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## Design-build enhances contractor-owner trust

Posted: 2:23 pm Wed, August 25, 2010  
By Joy Jayaram

**Association:** Design-Build Institute of America

When I made the transition from the design profession to the construction business, I witnessed numerous looks of confusion and bewilderment from my family, friends and former colleagues. They could not comprehend why I left my respectable job at an architecture and engineering firm to work for a “contractor.” I soon realized a lot of others also had a less than positive perception of contractors.

What does any of this have to do with design-build? A lot, actually. The largest obstacle faced by design-build is that it is premised on a high level of trust between the design-builder, typically the contractor, and the owner. As I think through the two most common misperceptions of design-build, they are both connected with a lack of faith in the contractor.

These misperceptions are that the owner will pay too much since drawings are not competitively bid and that the owner will sacrifice control over the design. Neither of these myths have much merit. On a typical project, subcontracts account for more than 80 percent of the cost of work, all of which are competitively bid. In addition, design-builder’s fees are pre-negotiated based on a competitive market rate and most will operate on an “open book” basis if requested.

An owner on a design-build project has the ability to control as much of the design as desired. Design-build is an integrated and collaborative approach. All team members have valuable input and are essential to developing the optimum solution. Many owners prefer to be hands-on during the design process and others prefer to be only minimally involved. The contractor is clearly more engaged in design management on a design-build project than on other delivery methods as managing the budget is an essential part of the project’s success. True design-build is an inclusive team approach where it is just as essential for all team members to understand the intent and function of the project as it is to recognize the cost impacts and constructability.

Although it is quite broadly accepted that design-build is faster, results in fewer change orders and undoubtedly sheds a lot of risk from the owner, there are still those hesitant to endeavor into this method of project delivery due to an underlying distrust in contractors. For design-build to become accepted and be successful, stereotypes need to be dismissed and contractors need to be welcomed as trusted advisers.

Contact The Design-Build Institute of America - Upper Midwest Region at [info@dbia-um.org](mailto:info@dbia-um.org) or visit [www.dbia-um.org](http://www.dbia-um.org) to find out more about design-build.

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