



## Case study

Name: A-one+  
Sector: Professional Engineering  
Location: South East, UK

## A-one+ gains the tools to plan for success with confidence

With significant time being spent resolving legacy issues, challenges in addressing the day-to-day performance of the business were straining the relationship between A-one+ and its client, Highways England.

Change was desperately needed. Strong leadership would drive the scheme forward, aligning priorities with the overall objectives, changing the mentality of all involved and providing the tools, processes and systems to deliver more effectively, on time and to budget.

Establishing itself as an integral member of the team, Managementors worked hard to eliminate frustration through its proven methodology. Initially launching a Quick Wins Programme, the results were clearly visible and felt by everyone - even those outside of the immediate project. This then created the confidence for more strategic developments, that were embraced by senior managers and the entire team, changing the whole operating model to be more proactive and productive, with confident leadership at the forefront.

### Key challenges

- Legacy mobilisation issues were affecting day-to-day performance.
- A reactive management style prevented the team planning for success.
- Without standardised processes, the team found collaboration challenging.
- An inadequate MOS prevented the team sharing a single version of the truth.

### Key gains

- A significantly improved working relationship between A-one+ and Highways England.
- Improved visibility of scheme progress, giving managers confidence in delivery.
- A measurable financial benefit during the lifetime of the project.
- The confidence to manage schemes effectively and plan for success.

## Background

A-one+ is a joint venture between Colas, Costain and Jacobs. It provides engineering services to Highways England, who manages the strategic road network in England, comprising motorways and some A roads. Highways England splits the country into 14 different areas, awarding various schemes of work to service providers to construct or maintain the network.

Unfortunately, performance in Area 4, which comprises Kent, Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex, was not up to the expected high standards of A-one+. Issues with planning and control were commonplace, leading to high levels of rework, delays, scheme overrun and all the associated additional costs. With the

pressure to deliver intensifying, the relationship between A-one+ and Highways England became ever-more strained.

Managementors was engaged to uncover the root cause of the challenges and, in parallel, A-one+ installed Primavera P6 programming tool as a measurement aid.

Under Project Melius, which involved all staff working within the Programme Development Team and Business Management Team, Managementors was tasked with improving productivity. This meant supporting the business functions to improve their control and visibility of schemes, to enable completion that was on time, to budget and delivered in a more joined-up way of working with Highways England.



