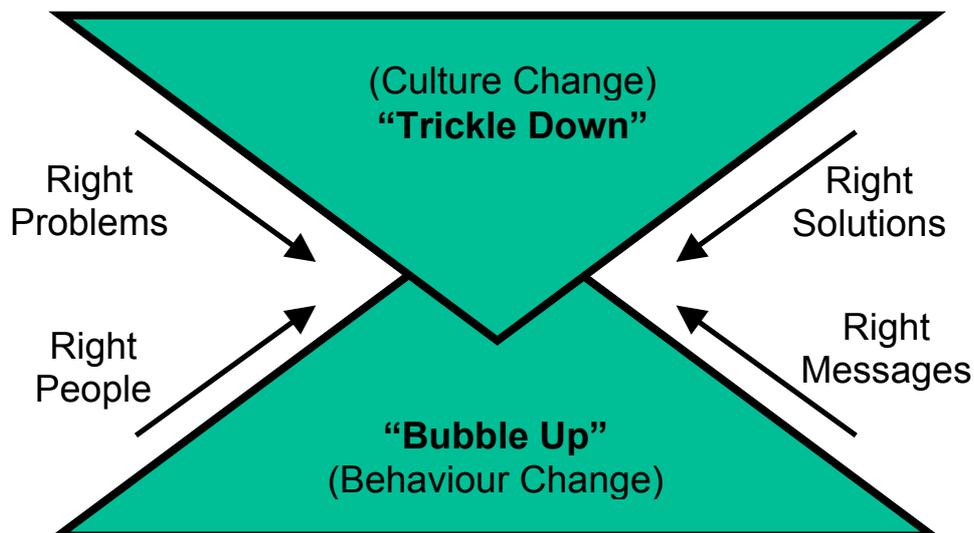
The toolkit is a standalone HSE microsite and. Apart from the contributors; BHSEA Members are one of the first groups to have seen it. It was developed after an overview of existing literature by HSE and HSL and best practice in the Construction industry. Some of the large firms who participated in the Leadership and Worker engagement Forum were: -

- **Laing O’Rourke Group (BHSEA Member)**, where **Gerry Mulholland** contributed soundbites.
- **Bovis Group**
- **MACE Group (BHSEA Member)**
- **Morgan Ashurst**
- **Carillion (BHSEA Member)**

The potential differences between the good practice, from the literature review, and the actual practice in the sector were identified and it was found that, on the whole, the companies interviewed were following best practice. This review also gave insights into the barriers to best practice and how these had been overcome by the companies. It also showed the need for a “top down” as well as a “bottom up” approach and the need to help SMEs to implement Leadership and Worker Engagement (LWE). This latter conclusion led to a significant change in the project to use the toolkit to disseminate best practice across the industry.



