

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Maple Commercial Group Ltd



Key Information

Assessment Type	Review
Assessor/s	Gwen Carter-Powell
Number of days on site	1
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Conclusion

The findings of this assessment recommend that Maple Commercial Group Ltd continue to meet the requirements of the Investors in People Standard.

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Introduction

Maple Commercial Group Ltd is an established, traditional company of Building Contractors and Developers with over 20 years of experience across a broad range of contract sizes and types. Operating out of Long Melford, Suffolk, the company have built a positive reputation across the area for quality and high standards of customer service. A recent development is to extend the operating base to include Bury St Edmunds.

The company has a large and highly skilled workforce, directly employed by 'Maple', ranging from Groundworkers to Bricklayers, Joiners, Carpenters and Roof Tilers. The company also owns a large modern fleet of vehicles, an extensive range of up to date Plant and Heavy Plant, and a fully equipped joinery workshop.

Types of completed work include:-

- Single and Multiple Domestic Dwellings
- Residential Conversions / Refurbishments
- Bespoke Domestic Extensions
- Period Property Restoration
- Barn Conversions
- New Build
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Retail

Good Practice

- A productive ethos and work ethic based on customer service and quality
- Learning strategies which including progression and active learning
- Leadership with clear vision
- Management which is motivational and challenging
- A definite line in terms of performance is maintained
- Teamwork which is engaging
- Good levels of appropriate and practical means of measuring effectiveness

Areas of potential development

Business Strategy:

- You may want to consider other disciplines as apprentices when needing to take on additional resources. Future growth strategy may lead you to requiring another Architectural technician. With this in mind you might find the benefits of developing a more inexperienced person but with the right attitude a good fit.

Learning Strategies:

- Consider endorsing your 1st year before apprenticeship commences with Otley College as the programme leading to NVQ2. You may need to train and internal assessor to progress this but most colleges will enable you to accredit your own qualifications as a centre. This would certainly measure the capability you require people to learn in this time, be aspirational for any junior member of staff and will acknowledge the amount they have learnt in their first year. The apprenticeship would then commence at level 3.
- There would be an advantage in using local networks for specific areas of expertise. HR for example can be accessed via local solicitors who run these types of network. (Goatlee's in Ipswich run a recommended network group which are topical)

Review Strategies:

- Schedule a series of reviews / job chats with people to ensure that career development, progressions, learning and performance can be consolidated. 6 monthly was suggested.
- A regular update between the Contracts Managers and the Technical and Design Manager was suggested to maintain the level of information. Previously when all at the same base this worked well.

Feedback

Planning Strategies – Indicators 1-4

- There is a clear and shared vision which relates to quality, customer service and reputation. These elements are translated into everyday working practice and monitored through regular discussions.
- Investment in marketing continues to ensure reputation and branding is maintained. The commitment and activity to support customer service ensures the high percentage of referral and recommendation takes place.
- Reputation was mentioned commonly and described as providing quality and customer service. This extends to partnerships with very good and productive relationships with the local authority and also suppliers of materials being maintained.
- Project plans identify key performance indicators (KPIs) for working practice. These KPIs identify specific standards in terms of financial, specification of construction works and completion timelines. Daily yard meetings and also weekly managers meetings ensure close communication, updates and scrutiny of working practice is undertaken.
- Managers have a clear impression of what is expected in terms of contractual arrangements. This passes to foremen on each job to manage day-to-day routines. Customer service is very much a pivotal element of every job with all staff developing specific customer contact and interpersonal skills as well as technical construction skills. There is no union recognised or needing to be taken account of.
- There is an overall dynamic which relates to personal social skills and the high level of awareness and interaction the team have, not only with each other, but others they come into contact with.
- Learning strategies include a high percentage of time taken learning on the job, mentoring and shadowing as well as taking accredited programmes where relevant including NVQs as part of the apprenticeship scheme. Good practice exists in the 1-year lead into apprenticeship, this ensures the apprentice can learn and establish relevant competence and also provide an important element of introduction and orientation to construction work. A degree programme is being undertaken by one of the apprentices and is part of the overall succession planning for the company.
- A range of development is in place which supports the maintenance of skills and knowledge. These include health and safety, CSCS, plant and equipment licences and first aid. Good practice is noted in delivering internal training. An example was given of asbestos awareness and also delivering toolbox talks.
- People are offered opportunities to develop trades and key skills. Planned development includes staff learning to use plant and equipment as well as progress to other levels.
- There is access to appropriate development including informal supervision whilst on site. A high percentage of learning is informal through shadowing, mentoring and supervision.

This works extremely well to align people with clear expected standards as well as maintaining the interventions in-house.

- The director provides clear leadership and maintains appropriate control in terms of performance. Managers enable contracts to be progressed from initiation through to completion. This includes a key responsibility described as a duty of care, health and safety and full appreciation of the impact on customer service. Foremen provide day-to-day management to ensure the coordination of daily routines are maintained. Generally the expectations of managers relate to customer service, interpersonal skills and managing people as well as relevant financial control depending on the level of management. Effective communication was found to be exceptional and provided a transparent and honest flow of information. All managers confirmed they were expected, and did, communicate effectively to clients as well as staff on site.
- Typical of clear expectations is an ethos where “I’d never ask someone to do something I wouldn’t do myself” exists. This is typical at Maple and evidence demonstrated went through management levels to staff. Clear leadership provides an overt example of behaviour and standards of performance.

Additional Evidence requirements Feedback

Social Responsibility is at the heart of the culture.

