

THE CLIENT

Martin Grant Homes is one of the foremost housing developers operating in the South of England and is currently operating on a dozen sites from Northampton to Chichester, producing in the region of 300 homes a year, both for private sale and for affordable housing.

THE PROJECT

How do you take a disparate collection of managers and help them evolve into a cohesive team? This was the challenge.

Concern about customer feedback not matching with the developer's formidable reputation, led Martin Grant Homes to commission Organic P&O Solutions who designed a two-year programme to develop these key members of staff to deliver:

- Improved management skills
- Cohesive team approach
- Co-operation across sites
- Shared purpose and focus on company goals

To address concerns about the diversity of the group, whilst acknowledging the wider reform taking place in the company, Organic P&O Solutions devised the Site Managers' Academy, a modular series of monthly collaborative workshops. A review of the first year has concluded with a firm endorsement from all levels of the organisation that the journey is proving successful.

The customer's perspective

"I have seen the change," said **Managing Director, Chris Hamilton**. "There was certainly a fair degree of scepticism at the initial meeting and that unspoken vibe in the room thinking, 'Why am I here? This lady can't tell me anything about building.' To the point now that we're through the first year of the academy and the guys realise that we're not there to tell them how to build houses, they know that.

This is about managing themselves, honing their management skills, understanding team ethics and being proactive in managing all their relationships. Because what site people are is very good planners, they're not particularly good communicators."

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“The long-term objective is improved customer service, so that they get more time to manage themselves and what they’re doing and delivering and I think there is definitely a realisation of just how important effective communication is. There’s still frustration when things don’t work out, but they are beginning to understand what they can do about it, rather than what they expect other people to do.”



The managers discover the benefits of working as a team

Health and Safety Manager, Ian Wand has taken part in the Academy and concurred, commenting: “We’ve suffered from a silo mentality, which is exactly what it was at the beginning of last year, not only by departments, but by individuals as well. The aim by the end of this year is to have a full company team in respect of everyone working together as a team for the common end and not work in silos.

Already the Production Team has developed because before the start of the Academy we had 13 separate site managers, now we have a management team. We have 13 people working as a team, all singing off the same hymn sheet, all saying the same things, all going in the same direction, positively.”

Ian explained, following the launch for year two, “It was lovely to see the site managers working together and the conversations that are now going on, outside of the Academy between the guys is phenomenal. I was out on three different sites yesterday and while I was on site all three of the site managers took calls from other site managers on other jobs, asking questions and it wasn’t technical, it was about how to engage with the contractors. It was brilliant it was absolutely brilliant! I am sitting there, thinking to myself: ‘You are doing it but you don’t even realise you doing it!’

Tash is doing an excellent job and I think she is enjoying it. I am certainly enjoying being in there and listening, and being on the journey with them.”

“ It was lovely to see... site managers talking about how to engage contractors... absolutely brilliant!



For the managers themselves, what has the journey been like? **Site Manager Alan Shadbolt** revealed: “We can take from what we have learnt in that first year and the ideas with how we can integrate different parts of the company to communicate in a more effective manner and improve the whole lot.

It just makes me take a step back and think through things and maybe change my views and see it from other people’s perspective. That does not make it easier, but it helps because sometimes we are all very blinkered in what we do and we need to see the broader picture sometimes, understanding people’s views and some decisions and choices that we must make.”



Sharing the love! The managers enjoy the sweet smell of success at the star of year two.

Year two of the Academy is already being eagerly anticipated, as **Site Manager, Sam Drew** explains: “I think year two of the Academy is going to benefit a lot of site managers even more than the first year, the reason being, bringing in the other departments we have to work with.

The biggest issues the site manager must deal with on a day to day basis is usually relying on other people; whether relying on Technical for information, or Commercial to procure materials or a sub-contractor. Being able to speak to these other visiting departments in an open discussion is going to be of real benefit to site managers, it will help the other departments understand the issues we battle day to day. We are all trying to achieve the same thing, but we are only as good as the people around us.”

Many organisations will sympathise with the challenges of running teams across multiple sites and managers operating with a silo mentality; here at Organic P&O Solutions we understand these issues and know how to get the best from your people, both as individuals and teams. Contact us today to discover how our approach to employee development and engagement could improve your business.

