

Winning work and achieving growth in rail: an interview with Market Infra

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Market Infra

With a specialist involvement in utilities, rail, highways and renewables sectors, Market Infra provides professional, strategic work winning and project management services to help infrastructure businesses thrive and achieve growth.

The business employs specialist staff and associates that support clients with bid management and writing, specialist resourcing and marketing.

Here, Market Infra's Managing Director Tom Hudson speaks exclusively to RBD about the firm's ethos, successes and learnings and its future plans in the rail sector:

What is your working background, Tom? What were you doing before Market Infra?

I started my career working in environmental services including renewables and flood risk management at JBA Consulting, supporting The Environment Agency Defra with external funding. I then moved into utilities working for Balfour Beatty in the HV space, supporting on major bid opportunities. This period gave me a good grounding in bid management, writing, stakeholder engagement and the upfront business

development/capture phase of an opportunity. I then moved into private equity-owned construction players in director positions which really honed my business development skills in wastewater, power connections, multi utilities and rail.

What motivated you to launch the business?

I come from a family of small business owners and wanted to carve out my own niche in a sector I really enjoy working in. The opportunity came about following a buy-out of UKDN Waterflow where I was working as Business Development Director when we successfully sold the business in a trade deal to Lanes Group. From here, at the end of 2015 I set up Market Infra. To start with it was just me working for clients including Balfour Beatty and SSE plc, who we still work for today.

How would you describe the Market Infra ethos?

Our approach is all about the strength, knowledge and integrity of our team working in an incredibly dynamic environment. One thing I take great pride in about our team is that they are able to be themselves, really connect with people and deliver a premium output. This encourages our clients to come back time after time for our services. Our vision, mission and values do a great job of describing our ethos. We established these as a team and they still stand true today.

Vision - To influence positive change for our clients, communities and the infrastructure sector.

Mission - To help infrastructure businesses grow by offering exceptional strategic development, project management and marketing services.

Values -

- Teamwork
- Authenticity
- Insight
- Dynamism
- Quality

We value our team and constantly invest in training and development as a learning organisation. This development is key to supporting our continued development as part of our five-year growth plan.

Can you explain your approach to clients and to delivering business growth for the UK rail industry?

As a result of Project SPEED, we have seen a huge shift in the rail sector meaning infrastructure owners and managers are having to become more efficient in how they release contracts and contractors are needing to be more effective in their delivery. We understand the challenges faced by the likes of Network Rail and HS2 and the scrutiny they are under. How this translates to the tender process is something we are already seeing in tender opportunities coming out in 2022.

Bidding organisations need to really acutely understand their market – their clients, competitors and own differentiators in the marketplace.

At Market Infra we help clients improve their understanding of where they sit in their niche areas, and how they are perceived by clients. From this we develop work winning strategies for them to help them focus on areas of growth. As a third party, we can often challenge our clients to think about their organisations objectively and really pin point what makes them stand apart in their sector.

We have found that saying “no” to opportunities is easier said than done – you can only confidently do this once you have a clear strategy and direction of travel with everyone in the organisation sharing the vision and delivering the business strategy.

What differentiates Market Infra from your competitors in the Rail Sector?

I think that the combination of sector knowledge, work winning best practice and technical expertise really makes us stand out as a bid consultancy. We are quite unique in that we work exclusively in the infrastructure sector, with many of the team coming from rail and utilities backgrounds. We are able to support clients from bidding through to project delivery, with our project management workstream so invaluable knowledge stays with the project. We are often complimented by our clients on how seamlessly we are able to integrate into their teams, something which really sets us apart from competitors.

What are your teams' key areas of expertise?

We are lucky to have a broad range of skills across our team, which enables us to work across the whole lifecycle of a project, from market analysis and feasibility studies, bid management and writing through to project mobilisation and delivery. Throughout all project phases we are able to apply our team's wealth of infrastructure experience and really add value for our clients.

What kind of rail businesses will benefit from you and your team's skills and experience?

All types, whether it be an asset owner, tier 1 contractor or tier 2 or 3 sub-contractor. Our niche is major projects and frameworks development – but this can translate to the lower tiers too.

How do you reflect on the first six years of Market Infra?

It has been an incredibly rewarding journey – but nothing has come without the hard work of our team, with everyone working together and driving in the same direction.

What have been the challenges and the successes so far?

As a business we have seen rapid growth throughout the last 6 years. Going through this growth during the pandemic presented challenges to us, as it did to lots of other businesses, as we had to ensure new processes and procedures were put in place and new team members were effectively introduced to the business whilst working remotely. We are incredibly proud to have doubled the size of our team throughout the pandemic and have successfully navigated remote working through strong team

communication.

I'd say client satisfaction has been a major success- our client feedback scores have been 4.8 out of 5 consistently, our win rate is currently above 1 in 3 and getting close to 1 in 2 for our clients. Due to confidentiality and the competitive nature of bidding we cannot give too many details, but we have worked on multiple HS2 projects in the last six months, resulting in us landing our largest ever contract.

What has been key to your success in these first six years, how have you maintained your excellent relationships with your customers?

Without doubt key to our success has been the team and bringing people along on the journey with me, but also looking after them as much as I possibly can. Without a strong team we are nothing. Many of our clients have developed from building personal relationships. I enjoy speaking to them and understanding their issues. At Market Infra we do genuinely care about supporting our clients in achieving their success.

What are the current key focus areas for the business in 2022?

In rail our primary focus is currently developing opportunities in CP7 and HS2, with an added focus on HV Power, the Water sector and the emerging EV Charging sector and Hydrogen sector, where the potential is huge.

What is the longer-term outlook for the business and how do you hope to grow further in the coming years?

We are currently working on a five-year plan and working towards recruiting 4-5 times more people in that period - growing the business to over 100 staff. This will support our existing and growing client base, in work winning activity and also our growing project management service. The UK continues to be a growing market, but we are also looking overseas: with the aim of exporting UK best practice and innovation to North America, Canada and parts of the E.U. It's an exciting period at Market Infra and I can't wait to see where we are at in the next five years.

For more information on Market Infra and how it can support your business with work winning, project management and resourcing services visit: <https://marketinfra.co.uk/>