



Big Problems In Estimating, From the Architect and Engineer

Posted by [donshort](#) at 5/13/2010 3:30 PM CDT

In a recent meeting with a large A/E firm, several problems were brought up concerning problems in estimating. The first problem stated, from more than one attendee, was accuracy. The accuracy of the estimate will be a continuing problem for design firms and even owners. Most, if not virtually all architects and engineers will have a multitude of root causes for this problem.

Architects and engineers are primarily interested in creating designs, not estimating. There is nothing wrong with this; if I wanted to be an architect I would likely not be interested in preparing estimates. However, the company attitude toward project costs for these firms is all-important. If they do not care about costs, they will not dedicate the resources required to make reliable determinations of the costs.

I know many architectural and engineering firms do not have any estimators on staff or as consultants to their firms. I know many firms designate one or two of their design staff as estimators when they are not actually doing design work. They are typically supported with a reference book for costs.

I know a lot of contractors that receive calls from design firms about how much certain items should cost. Some design firms will retain the services of an individual consultant for estimating. Very few design firms have full time professional estimators on staff or as a consulting resource.

Each of the above cases is the primary cause of inaccurate estimates—unqualified or a lack of qualified personnel in preparing estimates. In order to prepare reliable estimates the architects and engineers must first have qualified personnel.

This means they must have someone with the estimating qualifications that can prepare estimates for feasibility and budget purposes with very little to no information on the project. It means they must have estimators that can estimate the details required when the plans and specifications are completed, for all disciplines.

An architect or engineer that does not have these capabilities is only setting themselves and the project up for failure. One person can handle the feasibility/budget estimating with the right training and tools. Once past the initial budgeting, it takes a team of estimators with complementary skill sets to reliably estimate projects.

Secondary causes for inaccurate estimates from architects and engineers are a lack of time to properly prepare an estimate, an inadequate estimating program/budget, owner stipulations and even an outright lack of concern for costs. There are more!

Special Note from GuideOne Taylor Ball Construction

Posted by Mike Carlstrom at 5/18/10

Preparing comprehensive estimates at three to four milestones during the pre-construction time period in conjunction with qualified estimators will result in successful projects.

Guide One Taylor Ball has a full time estimating staff that is familiar with the pricing of construction projects as we are also buying construction materials and services on a daily basis. This allows us to keep up with market changes at all times. Our estimating staff is available to work with an Owner and their Design Professionals to avoid costly estimating during the design phase of a project.