

# CONSTRUCTION

## Andy Steele, CEO at Osborne, UK

**Andy Steele, CEO at Osborne, speaks to Daniel Moore about how the construction solutions provider is driving quality and performance through all levels of the business**

### **What does quality mean to you?**

Even before the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the construction industry needed to be able to demonstrate the true quality of its product. We need to be able to guarantee that what has been built meets the required specifications, and this can only be done through transparent and accurate records.

Quality, for me, goes beyond this to include making the project experience easy by being efficient in our way of working and optimising our customers' assets. We deliver on our promises through Osborne's core values and behaviours, while focusing on outcomes, continually learning and improving.

### **How do you encourage others to focus on quality management?**

This is a combination of carrot and stick. We do this by striving to be a learning organisation and I would like to think that this culture is the foundation of driving continuous improvement and innovation. This means empowering our staff to be able to openly share our learning from mistakes and successes, continually improving operating procedures, behaviours, personal feedback and best practice.

There are more than 40,000 logs in our Improvement Opportunities application. This is a testament that we are making good progress in encouraging everyone to focus on every aspect of quality. We also need our staff to understand the full consequences of their actions. We are using a variety of tactical engaging approaches by working closely with our staff and encouraging them to challenge

current practices. We are consequently developing more efficient ways of working. Our 'Gemba Walk', for example, raised 28 initiatives, a third of which have been implemented more widely and/or embedded within our processes and practices.

Some of these initiatives include an end-to-end inspection and testing plan process map, and a digital mobile solution to support our quality management activities.

### **What advice would you give to quality professionals who want to be heard by senior management?**

An effective quality culture is not something you can achieve by imposing multiple rules, procedures and tick sheets. Quality professionals need to demonstrate how they are winning the hearts and minds of the operating teams, as well as how they are bringing the project personnel along with them and making those teams an integral part of the solution development.

Quality professionals will get heard by keeping things simple and articulating the value of investing resources in terms of the beneficial outcomes that can or will be achieved. Hard data and facts supporting recommendations are essential in this.

### **How have quality improvement and quality processes benefitted your organisation?**

The data analysis work carried out collaboratively between our quality and operational teams gave us a better understanding of the consequences of not learning and improving as fast as we should be in some areas.

This work placed us in a much stronger, data rich position, and changing the quality management review cycle has enabled quality to better inform our business planning and priorities. We also learned some of the less obvious root causes of poor quality that sat under the surface and needed some focus. Our quality and business improvement



teams recommended five prioritised areas of improvement around three primary themes: People, Technology and Process. They explained why these were so important and consequently secured board endorsement and buy-in from our operational business leaders. Quality is now featured on the agenda at every level of the business.

### **What quality assurance challenges might you see businesses face in the future?**

The ageing demographic of traditional construction trades will see many skilled people leaving the industry over the next five to 10 years. Having less of those experienced, intuitive tradespeople around our sites will present further challenges in assuring the quality of work and preventing defects.

The anticipated growth of offsite modern methods of construction will go some way towards mitigating the loss of these traditional trades. Quality professionals must work closely with the industry and provide the necessary assurance and confidence that investors, mortgage providers and insurers need in adopting new technologies.

Osborne's digital transformation strategy will enable efficient collection and storing of data, increase the accuracy of our business analytics and drive efficiency by removing unnecessary processes and automating relevant tasks.