

TOP 10 MISTAKES IN PLANNING A PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Timely planning is the single most important task to ensure the success of your building project. The Top 10 mistakes that people make when planning their project actually tell you what to do to make your project successful. Avoiding these mistakes avoids a midstream change that means increasing costs, compromise, or both. In other words, avoiding these mistakes keeps your project's success out of jeopardy.

10 - NOWHERE TO GROW

Everyone has a need to plan for future expansion. The timing of and the amount of future growth vary dramatically for different organizations. But, not planning for expansion comes back to haunt you after the project is complete. The future costs can be double what they could be. Occasionally expansion is not possible at all. Make adequate provisions in your plans for an appropriate amount of growth. And make provisions in your building to allow expansion to take place easily.

9 - OVERLOOKING EASY MONEY

Missed money-saving opportunities could be 5% to 20% of your operating costs – forever. Overlooking these easy to do ideas is a shame. Consider lifecycle costs in addition to initial costs of materials and systems. This can create operating savings that pay for themselves. Such factors as building orientation, power use and controls, and selection of equipment dramatically affect utility costs. Planning for effective physical operation of your facility affects many things from payroll to storm water management taxes. Give these things some importance and explore the ramifications.

8 - MISSED EXPECTATIONS

Communicate what is important to you in writing. Make sure that budget and schedule limits are realistic and clear. Develop a list of features that you expect. Make sure that permits and approvals are identified early before they create problems. Many of these issues will surface on their own; but reacting, instead of planning ahead, almost always requires compromise or more money. Monitor whether your expectations have been addressed.

7 - FORGETTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure can often add 40% to your Square Footage and even more to your costs. Overlooking space needs that are incidental but necessary leads to cost increases that are inconvenient and maybe devastating. The incidental space needs can take the form of storage requirements for deliveries, custodial supplies, building equipment, stairs, toilet rooms, and trash removal for instance. When the 'incidental' space is mandatory it has to be accommodated by compromise or additional cost.

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6 - POOR TIMING

Things can take three to four times as long as you expect. A realistic grasp of the project schedule prevents dashed expectations, overtime costs, inadvisable rushing and aborted quality control. Think in terms of the process that is necessary – planning, design, specifications, permits and approvals, bidding and contracting, mobilization, construction and finally commissioning. The majority of projects take about two years.

5 - NASTY SURPRISES

Bumping into unforeseen constraints can kill your project. Zoning is like that. Identifying all the restrictions that you will face eliminates the risk of this happening. Every unplanned-for constraint always creates changes and delays. Constraints can be anything from governmental regulations to requirements of your organization.

4 - THE STAKEHOLDER BLUES

Ignoring the people problems almost always dooms the success of the project. There are many ways for this to happen. Your project may have all the usual stakeholders or it may be unique in its complicated makeup. Once you have identified your stakeholders, it is almost always possible to accommodate everyone's needs. Interestingly, ignoring your stakeholders often makes for a simpler project, but one that is not considered a success.

3 - OVERSIMPLIFICATION

You need to be prepared to be the client. It takes time and attention for a project to be successful. That is not to say that it is difficult. Your organization already knows what is required. But it does take your time and attention to put it on paper and to get it right. Unfortunately you can't delegate your role as client without risking that your organization's needs will go unmet.

2 - MISTAKING DESIGN FOR PLANNING

No amount of design can make up for a lack of planning. Mistaking design for planning can subtly undermine your project. Seeing your project take shape graphically is mesmerizing. It takes your focus away from what your real needs are. At the outset you should focus on getting clarity about your goals, needs and expectations. Only then do you have a way to judge how successfully the design addresses your situation.

1 - BAD ADVICE

You will get a lot of advice. Consider the source. Some advice will be self-serving. Some will be well meaning. Building is complex. No two solutions are the same. The advice you really need will guide you and help you to deal with the complexity.

SUMMARY

All ten mistakes should be addressed before you begin designing your project. You should document your decisions and research; and you should share it with everyone involved in your project. **The Project Blueprint™** takes you through all these tasks.

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