



Value Engineering

“It’s Never Too Early”



Given the state of the economy, value engineering (VE) the cost of a construction project is more important than ever. My experience as an architect has taught me that it is possible to substantially VE a project “up front” in lieu of waiting for actual bids to be submitted. This is especially true for alterations of existing buildings.

When it comes to value engineering a project, the earlier you do it the better. VE starts with selecting a qualified, experienced architect with a track record of bringing projects in on-time and within budget.

You should involve your architect in the site selection process which will help avoid committing to a space that is not readily convertible to your program or which may be too expensive to develop due to infrastructure constraints.

It is also vital that you compile a bid list of experienced contractors who have a resume which includes projects similar in scope and scale to yours. The early involvement of your architect can also be beneficial here as they can draw from their project experience to recommend qualified bidders.

Once you have selected a site, it is important that your architectural/engineering (A/E) team perform an accurate survey of the existing conditions so that the subsequent design and engineering drawings work with the existing infrastructure, not against it.

In developing your spatial program, it is wise to consider future flexibility and growth. This will allow your organization to adapt to future changes impacting your physical plant without necessarily needing to renovate again. Our clients often have us plan multi-function spaces which can be subdivided by folding walls and utilize modular furnishings that can be arranged to serve multiple functions. Our designs have also recently been featuring “hoteling” work stations for employees who tele-commute several days a week and share a physical workstation with other tele-commuters on a scheduled basis.

If you are renovating an occupied space, an intelligent phasing plan will be a key to your project’s success. The more area a contractor can renovate in a given phase, the lower the relative construction cost of that phase. Try to develop “swing space” where staff can be temporarily relocated to give your contractor “more room to work”.

If your organization is a not-for-profit, you are already exempt from paying sales tax on construction materials. If you have access to certain financing, such as IDA/bond funding, your project may also qualify for a sales tax exemption. In either case, your architect should specify locally sourced materials and equipment to help reduce costs. Long lead-time items should also be avoided as they could cause construction delays.

