

LESSONS FROM SAILING & FM

FM is a dynamic, fast moving service industry that can affect real change. That's why it attracts individuals with drive, focus and a desire to seek out fresh challenges and keep on improving. We caught up with one such individual; Tim Hancock, CEO, O&G, ahead of his appearance at the Facilities Show this year.



Tim has been working in facilities since 1991 and has experienced the evolution of FM whilst working at Serco, WS Atkins, Alfred McAlpine and

now O&G and along the way has secured around £1.5B worth of orders, often questioning traditional procurement attitudes along the way.

It is an approach and a success rate that reflects his other life: that of an Olympic and World class sailor and central figure in Britain's Olympic sailing set up.

In fact, throughout his career Tim has always been someone in demand, on and off the water. The sailing world is full of people who are at the top of their field, in sailing or in the world of business (one of his close friends is Justin King former-CEO of Sainsbury's and someone that he sailed with in the past). But there are few who achieve excellence in both arenas simultaneously; Tim breaks the mould.

When he is not planning the growth of a £50m business like O&G, he is chair of the Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy (WPNSA) where the British team is based as it works towards the Rio Olympics. In his spare time, he is a trustee of Hayling Island Sailing Club, but up to recently he was commodore overseeing a lottery funded rebuild of the club's facilities.

So, time management and organisation are core skills, but so is leadership.

And at the heart of good leadership is decision making based on having a clear sense of what needs to be achieved.

"The key lessons I've taken from sailing and applied to my work in FM is having a clear mission or set of objectives. Sport, especially high level sport, is all about winning and winning at major events. For me, the big focus as an administrator, race officer or as a selector is the Olympics. As an athlete that means focussing on the four-year Olympic cycle and targeting a medal," Tim explains.

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His argument is that in business generally people are a little muddled about their end goal. Clients in all sectors know they might have a problem, but they might not be sure how to solve it or the precise nature of the problem itself.

"In FM, you need to work hard with the customer to make sure they know exactly what they want. You need to challenge them and agree a clear objective and then work towards that goal – but dealing with the art



of the possible. It's similar in sport. You need to appreciate that in order to win, you sometimes might need to compromise or adapt on what it takes to achieve the right result."

Central to this is communication, in FM that means communication up and down the supply chain with the client and with the service teams on the ground. For Tim this is all about leadership, but it is also about surrounding yourself with the right people.

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"You need positive people, not just talented, because negativity can spread very quickly. But you need to be 100% clear from the outset about the goals you are all trying to achieve and you have to get the buy in from the whole team," he says.

That means pulling together the right skills and personalities to form a high performing team. In sailing just as in FM, it is usually a team effort that is the most successful. So, establishing a positive team ethos is vital. It means being direct and honest, when necessary, but with no blame culture. It means that everyone from the top down has to be willing to accept criticism if it is helping to achieve the overall objectives.

This is a different form of leadership to many FM service providers. Many organisations claim to have a culture of openness, honesty and ownership of problems, but few actively pursue it. But Tim is passionate about this approach – he has seen first-hand in top level sailing competition as

an athlete and coach that it brings results. He himself won gold medal at the World Championships in 1993 with Ian Barker in the 505 class. But is an approach that requires a light touch as well.

"You have to respect what everyone brings to the team – client, finance team, M&E technician, project manager or cleaner – and as a leader that means diplomacy, tact and most importantly celebrating success," says Tim. "You have to bring people with you – that's what leadership is all about. That means remembering what we are all trying to achieve and making a special point of praising people when you get the right result as you tick off your goals en route to the main objective."

Tim Hancock's current objective is to establish O&G as a challenger to the accepted big players in the UK FM sector and then take it global. Now as part of the fast growing \$100m Tenon Group, O&G is successfully competing against larger national players and pursuing an ambitious growth strategy to move from its current base to £100M inside five years.

He is restless to keep on improving in work and sport. Three world titles, two Olympics, Race Officer for the Star/ Finn course at the 2012 Games (celebrating first hand with Sir Ben Ainslie when he won gold) and achieving consistent success in the business of FM is not enough; not yet anyway.

Tim is also looking ahead to Rio and as a chair of WPNSA he is seeking to transfer his FM experience of successful business growth strategies and general management for high turnover FM companies in its evolution as a serious international sports facility. But he is also keen to keep things in perspective.

"Everything I do is about successful teams. To work well teams need leadership, but a sense of positivity and a sense of fun too. I've been fortunate that in sport and FM I have met a lot of great people, many of whom have taught me a great deal. What's more I have had a lot of fun but I don't take any of it for granted."