

Construction Management: Schedule Strategies

Schedule, scope and cost are the essential bottom-line issues faced by every project, regardless of size. They are always competing. Typically, everyone is looking very carefully at cost, but schedule very much affects cost and is often the hardest element to manage. There are strategies, however, to manage the “bottlenecks” that threaten to bog down a project and they should start early in the Planning and Preconstruction phases. When interviewing contractors, ask about how they prepare their critical path schedules, which will reveal a lot about their capabilities and efficiencies and their comfort level at discussing approval cycles and milestones. An experienced construction professional should be able to look at a set of drawings and predict the construction duration. Ask contractors about their proposed schedule to discern if they are realistic or overly optimistic, and whether they truly believe they can deliver the project in the time frame necessary.

Require contractors to prepare detailed critical path schedules that show all factors that affect time, such as shop drawings and submittals, architect and Owners’ review and approval cycles, manufacture/fabrication lead times for materials, installation, as well as interrelationships between affected trades. Be aware that their initial preparation of the schedule is likely not enough; it is essential to double-check for errors, missing elements (such as time for the Owner to select finishes and long lead items), excessive float time, and faulty logic between elements. The schedule should be checked and updated regularly, usually every 2 to 4 weeks. It is important to anticipate when the contractor is about to fall behind so as to make positive suggestions to keep them on track, such as adding crews, adjusting the work flow, etc. General conditions and management labor for your general contractor is a large part of the overall expense, which runs from a low of 8% of the project cost to as high as 15%. These fees are based primarily on the duration of the project. Any time increase also extends the architecture and engineering, inspections and other fees to manage the process.

It is critical to flush out schedule expectations and problems early. A good construction manager will reduce costs by accelerating the design and construction schedule. It is fundamental to Stonemark’s process that the contractors and all project participants are encouraged to work together as a team to provide full information, which we then organize in order to create efficient project delivery. The importance of communication cannot be overemphasized; team solidarity allows for early problem solving and tighter control of the schedule. Clear contractual and process controls on schedule can make the difference between a successful project and an unhappy client.

Stonemark Construction Management offers a full spectrum of construction management services for custom homes & residential estates, commercial buildings, sacred spaces and multi-family residential. Our projects and our clients are diverse, but our philosophy remains the same: to bring a harmonious approach to the chaos of construction.

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