

Author

Mike Gilmore

Senior Partner of The Cabling Partnership (www.it-cabling.com)
Managing Director of e-Ready Building Limited
P.O.Box MT65, Leeds, United Kingdom. LS17 8YD.
e-mail: mike.gilmore@e-readybuilding.com
Telephone: +44 (0) 113 232 3721

See last page for biographical details



The IT cabling infrastructure
division of
e-Ready Building Limited

The IT cabling consultants

e-Ready Building Limited
Next generation IT Infrastructures

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURES DAMAGED BY A LACK OF COMMUNICATION

by
**Mike Gilmore, Technical Director of the FIA
for Networking+ (December 2008)**

A recent survey of contractual problems in telecommunications infrastructures uncovered a worrying level of disputes resulting from a lack of relevant information being provided to the installers. The sources of this failure were two-fold. Firstly, requirements that had been clearly defined and documented by customers had subsequently not been included, or had been incorrectly translated or modified, in the tender document produced by the customers consultants. The second area of concern pointed to a failure in sub-contracting chains to provide the correct tender documentation to those undertaking the work. Both of these factors are symptomatic of a more fundamental problem - a lack of direct communication between the end-user and the installer.

In the "good old" days, customers defined their own needs for the IT infrastructure and used the services of specialist consultants or the suppliers of IT equipment to identify potential installers. Installers were then generally free to discuss the small, but critical, details of the installation requirements directly with the customer - identifying incompatibilities and information shortfalls. This approach is still applied for many of the large/very large enterprise installations. However, the survey found that such installations were comparatively problem free. Instead, the difficult, and sometimes, irresolvable cases lay in the domain of the smaller installations covering everything from universities to hospitals where the infrastructure specification was handled by non-specialist consultants and the installation of telecommunications infrastructures lay at the bottom of a multi-disciplinary sub-contract chain.

Before going any further, it may be appropriate to describe what is meant by "difficult" cases. Typical situations include cabling systems that meet the required transmission requirements but are rendered non-functional, non-maintainable or irreparable due to non-agreed installation decisions. One major and common cause of non-functionality is where an installer, having no other information, defines cabinet lay-outs. This can result in lack of space for the required transmission equipment or a lack of cooling/ventilation being provided to it - which amounts to the same thing. However, it is dangerous to focus on one specific aspect because the fundamental problem of communication needs to be addressed.

Many years ago a senior infrastructure consultant advised an FIA gathering that, in his view, the role of a consultant was to act as a barrier between the end-user and the supplier. After the resounding chorus of "sharp intakes of breath" subsided, FIA members attempted to point out that, while no customer likes to be hounded by competing potential suppliers, the situation following contract award should be completely different. The consultant should enable direct communication between those paying for the installation and those performing it. Based on the evidence of the current survey, this approach has clearly not been adopted.

The applicable British Standards including BS 6701 and the BS EN 50174 series define the required contents of installation specifications and also mandate quality plans produced by the installer which explain how those specifications are to be met. The critical point is that both the installation specifications and the quality plan are required to be agreed between the customer (or their representatives) and the installer - before the installation commences. Two fundamental questions must be answered by all end-users - firstly, do the specifications produced on your behalf meet the requirements of the applicable standards and, secondly, do you wish to delegate acceptance of installers proposals to the sub-contracting chain. If the answer to either question is "No" then something needs to be done, and quickly, or your next installation will be added to the list ready for inclusion in the next survey.

If you would like to have your say on this topic and would like to join the FIA in order to do so, e-mail jane@fiasec.demon.co.uk or, alternatively, you can contact the FIA Secretariat in 01763 273039.

The Cabling Partnership
P. O. Box MT 65, LEEDS, West Yorkshire, LS17 8YD, England
Telephone: +44 (0) 113 232 3721

The Cabling Partnership is a division of e-Ready Building Limited
Company Registration No. 4432595 Registered Office - Emery House, 192 Heaton Moor Road, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 4DU.

Biography

As the Technical and Standards Director of the UK Fibreoptic Industry Association, Mike is heavily involved in the development of training and competence standards for the fibre installation industry and sets down policy in this area. In addition he chairs the audit and arbitration committees for the FIA. His book "Fibre optic cabling; theory design and installation practice" published in 1991 remains a reference for both experts and entrants into this field.

Mike also initiated the establishment of the Telecommunications Infrastructure Advisory Board (TIA-B) along with the relevant directors of its other host organisations CMA and ECA-ITEC.

In the UK, Mike is Chairman of TCT7, the BSI Technical Committee responsible for the three panels on telecommunication cabling. He also chairs two of these panels (TCT7/-/1 and TCT7/-/3) and is Secretary of TCT7/-/2. TCT7/-/1 and TCT7/-/2 act to assist development of European and international standards for the design and installation of telecommunications cabling respectively. TCT7/-/2 also manages the implementation of these standards in the UK, where necessary producing supporting national standards.

Mike is involved in CENELEC TC215 - as Convenor of Working Group 1 and Secretary of Working Group 2. These committees are responsible for the development of an integrated series of standards for the design and installation of telecommunications cabling in a range of premises. In 2008 he led the ETSI STF362 on energy efficiency in broadband deployment resulting in the ETSI TS 105174 series documents, allowing Mike to assist in a new TC215 activity covering data centre facilities and infrastructures (monitored in the UK by BSI TCT7/-/3).

At international level, Mike is Convenor of the Cabling Implementation Task Group (CITG) within ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3. This group is responsible for the strategic management of the international standards covering the specification, QA, installation, administration, operation, maintenance and repair of generic cabling. This work supports all the cabling design standards produced by ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3 including ISO/IEC 11801, ISO/IEC 15018, ISO/IEC 24764 and ISO/IEC 24702 for industrial premises produced by ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3 IPTG (also convened by Mike Gilmore).

Mike is a regular speaker at seminars and conferences in all five continents. He has provided the keynote address and opening presentation in many conferences in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. His seminars, providing regular updates on the progression of cabling standards are particularly well attended and are operating in the UK and continental Europe.



The Cabling Partnership
P. O. Box MT 65, LEEDS, West Yorkshire, LS17 8YD, England
Telephone: +44 (0) 113 232 3721

The Cabling Partnership is a division of e-Ready Building Limited
Company Registration No. 4432595 Registered Office - Emery House, 192 Heaton Moor Road, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 4DU.