

# LEAN AND KEEN

## FMJ AIMS TO SUPPORT TECHNICAL EXPERTISE IN THE FM MARKET

A Lean culture can help to motivate employees, satisfy clients and deliver continuous improvement, says Gary Codling, Performance Director at Vinci Facilities.

**Pressures on cost, quality and timeliness, alongside the requirement for excellent service and sustainable operations, demand constant change and innovation. Continuous improvement must be integral to a service provider's culture and delivery. But how can this be achieved? One way is to establish a Lean culture.**

Historically, quality programmes such as TQM and EFQM have had some success, although more in some sectors than others. Support functions such as HR have chipped in with their own frameworks designed to enhance organisational performance – IIP is an example of this. Even facilities management has developed its own professional standards, as have other industries; now there are the beginnings of an ISO standard for FM.

All have merit, but ask the worker on the shop floor and they'll often dismiss such developments as the flavour of the month – the next (yawn) management initiative. The problem with all of them is that they are owned and driven by specialist functions. All departments are increasingly thinly spread, which means their programmes may not get the penetration needed to be sustainable. Then they fizzle out, leaving space for the next big thing. And that's when the workforce becomes disengaged.

What's needed is a different way; a different, more sustainable approach that inspires and motivates both middle management and frontline workers, day

in, day out. Something for the team, not something to be done to the team.

### HUMAN PRINCIPLES

Lean originated as a cultural programme that, like so many good ideas, became over-engineered into an academic science. But in its original version, it's a common-sense approach underpinned by human principles: respect for people, management humility and total employee engagement.

At its heart is a simple idea: deliver more of what matters to the customer by eliminating waste through continuous improvement. It can be implemented with simple tools and techniques that everyone can understand and use without specialists or too much specialist training.

It starts with management being clear about the organisation's objectives. Leaders and project managers need to ask: what's our purpose? Why do we exist? What do we need to achieve for our business and our operation to be successful? Once articulated, the message needs to be reinforced with regular business updates and site visits from the leadership team

throughout the year.

Communication is vital. Each member of a team should understand how their role contributes to success, and what they and their colleagues need to address in order to meet the organisation's goals.

At Vinci, for example, we begin by collecting feedback from clients and employees, helping us to set general objectives that everyone can recognise and appreciate. These are then aligned with clients' specific business objectives in strategic plans that are conveyed to individual workers through one on one annual personal review meetings. A 'Target and objectives' booklet is sent at Christmas from Vinci's MD to each employee's home, explaining the company's ambitions for the coming year and how the team can achieve them.

Everything is kept on track through

regular team meetings, in which everyone is encouraged to submit ideas and suggestions on how to improve, how to make the operation run more smoothly, how to eliminate waste, and how to boost productivity and quality. Everyone is treated with respect, because Vinci management accept they don't know everything. In fact it's quite the opposite; they know it's the people who do the job that best understand what's required. But it's essential that managers go and see for themselves the conditions under which employees work, and what great practices should be shared, so they can lead effectively.

### TAILORED INFORMATION

This is where data comes in. Forget standard deviation, Six Sigma and the rest of it, Vinci shares the information that people need to know in order to see how they are doing, where there's a need for improvement, or where there's reason to celebrate. It's all based on KPI data already gathered for clients and managers – Vinci simply tailors it for specific teams and makes it visible on information boards.

It doesn't do any harm to invest in trained help. Practitioners experienced in problem-solving techniques can help pick apart a problem. The process is called 5 Whys – a method of drilling down to the root cause of a problem by repeatedly asking 'why?' But the key success factor is involving the people actually affected by the problem. Whether the issue is wasted time, money, materials or energy, they are well placed to come up with a creative solution that works. With management support, that fix becomes the new standard that works for everyone.

Vinci has been doing things this way for seven years, and the results speak for themselves. In the employee engagement index, Vinci sits in the upper quartile of service industry providers (79 per cent in 2016). Its 2016 FM sustainability index score was 84 per cent. And at the time of going to print, Vinci – in conjunction with Lincolnshire County Council – was shortlisted for the BIFM Award for impact on employee experience. This recognises the effectiveness of the one team approach established by the council, Vinci Facilities and Mouchel, creating an employee culture that puts collaboration and communication at its core.

