

- **Transmittals**, *which should accompany every submission to the client or consultant firm as a record of the submittal.*
- **E-mail**, *which is commonly used to communicate a wide range of project information. It has become the preferred method of written communication with clients and consultant firms because of the speed at which information can be communicated.*
- **Monthly status reports**, *which summarize all activities and issues and update the project schedule for the client.*

The project manager will initiate much of this communication and documentation. It is his or her responsibility to see that all team members communicate and document in the same way. All project correspondence and documentation should be added to the project files.

Establish Project Budgets

The project manager is responsible for seeing that client budgets for the project are established and updated at agreed-upon points in the development of the project. The design firm typically has responsibility for establishing and maintaining budgets for construction and furnishings. It is increasingly common for the design firm to be asked to oversee as well the budgets for furniture inventories, audio-visual equipment, security systems, food service equipment, information systems, and relocation costs. The project manager must arrange for budgets to be developed, and he or she must also monitor and update them and communicate regularly to the client regarding them.

Some budgets are typically developed in-house, when the skills are available. Construction budgets are typically developed in-house by cost estimators. If these skills do not reside in-house, it is advisable to retain a cost-estimating firm as a consultant to the project. If a general contractor has been retained in the early phases of work, either through negotiation or as a part of a design-build process, the general contractor will be the best source for construction budget information. Furnishings budgets are also typically developed in-house. Interior designers or furnishings specialists can work with furniture manufacturers and dealers to develop furniture budgets.

Budgets for the furniture inventories, audio-visual equipment, security systems, food service equipment, information systems, and relocation costs are best developed by the consultant firms or vendors who specialize in these areas. Consultant services should be structured to include cost estimates. Vendors will provide cost estimates either for a fee or as a part of their services associated with selling the equipment.

The project manager is ultimately the keeper of all project budgets. It is his or her responsibility to establish the budgets and see that they are updated per the approved scope of work. If the project manager senses a change in the project or a decision that will affect costs, it is his or her responsibility to advise the client of this potential impact on costs immediately. The client may elect to add an additional budget update to the scope of work if the impact of the change or decision is serious enough.

The client's checkbook pays the project costs, and the client has every right to be fully informed about the costs of the project throughout the design of the project. The project manager must assume responsibility for making sure that the entire design team knows that when clients are presented with options, they should be informed of any cost differences associated with each option. No client likes to be surprised at the cost of a design that has been approved. Costs that are too high can cause difficulty for clients within their own organization. They certainly can cause bad feelings between clients and design firms. Costs that are low may be received very positively by the client. They may also be perceived to represent a missed opportunity for a better project. If clients feel that they have choices, are given cost information about each choice, and are given reliable budget information regularly through the course of the project, they will develop trust in the design firm. Without trust, the relationship between clients and design firms will be strained.

Maintain Client Relations

Everyone on the design team bears a responsibility to develop a good working relationship with the client, but the project manager is primarily responsible for tailoring the project's management to the client's needs, and for including the client in the design team.

Maintaining a good relationship with a client is a continuous effort that requires dedication, sensitivity, patience, and good listening and communica-