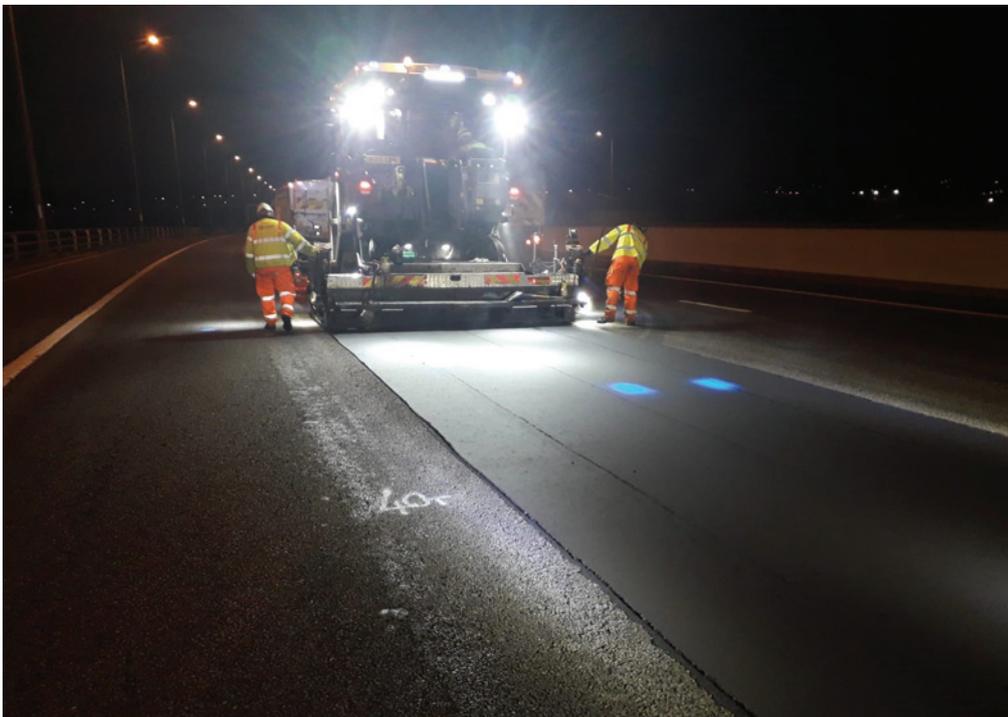
## The Challenge

From the start, one of the biggest underlying issues was time management. Poorly structured meetings between all the stakeholders meant that tasks weren't prioritised, leading to misaligned expectations. This led to poor visibility over all the activities taking place. Couple this with a frequent misunderstanding of the overall scheme requirements, and there could only be one result – excessive rework and missed deadlines.

But it wasn't just the scope of the schemes that were unclear, the management and supervisory roles within the operation were also in question. With a lack of clarity about where the lines of responsibility and accountability lay, work wasn't allocated effectively, and conflicting pressures made it difficult for anyone to oversee the operation. With staff reacting day-to-day, the team couldn't plan for success.

Of course, all of this was underpinned by problems with the process. Without a standard, effective programme methodology, the team was left working from inaccurate information, duplicating elements or working on non-value adding activities. The project managers were performing the role to the best of their ability, but the mechanisms weren't in place to share best-practice. In addition, there was no procedure to feedback issues and prevent them from recurring.

Ultimately Managementors discovered the root cause of A-one+'s challenges to be its Management Operating System (MOS). By not facilitating collaboration between A-one+ and Highways England, there wasn't a single shared version of the truth; forecasts were inaccurate, planning was poor and consequently reports meaningless, which meant review meetings were unproductive, and improvements never made.



## Approach

To re-build the trust between A-one+ and Highways England, and eliminate all frustration caused by poor communication and leadership, Managementors had to ingrain itself as an integral member of the team. Working together, they could:

- Introduce an active management style that planned for success.
- Agree mechanisms that facilitated better collaboration.
- Develop process flows to create a more effective, 'first time right' delivery model.
- Establish an effective MOS.

Upon commencing the project Managementors, in partnership with A-one+ leadership, proposed to address four main areas: management, MOS, processes and issues.

Firstly, by switching the leadership style from reactive to proactive management, A-one+ could drive performance, plan for the future and deliver better quality work first time. Then by critiquing the current MOS against the 'ideal' scenario, Managementors could implement the tools necessary to effectively manage the operation. Next, A-one+'s processes needed to be mapped and developed, with new ones added to eliminate duplication and non-value adding activities. Finally, Managementors provided the mechanisms to address everyday issues and reduce wasted time throughout the scheme duration.

