How Construction Project Managers Meet Deadlines On Time

Certified construction managers plan, coordinate, budget, and supervise construction projects from early development to completion. Without these individuals’ help, construction projects would be chaotic—complications have the potential to occur from the time ground is broken to right before opening the doors of a new business. And since delays and mistakes cost money, construction project managers are a necessary and valuable investment. We asked a number of construction managers how they met their deadlines to bring visions to reality. This is what they had to say:

Mary Brittain-White consults with and supervises contractors and builders from a technology perspective. In Brittain-White’s expert experience working with project managers in the construction industry, common management issues include:

- issuing
- tracking and receiving work
- auditing and invoicing work performed under contracts.

"Most project managers currently control workflow to and from contractors via spreadsheets, emails and paper work packs," says Brittain-White. "This presents a problem. Labor-intensive generation of work packs for contractors, manual data entry and verification of completed work, lack of visibility into work schedules, and no knowledge of delivery slippages early on make delivering on timeline problematic."

How mobile is helping to solve these issues:

In large part, these issues can be addressed by the emergence of enterprise mobility technology.

"The inefficiencies and challenges of manual processing, combined with poor visibility into a contractor’s work schedule, make it difficult for managers to catch delivery slippages early on," says Brittain-White. "With added time pressures, delivering on deadline is oftentimes problematic for a construction manager. Luckily, the advent of mobile technology solves many of these issues by changing the way that construction managers work with subcontractors. For example, quality mobile applications can remove all the field paperwork, increase transparency of work completion statuses and improve quality with safety compliance enforcement and electronic inspection forms."

According to Brittain-White, by moving the collecting and delivering of information from office staff to field staff, where the actual work is done, mobile apps can help turn "managed" subcontractors into a reality.

www.retrievercommunications.com

"We work as the owners' representatives, managing several different teams, while maintaining budget, construction and design aspects," says Alfredo Jaime from Jaime Partners (a construction, project and program management service in restaurant, hospitality, retail and office spaces).

"Deadlines are the biggest challenge we face as construction project managers. You have to know what you have control over and what you don't. You can order the materials on time and hire the best construction team, and still run into problems [which will affect meeting the deadline].

The key is to be a good manager. Take preventative measures and always think on your feet, just in case something doesn't go according to plan. At the end of the day, it's about satisfying the client and completing the project up to par, even if you have several deadlines to meet with multiple projects running simultaneously. As construction project managers, we operate
like a machine; as long as everyone does their job accurately, we run smoothly, and our
efficiency and productivity is maximized."

Bryan Weaver, the construction and engineering advisor at Scholefield Construction Law, has
the following insights:

Construction projects always consist of a three-way relationship between the owner, the
contractor and the designer. Delays can be the result of each of the parties, or none of the
parties (as in force majeure, which is something that is beyond the control of all involved).
Impediments to timely completion can be attributed to any of the parties. Claims for delays
always relate back to money—either the collateral cost of the delay, such as lost business
because of late completion, or the direct cost of correcting the delay in order to meet
deadlines.

However, one of the most difficult obstacles for a project manager (PM) is the determination
of fault for any given delay. Given that a project's timely completion may be interpreted
differently by the Owner and the Contractor, what is a delay to one party, is just a change in
schedule to the other. When there is a disputed delay, proving who caused the delay (and
who is going to pay for it) is often the crux of expensive construction litigation. Most of the
time, there is no clear cut answer, and each side may have valid arguments in their favor. The
best advice is to avoid delays altogether, but this is sometimes unrealistic.

The second most challenging obstacle for any PM is the Change Order. Some COs are
relatively easy to deal with, such as additional work or changed scope of work. The real
problem is when there is a difference of opinion on what is considered part of the scope of
work, and what was additional work. Obviously, a PM will issue a change order when they feel
the work is not part of the original scope.

The best approach to handling delays and change order disputes is to be proactive. Many of
the problems are rooted in poor communication, even as early as the pre-bid stage where
questions about the scope of work, site conditions, or contract obligations are encouraged.
During the project, questions may come up, and should be adequately addressed, and
potential problems that are not documented properly in fact become real problems.

Some pointers to avoid project disputes:

1. Understand the contract before signing— from beginning to end. This is your time to ask
questions, perform site inspections and thoroughly understand the scope of work. Ask
questions now. If a project schedule seems unrealistic, now it the time to discuss this,
not part way through the project when it becomes obvious.

2. Document everything - even discussions during a short jobsite walk. Documentation is
the key to winning disputes.

3. Know and use the contract terms and conditions - know your rights and obligations,
follow procedures. You may waive some valuable contractual rights by not addressing
items in a timely manner.

4. Communicate clearly. Make sure all communications are clear and unambiguous. Make
sure information received is clear and unambiguous. If it isn't, then request a
clarification.

There are many more basic rules for all stages of a project, but these listed above are a few
of the most common, yet some of the most ignored rules.

www.construction-laws.com