

## MET OFFICE, EXETER

### OPTIMISING BEST PRACTICE – MARK TAYLOR, SHIPLEY LTD

The first South West event for the APMP was held at the beautiful offices of the Met Office, in Exeter.

The Met Office hosted this event following their recent interest in the APMP, which is due to their increasing commercially focused approach. This really means that they now have to compete more for work, through bidding.

The Met Office provides both weather and climate services, to governments, individuals and organisations, all wanting to share the expert knowledge and advice. The services include:

- UK weather
- European and world weather
- Space weather
- Aviation industry
- Climate change



To find out more, go to [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

Before the APMP talk, we had a short tour of the offices. Their building is modern, airy and colourful inside. And has 700 doors....

A bit of trivia for you, did you know -

- Thunderclouds can be 16km high?
- There are 1,000 lightning strikes, globally, every second?
- The UK reports more tornadoes every square km than anywhere else in the world?

After a generous and delicious buffet we were welcomed by Phil Evans, Director of Government Services for the Met Office. He explained how fascinating he finds the

subject of bidding. He has been extensively involved in evaluating bids in recent times, and he made the insightful comments that bids come in all shapes and sizes, good, bad and distinctly indifferent, but also that there is no correlation between the size or professionalism of the company and the quality of the bid response...he also mentioned that he has read some that made him want to weep... and some that made him want to clap.... Isabel instantly booked him for a future talk!

We were then treated to a lively and practical discussion, led by Mark Taylor of Shipley Ltd, on 'Optimising Best Practice in Bidding'.

Mark discussed triangles, formulas, PAD, Ts and pigs.... All the time hinting at best practices and how to get them sneakily embedded within businesses to improve their winning capability.

### **De-mystifying the execution gap with triangles**

Mark outlined the three points of the triangle being:

- 1 What we know we should do
- 2 What we say we do and
- 3 What we actually do - with gaps between each of them.

He suggested that these gaps can be explained as follows:

- The knowledge gap sits between what we say we do and best practice. Quite simply, where we don't know what we don't know. Or where we are unconsciously incompetent. The solution to this can be personal development in all its various guises.
- The capability gap sits between what we do and what we know we should do, where we don't know how to do something or may not have the resource to do so. This is conscious incompetence. The solution to this can be buying in people to do it for you – but then you are left with the same problem once they leave.
- The execution gap sits between what we say we do and what we actually do. The solution to this is often measurement and audit – adding process and control.



However, you don't improve performance by measuring it... neither do you make a pig fat by weighing it!

Mark's suggestion is that neither do you improve performance by changing strategy. It is much more about culture. As Peter Drucker may have once said: "Culture eats strategy for breakfast" and Mark added: "and principles eat process". What he means is that we can influence people to make sure we 'sneak in' best practice so that they follow the principles, rather than the letter of the law.

**Mark then talked us through three further best practice topics:**

1. The winning formula – where a  $WIN = ATQ + CTP$

Where ATQ stands for answer the question, or maybe for STQ – help your customer to set the question and then answer it for them.

CTP stands for change their perception – change your customer’s perception of you, of your competition, of their future with your solution in place...

2. Using PAD to develop winning submissions for customers

The starting point for creating a customer focused proposal needs to be what the customer is trying to achieve – their hot buttons. Not every section of a proposal will have direct correlation to a hot button, but many will. Mark outlined a simple structure to help you create and review a bid plan. This is where PAD comes in.

Plan, assign and drive.

3. Avoiding Ghettos of excellence with the T theory

IBM in the 1980s coined the phrase ghettos of excellence, or silos, where different functions in a business become expert in their own business spheres, but rarely link these across the whole business. If they can be linked, it is one of the key ways in which a business can close the execution gap. If you link functions and look at where each affects another – for instance pulling solution development into the bid phase, or commercial planning into the bid phase, you will maximise the influence of all the best practices within a business.

Mark left us with this final thought about pigs – and a superb action caption.



*Boozy feral pig steals beer, gets drunk and starts fight with a cow*