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Question of the Month: What is the advantage of having an owner's representative on a construction project? - by Peter Koska and Randy Bern

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Peter Koska,
The Site Management Group

Randy Bern,
The Site Management Group

The Site Management Group (SMG) has represented developers and building owners on numerous commercial and institutional construction projects for the past 23 years. The commitment to their clients is evident in their goal to increase the profitability of a project without sacrificing design

integrity or visual appeal, with special emphasis on value engineering and completion of the projects on schedule. SMG has the experience, commitment and passion to provide an owner with the representation they need to deliver a project on time and within budget.

As an owner's representative, SMG gets involved in the preliminary design stages working with a team of civil, geotechnical and structural engineers and architects to develop a project that will succeed with a well developed design, and stays within the budget proforma.

The owner's representative can aid in negotiating consulting contracts with geotechnical and civil engineers, architects, testing agencies and landscape designers. The objective is to support clients through the most difficult site and building projects. SMG's services are valuable to the site developer, civil engineers, educators, medical groups and commercial lenders associated with large and small residential developments, retail and commercial projects, educational institutions and medical facilities throughout the northeast. They have developed associations with various construction and engineering consultants, as may be required from time to time depending on the varied complexity of a particular project, thus offering as much or as little service as a client may require.

Many developers do not have the necessary background or in-house construction personnel to manage a project from preliminary design through construction finish. An owner's representative has the ability to provide guidance throughout the project. It all starts with the review of site feasibility, proximity to all required utilities, soil conditions and development of site budget costs. Next, an analysis of preliminary and interim plans and specifications, as design engineers finalize working drawings with input for value engineering recommendations, exploring potential cost savings by introducing alternative construction methods, materials, and sequencing. At this point, site and building budget analysis is considered to keep the project financially on track ready to start permitting. The owner's representative will establish a format for the bid package and solicit qualified bidders for the project, review bids, and negotiate the construction contract with the successful contractor. This is a critical part of the process as a well-developed set of construction drawings, and specifications can reduce over runs and extra work change orders.

Once the project moves into the construction phase, the owner's representative will advise the developer on the project schedule, attend weekly job meetings, review monthly payment applications with presentation to bank inspectors, and solve the varied construction issues that require trouble shooting on a daily or weekly basis. During the construction phase the owner's representative takes over the responsibility of coordinating construction with all local municipal agencies, city inspectors, and utility companies.

As the construction process evolves there is a likelihood of extra work due to discrepancies in contract drawings, changes to the design to improve the look and functionality of the project, or unseen site conditions, which initiates a cost for these changes. It becomes the representative's job to review these costs for validity and accuracy.

An owner's representative will combine the knowledge derived from many years of construction

experience to be the one person the owner can depend on and trust to provide the critical information needed to make informed development decisions that affect the aesthetic and financial success of any project. To have one person responsible for coordination of all the elements previously discussed would be a tremendous advantage and ultimately pay huge dividends to the owner of the development.

The Site Management Group's principal advantage to an owner is to consistently maintain control over all aspects of the project, thereby allowing the client the opportunity to focus their attention on the other aspects of their business.

Peter Koska is the president and Randy Bern is director of The Site Management Group, Hanover, Mass.

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