

PROJECT BIDDING – ALL THOSE LITTLE THINGS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

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Question - Project Bidding- What does this really mean?

Answer – It can mean a lot of things but one of the most important steps is to take time to prepare a “Plan”.

As an Owner or an Owner’s Representative you must define the project as completely as possible in advance of advertising for bids. Planning a project requires a lot of forward thinking, thorough discussions and repeated revisions prior to going out to bid. Typically project planning is a team effort which might include you and one or more of the following:

- 1) Architects
- 2) Designers
- 3) Engineers
- 4) Surveyors
- 5) Scientists
- 6) Expert Consultants
- 7) Supervisors
- 8) Committees
- 9) Customers
- 10) Experienced Peers
- 11) Sales persons/ Suppliers/ Vendors
- 12) Qualified Contractors

Ideas and solutions for a project can come from many persons and places. Diverse inputs can help you to develop the most appropriate plans and innovative solutions that will help to achieve success.

A good plan will very clearly illustrate your expectations for a project and this is an essential early step toward successful completion of a project. The plan will define the final product and allow you to measure successful completion of the project. Of course some projects will require much more planning than others however even the simplest project will benefit by the formulation of a plan. With smaller projects the plans and specifications are often verbal and there is nothing wrong with this. However, as in nearly all situations, the act of writing it down or sketching it out forces the planner(s) to consider more thoroughly the many interrelated factors and considerations and thus to better communicate with the bidders and other cooperators.

A comprehensive plan that includes specifications is an important communication tool. The plan will communicate your ideas and requirements to all interested parties. The plan will facilitate efficient communication with qualified contractors and sub-contractors, key employees, managers and supervisors, committee members, constituents, customers and patrons, etc.

Bidding is often a formal process wherein qualified bidders are provided a complete set of plans and specifications which they must study in the process of preparation of a bid. Usually there will be one or more meetings where bidders will be allowed view the work site and encouraged to ask questions to clarify their understanding of the proposed project before the bid deadline. Bidding may also be accomplished through private meetings with 1 or 2 qualified contractors where ideas and methods are developed based on the contractor’s experiences with works similar to what is being proposed.

Whether a bid will be formal or informal the following items should be addressed in advance:

- Time Table
- Dates for the commencement of work
- Schedules
- Completion date
- Timing conflicts
- Contingency plans
- Contract Items
- General Contractor – Qualifications
- Sub-Contractors – Qualifications
- Material suppliers – Specified or authorized

Owners responsibilities
Scope of work
Change orders and problem solving
Permits and inspections
Safety
Insurance
Bonding
Application for payment, terms, retainage, etc.
Authorization of payment
Site maintenance
Collateral damage and repairs
Project close out and punch list

And finally – **“A Lot of the Little Things That Make a Difference”**.

- 1) Study the proposed project thoroughly so that you can view it from all sides.
- 2) Consider how the work will proceed under optimal and poor working conditions.
- 3) Look at the sequence of work and how it will flow throughout the project.
- 4) Plan for changes even though you have no idea what they will be or what will necessitate them.
- 5) Try to consider all contingencies either good or bad.
- 6) Double check everything. Never assume anything.
- 7) Keep thinking and adjust as needed. Do not get trapped by rigid adherence to the plan. Projects have a “life” of their own where the outcome is a product of infinite interacting factors. Keep the target in view but do not be afraid to innovate or to jog around a temporary inconvenience.
- 8) Take notes, keep a log, sketch as built drawings, make lists, do whatever is necessary to keep everything going smoothly.
- 9) Keep your cool, it is easier to communicate and resolve any issue from a stable position.
- 10) Communicate – before, during and after!
- 11) Take credit for your decisions and actions, be it good or bad.
- 12) Learn from your mistakes, adjust as needed and keep moving forward. Stay positive.
- 13) Try to do everything for a reason. “Just because” is not a reason. Make a decision, take action, evaluate the result. If it works well you will know why, if it doesn’t you will know why.
- 14) Be honest and fair.
- 15) Fully utilize the experiences of everyone involved with your project.
- 16) Keep an open mind. Good ideas can come from anywhere.
- 17) Try to develop expectations that you can fulfill. In other words do not make promises that you cannot keep.
- 18) Words like “Thank you” and “Good Work” go a long way.
- 19) Communicate – before, during and after!