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2016 Commercial Construction & Renovation Summit





The Operations Team

Are they your greatest advocate or your worst enemy?

By Scott Offerman

When undertaking any construction project, the end goal often is obscured in the process and forgotten. Between architects, designers, engineers and the individuals from the owners and occupants providing input, it is easy for the goal to become lost.

The ultimate goal in any construction project is to create a space that meets all of the requirements of the end user. To produce a final product that will meet and exceed the expectations, it is essential that the operational team be engaged throughout the project. Whether new construction or a remodel of existing space, the engagement of the existing or proposed operations team will generate a successful delivery of the project with fewer challenges.

The operation team can provide in depth knowledge of the occupants, business and culture. Working through the design phase, the operations team can validate the functionality as it specifically relates to the occupants needs.

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Helping to identify the appropriate storage space, janitor closets, support area's required for the operation is only the starting point. In selecting fixtures, finishes and equipment, the operations team can be instrumental in selecting product that can be supported by local or national contractors that already have established relationships and the ability to source spare parts and components, assuring the ongoing maintenance.

With the unique understanding of what the occupant pain points are, they also can provide insight into space utilization and design. This will help create a space that will optimize the performance of the business unites. This can range from more telephone rooms in open office environments, to the best size and number of conference rooms, or the operating hours to aid in the design of electrical and mechanical distribution for energy efficiency. This team, which ultimately will manage the ongoing operation, can proved the insight and information needed for the contractor to meet the expectations of the customers.

Creating this partnership in the design phase will lead to enhanced support during

the construction phase. The operations team can be key to gaining access to the site, placing the building systems into bypass and managing the occupants of the building. This provides helpful in understanding the business and building limitations. It also will aid in scheduling the staging of sub-contractors, deliveries and specific work to minimize disruptions and delays.

Providing a liaison with the landlords, owners and occupants and identifying key events can assist in minimizing the impact of the construction that often creates unnecessary delay. For example, if there is an important meeting being scheduled, modifying the work schedule to minimize noise and disruption during that time will minimize complaints and the need to stop work.

When scheduling noxious, loud or invasive work, the operations team can identify the time frame that provides the least impact to the business. When the operations team is not engaged, an adversarial relationship is created. The engagement and inclusion of the operations team during the construction process will ensure a smoother project execution, minimize disruption and aid in the management of occupants and client.

Building relationships key

The relationship created during construction will continue to be beneficial. When the project is completed, there is a shift from the original client to the operations team becoming the primary client. The operations team receives the documentation for the warranty and operational information and the operational training. They also are tasked with the management and completion of the punch list items and managing warranty issues.

Giving control to the operations team, such as allowing them to contact the appropriate contractor or sub-contractor directly, enhances the contractor's delivery. Creating a defined communication and escalation protocol will allow visibility to the issues related to the project without becoming overburdened by requests.

When a contractor becomes overburdened, they become an obstacle. If every question or request must be funneled through the general contractor, they must be prepared and staffed to manage the influx

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of calls as well as be prepared to handle every issue as a priority from the client. Empowering the operations team to take ownership of the project after it is completed will reduce the demand of the project team when coordinating tactical work.

Contractors want to deliver a superior product to the clients and still achieve the desired profit. The engagement of operational teams will enable the contractor to gain unique knowledge and insight of the clients business and mitigate construction delays and additional expenses by the proper and timely staging of work and materials.

Recognizing and utilizing the operations team appropriately will aid in the management and delivery of a superior construction project. **CCR**

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