FULFILLING CONTRACTORS' CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES USING STANDARDS-BASED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Alan GRIFFITH

Department of the Built Environment, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, S1 1WB, UK
Email: a.griffith@shu.ac.uk

Abstract
Construction projects place intrinsic and substantial demands upon contractors to uphold their corporate social responsibilities (CSR). Such responsibilities influence both the strategic corporate management approach of the contracting organisation and the operational management of processes and procedures used to manage the construction projects it undertakes. The implementation of organisational management systems is an obvious and proactive way for a contractor to embrace its CSR. Quality, environment and safety are at the forefront of management systems applications within construction where well conceived systems can respond effectively to the many demands placed on the contractor by CSR. This paper examines how contractors' CSR can be fulfilled using standards-based management systems and looks forward to the innovative use of integrated management systems (IMS) within construction.

Keywords
Construction contractors, corporate social responsibility, management systems.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of corporate social responsibility, or CSR, has evolved greatly since its introduction into common business terminology in the 1950s (Bowen, 1953). A proliferation of theories and approaches has followed leading to a good general understanding of CSR as a business theme but with considerable obfuscation of terminology and applications (Garriga and Mele, 2004). CSR has courted controversy due to the different ways in which organisations have approached CSR and moreover in the reasons given for doing so (Campbell, 2007). Notwithstanding, CSR defines and explains an organisation's ethos and commitment to be accountable to its business stakeholders. "CSR demands that businesses manage the financial, social and environmental impacts of their operations to maximise the benefits and minimise the downsides" (CSR Network, 2009). Contracting organisations operating within the construction industry are well aware of their CSR. A clear social understanding, proactive community relations, safe working practices and a high respect for the environment are all part of the normal business operations of contractors. As such, many embrace CSR within closely targeted corporate business policies supported by recognised international standards-based organisational management systems. The three most prominent systems are quality management systems (QMS), environmental management systems (EMS) and health and safety management systems (H&SMS).