

jcp ii embracing collaboration in a more separate world

July 22, 2020



Collaboration – It has become one of the key words for the railways to overcome the challenges faced during the coronavirus pandemic. The industry has come together to implement the best working practices to keep staff and passengers safe whilst at the same time keeping projects and freight moving.

Arup's Andrew Belcham has spoken about the need for thinking differently, collaboration and how we might measure projects outcomes. Diarmid de Burgh-Milne, Managing Director at JCPii is on the same page, particularly when it comes to collaboration, not just in recent months, but also importantly in the coming days, weeks and years.

Over the past eight years, JCPii has developed, and continue to offer, its own brand and philosophy of collaborative leadership and team development. He has written an article for railbusinessdaily.com on the exciting task of leading collaboration into the new reality:

"The inspiration, excitement and simple joy of team working and socialising is, for many human beings, the very heart of their motivation and wellbeing. Isolation, a sense of loneliness and even exclusion can be damaging. A huge part of the joy and satisfaction that we have been lucky enough to experience, helping

people change the mindset, culture, relationships and behaviour at work, comes from seeing how the transformation to collaboration has helped bring a smile back to people's faces. This aspect is at its strongest in the railway family of impassioned enthusiasts, who live and breathe all matters rail.

But, as a consultancy, we have to understand that, while many businesses may recognise the human aspect of our work, the primary motivation for engaging us comes down to such matters as added value, certainty of delivery, risk reduction, more efficient and effective working – often through greater integration, which without collaboration rarely, if ever, truly works. And we should not forget the often hidden and unrecognised benefit of collaboration, namely safety, health and wellbeing – people who care for each other, look after each other. Our purpose is to make that collaboration real, to ensure it works.

As we all start to feel our way in this new separated world, the desire and demand for real collaboration will grow at the same time as the difficulties of implementing it increase. Any change is hard – our beliefs, learning, habits, assumptions, relationships and comfort level all conspire to oppose it, perhaps even more so today. And culture change is the hardest. It will not happen on its own. We have to work at it with courage and determination while adapting to the new challenges and leading by example.

Our team's history of pioneering collaborative initiatives and development over the last 25 years includes developing collaborative relationships between DfT, TOCs and the Infrastructure owner and introducing the Pure Alliancing model into the rail industry. Now we face the exciting task of once again trying to lead collaboration into the new reality. Much work will be Teams or Zoom based and verbal behavioural skills will become even more relevant. Our behavioural model has been thoroughly tested in this new environment and proven powerfully relevant. The need for facilitation of meetings continues to grow and we have had to learn and adapt our approach. Similarly, large workshops in a real room are now, certainly for the short to medium term, consigned to virtual rooms, with the norm becoming smaller groups in two hour sessions rather than two day sessions. We have some 20 of our team working on developing and refining new modules, to help our clients, and new exercises to support the experiential learning for which we are known.

In this world of back to back meetings, which are more tiring than physical ones, for a variety of reasons, one area that we have explored is the missing social inter-action piece: the 'watercooler' or 'coffee' chat, unstructured but often highly productive, while fulfilling that need for human contact. We have now added a facilitated (light touch control) informal get together to our portfolio. We believe this may prove one of the most important offerings we have.

Like many others, we have to be brave and face the future, not clinging to the past but seizing the new needs and opportunities, challenging the norm, seeking solutions, supporting collaboration as the way of working in this new age. We wish you all joyful, healthy and safe success in a new rail culture built on mutual trust."

Diarmid de Burgh-Milne, Managing Director JCPii. Visit www.jcpii.co.uk for more details.