

LABC – adding real value to the construction process

LABC regularly asks for feedback from its customers about the service it provides. The results of these consultations often surprise us – but they can also surprise customers

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LABC's building control teams typically work on 70% of all building projects in their area. Local architects, plan drawers, engineers, builders and developers are our main customers working on smaller developments, domestic conversions and extensions. Mostly we have long lasting business relationships over many years. Typically these relationships have 'highs' and 'lows' usually caused by differences in Building Regulations interpretation. So it is interesting to look at customer feedback and the results of customer panels and interviews. These results can be surprising for LABC as well as its customers.

LABC local authority teams are typically much faster to respond to customers. This applies to plan checking and feedback on plans as well as inspections. This is because local authority building control teams have to work to and report performance standards. These cover response times for key parts of our work. To improve performance, teams now use appointment systems (many even offering a same day service) and make much greater use of IT and mobile systems.

Across the country LABC teams' flexibility is illustrated in many different ways. Most

departments now have specialists in different areas of building eg structure, fire, access, sustainability, etc. and can put customers in contact with the best person to offer help and advice. On larger projects, local authorities will 'partner' and provide, in effect, a dedicated account 'manager'. In other words, we are responding to the particular needs of different types of customers.

The Building Regulations are getting increasingly complex and LABC teams recognise this. However, we believe that common sense – usually following the 'spirit' of the Approved Documents – provides a sensible, practical and affordable way forward. Similarly, the notion of risk-based working isn't an anathema to our people.

Where we are working in close co-operation with customers, especially where we have provided early feedback, most issues get resolved in principle before they happen on site.

The building industry produces unique circumstances requiring creative solutions. It is a highly innovative industry constantly introducing new products and techniques and LABC uses its national and regional organisation to be proactive in this regard. We like innovation, we support it and are

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proactive in helping customers to find and adopt new solutions.

Of course money comes into the equation. Customers are often tempted with a cheaper offer, but the vast majority make a positive decision to stay with local authority building control because of the better value we offer. Our prices are competitive and are negotiable on larger projects. This, together with our pre-build and on site advice, creates a really attractive package. This is evident in the positive feedback received from customers.

All this amounts to added value which is the focus of LABC's local marketing.

Find out how you can secure more added value by talking to your local LABC manager and asking for a partner arrangement, or go to www.labc.uk.com/pas for more details.

Partnering has no cost and there are no contractual requirements placed on companies or individuals – so there's nothing to lose and everything to gain.

LABC Business Development Team National Coverage

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