

Even in the worst economic downturns, life goes on. The need some companies have for a building, an addition or a renovation doesn't change merely because the credit market tightens, it just makes it more of a challenge.

In an economy where money is tight, the issue in construction becomes one of value-per-dollar—what are the methods a company or a community can utilize to create the best facility for the least cost?

More and more, businesses are opting for construction management and, in particular, the design-build method of commercial construction.

Construction management generally refers to the application of techniques to reduce time and cost while enhancing quality. In this method, a budget is set by the client and both the designer and builder work toward a common goal of meeting the client's needs within that budget.

Design-build merges traditional processes to create even greater efficiencies. The architects, engineers and the construction manager are brought together early on, allowing the owner to speak with one responsible and efficient team instead of many individual service providers.

It's worth taking a look at the advantages of both the construction management and design-build methods when considering your next project.

INCREASED EFFICIENCIES

The traditional design-bid-build method is time consuming and requires the completion of design work before anything else can happen. Both construction management and design-build allow significant acceleration of this process because costs can be identified sooner and construction can begin on the first phases of the project while design of later phases continues. In addition, communication is improved, scheduling delays are prevented and problems can be detected and resolved earlier.

Working as a single team allows other kinds of problem-solving as well. When the La Quinta Inn in North Platte

needed an accelerated construction timeframe, we were able to save four to six months off the overall schedule by building the team according to the parameters of the project versus the lowest bid. This allowed us to choose the best contractors, getting people onsite faster and starting many facets of work all at the same time.

VALUE ENGINEERING

In design-build and construction management methods, the focus shifts from the contractor trying to spend the least possible amount on construction in order to maximize profits, to a coordinated effort to maximize a client's budget.

The design-contractor-owner team is able to assess every aspect of the project, and working together, make changes to reduce costs. For example, when the BD team built the Culver's Restaurant in Kearney, they spotted inefficiencies in the electrical design and saved considerable cost by bringing in the electrical services in a different manner.

Another example of this ability is in the construction of an addition for Kearney Floral, a unique and attractive building by anyone's standards. Our evaluation of the situation suggested a pre-engineered structure with alternative exterior finishes would meet budget, where conventional construction methods would not. For all intents and purposes, the finished construction is indistinguishable, and the bottom-line benefit is considerable.

ENHANCED FLEXIBILITY

Imagine spending a ton of money and time on a new design, acquiring bids, and then finding out that the design exceeds your budget. Construction management and design-build methodology helps you avoid being locked into those kinds of problems.

When we remodeled a former gas station to serve as a drive-up facility for Five Points Bank, the challenges were many. The construction budget was such that the project would only work if we could come up with a method of preserving the existing wall and roof systems, and figure

out a way to use the existing canopy. More challenging still, the client was eager to remove all reminders of the former gas station and improve traffic flow.

Working jointly, the designers, builders and owner were able to address the issues in the context of the overall project, meet the challenge and satisfy the client and the budget.

A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATIONS

Another important advantage of construction management, and particularly design-build, is in communications, both within the design-build team and between the team and the client. Many, if not most, general contractors regard the financial details of a construction project as confidential, whereas many design-build contractors have an “open-book” policy. We utilize a state-of-the-art construction management program that tracks every detail, down to a single roll of insulation or box of nails, and we’re ready to share the information with clients at any point in the process.

That’s just part of a whole philosophy that makes good, open communication—with clients, architects and engineers, subcontractors and field crews—a top priority. We make it a point to be easily reachable by phone or email, and by being responsive to changing needs and conditions.

A BETTER WAY TO BUILD

Even in a booming economy, construction management and design-build are value-oriented methods with numerous advantages for many commercial structures. Both are cost efficient, creating a smoother and less complicated process.

The world doesn’t come to a halt just because the economy is struggling. If you need to build, build. Just make sure you build smart.

ABOUT BD CONSTRUCTION

Founded in 1960, BD Construction is today one of the Midwest’s leading construction companies, with a lengthy history of large scale building projects of every description, from hangars to hospitals to hotels. As design-build and construction management specialists, BD is capable of handling all aspects of a building project, starting with the initial concept and floor plans and continuing through site selection, design consultancy, financing coordination and permitting, project management, construction and evaluation of the finished project. For more information, visit them online at www.bdconstruction.com. ■