

Lost on the Road to Alternative Project Delivery?

By Michael Kenig

As an Owner, are you able to use alternative project delivery methods?

Most Owners are either looking for or already headed down the road to alternative project delivery. After having observed so many Owners travel down this road, four distinct stops along this road have become apparent:

1. Gaining the ABILITY to use alternative project delivery methods.
2. Developing a list of DEFINITIONS of the alternative project delivery method options.
3. SELECTING the appropriate project delivery method.
4. IMPLEMENTING the project delivery method chosen.

It has been my experience that most Owners who get to the first stop (the ability to use alternative delivery methods), skip to stop 3 and immediately start focusing on trying to select the most appropriate method. Eventually, however, everyone goes back to stop 2 to establish some definitions of the delivery methods. If they are lucky they get to the fourth stop and are able to successfully implement the alternative delivery method they have chosen.

Most start out determined to select a project delivery method, but then quickly run into a wall of words with numerous meanings. With the absence of any industry standard, we all feel as if we are the first to travel down this road. So, when we go back to stop 2 we all start developing our own lists and definitions. Individuals, groups, associations all over the world are working on stop 2, developing their own set of definitions. This situation has created the chaos that exists today, many different terms for the different delivery methods and many different definitions. None of these are wrong. In fact all of the definitions are all correct in the eyes of the individuals that created them. No wonder that people are still getting lost on this road to alternative project delivery!

In addition to being an accurate way to mark the stops along the road allowing people to determine where they are, these four stops have also proven to be useful to provide a framework for discussions about project delivery. So often you find yourself in a conversation with someone talking about one of these issues, for example, gaining the ability to use alternative methods, when all of a sudden without warning the conversation has shifted. Frequently this shift is to “why” they prefer one method over another method or “how” they go about their selection processes. Part of this discussion assumes you are at the third stop, selecting a method and the other part assumes you are at fourth stop, how to implement a chosen method. Sharing these stops with people should help everyone organize their thoughts and allow all of us to have more productive conversations. We may still be lost, but at least we’ll know where we are!

Michael Kenig is Vice Chairman of Holder Construction in Atlanta. He assists Owners during the planning stage of their projects, helping them determine the best project delivery strategy. Michael has also written several articles on successful project delivery. He serves on the Associated General Contractors Association’s (AGC) committee on Project Delivery and chairs the AGC of GA Governmental Agencies Committee. He holds a degree in Construction Engineering and Management from Purdue University.

