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Living life on the fast track: Where time is money and schedules are increasingly shortened

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No, this isn't the Disney World Fast Track car racing ride. This is life in the "Fast Lane" of construction projects where time is money and schedules increasingly shorten to move a client into new space faster.

The timeline for architectural and engineering due diligence and site survey decreases along with the construction schedule. Often clients bring construction managers into project planning early to partner with them and the A/E team. In particular, they ask CMs to assist the preconstruction process by helping identify existing conditions. In some cases, this requires exploratory work and in others, full blown demolition to expose all existing conditions for the project team.

During preconstruction, Bond Brothers is a vital part of the team who identifies scheduling issues including lead times, recommends alternate products and materials to achieve the project deadlines, and phases the work around subcontractor manpower availability, logistical challenges, and permitting requirements. Our experience in building construction allows us to consistently refine this process, especially in the tenant fit-out market where churn is so important. We learn from the previous challenges and find better routes to success moving forward.

I often view our work as like an orchestra leader's; Seiji Ozawa comes to mind. We oversee the process of construction in a manner similar to a conductor directing an orchestra. We fine tune the schedule and manage all the subcontractors, masterfully advising them when to be on site and when they need to leave. We coordinate every little detail of our work and our client's work through communication in weekly and even daily subcontractor meetings with our field team. Often we work 2 shifts, 7 days a week to meet the schedules required by our clients. We skillfully schedule trades in sequence (most of the time) to achieve the team's work, sometimes needing to creatively manage those trades due to challenges faced. We manage the process of change initiated by our clients and the dreaded change orders that follow. We manage to the budget set forth by the team and are accountable for identifying items/costs as the project progresses while never losing site of the project completion date.

All this happens because a dedicated team of construction personnel give of themselves for the profession we love, often giving up personal commitments for the sake of a project. The on-site construction team is a solid, humble group who put their strongest effort into driving a project to meet its objectives. The rubber meets the road here and this is the team that gets the project built. As managers and leaders, we regularly become their cheerleaders, contributing pep and

enthusiasm while constantly repeating the mantra, failure is not an option. The field team works in conjunction with the office team through constant communication over the days and weeks of the project. The special bond we share in the success of a project gone right is unlike anything else. The teamwork and relationships built between project personnel and subcontractors is phenomenal.

As technology changes, information passes faster to the field. A computer is an essential tool like the screw gun or hammer. Disseminating information to the subcontractors has also changed. The days of snail mail and faxes are gone. We live in the world of scanners and PDF files and CAD files; the touch of a button enlightens the team about a project's latest developments.

The projects' quality remains unchanged by the speed at which we build. The moment the project commences, the field team's critical eye engages in visual inspections of the work. Construction personnel see things that the average person will never see as they walk through a space.

Younger managers and field staff coming up through the ranks have always run projects this way and do not know how our business has changed. Project life in the fast track will remain full of constant speed, team members' dedication, and a partnership where the owner, architect, engineer, and construction manager work together to achieve mutual goals.

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