



Benefits of MERIT training

1) The elements of MERIT

MERIT simulates the operation of a construction company and offers training in Company, Business and Financial management in a construction context with the members of each participating team acting as a Board of Directors. MERIT training develops disciplined decision making, teamwork and leadership skills.

The MERIT training experience raises the awareness of the participants to high level company decisions and responses to market and other changes.

Participants learn through participating, taking decisions, seeing results and responding. This active involvement in the learning process is a learning approach that appeals to professional staff and more mature students. The stimulus to succeed is provided by the competitive environment.

The following outlines the key elements in which participants are required to take decisions. This requires a development of an understanding of the background to these decisions and the impact of them using the extensive searchable MERIT tutorial

Company Management includes determining:

- the Company strategy, its target markets, target size in terms of turnover and value and the head office support staff required;
- which jobs in each market sector to bid for;
- the estimating effort required to ensure accurate estimates;
- staffing of individual projects through own labour, sub-contractors and project managers.

Business Management includes:

- determining the best market sectors;
- developing and maintaining client relationships; and
- ensuring that the Company Management responds to the development of the market.

Financial management includes:

- ensuring that the company has enough capital to support its workload;
- managing the company's assets ensuring that the company hasn't an excess of underused capital by investing or expanding turnover;
- managing the company's cash account; and
- determining the rewards paid to shareholders through dividends.

2) Team roles and disciplined decision making

A key lesson is disciplined decision making and working together. The more successful teams are those that organise themselves as a 'Board of Directors' and take decisions as would company directors.

This means each team member or Director needs to have clear defined responsibilities. The individual Director needs to understand all aspects of the input to the decisions for which they are responsible. The individual Director needs to be an individual specialist.

The key post is that of Chief Executive Officer or Managing Director. This role is the one that oversees the work of all others through chairing the Board meetings. The CEO has the responsibility of ensuring that the actions of each individual Director are taken on time. Discharge of this responsibility may require the exercise of discipline on fellow directors.

Consider a Board Meeting. Each individual Director reports on their activity since the last meeting, makes recommendations as to what decisions should be approved for which they are responsible. The CEO and other Board Members then interrogate the individual to test that the recommendations are soundly based and have not arrived at on a casual basis and do not conflict with other decisions. In this way the quality of each suggested decision is tested.

3) Determining company strategy

Individual decisions such as employing labour or deciding which contracts to bid for sit within a 'Company Strategy'. The strategy is the collective responsibility of the Board, arrived at after each individual's input, for their own area of responsibility. Strategy formulation will face conflicting views and conflicting scenarios and conflicting data. These are resolved by disciplined discussion. The discipline is imposed by the CEO. The most important aspect of strategy is to determine whether it's achievable and how to implement it. Without these there is no effective strategy. The CEO together with their team of expert Board members must be convinced of their own strategy.

However the greatest aspect of strategy is flexibility. When the original strategy doesn't work out, when the market changes, when competition increases, when the financial status is difficult, does the Board have the wit to recognise the changes and the strength to change the strategy? An effective Board will. A casual board will plough on with the original and now failing strategy. Flexibility is strength.

4) Successful teams

The teams that adopt a disciplined approach to Board responsibilities, Board decisions, strategy reviews and responses are the most successful in MERIT simulations as they would be in life.

The successful teams adopt the mantle of senior directors. They act like senior directors, they conduct themselves like senior directors, they think like senior directors. These teams have taken a step away from being junior staff and adopt the attitudes and behaviour that will sustain them in the more responsible roles they will fill in future.

5) Leadership and discipline

Success in MERIT requires leadership from the team leader, the simulated CEO. It also requires great discipline from all other team members to prepare their input to decisions and have wisdom to make judgements in conflicting situations.

6) Raising horizons

MERIT exposes participants to the totality of a business in a construction context and covers company management, financial management and business management. The experience of acting as a Board of Directors exposes the participants to the importance of leadership and discipline.

This collective experience extends the participants thinking into topics that they may not experience in their day to day work or studies. This raises their horizons, sets their own activities into a wider context and demonstrates the interconnections between all the elements of business that need to be successful and to build a successful business. This guides the participants' future knowledge acquisition and choice of future training

On completion of participation in the MERIT simulation team members will have gained some of the following competencies:

1. Knowledge and Understanding
 - a. A sound, data-based, knowledge and understanding of the construction industry and its projects.
2. Management and Leadership
 - a. Manage the planning and organisation of tasks, people and resources;
 - b. Manage and lead teams to meet challenging technical and managerial needs;
 - c. Plan, direct and control tasks, people and resources.
3. Commercial ability
 - a. Prepare and control budgets;
 - b. Use knowledge of statutory and commercial frameworks and gain an appreciation of other commercial arrangements;
 - c. Analyse and interpret construction company and project performance data;
 - d. Understand the dynamics of construction management decision making;
 - e. Evaluate business scenarios and devise business strategies;
 - f. Assess project risks.
4. Independent Judgement and Responsibility
 - a. Identify the limits of personal knowledge and skills;
 - b. Exercise sound holistic independent judgement and take responsibility;
 - c. Identify the limits of a team's skills and knowledge.
5. Interpersonal Skills and Communication
 - a. Communicate well with others at all levels orally and in writing;
 - b. Discuss ideas and plans competently and with confidence;
 - c. Effective personal and social skills;
 - d. Understand and apply team-working skills;
 - e. Effective use of IT resources;
 - f. Work effectively within time limits

Some quotes from previous players:

“It is a great way to see how each sector of a business interacts with one another and the how each decision impacts other areas.”

“MERIT is an excellent training aid - providing a good method of team working and discussion and broadening our skills with regards to decision making, leadership and coping under pressure.”

“The experience of using MERIT has been massively helpful to better understand decision making at a higher level and how large organisations operate.”

“It was very useful in working as a team whilst getting you to really think about the long term strategy, and how what you do now affects the future. I felt our team getting stronger from round to round”