

Lean Tip:

September 2010:

“The Big Room”

In many of the very large capital outlay projects using Lean project delivery, key members of the design and construction team may co-locate in a large single office space known as “the big room” and actually produce the entire set of construction documents working collaboratively in this space. Participants in such projects report a number of benefits from working together in this way, from accessibility to other team members for consultation and problem solving, being able to call impromptu meetings to discuss a burning issue, to the kind of bonding and team building that occurs spontaneously in such an environment.

While this workplace arrangement makes sense for projects that have full-time dedicated staff from each of the major project participants, it is more difficult to implement on smaller projects where consultants are often juggling multiple projects, each with its own demands. This is where the integrated project delivery (IPD) team meeting can be used in a very rich way.

The IPD team, at a minimum, comprises the architect and its engineering consultants, the general contractor and its key trade contractors, and the owner and user representatives. We recommend that the IPD team meet at least weekly during design, and that the meeting be long enough (at least 3 to 4 hours) that it can be an actual working session instead of just a “check-in.” In our experience, if team members roll up their sleeves and engage in concrete problem solving and interchange of information during these meetings, they will be viewed as productive by all participants, and will actually expedite the work that is being done by each of the individual participants offsite in the time between meetings.

IPD meetings can be used variously for BIM coordination, review of value engineering and value enhancement ideas, working out various technical and construction details, and discussing design options with respect to price, quality, availability, sustainability, and many other factors. This process will require participants to open up to new ways of doing their work, especially in planning workflow so that all participants can move forward efficiently.

CPM’s experience with the IPD process on relatively small projects (\$15 million construction) has demonstrated unequivocal benefits to the project: shortened construction document time frames, higher quality documents, and fewer critical decisions lingering into the start of construction. As a result, we are advocating the use of the IPD process wherever possible, starting as early in the project as is feasible.