

A SCENARIO: CONVEYING INFORMATION THE CLIENT DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR

Lots of unexpected things can happen during the construction administration phase and it does take a skilled psychiatrist to know the best way of presenting all kinds of news. While renovating a waterfront farmhouse on Shelter Island, NY, I arrived on the construction site for my first meeting with the plumbing team, ahead of the contractor, who was always late. I saw several plumbers stick their heads out of a hole in the wood floor from the basement. “So how is the plumbing looking?” I asked.

“Plumbing’s OK.”

I tried to extract a more detailed response. “Anything we need to remove or replace that we weren’t counting on?” I admit I may have actually dropped the “g” sound at the end of “counting” to reduce the distance between us in this first meetin’.

“Yup.”

“Well, like what? Can you tell me what you have found?”

“Well, we got most of the asbestos out already.”

“What? You did what?” I responded. “You found asbestos and then you took out the asbestos yourselves? That’s dangerous and illegal. We need to bring people in to remove asbestos, don’t you know that? People who are protected and licensed. It needs to be discarded safely and properly. Where’s the contractor?”

“Lunch. Found something else, too.”

“Another problem?”

“Might be.”

“What?”

“Bones. In the basement. And they ain’t no deer bones. It’s somebody. All cut up with a power saw, too.”

Conveying news like this needs several people skills. Separating the messenger from the message for your own personal safety. Breaking each part of the message into resolvable units rather than one impossible situation. Putting yourself at the side of the client as someone who will work to resolve the issues. Allowing the client to see this small glitch in the scope of their entire life. One can tell the client almost anything if it is done in the right way.

CONCLUSION

Walzworkinc.'s contract administration process is certainly not considered standard in the industry. But our approach is extremely successful in encouraging and supporting responsive and intelligent design solutions. While our process is unique to our firm's personality, our success has to do our ability to be responsive, flexible, and able to effectively communicate to the many different players in the entire design process. This approach allows us to arrive at a different solution. And that is what our clients are looking for—a solution that is created just for them.

Bibliography

Stockebrand, Marianne. *Donald Judd: Architektur Westfälischen Kunstverein Münster*, 1989.