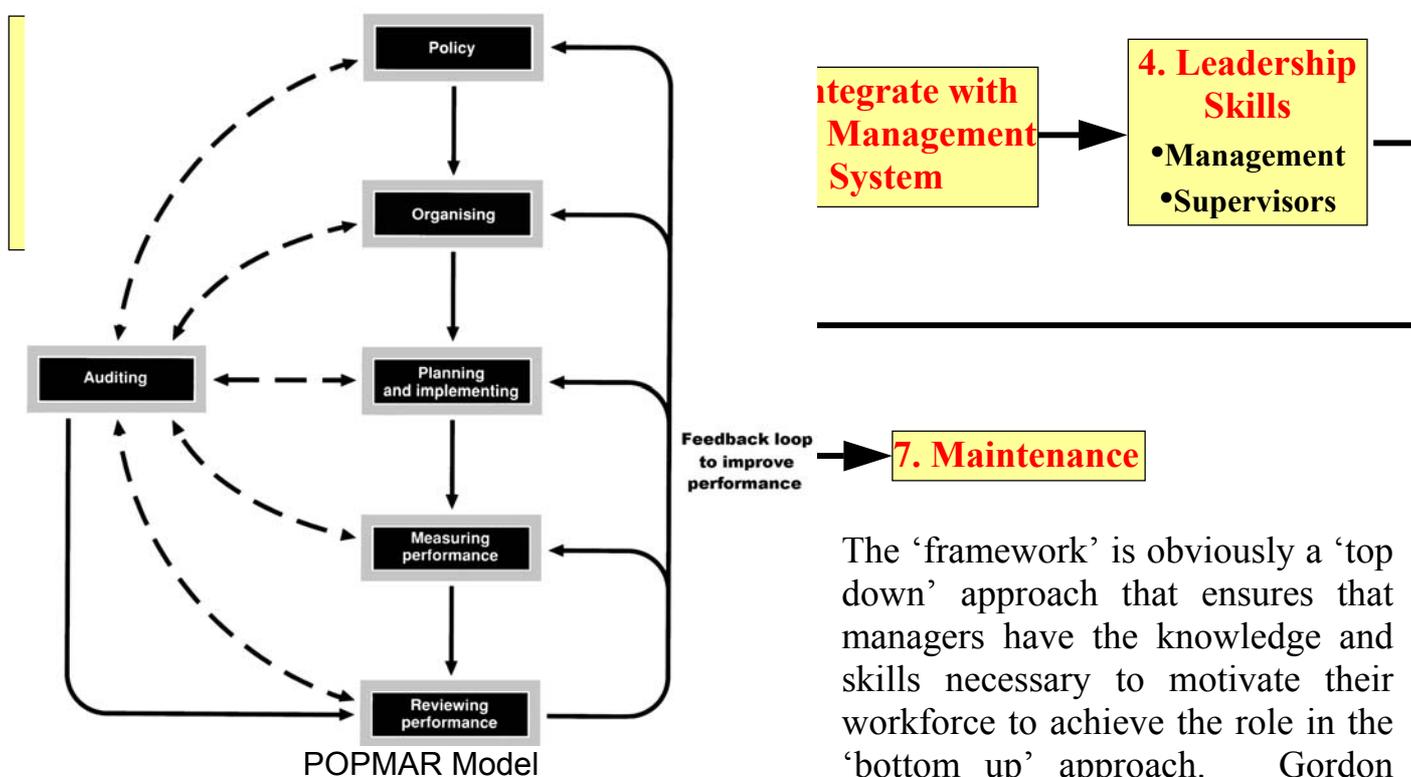
Gordon Crick, HM Inspector, CDM Unit



These two elements complement each other, with the cultural approach compensating for the behavioural approach's shortcomings in exposing root causes. Similarly, the behavioural route can provide the precision and impact on 'immediate causes' in a way that the top down approach cannot. Top down pressure could be created by including behavioural standards into more supply chain contracts and by more frequent exposure to high standards adhered to by principal contractors. This has been shown to be more effective where there is a high degree of workforce 'churn'. In time it could also help culture change across the industry, when contractors who may not work for principal contractors will rub shoulders with those that do and become more receptive to best practice. Gordon went on to say that 'bottom up' change would be enhanced by motivating and helping SMEs to implement LWE.

Gordon continued by outlining the seven sequential steps in the: -

The LWI Toolkit Framework



The 'framework' is obviously a 'top down' approach that ensures that managers have the knowledge and skills necessary to motivate their workforce to achieve the role in the 'bottom up' approach. Gordon commented on the fact that it

ensured behavioural safety practices are properly integrated into the safety management system in order to provide a facilitating physical environment. This is achieved by following guidance mapped onto the POPMAR model (policy, organisation, planning, monitoring, auditing and review) as specified by HSG65 (HSE, 2000). It is also easier for SMEs to understand the key concepts involved. Another important feature of this system is that it enables managers to sustain change over time.

Phase II of the project, running from April 2008 – March 2009, drew on all these learning points to develop a toolkit designed to motivate SMEs and help them to implement LWE practices. It started with a literature review to identify SME characteristics (No. of employees, type of work, geography, knowledge and motivation to use LWE) and current practice (the previous review had looked more at larger organisations). The aim was to learn more about the safety culture maturity of SMEs

the barriers and enablers to LWI practices e.g. the types of business, moral and legal arguments would convince them about the case for LWI.

This crucial work was then supplemented by a series of interviews with SMEs to establish their site conditions (environments and hazards they faced, together with the controls they used). This information was pooled with the experts' knowledge of behaviour change on the Steering Group to develop the toolkit around the seven areas of the framework. The key principles are: -

