

## Breakfast: The Most Important Meal of the Day for a Project Manager

By Joseph McNiel

Athens Olympics 2004 – 14 Deaths

Beijing Olympics 2008 – 10 Deaths

London Olympics 2012 – 0 Deaths

When the UK won the bid to host the 2012 Olympics in 2005, 14 people had just died during construction of the Athens Olympic village and 10 more died during construction for Beijing. For London, this was simply unacceptable; these deaths were preventable.

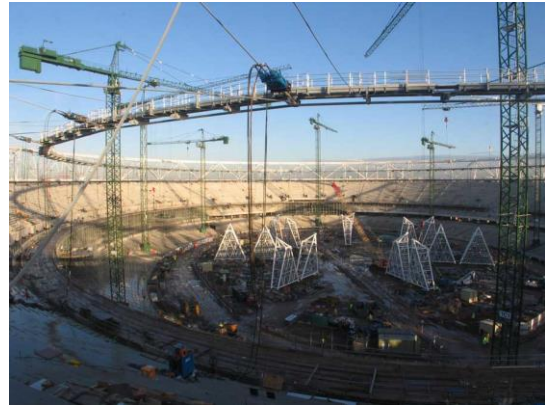


Figure 1: Construction of the London Olympic Stadium

The challenge set to the UK Olympics was to make it the safest Olympic games ever and that meant zero deaths. The Safety Health Environment Leadership team (SHEL) made the 'one in a million' pledge which was to limit accidents to 1 for every million hours worked and this was achieved, but how? Through extensive research from industry experts, it was discovered that around 70% of construction workers in the UK are either overweight or obese with 29% having high blood pressure<sup>1</sup>. When cross-examined with historic data on construction-related accidents, there was found to be a strong correlation between an individual's health and their chances of having an accident. It was also found that those who miss breakfast are more likely to have one. Following on from this research, SHEL decided to offer all workers a healthy breakfast; whilst seemingly being a rather insignificant move in the overall portfolio of work, SHEL took the welfare of their employees into account. Should this practice of looking after the individual's welfare become a key consideration of Responsible Project Management (RPM)?

Welfare management encompasses a wide range of factors including diet and mental health and in 2019, 26% of construction workers considered taking their own lives, with 97% being stressed at least once a year<sup>2</sup>. In addition to diet, mental health issues can greatly increase the chances of accidents occurring on-site. With all this information available, by simply taking welfare into consideration, the rate of accidents is reduced and therefore welfare must become part of Health and Safety Practices.

RPM is a concept developed by industry experts to show the impact responsibility can have, not only on the project itself, but in the wider communities as well. Project success is not just about delivering on time and on budget, there are a variety of contributors. For the London Olympics, SHEL showed that by being responsible and considering the wider context of a project, a variety of successes can be achieved such as zero deaths. They took responsibility for their actions and the results showed this. Time, scope and quality cannot be prioritised over safety and this is something that must be taken into consideration in all future projects. Whilst holistically, it may seem more expensive to offer breakfast, the overall costs are likely to be reduced as accidents can be extremely costly for a project both in budget and time and therefore overall, it may be cheaper to offer benefits like breakfast.

To conclude, the London Olympics is an outstanding example of how being responsible leads to outstanding project success, it shows that something as simple as providing a healthy breakfast can have such a positive impact on a project. Budgets and deadlines cannot be prioritised over people.

## References:

Figure 1 - e-architect, 2011. *London Olympic Stadium image from the ODA* [online]. image. Available from: <https://www.e-architect.com/london/london-olympic-stadium-construction> [Accessed 4 Jan 2021].

<sup>1</sup> Rees-Evans, D., 2020. *Understanding Mental Health in the Built Environment* [online]. Ciob.org. Available from: [https://www.ciob.org/industry/research/Understanding-Mental-Health-Built-Environment?gclid=Cj0KCQiAls\\_vBRDtARIsAHMGVSZj8yl4v8iqfqXuORI63os43pEBSdUZZG3Z\\_xDfUpxIsvHEpmlidkaAn6QEALw\\_wcB](https://www.ciob.org/industry/research/Understanding-Mental-Health-Built-Environment?gclid=Cj0KCQiAls_vBRDtARIsAHMGVSZj8yl4v8iqfqXuORI63os43pEBSdUZZG3Z_xDfUpxIsvHEpmlidkaAn6QEALw_wcB) [Accessed 4 Jan 2021].

<sup>2</sup> Tuchman, J., 2012. *London Olympics Construction Is Safest in Recent Times* [online]. Enr.com. Available from: <https://www.enr.com/articles/2643-london-olympics-construction-is-safest-in-recent-times> [Accessed 4 Jan 2021].