



Focus on quality and culture linking with sustainable development

Changes in attitudes to outsourcing are aligning with service providers aiming to deliver long-term growth, says *Tony Raikes*

One of the first comments made by Vinci Facilities managing director Tony Raikes in an exclusive interview with *PFM* confirms that he is continuing to enjoy his role and the potential for this to continue for some time to come: "I've got a great job," he states.

Over the course of the next hour he provides a considerable number of in-depth analytical comments to support this statement, beginning with the alterations to approaches and attitudes towards the outsourcing of FM services in the wake of last year's Carillion collapse. "There have been a few notable changes since Carillion went and it's now more noticeable that there's more recognition of the need to move away from unsustainable procurement practices.

"So, for public sector service contracts we're now seeing much more evidence of an emphasis on quality and culture than was previously the case, which sits very well with our business ethos," he continues. "While price is still an important factor, and rightly so, it's not always the biggest element – in

one recent bid quality and culture accounted for around 70% of the bid."

Mr Raikes further explains that his company has always avoided falling into the trap of bidding on just price alone, with the wisdom of this supported by the demise of Carillion and the well-publicised difficulties experienced by a number of large, TFM service providers in recent years. Although this may have limited the number of bids the company has submitted, avoidance of unprofitable contracts has seen it enjoy growth of 10% over each of the last two years and a positive outlook for the future.

"Possibly one of the best examples is our contract with the Ministry of Justice. Since we began, we have gained more work as a result of the client's appreciation of our focus on high levels of customer service," he explains. "We're seeing more acknowledgement of the need for a long-term focus and, within this, the need to support sustainable growth."

Having confirmed that the business is in a position that many companies dealing

with the ongoing Brexit uncertainties and post-Carillion fallout would find enviable, Mr Raikes further explains that the effort required to reach this point "was hard-earned in many ways". This included an unflinching concentration on delivering the company's business model.

"I've been very lucky in receiving complete backing from the board, we've never had to quibble about the business plan and that's allowed us to devote all our efforts to making sure we continue to do the right things and keep everything on track," he says. There are, of course, challenges to address, including the ongoing Brexit situation, maintaining training standards and ensuring that all staff have the appropriate skills for their role – and this can be said for the majority of organisations.

In the case of Vinci Facilities, the company's aim in meeting its challenges is also combined with the overall focus on maintaining the standards required to assist in meeting its business objectives, including consistent delivery of high levels of customer



service, says Mr Raikes.

Another aspect of the company's concentration on sustainable management is its support for its supply chain. The business aims to pursue an ethical way of working, backed up by the appointment of a director of business responsibility, and paying its bills is central to this.

Having previously worked in the construction industry in Africa, Mr Raikes saw first hand examples of the difficulties caused through late payment of companies in the supply chain. Parent company Vinci Construction UK signed up to the Prompt Payment Code in 2013 and the most recent figures, covering the period from July to December last year, show that it is ranked in the top three, regarding the number of days taken to pay transactions of Build UK members, and its concentrated efforts are continuing with the aim of delivering further improvements in 2019.

"We aim to pay all our subcontractors on a 30-day basis to help them run their businesses and avoid problems that can develop when the company has to wait for long periods for their bills to be paid," he continues. "Everyone works better if they know they'll get paid on time and that's especially the case for smaller companies.

"If you look after your supply chain you'll get a better level of service and this is another aspect in our culture, where we treat all our suppliers, employees and clients well," says Mr Raikes. "I'm very lucky to work for a

company that allows me to do that."

There are, of course, many considerations to include in the running of any successful company and he is keen to confirm that profit and cash flow continue to be main priorities, alongside those described previously. In addition to the support received from its parent company, Mr Raikes also states his appreciation of the many efforts made by his fellow directors.

"In order to be a better employer, we've realised that you have to make the workplace as inclusive as possible, which wouldn't happen if we didn't have such a high level of quality people involved at every level," he says. "Having a great management team helps us to deal with the things that every business experiences, including any Brexit-type impacts or similar."

The company's management team continues to be highly engaged with its apprenticeship programme, which was launched last year and has now welcomed its second group of apprentices. Mr Raikes states that this has resulted from the company accessing all the funding available to it through the Apprenticeship Levy.

"We've made the most of the funding and our level of training has increased dramatically when compared to three years ago – we are in effect investing the money from the Apprenticeship Levy as quickly as we are charged," he says.

There is a business-wide commitment to training, from trainees and apprentices



Vinci Facilities apprentices with members of the company's senior management team.

through to young managers. This last group is represented in Vinci's talent development programme. Split into teams they were tasked with delivering quarterly presentations to company directors and the final requirement was for each group to pitch for £10,000 of funding for the project of their creation.

"We organised a Dragon's Den-type final session to hear the four groups' presentations to pitch for the funding," says Mr Raikes. "The winning project was the one that focused on reducing the amount of single-use plastic in the business.

"You could say that this has no benefit to the Vinci bottom line, but it proved the most appealing and its aim to drive the use of plastic out of the business was very well received and it's continuing to be further developed this year."

The winning, all-female team consisted of Sylvia Mercer, Hayley Hill, Sarah Anne Catton, Louise Errington, Laura Eaketts and Charlotte Osterman.

With the widely varied areas of concentration for Vinci Facilities ranging from customer service excellence to diversity and increasing levels of support for its supply chain, it appears that the company is continuing to operate on a level that places value before cost to allow further sustainable growth in the years to come. ■