

The importance of an experienced Broadcast project manager

as seen on LinkedIn April 2024



Mike Watson



amount of noise, dust and general disharmony, it was clear that the building was far from being ready for the broadcast first fix. The main contractor was under pressure to deliver the building with a practical completion of five months. All the trades on site were under immense pressure to deliver their services. As you can imagine, the site was a tense place to work, with multiple trades trying to meet their deadline. Even though they had sub-contracted the specialised studio builds, it was clear that the main contractor had very little understanding of the world of post production, and treated it like a standard fit-out.

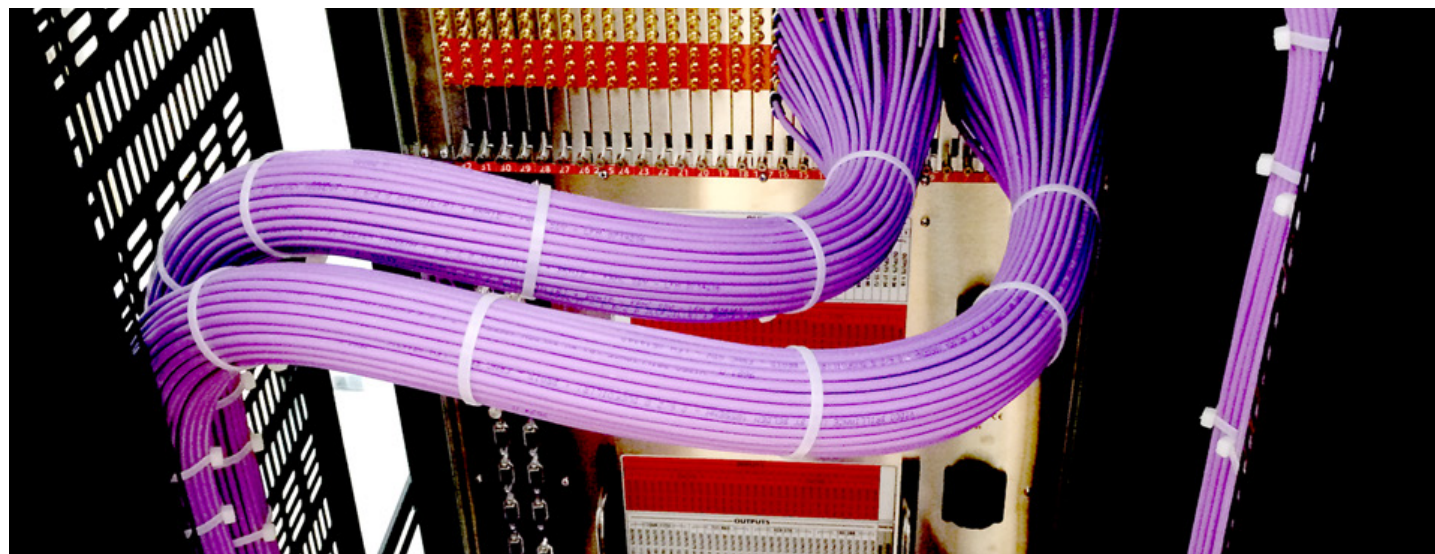
More significantly, even though there was a deadline, there appeared to be no project plan. Perhaps there had been a number of significant system of design changes made by the client, perhaps they were having to deal with awkward building control. All of the trades were expected to complete their installations by the deadline, with nothing more than a practical completion date. It was utterly chaotic.

THE EAST ON DIFFERENCE

At this point it was clear that we needed to employ our own project manager to ensure that the technical delivery given its own date for completion. Having worked with Darryl Easton from East On Projects for many years, it was a natural choice to ask him to get him involved. We have worked together on a plethora of broadcast projects for ITN, in Gray's Inn Road.

In 2023 Absolute CAD was invited to design and install a new facility for a leading provider of Production, Post-Production Equipment & Editing Equipment. The remit was to design and install seven floors of post production facilities including Atmos Theatres, Tracklay Rooms and VO, Online and Offline editing, QC and Grading suites. All of these facilities had a supporting Comms Room, located in the basement, all in all around 30 technical rooms.

On initial inspection of the site we found it completely gutted to leave seven floors of concrete and steel. With contractors on every floor, creating a huge



Darryl was frankly shocked at the lack of information regarding the project timeline. He was also concerned that the project build did not even consider the technical fit out, along with testing, and acceptance from the client. Darryl's calm approach was very reassuring during what was quite an incredibly tense time on-site with contractors blindly rushing to meet the practical completion deadline.

In the absence of a project timeline, Darryl worked with the client to produce a technical delivery plan, that could be integrated into the main program of works, once it materialised. It included bill of materials design sign off and more importantly lead times, technical design and subsequent sign off, technical project milestones and payment schemes, broadcast installation schedule, technical acceptance testing and user acceptance testing, all of which were absent from the main contractor's program. By the inclusion of these aspects of the program, the client was re-assured that the technical delivery was achievable, and Darryl kept in close contact with the client, and the technical teams for the next six months whilst the main contractor rushed to get nowhere.

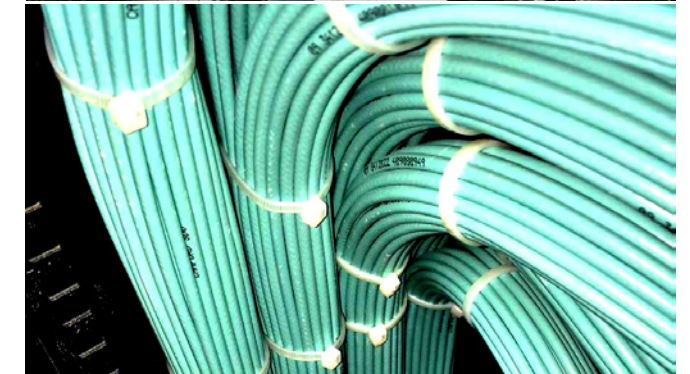
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

During the project, there were a number of challenges, and it was here that Darryl really came into his own. Each problem was dealt with calmly, and with great communication. Once Darryl's program of works had been, the client had a "Go Live" date which was 6 weeks after practical completion by the main contractor. This gave the technical team a good chance of wiring the 30 rooms, the Comms Room and get it all configured and tested. When problems arise during a build, they cause delay in the practical completion, which normally compresses the technical delivery time, but Darryl was steadfast, and ensured the client was made aware of any delays, giving us the desperately needed time to complete.

Some of the challenges were to do with the build, like organising fibre to the site, which included cordoning off

"I can't thank Darryl enough for his extraordinary efforts during this stressful project. If he had not been involved, I am certain the project would have failed."

MIKE WATSON, ABSOLUTE CAD



and digging up roads to facilitate the laying of fibre into the building, having the newly built studios acoustically checked through to ensuring the Comms Room had enough power and cooling to accommodate all of the broadcast, network and storage equipment.

Other challenges were system oriented, detailing all of the technical deliveries and integrating long lead time items, ensuring that project milestones were set up to ensure sufficient payments were made to cover work completed, through to a detailed room by room delivery schedule which included installation, technical acceptance testing from Altered Images and the final client acceptance.

UNDERSTANDING THE INDUSTRY

All in all the project ran three months late, primarily due to delays in the main build, but thanks to Darryl, we still had our 6 weeks, and we felt that we had a reassuring level of protection. In most instances in our industry we are faced with an experienced project manager, but they may not fully understand the broadcast industry, and are generally hired to make sure the build is completed on time. I think having someone who understands the technical nuances of our industry is absolutely vital.

If you could do with this level of project management, please find him and his team at:

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