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Connect create construct - design build and single source philosophy

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In an industry wary of change, embracing innovation and creating systems that minimize client risk, foster collaboration and partnership, and ultimately deliver the client vision are distinct advantages in today's market. The design build model is one of single-source responsibility. One entity delivers both design and construction services, owner risk and burden reduce and an inherent alliance emerges. With the architect, estimator and construction manager engaged up front, the adversarial triad dissolves. The focus becomes the solution rather than the responsibility and cause, and a true collaborative effort unfolds. Ultimately, cost and schedule reduce, client confidence builds and the capital-intensive gamble of the development team pays off.

Connect

The goal of the design build team is to seamlessly connect clients to all aspects of the project; from concept, to design, to development, and from construction to finish. Clients and industry vendors are partners in the process; engaged from project inception through to completion. The design build firm becomes an extension of the client team through a no-nonsense relationship. Collectively the team studies "the build" up front and constructability is analyzed at project inception. Costs are examined from the start as design ideas impact pricing. Does this system have a cost-effective alternative? Does it function historically and what are the risks? Architects think like the builder and builders think like the architect. Field personnel with decades of experience provide constructability reviews, critical subcontractors are engaged early and the team evolves.

Create

A cohesive effort ensues during design. In-house architects, engineers, estimators and construction managers become the design-build team; their advantage is a mindset concurrent with the entire evolution of getting a development out of the ground. The entire team thinks in terms of constructability. Several subtle and unique practices are in play in the design build firm. One example is the kick-off meeting. Far from traditional, the construction manager and architect determine an ideal construction process up front and guide the design deliverables in terms of this sequencing. On a complex project, phasing of construction determines phasing of design and subsequently the plans, specs, estimate, etc. A fluid project work flow is established and is later reflected in field operations. A second example is the construction superintendents, with decades of experience, now assisting in-house and performing constructability analysis of the design. Initial value engineering ideas are vetted with real-world field experience. The cross-pollination, influence and inspiration between construction and design are continuous and an integrated project delivery emerges.

Cost Control

Cost control is established with ongoing coordination and estimating during design. Pricing is

delivered at several stages: a conceptual estimate based on historic data, a budget confirmation and then the guaranteed maximum price identify development viability at all stages. Civil engineering and site cost controls are explored at the very beginning. Value engineering and MEP/structural systems analysis are performed project wide and often several times. Cost-effective green and sustainable design and construction techniques are folded into the process with ease. Design modifications typically have little schedule impact. Real budget numbers from project inception to ground breaking are a constant check. Form follows function in the truest sense and the end result is speed to market.

Construct

Constructability analysis continues after groundbreaking. Detail meetings, design review and subcontractor input are ongoing. Quality control, on-site collaboration and maintaining the integrity of the client vision stay at the forefront. The culmination of the team synergy is a tremendous advantage during delivery, sometimes resulting in 25-30% reductions in timeline. Owner contingency and change orders are diminished and in some cases non-existent. It's ultimately an improved risk-management system. Design build is highly responsive and flexible in the field. Adaptability to field conditions, modifications and creative problem solving are prompt and innovative. Fairly large decisions can be revisited and changes made, often without the inherent scope, cost and schedule impacts of traditional delivery.

Conclusion

Design build provides clients with a competitive edge to the marketplace. Hands on knowledge and a practical, common-sense management style yield a more holistic approach to project delivery. Client confidence builds over time as their project or portfolio ideas are delivered. The investment pays off over the life of a single project and during the relationship evolution of the design build and client teams. That payoff is then repeated and often multiplies through larger portfolios. This unique platform has proven time and again to enable the developer to grow, reach greater heights, expand regions, and ultimately succeed.

PROCON has been delivering design-build services in New England for several decades. We visualize with the client, think in terms of constructability, design in terms of operations, estimate in terms of value and build for efficiency, safety and longevity. And our team has a history of success. Jennifer Hamwey, PE, is member of business development team for PROCON, Manchester, N.H.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540