

Program Management Tip:

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How do you create a collaborative team to deliver a capital outlay project?

One of the greatest sports teams in history was the 1980 U.S. Olympic Hockey Team who gave us the “miracle on ice.” If you’re not a hockey fan, then we’ll go with the ’77 Portland Trail Blazers led by Bill Walton. I know! I know! We could argue about this until Portland wins another championship... But, what made these teams so great wasn’t the fact that they won the championship. It was the fact that they exhibited the values of true teamwork. Values like cohesiveness, trust and collaboration. These team values aren’t anything new for us, yet we continue to disregard their importance while planning and delivering complex capital projects. Lean Construction seeks to improve the fundamentally flawed process of traditional project delivery by bringing together owners, designers, contractors, and suppliers in a collaborative process known as Integrated Project Delivery (IPD).

A Better Way

All too often, construction projects sacrifice quality for the sake of speed, or a contractor blames a conflict in the field on poor design. In the end, the owner almost always pays, and at a minimum, the parties involved go home frustrated. These are undesirable consequences of fundamentally flawed project delivery. Let’s get rid of the finger-pointing and arguing over who did what wrong, but instead work together to find solutions. Let’s liberate the communication process that has to work its way through a quagmire of hierarchy and bureaucracy, and allow the individual who needs information direct access to the person who has it. Volumes of research shows unarguably that a collaborative team is far more effective in reaching a complex goal, or solving a problem, than a group of people organized in a traditional silo-like structure. Lean construction provides processes and supports teamwork that eliminates these undesirable characteristics of traditional project delivery.

In the End

The values of teamwork go a long way toward solving a complex problem and reaching a goal. Teams are far more productive and almost always render more creative and efficient ways of delivering solutions and results. Companies use them in the workplace. Sports teams use them on the field and on the court, and they are being used to deliver construction projects with great success. As with the 1980 Olympic Hockey Team and the Trailblazers, there’s something magical about the process of a team that really works together and the results are anything but a “miracle.”