(1.10, 1.12, 1.16, 1.18, 1.22, 1.25)

- The director, managers and staff gave examples of how social responsibilities are taken into account. Sponsorship of the local football team and undertaking some minor and major repairs and installations for people without charge are to be acknowledged particularly for the community spirit in which they are offered.
- The team are very proud of their achievements in the local community. Hand in hand go the determination to provide a quality service which is right for the customer and working and living in the community themselves. Staff interviewed mentioned how positive they felt when they reflected on the jobs they had undertaken.
- The sense of community and being very much a part of it lies at the heart of the culture at Maple.

Areas of potential development

Business Strategy:

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Learning Strategies:

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this but most colleges will enable you to accredit your own qualifications as a centre. This would certainly measure the capability you require people to learn in this time, be aspirational for any junior member of staff and will acknowledge the amount they have learnt in their first year. The apprenticeship would then commence at level 3.

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Do Activities – Indicators 5-8

- Daily and routine meetings take place with staff to regulate performance. More often are informal job chats which pick up on performance standards when needed. Meetings at the completion of projects ensure staff who have contributed reflect on outcomes, this includes the financial performance as well as quality.
- Most staff mentioned receiving constructive feedback which helped them progress. This is regular and informal and is said to work very well.
- People feel this is a stable place to work, providing good and regular work and a good environment within which to work.
- There is a key link between feedback and appreciation and reward. Client feedback is always fed back to relevant staff and appropriate rewards used to recognise effort and good practice. Whilst most people felt valued and appreciated, there are times when recognition of effort may go unnoticed.
- There were many examples of people feeling they had received personal support when life situations came their way. Listening and supporting appropriately and flexibly through these times has seen many people through rough or hard times. This flexibility has generated a decent amount of loyalty.
- Social occasions take place and there is a healthy banter described which staff feel supports good teamwork. Sub contractors are viewed as part of the team and are involved in appropriate ways. Team outings are supported and viewed as important elements of maintaining a healthy team.
- People feel part of the project they are working on and participate in the daily yard meetings where information is shared and ideas and suggestions raised. People do feel able to be open and honest about their opinion, even if it differs from the main.
- Staff on site are involved in decisions that affect their work. For example working out how to fit a specific area with under-floor heating was discussed and a plan formulated whilst on site.
- Support for new staff and staff less experienced is good practice. There is attention paid to what is needed to help them familiarise themselves, to learn the basics of the job and on going support.
- Development is a continuous activity. Working with senior members of staff, in-house training, input from managers and external activities support people well in what they

need to know and what they need to do. Building control seminars were an example of support for development for a specialist member of the team.

Review Strategies – Indicators 9-10

- Regular observation of quality takes place undertaken by the director and also contracts managers. Feedback relating to quality sometimes results in development being required where a staff member might be shown “how to” to ensure the standard of quality is consistently maintained. Local authority inspections take place and provide input to compliance.
- Standards of performance are monitored on site. Building an ethos of high quality standards is a management style which asks staff to qualify the standard of work themselves. It was typical that a staff member would be asked “would you be happy with that in your house?”
- Typical evidence for reviewing learning and supporting progression was in the form of informal job chats taking place. There are instances where it might be beneficial to ensure all staff know when to expect a job chat and intervals of review being set up.
- Recognising potential and progression is a commitment that is upheld by the director and supported by managers. There were common examples of people being asked to develop, take on other skills and levels of work and explicit succession planning.
- There is a good amount of customer feedback received on site as well as following completion of projects. The measures of customer service are reviewed at this point in terms of learning.
- Evidence collated suggests a very effective continuous improvement cycle exists. One in which people are involved and participate in fully. Ideas, suggestions and comments are aired regularly which support continuous improvement. Telling of this type of dynamic is that when asked staff had no other suggestions to make.
- Changes to structures and some personnel changes have improved communication further.

Areas of potential development

Review Strategies:

- Schedule a series of reviews / job chats with people to ensure that career development, job progression, learning and performance can be consolidated. 6 monthly was suggested.
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Appendix 1 – Continuous Improvement Plan

Areas for Continuous Improvements and / or Areas for Action Plan	Activity	Support from (e.g. Assessor / Centre / Other)
<p>Business Strategy:</p> <p>1. You may want to consider other disciplines as apprentices when needing to take on additional resources. Future growth strategy may lead you to requiring another Architectural technician. With this in mind you might find the benefits of developing a more inexperienced person but with the right attitude a good fit</p>		
<p>Learning Strategies:</p> <p>1. Consider endorsing your 1st year before apprenticeship commences with Otley College as the programme leading to NVQ2. You may need to train and internal assessor to progress this but most colleges will enable you to accredit your own qualifications as a centre. This would certainly measure the capability you require people to learn in this time, be aspirational for any junior member of</p>		

<p>staff and will acknowledge the amount they have learnt in their first year. The apprenticeship would then commence at level 3.</p> <p>2. There would be an advantage in using local networks for specific areas of expertise. HR for example can be accessed via local solicitors who run these types of network. (Goatlee's in Ipswich run a recommended network group which are topical)</p>		
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Appendix 2 – Assessment results summary

The Investors in People Framework

The Evidence Requirements

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
1	✓	✓	n/a	✓	n/a	✓				✓		✓				✓		✓				✓			✓				
2	✓	✓	✓	✓																									
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																								
4	✓	✓	✓																										
5	✓	✓	✓	✓																									
6	✓	✓	✓																										
7	✓	✓	✓																										
8	✓	✓	✓																										
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																								
10	✓	✓	✓																										

The number of evidence requirements met is **37 + 6 additional** 1.10, 1.12, 1.16, 1.18, 1.22, 1.25

Key:



The Core Investors in People Standard



Your Choice from the IIP Framework



Not part of the Investors in People Framework