



## Enlightened Clients' Guide to Project Quality and Compliance Detailed Notes

# Why are construction's customers called clients?

Customers, either individuals or organisations, typically buy fully completed items from a shop, store, or these days increasingly online. But buying a building is different, very different, and this is recognised in construction's 'customers' being called clients and not customers.

As a client commissioning a building you will normally be involved throughout its design and delivery. An integral part of a building project from the earliest stages right through to commissioning, and if the building is not sold at this point, into its use and eventual decommissioning.

This means that being a client can be more challenging than being a customer but on the other hand it presents opportunities too as it allows you to shape or customise the design and construction of a proposed building to meet your specific needs and ensure you achieve your desired project outcomes.

In contrast, the purchaser of a new car would not be directly involved in its design and manufacture and similarly having ordered a meal in a restaurant a customer would not be expected to visit the kitchen and be involved in its preparation.

Another feature setting building projects apart from other products or services is their life expectancy, which can be 75 years or more if properly maintained and refurbished. In contrast, a meal in a restaurant typically lasts a couple of hours, a family holiday a fortnight, and cars are often traded in after a few years.

Then there's the complexity of buildings and their long list of functional requirements. And the convoluted process through which they are designed and constructed. The design, construction and commissioning process is an intricate, long and complicated involving several successive phases or stages, sometimes overlapped but always linked.

*As a Health Trust we realise that our buildings are very complex and much of that complexity is related to what we do and our processes. We have, of course, to ensure the wellbeing of our patients and staff, but we also have special requirements for our buildings including NVAC, fire, hydraulic and mechanical services.*

As well as having a number of phases in progressing from strategic definition or initial feasibility to completion and in use through occupation, a typical construction project involves inputs from many different people too. This can include financiers, lawyers, architects, design and cost consultants, project managers, main and specialist contractors and materials and component manufacturers.

Also, depending on the complexity of the project, an array of specialist consultants concerned with such factors as its environmental impact, fire safety, acoustics, and structural integrity. All of these inputs have to be synchronised if the project is to proceed smoothly and effectively to completion and deliver quality and value for you the commissioning client and the end users of the facility.

For further insights into the characteristics of construction projects and their management see Chapter 0, an introduction to the *Code of Practice for Project Management for Construction and Development*, 6th Edition, published by Wiley Blackwell.

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