- **Don't walk by:** It's everyone's responsibility to prevent any unsafe acts from turning into an accident. Talk to the person concerned and draw their attention to the risks.
- **STOP:** All workers should be encouraged to stop working whenever they feel unsafe, no matter if their reasons later turned out to be unfounded. Better to STOP than have an accident.
- **A safe working environment drives safe behaviour:** If you expect your workers to work in a safe way, you need to first make sure that you do all you can do to make their environment as safe as possible.
- **Don't blame the worker until you account for all the causes:** The causes of unsafe ways of working, accidents, incidents and ill-health do not always stop with the worker. The problem can often be traced back to less obvious causes such as decisions made by managers and the wider organisation.
- **Use your workforce for ideas:** Your workforce can have a more accurate idea of what works and what does not work than you, your management or other experts. They have to deal with the issues every day, so include them in your plans.
- **Change does not usually occur overnight:** Do not expect quick wins. Improvements are likely to emerge overtime, but only if you stick with it.
- **Knowledge is not enough:** Simply telling workers that something is wrong, or is a risk, is not enough. They also need to know why and how to avoid harm if they are to act on the information you provide.
- **You lead by example:** Your behaviour sends strong signals to your workers as to how they should behave. If you carry out your job in a safe way, your workers are more likely to work in safe ways, as well. If you do not, then neither will they.
- **Encourage co-operation:** Treat your sub-contractors as you would direct employees. Encourage different sub-contractors and trades to communicate proactively with each other. Getting consistency in standards will then be that much easier.
- **Don't neglect occupational health:** If you look after health as well as safety of your workers now, you are less likely to store up problems for either you or your workforce further down the line.

Gordon then referred us to the on-line part of his presentation at the link: -

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/lwit/index.htm> that leads us into **Step 1** of the toolkit. This is a Health and Safety Diagnostic Tool (HSDT) that gives employers a

baseline audit on their starting off point, “How are you doing?” This analyses the various ‘Building Blocks’: -

- Commitment
- Worker engagement
- Prioritisation of Health and Safety
- Compliance
- Measurement
- Organisational learning

This gives the employers a starting point and development plan to assist with improvement progression, before moving on to the remaining six Steps of the LWI Toolkit. Each of the stages adopts the same format: -

- Introduction
- Key Tool
- Further Tools
- Summary

These are populated with video case studies, checklists, interactive exercises and other guidance in a very user-friendly format for managers and workers. **Step 2, “Find the root of the issues”**, introduces the well-known “Five Whys” technique to critically examine accident causations in order to ensure that the true root causes of accidents/incidents are identified. This technique lies behind one of the Key Principles, above, **Don’t blame the worker until you account for all the causes!**

Step 3, entitled **“Make it fit with what you do”** contains an extremely helpful introduction to risk management, called the **10/50 Story** that is based on an analysis of 169 fatal construction accidents over eight years. It states that 50% of those fatalities were caused by just 10 accident causations, in order of frequency: -

- Fall from a ladder
- Fall through a fragile roof
- Lifting operations
- Struck by plant
- Overturning plant
- Fall from scaffolding
- Fall through an internal void
- Asphyxiation poisoning
- Crushed by falling excavation
- MEWP crushing entrapment

These causations are then used as a base for a series of learning packages for managers and workers to develop safer working practices, using the conventional hierarchy of risk control measures in a very practical format. In addition, the package also addresses the two disabling causations of slips and trips, plus respirable dusts. This stage identifies the greatest problem as a failure to spot risks and failure to plan against risk. It also says that 60% of accidents could have been prevented if there had been a recognition of **Serious and Imminent Danger!** The strong recommendation is that managers should encourage workers to recognise this simple sign!

Step 4 “Lead this in your Company”, contains a wealth of guidance and training packs on leadership, effective communications and motivational techniques. **Step 5, “What’s in it for your team”**, is a little nearer home in that it uses Laing O’Rourke’s video **“It will never happen to me”** about a widow’s thoughts following her husband’s fatal fall, just weeks after they were married. **Step 6, “How your team can carry it out”**, deals with effective risk management by workers, effective communications, safety monitoring and procedures for stopping unsafe work in progress.

The final **Step 7, “Make it last”**, contains a site audit checklist of things to do to maintain the development of improved leadership and worker involvement. This is supported by templates and a guidance pack.

Gordon concluded by saying that the feedback received was very good, with comments that it is a **“Very professional resource, built on sound knowledge”**. He added that it is usable and relevant for construction SMEs, and that users like the website structure. It is well presented, visual and interactive, with a broad mix of tools available. The ten key principles give good take home messages that are powerful and persuasive.

Gerry Mulholland recommended that members try the toolkit online and said that it could be used by anyone. Gordon was asked a variety of questions about the use and scope of the toolkit and it was obvious that his presentation had provoked a lot of positive response. After the meeting the Secretary used the toolkit and formed the opinion that it was one of the best techniques that had been introduced for some time. The initial time spent on the questionnaire was a worthwhile investment, even though it appeared to be somewhat daunting at first.

As the questions drew to an end, Gerry thanked Gordon for a most stimulating presentation and the members responded very enthusiastically in the time honoured way!

