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OWNERS, DEVELOPERS AND MANAGERS

By Ted Brennan, T. M. Brennan Contractors, Inc.

Capturing the value of design-build without limiting choices

It's generally accepted that there are a number of benefits that the design-build option delivers owners. But, fortunately you're not limited to only considering design-build firms to capture these benefits. Here are a few tips that may open up your choices.

Part of the equation is screening for architects and contractors who have your bottom-line as their driving principle. You can determine this by how your candidates talk about past projects and how their past clients speak about them.

Another key ingredient is the attitude of both the architect and the contractor about working seamlessly. You want an architect who is open to input and respects contractors to bring a lot of hands-on experience. You want a contractor who is focused on improving your bottom line and won't cloud your vision. You also want a contractor with depth of ex-



Ted Brennan

pertise possessed by senior management and also the project managers, site supervisors and their skilled lead workers assigned to your project.

It also helps if you involve the contractor before all the detailed design and engineering is completed. A relatively small investment in a thorough, professional design review by experienced contractors you're considering will be repaid many times through your savings on the cost to build, operate and maintain your building. This is an important step because architects and contractors bring complimentary but different expertise;

and you want to benefit from these differences while the cost of change is still low.

With each passing day, energy and water efficiency becomes more important and affects the value of your project over the long run. So, it helps if you select a contractor who has direct experience with HVAC and plumbing. You also want your contractor experienced with sophisticated management systems that will help you achieve your targeted performance levels.

These days most contractors use standard management tools. What still makes the difference are the people who load these tools with events -- and how they think and act on a daily basis as they encounter inevitable ups and downs on the job. So, probe your candidate firms about their approach to planning and actual history dealing with inevitable glitches.

Another ultimate ingredient affecting

the value built in on a daily basis is the careful selection of subcontractors who will work on your project. So, again, probe for real history. The right subcontractors are central in keeping to the schedule.

And finally, you want the architect and contractor to have the right attitude about change orders. These are inevitable but make sure they have a history of not 'nickel and diming' owners. This is not where you want a contractor to make up for a poorly planned and priced bid. Appropriate due diligence with past clients is the way to go. If you select carefully, your project will remain focused on the ultimate goal, which is a cost effective building for the whole life-cycle. You'll also avoid needless overhead, delays and headaches.

So, in summary, here are the five most important factors that will help you capture the benefits of design-build without limiting

your choices to only design-build firms:

1. Bottom line focused architect and contractor -- both the senior management as well as key personnel -- with the right attitude and track record for focus on owners' bottom-line

2. Early and thorough contractor review of plans to capture the benefits of their hands-on experience before you finalize plans or break ground

3. Energy and water systems expertise to deliver an efficient and easy to operate and maintain building

4. Strong history of wise selection of subcontractors

And last but not least ...

5. Clear, strong track record for handling change -- without 'nickel and diming' the owner.

Ted Brennan is vice president of general contracting at T. M. Brennan Contractors, Inc. in Hamburg, NJ. ■