Industry Leaders

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Specifications unlock power of critical collaboration

The need to aggressively adopt a way to improve processes, gain organizational efficiencies and control costs has always been important, but now it is critical to complete successful projects. The advent of cloud-based sharing technologies along with remote project management and ownership provides an opportunity for advancement in how project teams can improve their organization and collaboration. We can now use these exciting new platforms to expose and exploit the strengths of these tools for the benefit of the construction management industry to ensure that projects are coming in on time and without budget overruns.

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Specifications are key documents, which detail system descriptions, and organize the information to relate to construction cost estimating. Managing specifications is crucial for everything from documenting design decisions, to ensuring budget compliance, and stripping hidden risk as a whole. Stakeholders depend on specifications to deliver their projects efficiently.

When begun early in the process, specifications can manage and document the OPR (Owners Project Requirements) and can incorporate feedback from the end user, owner, contractors and all stakeholders. Maintaining a decision record provides the owner teams with a more substantial presence, collaborating with the preconstruction team and continuously updating estimates and lead times for materials. As design documentation progresses, rework is minimized, costs are controlled, and the owner's informed consent is enabled throughout the entire process. After construction, the complete data package can be delivered and utilized for ongoing building operation and maintenance.

This documentation process uses Uniformat (UF), which provides an outline to a building's major systems and assemblies. This powerful tool captures the origin of the documentation process and is used throughout the project lifespan. It is an elemental classification system developed by estimators for cost analysis of building systems and it has evolved to include performance and design criteria and other documentation that would be included in the OPR. Typically, construction documents are written in MasterFormat (MF). UF is best for exploring options and selecting optimal solutions, while MF permits purchasing products, contracting installers, validating construction results.

A cloud-based Integrated Building Information (IBI) tool permits integrating the OPR, UF, and MF specifications into a single platform. The information is available in total or in part, specific to users' project roles. This revolutionary concept has many benefits, including:

- Providing constantly updated and relevant information;
- Project specific data with historical and chronological input from all parties;
- Documentation and data updates based upon approvals and recommendations;
- Ease of access by all relevant parties, including contractors, estimators, suppliers, owners, etc.;
- Estimators can quickly access the UF systems and components that must be priced to guide design decisions;
- Sharing of uniform MF specifications allowing all parties to understand proposed products and schedules;
- Clear communication between ownership and designers in an always-current OPR;

There has never been a better time to implement these changes into projects – it is more cost efficient to deploy these solutions early on to avoid expensive future mistakes, oversights and change orders. The potential of specifications has been unlocked. Through UF and MF integration and universal stakeholder participation, all of the project requirements are incorporated in one platform that enables continuous estimating and design validation that will serve the life of the project from day one through commissioning and building operations.

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