



Owner's Representative in Truest Sense

Most companies have internal facility management personnel responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of their organization. But in today's lean-and-mean economy, these individuals may not have the time to handle a short-term workload increase or the experience required to plan a large corporate renovation or relocation project. An owner's representative (owner's rep) delivery method is one solution. An owner's rep provides experienced, professional project managers on an as-needed basis without the additional payroll and administrative costs of full time employees.

The Truest Sense of the Word

In order for the owner to receive the most benefit of this delivery system, the owner's rep firm should be a separate, disinterested third party, i.e., the owner's rep should not provide property management, brokerage, general contracting or architectural services, nor sell furniture, telephone systems or other related products. All vendor contracts should be entered into directly with the client. This eliminates any potential conflict of interest and enables the owner's rep to focus on their clients' objectives.

Benefits to the Owner

Since most owner's rep staff members have previously worked in the corporate or manufacturing facilities environments, they bring an understanding of the

client's business and the knowledge of how to identify and head-off potential roadblocks to a successful project.

New construction, renovation or relocation is the perfect project to be



outsourced because it requires specialized experience, but is a finite task requiring short-term peak staffing. For example, our firm assumed the responsibility for the consolidation of six regional offices for The American Cancer Society (see photo) into one central location in Meriden CT. No inside expertise existed within the client organization, and the project was a short, five-month duration. The client benefited from having one firm handle all aspects of the construction administration, project management, including the relocation of approximately 65 employees.

The use of owner's rep services for long-term assignments is also becoming quite common. Facilities managers are faced with having to meet long-term corporate commitments in terms of consolidations or expansions, while at the same time unable to secure approvals for additional staff.

For example, when Pratt and Whitney went through a recent restructuring of its manufacturing units, the use of outside owner's rep firms facilitated the process without adding to Pratt & Whitney's staff. These project assignments lasted in excess of 18 months.

In addition, many of state's insurance companies utilize these services for both home and field office projects on a regular, as-needed basis. The amount of time required of the owner's rep can be adjusted to meet the workload requirements and does not always necessitate a full time involvement. The costs for an owner's rep firm on capital projects can often be amortized over the life of the lease or project life.

Choosing a Qualified Owner's Rep

When choosing an owner's representative, consider the firm's experience with projects similar to the proposed project in terms of scope and type, the level of time commitment and availability of the owner's rep staff member, the adequacy and track record of the firm's scheduling and budget systems, and independence of the owner's rep from offering other products or services which may create a conflict of interest, among other criteria.

An owner's rep firm should be committed to quality and excellence. Successful firms are diligent about representing the owner in a fair and objective manner, while earning the respect of vendors and maintaining the highest level of ethics, customer service and attention to detail that their clients expect. ▲

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