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Design-build project delivery method has gained momentum as a client-preferred model

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Over the past decade a common thread has been established among the booming life science and pharmaceutical industries here in the Northeast. There has always been a constant need to provide a flexible work environment to support healthy and growing business models for these industries to stay ahead of the competitive curve and adapt to new technologies. For a business owner tasked with the investment of growth as a capital improvement for an organization, the question of "success" is often measured as it relates to having spent the least amount of dollars to accomplish a particular goal or objective. In the pharmaceutical industry, research and development leans heavily towards rapid technological advances supporting product development, which requires constant change. This challenge can be met by the design-build delivery system, which supports these needs and ensures success for growth while maximizing your investment in the process.

The design-build model has been an extremely powerful and effective project delivery method to support the demands the life sciences industry requires. This method of construction offers the client a contractual single point of contact with the construction manager, who interfaces with the design team, providing the client with a turnkey approach from concept through construction. Collaboration of the key stakeholders (owner, construction manager, designers) that have bought into the design-build delivery process creates an atmosphere that seeks to avoid adversarial relationships and yields a much higher level of success. The design-build process also presents the opportunity for the construction manager to provide valued expertise on the front end of conceptual/design development, which allows the team to explore "what if" scenarios and prevent surprises down the road.

Any successful business owner in the life sciences industry (or any industry for that matter) will tell you that their most valued customers aren't just the ones buying their products; rather, the organizations that focus on their people, such as the product development group. From the construction side, the trend for "modular" builds to support these folks has been at the heart of enabling flexibility in business. Fitting out wet labs and clean rooms with enough capacity for future growth is essential for keeping lab users at their top performance. In this technology-driven day and age, space planning has also changed dynamics and needs for an organization. Being on the front lines of modular building, it's paramount that adequate future planning and provisions are incorporated into any project. There is much emphasis on the design of a modular wet lab configuration, which is undisputedly instrumental to the success of these companies. However, planning and designing non-lab space is equally important. Areas such as conference and meeting rooms must also be taken into consideration; these are places where results of lab work are analyzed and discussed, and where decisions are made. Cutting-edge lab and production space is great, but inadequate ancillary spaces can hinder progress.

From a page out of Stephen Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, to "begin with the end in mind" is the real measure of success for any design-build project. Engaging the construction manager as a partner in the design process is invaluable for both the owner and the design team. There are a multitude of benefits that stem from early discussions with critical team members such as facilities, operations, and end users. From a timing perspective, the ability to design and execute into construction has been proven to shorten the overall project duration. For example, identifying long-lead items as potential risks early on in the project can help the decision-making process from a procurement standpoint. During the programming effort, identifying any potential value optimization could very well result in reducing overall project cost. As an owner entering into a design-build agreement, there is often times a significant benefit to having a construction manager establish a guaranteed maximum price through design. Establishing this pricing early on in the process will enable the team to design within the budget, not around the budget.

I have found the design-build project delivery method to be an extremely successful practice throughout the years, one that has been gaining momentum as a client-preferred model. With a process that exhibits a proven track record among all parties - clients, end-users, construction managers, and designers - and alleviates cost and "scope creep" headaches, it's easy to see why. Dan Cobb is a project executive at JM Coull, Inc. of Maynard, Mass.

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