

## Pre-Construction Services

One of the major shifts in today's construction industry is that conversations with general contractors now commonly begin during the early planning phase of a project, even before drawings are prepared. When you think about it, this makes a lot of sense. Contractors are familiar with a multitude of issues dealing with the construction of a project. Hence, contractors that offer pre-construction services provide a real value to the owner and facility manager by providing timely information, value engineering and project life cycle cost analysis as part of their pre-construction services.

A contractor's pre-construction services are designed to assist in the decision making process associated with project planning. For example, when the work is facility related (such as working in or adjacent to an occupied environment) the contractor can provide a wealth of information in terms of site usage, construction sequencing, safety and costs before the work starts. The most important issue relates to cost. A contractor offering pre-construction services can analyze the impact of the budget and project choices ( i.e., what is this design going to cost compared to an alternate design? Or, what changes do need to be made in order for to meet our budgetary guidelines?). The contractor is the only one with hands-on experience relative to cost. They order material every day, they know the cost of manpower, and they know how long a particular construction activity takes, so contractors are in a position to offer accurate construction estimates.

Pre-construction services by a contractor compliment the architect's services by helping with cost estimates and construction methodology. The architect is still responsible for the design of the spaces relative to the owner's building program. However, incorporating the use of construction services as part of preliminary planning can, without question, save the owner money.

Consider this statement:

**"The only time you can save money on a project is before the construction starts. After construction begins, all you do is spend money."**

The time to really save money is when the construction documents are being prepared. The best way to evaluate a typical project design from the point of view of value engineering is during the design process. An owner is going to have to hire a general contractor sooner or later, so why not do it at the beginning of a project where the general contractor's construction experience can benefit the project development (and the owner's bottom line). The best part is that the owner still has the advantage of competitive bidding of subcontractors once the project is ready for bidding.

Saving time and money are critical needs for facility managers, who make decisions regarding a particular facility based upon the objectives set forth by a company's changing needs. These decisions almost always relate to money (i.e., how do I maximize my construction dollars?). When there are so many complex building issues facing today's facility managers – from mechanical, electrical, structural systems, to the actual construction sequencing and coordination - the timely advice from a contractor is important.

The real advantage of pre-construction services is that it helps facility managers to manage from a position of strength. They can develop a team of services that work together to guide a project to the best possible solution based upon the given design criteria, budget, and construction methodology. Doubts regarding budget concerns are eliminated, and the focus is on producing a quality project that satisfies the programming objectives. By developing relationships with contractors that offer preconstruction services, owners and facility managers have an indispensable resource for construction decisions.

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