



Clients



Heritage image: New York City Subway, Historical City Hall Station. Dignitaries inspect the IRT on opening day, October 27, 1904.
Future image: Andrew Gallagher, Technical Executive (L) and Aaron Yuan, Structural Engineer (R) from PB's Structural team work as part of an integrated engineering group to ensure our clients are provided with an innovative range of technical services.



New York City will ever hold Mr Parsons in high respect, not alone as an engineer, but as a gentleman who has established the fact that great public works may be carried to completion with clean hands and an unsullied reputation. ”

~ Editorial *New York Times*, 2 December, 1904

Our approach

We believe that good communication is crucial to helping our clients achieve their best outcomes. Listening and responding to clients is important, but so is keeping abreast of current and emerging issues so we can provide relevant advice.

PB project teams work with clients to identify innovative futures, and identify appropriate solutions that will yield the greatest possible return for their organisation and its stakeholders.

Managing client relationships

Throughout 2010, we continued to develop our Trusted Adviser Program (TAP), which is dedicated to building relationships with our Brand clients.

TAP is an internal program that aligns our clients' needs with the services we provide.

The TAP program:

- recognises that client relationships are long-term
- regards client relationships as a role that everyone at PB plays, rather than the responsibility of a single relationship manager
- understands that client relationships impact at strategic, cultural and operational levels
- understands that client relationships are ongoing and not project-based
- recognises that relationships are formed and maintained through direct, personal contact.

Continuous improvement is a key factor in PB's ability to establish strong relationships with our clients. A number of processes support our continuous improvement efforts, and these are discussed below.

Client service brief

At the start of a project, we ask clients for their critical success factors so we can deliver them. Part of this process is to identify the client's preferred engagement method during the project, the PB staff who should be involved in those interactions, and timing. This is a formal procedure detailed in PB's clients and markets business procedure documentation.

Post-project client survey

We survey our clients about our performance (service and technical quality) at the end of our projects. The surveys are conducted face-to-face, by telephone or by email. The outcomes of the survey are forwarded to an appropriate person for follow-up as required. Reports on individual strong performance or poor performance are sent to the Business Systems team and included as part of their systems improvement process. An overall report on business performance is also produced on a quarterly basis.

A number of key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to client satisfaction are outlined in the PB A-P strategic plan and measured from this survey process.

In 2010, 291 surveys were completed, from 448 surveys sent — a strike-rate of 65%. Forty-one per cent of surveys conducted were with our Brand clients.

Client relationship managers

We have allocated client relationship managers (CRMs) for 54 Brand accounts. Our intent is to provide a contact point for clients to ensure they are receiving a high-quality service and to better understand their business needs, so we can deliver excellence on their projects.

Performance — the Engineering Beacon survey

Each year we participate in an industry benchmarking survey through Engineering Beacon. The survey rates the performance of Australian engineering firms.

PB believes that independent auditing by our clients is an important tool in assessing how effectively we are contributing to their success.

The Beacon survey is the largest survey of its kind in the world and gives clients an opportunity to express what is important to them in dealing with consultants. The research is used to identify areas of strength and weakness and formal improvement programs are developed for any key areas of weakness.

“
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What did clients think about our project performance?

Top three strengths	Score out of 10
Friendly/strong rapport	8.34
Technical expertise	8.08
Recommend PB to a colleague or peer	8.04
Top three weaknesses	Score out of 10
Cost conscious (ie. careful when spending on your behalf)	7.37
Value provided by PB on the project as assessed by project performance relative to fees paid	7.44
Provided regular debrief opportunities	7.48

Managing client relationships in the future

Guided by TAP, we continue to work towards building trusted relationships with our clients, with particular focus on Brand clients.

In 2010, 70.6% of net revenue was from Brand clients. This has improved from 56.9% in 2009.

Since late 2009, a team based across all of PB's operating companies and Heery International have been working together to review the tools needed to support PB's approach to client relationship management. PB has decided to implement a global client relationship management solution, Oracle CRM OnDemand. It is expected that this system will support the technical needs of PB's TAP initiative.

Client relationship plans continued to be a focus of our client efforts and have assisted our people in guiding resources and marketing activity. In addition, client surveys prove to be a valuable tool for our client teams to gather appropriate client feedback. There is still a gap in how well we document, respond to and communicate back to clients about their feedback in order to reassure them that we are listening and committed.

In addition to project conversations, we need to undertake more conversations with clients that can provide insight into their business and check the strength of our relationship. We also need to increase the level of training relating to client relationship management methodology, so people within the business or those who have taken on roles as part of client relationship management teams have the skills they need to be successful.



Evan Giles
Team Executive NZ,
Tunnels and Geotechnical

Good client relationships – some reflections

In today's super-commercial environment, where so many engineering appointments are based on lowest cost choices, one could be forgiven for questioning the value of the time investment needed to form relationships with clients. But we must not question it!

If we do not have the business side of our professional life optimised, we are not going to be able to enjoy the 'doing' part we cherish so much. The topic of good client relationships is therefore well worth musing over. Consider with me some personal choices I routinely make.

I live in Birkenhead on the Auckland North Shore. In my local village there are over a dozen dental practices. The closest is about 700m from my home, yet I drive 12km to my chosen dentist. Why? Well, I like him. I think that he knows what he is doing and I trust him. The same goes for my doctor. Each time I visit him, I pass three other practices. I came upon my GP via a strong personal recommendation 10 years ago and that's it. He's good, he has a bit of character soul, and he knows his limits. Why change?

Why then, would we imagine our clients would be any different? They too have responsibilities, deadlines, financial controls and issues to resolve. They too have hectic days. There are times when chewing the cud over a dawdling project or a current issue would be valued—and more so if the financial clock is not ticking, morphing into a nuisance bill that has no budget allocation.

A problem shared is a problem halved and the trouble is you cannot fake it! You need to have convinced yourself that you need to give, in order to get. That way you will be willing to give the time (because it takes time) and the difference will be a known intangible. If as a result you become trusted and seen to be reliable, why would they not want to work with you and your firm? They have confidence that their needs will be met, their concerns taken on board, and their constraints absorbed and enacted.

I rest my case ... but with a few words of encouragement. Make client service a lifestyle choice. It's rewarding in many ways, and supports the very essence of sustainability!