

## **Construction management methodology due for overhaul**

The African property development industry is rich in new developments, pressured successes and epic challenges. Lessons can be learnt by examining these projects, their strengths and weaknesses, their management strategies, and the reasons for their success or failure.

South African managing director of Onsite Control Systems, developers of a cloud-based collaboration system, John Haefele, believes that all projects have the potential for efficiency, effectiveness and cohesion, but unfortunately many projects conducted in today's African environment are inherently inefficient. "Teams work ferociously against inherent problems to keep the project aligned, but due to the industry's traditional methodologies and historically flawed tendencies, these issues prevail and the project is not always a success."

Haefele, who has 20 years' experience in the African construction arena, says that the industry norm is anything but acceptable. He has played a direct role at varying disciplinary levels on many large-scale developments: "Diligent project teams and well-organised project managers do their best to tackle the challenges presented within the available systems and using traditional methods, but due to the lack of alternatives the results tend to be less than desirable. The reasons for any project's failure are easily recognisable, definable, and can be overcome with the appropriate system and management mind-set change."

### **Redefining management processes**

"Traditionally, we built with a notepad, landline telephone, fax and a 2-way radio," he says, but 20 years on and very little has changed. The fax evolved into uncontrollable and numerous emails; the landline has been replaced by the intrusive and contractually limited cell phone; while the trusty pocket notepad and 2-way radio still remain. Although these tools provide flexibility, it is the inherently flawed nature of this 'toolset' that results in the industry's persistent challenges.

"The multiple channels and methods of communication create

the challenges we face on a daily basis and are the reason we continue to struggle,” Haefele explains. “Slow adaption towards any change in the traditionally accepted method of information creation and flow, as well as the technology required, are significant challenges and definite stumbling blocks. These issues need to be addressed now if we are going to successfully move the construction industry forward.”

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He acknowledges that the reality of construction is time consuming, difficult and a stressful arena for all disciplines involved, but says that all disciplines on any development should rather be seen as one system rather than a group of individual parts within a system.

“It is important to realise that the main contractor’s or subcontractor’s internal management ‘methods’ are just as much of a risk or benefit to the project as the architect’s, engineer’s or principal quantity surveyor’s internal management ‘methods’. The same can be said for any discipline on the project and it’s important to understand that these ‘methods’ are inherently hindered by traditionally accepted methods.”

Any solution to the challenge of construction information management that benefits only a few levels of any project team structure, while not equally catering for the internal management ‘methods’ of all other levels, will not succeed.

### **Teamwork is part of the single system solution**

It is not enough to digitise the currently accepted information flow. Rather, a successful solution will re-engineer and ease the previously accepted method of information creation, work flow and execution management, and as a by-product deliver effective results and reports, while increasing transparency along the way.

It will deliver a substantial change to the industry across all disciplines, and allow the team to act as one, from feasibility to handover. It will support all involved, assisting on every hierarchical level to achieve the project team’s goals.

In 2005, Haefele envisaged Onsite Control Systems (OCS) and teamed up with a senior solutions architect and owner of the software development firm Haefele Software in the United

Kingdom to develop and launch the OnSiteIMS™ System. The system, patented through Bowman and Gilfillan IP Attorneys, in 2008, 2010 and annually since, was created to resolve these historical challenges and tendencies in the project and contracts management arenas.

Years of contract management and project management experience through these challenges have culminated in, and continue to be, incorporated into the functionality of the OnSiteIMS™ Solution.

### **One platform**

The OnSiteIMS solution is a cloud-based collaboration system that provides one platform for all your development related information. It re-engineers information creation methods across all channels and from all disciplines, allowing the channelling of any information type (instructions, tasks, documents, actions, drawings, requests etc.) between the client, developer, professional team and contractor, and onto subcontractors and suppliers in a manner that is manageable, productive, efficient and traceable, from both mobile and online interfaces.

It provides one easily manageable, secure, reliable, and always available framework for all communication creation and flow, reducing the resourcing needed to manage the various disciplines as well as in managing themselves.

“The current construction and project management methodology is in dire need of an upgrade. The industry requires a change toward reduced complexity; increased real-time accountability and streamlined key processes, to reduce the excuse of non-performance, and to free up limited resources and time to be better spent on those aspects that create success. With the recent release of the OnSiteIMS 2015 Online™ and OnSiteIMS 2015 Mobile™ platforms, we finally have a collaboration solution that fits the bill,” concludes Haefele.

With branches in Africa and Europe, Onsite Control Systems is the first Africa based information management consultant for the construction industry and the largest construction collaboration provider in the southern hemisphere, currently assisting project teams to meet their goals on developments to

the combined value of over R12 Billion in Ghana, Namibia and South Africa.