

USE PARTNERING TO IMPROVE CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTIVITY

What potential “rocks in the road” might cause you problems on your next major construction project? Will they be poor communication and coordination, lack of responsiveness, poor plans and specs, or something else?

In partnering session after partnering session, these potential barriers to success continue to be part of the top ten reasons for problems on construction projects. As it turns out, these three issues were also mentioned frequently in a recent survey of over 200 contractors as posing challenges to maintaining or improving construction productivity.

Poor communication and coordination will result in wasted time and effort, rework and unnecessary, non-value-adding costs on a project. Communication improvement can occur fairly painlessly if the partners on the contract understand and use the appropriate chain of command on the project and if they make an effort to continuously talk about the project and issues that they foresee on the horizon. Having effective project management team meetings can help maintain communication, coordination and cooperation on your construction project.

Lack of responsiveness is often cited as a problem by contractors who complain that they can't get decisions from the owner, A/E, or owners' reps quickly enough. Delays in decision making can be a real problem on a project with a tight time schedule and financial penalties for delays. Time is money—for both the contractor and the owner. Keeping the communication channels open, while acting with a sense of responsible urgency, can help the parties to the contract avoid this problem.

Instances of contractors raving about the accuracy, completeness and usability of plans and specs are hard to come by. Of course, some plans and specs are better than others. Focusing on working together to mutually solve problems, rather than fixing blame, can help work through these issues. This of course also requires adequate communication in the spirit of cooperation that drives all successful partnering efforts.

Based on our years of experience working with contractors and construction projects, we've seen case after case where poor productivity costs everyone more. It results in higher costs and lower margins for contractors and ultimately in higher costs for owners. Using common sense and common courtesy within an appropriately developed partnering charter and infrastructure can help improve productivity on your job.”

Dom Cingoranelli and his firm assist project teams with partnering facilitation, intergroup conflict resolution and related consulting.