

Giving back

The experts at EADS General Procurement wanted to use their knowledge on monetary savings to help bring about a much larger immaterial gain. The occasion came at their team-building event late last year, when they offered purchasing and spending advice to five UK charities – the aim being to help the struggling organisations continue their valuable work.

Cutting tools, protective equipment, gas, power hand tools... when it comes to purchasing strategy, the EGP team for Production & Other Consumables knows all about negotiations and saving costs in this area. But would they be able to use this to help five charities whose everyday business involves assisting adults with learning disabilities, or providing homeless accommodation or community activities? Rosemary Rogers from charity The Chester Link had the same concerns: "Our fear was that they could find us too different from their usual day-to-day activities to make this work and that none of us would get anything out of the exercise. We were happily proved wrong."

At the start of the two-day event, the EADS team was divided into five groups to meet and work with the charities. Trainers from Westmill International (an EADS supplier for coaching services) helped during both days and found the charitable organisations – The Chester Link, Save the Family, Barrowmore Limited, Blacon Community Trust and The Petty Pool Trust – who are all based near Airbus' Broughton site. Each group first carried out a procurement audit with their charity to understand their activities and see if there were any ways the team could help with potential savings. The team then had a brainstorming exercise to

find some realistic, practical recommendations for saving money. Finally, each team reported back to the charities and offered advice on how to implement the proposed changes.

Strength in numbers

The suggestions had a positive impact. As Save the Family's Karen Fisher says, "The team helped us to re-evaluate our processes and to look at how we go about procurement." And Eric Lees from Barrowmore Limited adds, "It was a great experience for our management team and we will pick up on some aspects of the report and follow up in 2011. We really enjoyed working with

EADS." These aspects included putting in place a basic procurement process to track expenditure, reducing the number of suppliers and setting up a partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University's procurement department. And the charities also wanted to implement certain ideas immediately; for example The Petty Pool Trust runs corporate away days to finance their activities and was therefore interested in linking up with the Broughton site.

Another suggestion involved setting up a procurement platform with other charities to compare spend with a view to getting discounts based on higher volumes – something EGP is well-

versed in due to its own experience within Future EADS. The EADS team – which came together from different Divisions – noticed that most of the charities were facing similar procurement problems and through this event was able to help the organisations connect. "The charity workers were surprised when we told them that they can get real cash benefits by bundling their purchase volume. So they decided to purchase electricity, water and gas supplies together. This collaborative approach is simple and it can bring them huge benefits," underlines Production & Other Consumables team leader Boris Brauner.

Alexander Kandt

