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Julian Sutton has 20 years experience of construction on projects in the UK and Europe. He has a wealth of on-site experience gained working for national contractors as well as having worked for international consultancies.

He is experienced in preparing and communicating Strategic, Design, Procurement and Construction programmes on multi million pound projects. Julian also has experience of preparing and responding to extension of time submissions at adjudication and arbitration.

VINTAGE WINE GUARANTEES PROJECT SUCCESS

INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time, a Client wanted a building. He employed a brilliant Design Team who came with many design awards, leaders of their field. The Client then employed a Project Manager of much acclaim to oil the wheels of the project delivery machine but something was still missing. Even at concept stage, the project delivery team was missing deadlines, working inefficiently. Trouble ahead.

The Client, having taken to the wine at lunchtime to calm his nerves, pulls the cork out of a lovely vintage bottle and out pops a Genie. The Genie grants the Client three wishes.

The Client thinks long and hard, and then says, “I am tired of this constant battle to get the team on this project to perform! Can you please make this project work like a dream and finish as soon as possible” (work was on the forefront of his mind as he was a work-a-holic)

The wish was granted. The project was completed. (If only all problem projects were solved so simply!!)

“And for your second wish?” “I would like to be granted with the wisdom to conceptualise and deliver a successful project, on time and on budget. The Utopian scenario”

He had a bit of a sore head. The wish was granted. “And for your third wish?” “I would like to be granted with the wisdom to overcome project delivery problems in the real world of development. The Real World scenario”

He had a real sore head now! The wish was granted.

So, how does this fairytale relate to DGA’s Newsletter.....

The Client, wishing to remain anonymous, has made this contribution.

UTOPIAN SCENARIO

The Client employs his brilliant Design Team, and a Project Manager to oil the wheels of the project delivery vehicle, but also employs the services of a Programming Specialist. The role of the Programming Specialist commences at concept stage of the project. By producing an early Strategic Programme the whole team can see who is producing what by when and who requires the information. Perhaps, more importantly, the Client can see when elements are to be carried out, and by whom. Further, simple cash-flow histograms are prepared as part of the programme so that the Design, Procurement and

Construction profile can be compared with the funding profile. Funding shortfalls can be addressed early, and the consequences of those changes seen.

We have found this modelling very useful where funding is released in stages. Not only can it be used to ensure that enough money is available to pay for the project, but also, should a delay occur, and the funds are already in the client's bank, how much, and how long can be invested to offset interest charges.

The Programming Specialist should be employed on the project from inception to completion. By updating the programme with each change, and monitoring the progress of each activity, be it design, LA planning, procurement, or construction, the Client can be fully informed regarding the costs, risks and delivery of their project.

THE CLIENTS EXPERIENCE

“The Programming Specialist was employed to prepare the strategic and design programmes. We knew what was going on, and the design programme increased the efficiency of the design team. Last year we had a commission to review how long a design team required to undertake a full Environmental Impact Assessment and an Outline Planning Application on a very large manufacturing site. The Design Team had told me (the Client) it was a six month task. The Programming Specialist prepared, in conjunction with the designers and environmental consultants a detailed programme showing who was to produce what, by when, and where it was to go. It was an aggressive programme of 3 months agreed with the Design Team. The Design Team, which comprised some 26 individuals from a number of organisations had to be convinced that the programme would increase their efficiency by knowing when packages of work would be passed from one member to the next. Weekly progress checks keep the programme up-to-date. In the end, the planning application was submitted on time! I (the Client) was happy.”

REAL WORLD SCENARIO.

Many developments are carried out by Developers who have little or no funding until Planning permission has been granted. The designers have to work speculatively, with, if they are lucky, a small fee. Funding impacts on the early design of the project.

Once Planning Permission is received, funding is available, and then it is full steam ahead to get on site as quickly as possible. The client uses a 2 stage procurement route to get on site even quicker Not Clear!!

So, is the design ready or not? Many projects only find out when the contractor comes on site, and finds that many of the design changes made for value engineering purposes have not been updated on the contract issue drawings, and the design is not co-ordinated.

Familiar?

So, what gems of brilliance did the Genie pass onto our Client then?

THE CLIENTS EXPERIENCE OF DEALING WITH THE REAL WORLD.

“I (the Client) have found that the Programming Specialist offers real benefits. They improve communication, provide detailed and reliable records, and assist with a robust management system.

Good Communication.

This is the life blood of a good marriage. In the marriage of various parties to the contract, each with differing needs and priorities, good communication is the key to avoiding an acrimonious and expensive divorce, where no one truly wins.

Detailed and Reliable Records.

By undertaking regular and detailed progress reviews with the design, procurement and construction teams, the Programming Specialist can see where the log jams are occurring in the programme. Once a log jam is identified, the best way around the problem can be found. This saves time and money.

This information should be fed into the change control system – what is the true cost of a variation, including any delays to the completion date. Then I, as the Client, can make an informed decision based on all the factors.”

IN CONCLUSION

The employment of a Programming Specialist improves the efficiency of the Project Delivery Team. The role creates an environment of accountability, commitments are made, and whether they are honoured is recorded. This improves certainty and reduces the risk for the client. Team peer pressure usually keeps the design team moving in the direction and rate of the programme. When that fails, the evidence is there for a quiet word in the right ear and, hey presto, resources are focussed on the area of concern.

We have found that these simple methods of improving delivery have worked on projects ranging from £0.25m up to £1000m.

DGAL have the resources and the expertise to assist Clients and Developers [and even Contractors] to achieve their ambitions in relation to construction projects that they are about to undertake.