

When Does Contract Administration Start?

By: John Clinckett, Construction Contract Administration Committee Member

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When does Construction Contract Administration start? This is a great question, and this depends on a number of factors: the office structure, the persons and skill sets available, the nature of the project, and also the location of the project.

Generally architectural practices are horizontal or vertical. Horizontal, usually larger practices, work under separate divisions. There is Marketing, those who search out and get the commissions; there are the talented designers who review the program and complete the concepts; there are the working drawing and specifications [sometimes out sourced] that produce the Bid Documents, and handle queries; and there is generally a contract administration group that may produce the Contract Documents and who see the project through to completion. On the other hand, the smaller practices of a number of architects are considered vertical practices, where an individual, principal or project manager, likely the client contact, will see the project through completion with support during the different phases of the process from the office, and may complete the contract administration themselves.

Given those two scenarios; in the horizontal, the contract administration can be introduced after the bids have been received and contract awarded – now the C.A. work of getting the facility built begins. Some times the contact admin people or person may be introduced earlier to assist in the bid docs & queries to assure a smooth process into construction. Two of the biggest hurdles to overcome include problems that can occur as result of handing off stages of the project to other personnel, and from differences between these personnel in terms of approach, philosophy and priorities that result from their different experiences and skill sets, i.e between client-contacts and contract administration personnel. The division of labour and greater specialization has benefits and detriments.

In a vertical office, the client deals with the same person throughout the project and the design intent can follow through to the completion of the construction. There may, and usually are others in the firm who support during the different phases of the project during development process. Here there is no hand-off and much less division of labour so the contract administration begins with the signing of the agreement.

There is not necessarily an official for contract administration, but rather it is a process which when everyone is involved and completes their tasks efficiently and as expected, leads to successful and rewarding projects.

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