

larly, they may ask a worker whether an item can be changed easily, whether the worker who is working on the site likes the design, why (seemingly) nothing is happening. A client must use proper channels to ask questions about the design and its implementation. A client must make all changes by approved methods and approve the cost to make those changes before the change is implemented.

EVALUATE APPLICATIONS FOR PAYMENT

We like to work with a construction management format with our contractors. This format is critical for our type of designing, because it allows us to leave allowances while working out details during this phase. You'll always, always get a better price from a painter when he sees the job near the time he is to do his work. In the construction management approach, when designers review progress and quality, they can isolate problematic work by withholding payment, without penalizing those who are doing their job well.

CLOSE OUT THE PROJECT (PUNCH LIST)

Be quick and consistent with objections and their resolution as a project is going on. Document all concerns and copy the information to everyone. Should the client have unrealistic expectations, you need to find the way to explain the difference.

VERIFY COMPLETION

Because add-ons or late changes occur during most construction projects, make sure the client does not pay the contractor until the work is complete and all such issues negotiated. Make sure you are satisfied, ditto the client. Then approve final payment.

COORDINATE CONTROLLED INSPECTIONS

Try never to file for permits more than necessary, especially where the building department is corrupt. Just do things to code and hire the best expeditor you can find.

COMMUNICATION AND CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION: PEOPLE SKILLS WHEN PERSPECTIVES DIFFER

During the contract administration phase one has the opportunity to keep on top of the budget when working with a construction management format. It makes sense to allow research into alternative processes that might keep the project in budget. This is best accomplished when there is an overall but flexible view of the project and when the actual cast has been selected to do the work. When a designer works with a fabricator with skill and experience, he or she might do well to listen to the fabricator's ideas about the best or most cost-effective methods for fabrication. The detail you might select is likely not to be the best or most cost-effective unless you understand the skills of the selected fabricators. But a warning is in order: Some contractors and fabricators consider thinking an extra. To make the flexible view of the project work, designers need to develop people skills and a real sense of how to understand others' perspectives and motivations.

Some people think that their job is only a job. With some contractors and some fabricators, budgets go out the window as soon as they are asked to think. I avoid fabricators like these. I will not make a design that does not require thinking. A designer needs to pull everyone to the same side of the fence, so there is a sense of a common goal. In Italy, where I live, people consider thinking an essential part of their workday, as essential as the good meal at lunch time. There is a joy when a solution is found to a problem during the construction administration phase. Construction documents are an essential element of the design, but the final design is scribbled on the wall. In Italy on a jobsite every element might need to be marked in the space on the wall with a stubby pencil for final location, proportion, and detail. Lawyers are not called upon, and everyone's word is the final contract. It is much easier to keep a design alive and responsive during the contract administration phase in an atmosphere of trust and common goals, such as I have found while working in Italy.

A few summers ago I was renovating a penthouse apartment in Manhattan and at the same time an apartment in Rome. While in New York I had a meeting with the contractors on the penthouse project. The contractor reported, "We can't possibly reuse this door hardware or the baseboard and door moldings. It will be easier and cheaper and better to simply replace it all."