

Interior "Fit-up" Construction

The statement "Time is of the Essence" was most likely coined for the tenant fit-up market. High-end and fast-paced emphasizes these highly challenging and competitive renovation projects. Elements that are vital to understanding the management approach vary from that of retail, healthcare, institutional and commercial markets. The reason for the uniqueness of this market is the uncertainty of the tenant's knowing where they will spend there next leasing period or how best to utilize their space to be more effective and productive. Hence, the calling to the design team to integrate with the tenant coordination and relocation team begins day one at full speed.

The design process includes the element of planning. The assistance given to the tenant to plan the future furniture needs and its placement within the renovated space, then locating the communications devices, specialty lighting for special conference rooms or advanced technology presentation rooms. There may also be sessions on temporary relocation of a user group or there may be a need to identify swing space - an alternate location to move a group of employees that remain in this temporary setting until the completion of the project, and then, they are permanently placed in their new habitat (the flexibility to consolidate its work force to create areas of work for a contractor). The placement of the computer room (high profile) and the mail room often require a central location to the space or a location that allows for the connectivity to upper or lower floors. The finishing touches come into play with the planning, scheduling and budgeting. Where architectural firms do offer these activities as a service, many agree that the construction manager's integration and participation as a team member benefits the process.

The construction manager is an expert in the budgeting and tracking of construction costs on a project, they offer constructibility ideas to the architect for consideration in the design that can improve the details of construction, and they are creative in programming around sensitive construction environments, protecting people and space from the dust associated from demolition operations and sanding of wallboard and more. Where scheduling becomes a large responsibility the construction manager excels in this area by the nature of it is business, relevant experiences and finally, the training programs that are a common part their business practices. The coincidences of these functions are beneficial to the client as they provide for substance at each release set of drawings produced by the architect.

Observing the site, existing conditions as well as exploring concealed conditions, above ceilings within the designated space as well as ceiling on upper or lower floors affected by the construction must be coordinated with the architect, tenant and building manager. Typically on off-hours ceiling tiles can be removed and the above ceiling areas observed to accurately identify mechanical systems, allowing for a more complete existing condition drawing to assist in educating subcontractors pricing the designed systems, ultimately improving the possibility for an accurate Guaranteed Maximum Price.

Receiving these drawings, and subsequent release drawings, the construction manager's estimating department looks at the design as a new project. A careful quantity takeoff is prepared, then priced using current market data, generally from a database stored on computer by the construction manager. From this takeoff, a description of each trade of work is prepared and will be used in comparing subcontractor bid proposals that will be solicited at the design development stage of the pre-construction process. This may be the best time to identify long lead time items, such as, HVAC elements, lighting fixtures, glass requirements, flooring and special wall finishes, etc. There may be exceptions to this practice, for construction managers who employ a small estimating departments or a full staff with much to do, involving select subcontractors of the mechanical and electrical

trades is commonplace. Whichever method is used, accuracy is keynote in this exercise. A project manager has the role of coordinating these activities between the estimator (and MEPS agents) and the project team. His role includes tasks such as communications between all parties involved, perfectly communicated without personal interpretations, developing a construction schedule, analyzing the logistics affects of the project on the client user, making recommendations that help the client user consolidate their space or recommend the need for a swing space. This often requires multiple schedules that demonstrate the efficiency of construction based on the respective move arrangements being employed. He must also work with the estimating staff and agents in identifying value engineering ideas that may not have surfaced during the pre-construction process, review these recommendations and present to the project team all ideas, with respective costs, life-cycle implications and availability of materials to the project team.

The project manager must also **captain** the progress of activities during pre-construction to guarantee the timely delivery of the final documents for bidding, having a plan in place to distribute the construction documents and then collect the subcontractor's bid proposals. He must next be prepared with adequate planning time for review of the proposals, analysis of materials and resources and to make recommendations to the client users on which subcontractors are the best prepared to proceed working on the project. Knowing the location will help understand the external costs that need to be included in the estimate. Collecting building shutdown and usage fees is very important because they can add up to a substantial amount. Building management companies collect fees for elevator usage, fire alarm/sprinkler shutdowns, security building standard materials or equipment that cannot be substituted for by alternate or similar products and some high rise building management companies may also retail select materials directly to the contractor to maintain these consistencies.

The construction kick-off meeting, run by the superintendent in the presence of the project manager, must be attended by the primary subcontractors, with the superintendent discussing the approach to the project, project schedule, logistics, manpower requirements and safety, and the start date will be made permanent. The project manager will assign early purchased long lead-time items to the subcontractors and latter included in the appropriate construction subcontracts.

The information gathered at this meeting will be brought back to the project team and the client user can commence with their necessary relocations.

At construction startup, the superintendent becomes the most important project team member. The day-to-day contact for the client user and the architect, and the coordinator of all site activities, the superintendent provides the expertise necessary to make this project a success. His role extends to be a full service provider to the client user and a technical advisor to the architect. Having every element of the project placed under his control, his actions best serve the project by his best serving the project team. Constructing in a timely manner, looking ahead of the project tasks for conflicts and making the necessary adjustments to remain on schedule is of highest importance. When conflicts arise, he must immediately alert all members of the project team requesting quick resolution, always stressing schedule. The best superintendents do this.

A Tenant Fit-up project is fast-passed, high-end and most intriguing.