

Go time

Handling successful projects in occupied space

By Scott Offermann

Construction projects provide their own unique challenges under the best circumstances. When you add the additional challenge of construction in occupied space, the simplest tasks can become the hardest to deliver. Unexpected interruptions, continued rescheduling and the added client management requirements create undue stress on employees and sub-contractors quickly eroding profits.



When undertaking a project that includes occupied space, taking the time to focus on the additional requirements will provide the foundation for a project being delivered without undue stress, on time, on budget and with greater client satisfaction. It also will help preserve the anticipated profits.

The preparation for work in occupied space begins at the first engagement. During the first and subsequent job walks, it is important to understand the occupant requirements, cultural employee concerns and any landlord requirements that could cause concern — all of which could delay the project and add additional costs.

Recognize that what is considered normal working conditions in the construction industry can be interpreted as hazardous to the occupants. Excessive noise, noxious fumes and excess dust can be reasons for employees to be absent or obstruct the efficient flow of work. When you're scoping the project, use past experience to identify client sensitivity and think about some additional measures that will help mitigate the impact.

There are some very simple things that can be done to reduce occupant impact. These include after hours and weekend scheduling for loud and intrusive work, the use of containment and negative pressure areas to minimize the occupant impact from noxious odors as examples.

In addition, it is also important to recognize the requirements of the landlord, other tenants in a multi-tenant building and local municipalities'

requirements for accessing the job site, exterior staging of supplies and equipment and special permitting.

If there is a requirement to have material removed from loading docks, entrances or parking areas before a certain time of day, make sure you have the appropriate time and manpower to move the material before the deadline. This may mean bringing on additional temporary staff, adjusting the delivery times or utilizing sub-contractor labor to assist.

All of these are easily achievable, however, they may incur additional cost. Identifying these requirements early will allow inclusion into the initial proposal. Much like staging the contractors and equipment during a project, the thought put into minimizing the impact to the occupants will prove a beneficial return on investment.

Sub-contractors and suppliers are a key contributor to success. When dealing with sub-contractors, make sure they understand the requirements and conditions of the occupants and landlords. Validate that they have the ability to accommodate the requests. Discuss the options and their experience. Oftentimes, they have encountered similar situations and can provide alternate options to achieve the requirements.

Sub-contractors and suppliers must build these additional requirements into their bids as well. Every player in the project needs to protect their profits. Identifying and clearly documenting the additional requirements will prevent surprises during the

project. Verifying that the subcontractors and suppliers understand the requirements and protect themselves before the project begins will eliminate the much dreaded discussion of who will absorb the cost of the added burden.

Today, when bids are being led by procurement teams, it's essential that this type of information be clearly identified and highlighted. When communication with the client, make sure they understand where the additional cost is coming from and explain the benefits of these additional requirements. This include those items that can be delivered without additional cost as well as the higher cost of accommodating occupants needs.

The inclusion of these requirements can be used to highlight your company's commitment to the customer and the success of their business. This will provide them the information required to accept the higher

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cost or to clearly make the commitment to operate without the added conveniences. When the client accepts the risks associated with a lower cost, it is important to document.

If is far too easy for customers to claim they were not made aware of the option, and therefore should not pay the additional cost. The documentation is will provide protection to you and the client in the event the project encounters problems.

Construction in occupied spaces can be accomplished with minimal impact to the project and with increased client satisfaction with some forethought and planning. Understanding the unique client requirements that create the challenge will help the contractor identify the solutions and resources needed to overcome them.

Incorporating these solutions and costs into the project will achieve a heightened positive perception from the occupants and client. **CCR**

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