

OFFICE PROPERTIES

Quarterly

Project Management

The evolution of coordinating national construction

Over three decades ago when I got started in this business of managing construction, coordinating national office work was quite the challenge. We had master service agreements for national construction accounts in the telecom and financial industry that were growing rapidly across the United States.

Although we had conference calls, beepers and faxes, it was cumbersome to coordinate with tenants and owners, not to mention design and construction teams. It was a lot of fast talking to get everyone on the same page.

There was also a lot of downtime with miscommunications and travel. It seemed like every time you left the job walk, something else popped up that you really needed to review on site. How things have changed.

Fast forward to today and, thanks to technology, we have made a quantum leap in how we coordinate projects. Currently, our team is working on a project in Colorado with clients and team partners in New York, California, Boston, Texas, Atlanta and Arizona. We can now get done in an hour from our office what used to take days and even weeks at times.

Typical office project meetings may include a dozen or so participants. When you factor in the drive and/or flight time, costs can surpass tens of thousands of additional dol-



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lars per meeting – not to mention the challenges associated with mobile logistics.

Successful businesses are always looking for ways to cut costs, be more efficient and produce better results. Technology is accelerating the process and reducing the over-

all costs for coordinating projects. Following are the Top 9 ways to leverage technology for project success.

1. Conferencing capabilities. Ring Central, Zoom and Skype, I love you. I am still in awe that you can get the entire project team in the same room without leaving the office. Sharing desktop screens and seeing architectural and engineering plans change in real time keeps the entire team current with revisions.

2. Mobile phones. Mobile phones today are incredible. To have your notes, emails, drawings, camera and phone all in one device is the ultimate for communicating and managing projects with technology.

3. iPads. When I walk on job sites these days and see superintendents with iPads, I get a big smile. Having personally experienced the challenges of keeping up with requests for information and design

revisions, I know the importance of keeping the team connected. The super is always on the front line, so it is critical to keep him or her connected in real time with the client and design team for a smooth project.

4. Software. Let's first give a big round of applause for Bluebeam. I will never forget when I saw that program in action on a shared screen. It was revolutionary for making design changes and coordination. Building information modeling, known as BIM, is another fabulous program for the efficient planning of projects. Procore and Fieldlens are excellent programs for collaborating and tracking projects with team members across the country.

5. Video cameras. Everyone has a video camera on their desk, phone or computer, making it easier to connect live, and read facial expressions and body language. You can quickly use a face-time meeting with a design team or owner to see issues in the field and make informed decisions no matter where you are.

6. Job site security cameras. When you are coordinating projects with lots of materials and workers on site, sometimes accidents or theft happen. Having multiple cameras on site typically deters crime, but in the event something happens on site, you have a record of the crime or accident. Team members in other

cities can log in and see the site in real time. The cameras typically motivate crews and document manpower on site. It's also fun to see those time-lapse videos where you can see the entire project come together in minutes.

7. Virtual reality. This needs to be in a category all by itself. When you can put on a headset and walk through a project before it is built in another state, it is a game changer. So many times, we all have difficulty visualizing the outcome of a project before it is built. Virtual reality technology lets you beam yourself to the future, allowing you to take a peak and make sure you are on the right track.

8. Drones. Drones can map, track and perform site visits in those hard-to-get-to places for pennies on the dollar. Clients and design teams can see challenges or verify quality without leaving their office.

9. Electronic plans submissions. As much as we all appreciate how our municipal partners keep us code compliant and safe, we don't need to visit them every time we submit for a permit. Architects from across the country can submit plans from the comforts of their office within a lot of progressive jurisdictions. This is a big-time saver for design teams and contractors.

Reflecting on these amazing technological advances makes me look forward to what the next few decades of technology have in store for us all. ▲