

# How PriDE used expert communication to get contract mobilisation right for Defence Estates

## The challenge

PriDE is a joint venture formed by Interserve Defence Ltd and Southern Electric Contracting (SEC). The consortium was awarded the MoD Defence Estates Regional Prime Contract for London and the South East early in March 2005. PriDE's aim is to support military capability by delivering sustainable maintenance and key capital works solutions to the defence estate.

The move to a Prime Contracting model was an opportunity for the MoD to achieve better long-term value for money from its estate through improved supply chain, incentivised payment mechanisms, continuous improvement, economies of scale and partnering.



The transition to this new way of working was a huge change for MoD establishments, each of which had been used to managing their own maintenance and construction supply chains.

## MoD Regional Prime Contract South East - Facts & Figures

### The contract:

- The 3rd of 5 Regional Prime Contracts to be awarded
- 95 establishments
- 6000 assets
- Across 8 counties
- 7 year contract
- £380 million contract

### The service:

- Capital works and facilities property management
- Core Services - maintenance of assets and facility management
- Core Works - new build or refurbishment work involving capital expenditure or additions to assets

**Twist client:** PriDE - an Interserve and Southern Electric Contracting (SEC) joint venture for MoD Defence Estates

**Website address:** [www.pride-serp.co.uk](http://www.pride-serp.co.uk)

**Sector:** Facilities Management & Construction

**Dates of project:** 2005 to present

Getting contract mobilisation right for a transition of this magnitude was crucial. Within a matter of weeks, the PriDE team had to:

- get the 800+, regionally-dispersed staff onboard, ensuring they understood, accepted and were compliant with the new arrangement;
- prove to the end users at the MoD establishments that PriDE could effectively fulfil their maintenance requirements;
- meet the high expectations of their client, Defence Estates.

## The communications solution

The PriDE team recognised that first class communication was the key to engaging all the different parties concerned with the new contract.

Communications expert Jo Twiselton from Twist Consultants was brought in as communications lead for the mobilisation process. Jo helped to define a practical communications strategy that painted a clear picture of the benefits of the new way of working and of PriDE's approach.

To ensure that the strategic message did not get lost or diluted at the operational level, Jo helped the team to translate their high level strategy into clear, positive, appropriate messages across both Core Services and Core Works. She tailored the message for each separate set of stakeholders to ensure relevance and understanding.

Jo helped the PriDE team to develop the right communications tactics to get these messages across. These included: presentation material for live events with employers, client and customers; information to back up TUPE processes; recruitment and induction material; staff handbooks; signage; livery and notice boards.

To measure the contract performance, Twist carried out satisfaction surveys for PriDE. These provided first-hand evidence of what was important to staff and customers, demonstrating how value for money was being delivered by the new approach and where improvements could be made.

*"We needed to take the new supply chain and newly TUPEd staff from the hypothetical into the actual, fast."*

**Chris Colley, PriDE Contract Director**



*"Jo helped us to create a very clear brand strategy and to define the values behind it. This was extremely useful. It meant that our staff and end users quickly understood what we are all about, accepted the change and could just get on with the work they had to do."*

**Daren Bell, Operations Director**

## The benefits of this approach

The full delivery of Core Services commenced on 5 September 2005, following a mobilisation period of 6 months.

With regard to Core Works, as at 31 December 2008, Regional Prime Contract South East has delivered £100 million of Core Works, with a further £40 million of Core Works in construction.

The clarity and consistency of the communications process helped PriDE's mobilisation of the MoD Regional Prime contract to run smoothly, and set the foundations for the stable and efficient service they have delivered to Defence Estates from 2005 to this day.

The work put into understanding each distinct audience's perspective – at strategic, operational and technical level - meant that the messages conveyed reassured stakeholders that PriDE's approach to Prime Contracting represented positive change.

Staff across the Core Services and Core Works teams understood the contract model and had a clear picture of what was expected of them.

The client had confidence in PriDE as an effective outsourcing partner from the start. End users on the MoD sites knew their maintenance needs would be met.

The communications process helped the PriDE team to understand the value of the contract, identify any gaps and so improve overall contract performance for the benefit of the MoD defence estate.



*"Effective communications ensured that we were all at the same step, at the same time, at the same speed, with the same understanding."*

**Chris Colley, PriDE Contract Director**

## Feedback on Twist Consultant's contribution:

PriDE engaged Twist Consultants to develop and implement a tailored communications strategy for the mobilisation phase of Regional Prime Contract South East.

Here's what two senior members of the PriDE team had to say about Twist's involvement:

*"We engaged Twist Consultants to help us develop high quality communications to support the mobilisation process. Jo rolled up her sleeves and quickly got integrated into our team.*

*Jo understands the strategic but she works at operational and technical level too. She can step into all roles, and look at the issue from the point of view of those working at ground level. We trusted her to work on the whole piece, from creating a brand, and forming a plan to delivering the communications tools that brought our strategy to life.*

*Her involvement meant that our communications were always clear, professional, consistent and relevant. Twist is my first port of call for anything communications related."*

**Daren Bell, Operations Director (now with Sodexo)**

*"Most people involved with a contract mobilisation are either operations or engineering focused. Jo is the 'communications conduit' that runs between all involved, ensuring that the messaging (both internal and external) is clear, consistent and adds value to the process.*

**Chris Colley, PriDE Contract Director**

Four years on and PriDE continues to engage Twist Consultants for strategic communications advice and implementation. For example, Twist conducts PriDE's employee and customer satisfaction surveys to demonstrate ongoing value from the South East Regional Prime contract.

Case Study written July 2009

### Tips for best practice communication when mobilising an outsourcing contract:

1. Have a concrete plan at the beginning that marries with your mobilisation plan
2. Make sure communications is an inherent part of the planning and programme team, tied into all workstreams
3. Uncover and appreciate each separate audience's perspective
4. Ensure consistency of message across all communications
5. Keeping reviewing, keep measuring and constantly draw on lessons learned



## About Twist Consultants

Twist Consultants helps organisations - particularly those in the business support services sector - to improve business and contract performance through powerful communications.