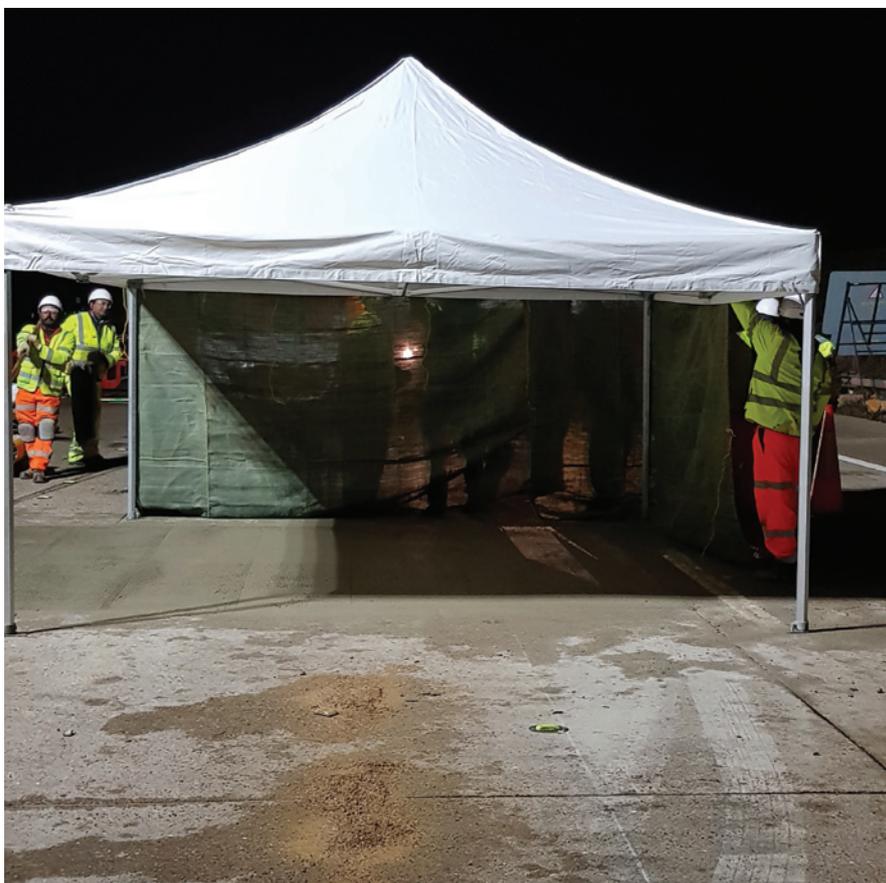
"Initially our engineers viewed Managementors as a threat, placed by senior management to force change upon them," said Chris. "But, able to speak to people at all different levels in the language best suited to the situation meant Managementors quickly earned everyone's respect. They challenged us weekly, which was exactly what we needed. Our engineers saw why change was necessary and that Managementors wouldn't stand any nonsense. Once we saw those perceptions start to change, we knew people were engaging with the project. And now everything we do supports the new MOS."

Deploying its proven methodology, Managementors focused on the long-term strategic developments necessary for change, as well as completing a Quick Wins Programme. As part of this, meetings were developed into more focused and action-orientated events, where decisions were made, and outcomes clear to everyone involved in the scheme.

Managementors then focused on the four target areas, developing an effective structure with clear roles and responsibilities, standardised processes that were simple to follow, and all the tools necessary to implement more effective working practices, including a detailed procedures manual. In addition, to ensure the changes became ingrained in the culture and part of business-as-usual, Managementors transferred its knowledge to upskill the team at A-one+.

*"Managementors was quickly accepted as part of our team because they took the time and effort to get to know everyone by name – it established trust from day one. We needed a system that could live on forever as part of business-as-usual activities. The clear objectives, organisation skills and leadership gave us the confidence that we could make these effective changes, and embed them as part of our culture."*

Chris Sheppard  
General Manager  
A-one+ Area 4



## Outcomes

Upon completion of the project, Managementors had significantly improved the working relationship between A-one+ and Highways England. Improved resource and project planning, the introduction of a proactive management style and streamlined joint processes meant schemes were being delivered on time, to budget, and completed to a higher standard.

Chris commented, “Everyone has had a very positive attitude towards the whole process, which has helped us to work more collaboratively with Highways England. Now everyone understands the focus of the scheme, and the process we need to follow to deliver. It’s benefitting people that weren’t even involved in the project because we speak a common language that just wasn’t there before.”

Through the Quick Wins Programme, the number of meetings held was significantly reduced, with each now having a clear agenda and focus on agreeing actions and setting priorities for the team.

While not a priority, A-one+ also saw a significant increase in productivity as a result of the project, enabling it to reduce the requirement to employ contractor resource or backfill vacancies. Through the changes instilled by Managementors, A-one+ now believes it can deliver future schemes at lower cost, simply by working more collaboratively and effectively.

Chris concluded, “For us the project was never really about the cost-savings, it was about building a long-term relationship with Highways England. Before we felt like the business was controlling us, which is evident in our reactive working style. With the help of Managementors, we now have confidence in what we’re doing, and confidence that what we’re doing is the right thing for all involved.”

*“From the start we knew change was necessary for our future success, and throughout the project, everyone has taken it seriously. Everything Managementors put in place is now business-as-usual and embedded with us, which is why we continue to see the benefits.”*

Chris Sheppard  
General Manager  
A-one+ Area 4



Contact us to find out what Managementors can do for you

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