PROJECTions

From *American Constructors* Winter 2007

Communication - A Key Strategy For Success

Calendar year 2007 has been a challenge for the construction industry. Nationally, there have been significant pricing fluctuations and material, equipment and skilled labor shortages. Locally, these factors have been magnified by the volume of construction in the central Texas area, as well as the record breaking amount of rainfall. Put all of these conditions together and you have the "Perfect Storm," a situation where everything is set up to negatively effect the completion of a project.

To manage through these challenges, one of American Constructors' principal key strategies for success is open and continuous communication between all of the team members (owner, architect, consultants and construction manager). Each project has its challenges and the earlier they are recognized, addressed and resolved, the better the chances are for minimal cost, quality, and schedule impacts.

By working with city officials, St. Edward's University Fleck Hall Renovations and Additions' first two floors opened for the beginning of the school year and the third floor conference rooms one month later as planned.

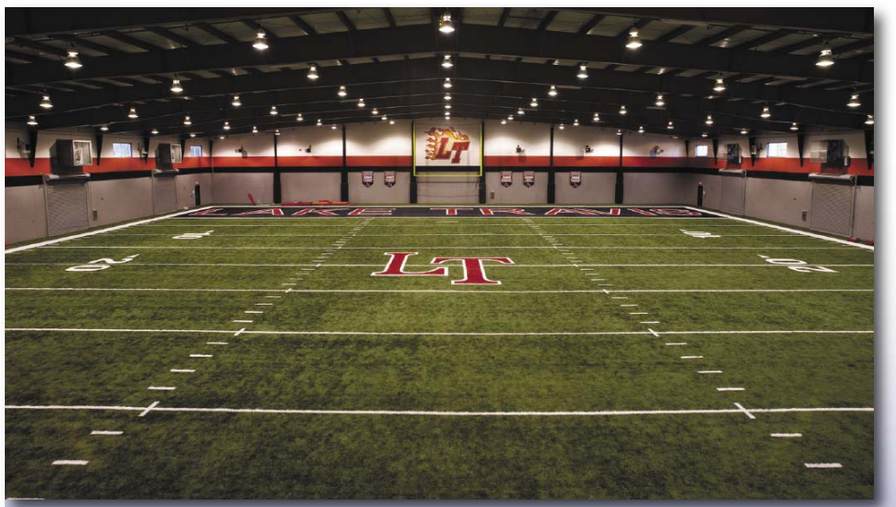
Project specific management plans are set up that center around communication. These plans start with kick-off meetings to establish goals and relationships. From there, procedures are implemented to achieve these goals and expectations. Procedures include document control, budget and cost reporting, critical meetings, electronic transfer of information, distribution of correspondence and time lines for providing responses and approvals. The more communication, both formally and informally, the greater the opportunity for issues being resolved in a timely manner and success for the project.

Despite a six month delay in obtaining the building permit, the San Marcos CISD New High School opened for school in August 2007 as planned.

The detailed components of our communication strategy are not unique to American Constructors. What is unique however, is our philosophy of implementing and utilizing them at a high level to enhance and maintain project communications.

This year, and in particular this summer, has been one of the most challenging for American Constructors. At the beginning of the year we had ten projects underway and eight of them required they be completed by the end of August. Accordingly, it became essential that not only were the traditional levels of project communications maintained, but due to the "Perfect Storm" conditions, the level of communication to maintain the pace of the projects was increased. As a result, every one of our completion dates for the opening of our schools was on time. It turned out to be an extremely successful year for our clients and for American Constructors.

Close coordination kept the service area open during the renovations to the existing Region XIII ESC building.



Daily communication on the Lake Travis ISD Multipurpose Center project allowed for several modifications while completing in time for the 2007 football program.

Communication Plan Components:

- Monthly reports
- Checklists
- Kick-off and closeout strategy meetings
- Aerial and project photos
- Partnering process
- Commissioning plans
- Electronic/website information
- Updated scheduling reports
- Cost projections
- Defined submittal process

Communication Contributes to the Success of Award Winning Projects

Eight educational facilities were completed by American Constructors this fall - despite many challenges impacting the construction industry both nationally and locally. Schedules were crunched and rearranged, subcontractors shuffled priorities, and detailed planning and communication went into making sure each project was ready for students to start the 2007 - 2008 school year. Two of the projects we completed have also received awards for outstanding performance and quality, and are highlighted here.

Rooster Springs Elementary School, Dripping Springs ISD

Project description: This is a 110,000 square foot elementary school sized for 850 students and core facilities for 1,000 students. It contains classrooms, administrative areas, gymnasium, cafeteria/kitchen, science and art rooms, and library.

Several different concrete textures and colors were used to vary the design.

Unique challenges which were resolved through teamwork and communications:

- Early move-in – With detailed coordination, DSISD was allowed to occupy certain areas for early move-in.
- Mechanical Stabilized Earth (MSE) wall – After several meetings with design team, this wall was changed to a stacked mortared wall to avoid costly relocation of utilities and to save time.
- Groundwater – Working with the geotechnical engineer, an innovative concrete placement technique was devised for the piers to overcome the unanticipated ground water. This resulted in minimal schedule impacts and no additional cost.
- Rain delays – This project encountered over 50 inches of rain impacting 120 days of construction. Despite these conditions, and as a result of close communication and flexibility of DSISD and the architect, the school was completed on time.
- Value engineering – In an effort to identify additional saving opportunities, a value engineering effort was conducted after the original bids were received. This extensive effort occurred simultaneously with the project construction. As a result of these efforts, over $125,000 worth of savings was incorporated into the project.

San Marcos High School, San Marcos CISD

Project description – A 349,000 square foot new high school with core facilities for 2,500 students.

Several different concrete textures and colors were used to vary the exterior design of the new San Marcos High School.

Unique challenges which were resolved through teamwork and communications:

- Precast Double T penetrations – Through close communications and coordination with the design team, over 150 floor penetrations were located without conflicting with the structural T's. This eliminated costly delays and rework.
- Boring pit for utility line – Excavation of over 35 feet was required for this work. Working with safety representatives, geotechnical engineers, and TXDoT officials this work was accomplished with no disruption to utility service or traffic.
- Dissimilar materials – To accurately address each condition, American Constructors prepared CAD drawings and worked with the design team to develop waterproofing details that were consistent with the design, and provided multiple barriers for water infiltration.
- Early turnover – To accommodate the athletic program, the completion of these facilities was moved forward one month. This required extensive coordination and communication to meet everyone's expectations and needs.
- Value engineering – As the construction progressed, American Constructors identified substantial cost savings through value engineering. With close communication and quick approvals, upgrades such as landscaping, CCTV, access control and intrusion detection, and pro audio systems were incorporated.

Tech Tips

Electronic Communication

There is no avoiding it. Computers are a part of everyday business and new advances are being made every day to make our job easier. The key is staying ahead of the curve and using technology to its maximum potential to save each project time and money.

American Constructors is constantly striving to find the best solutions. To this end, the corporate website was redesigned and a collaborative internal computer workspace was implemented. This allows us to:

- Communicate with our subcontractors
- Gain immediate access by the main office team to the project job sites for constant communication capability
- Direct friends, clients and professional partners to one place to see our services
- Use our site as a first class recruiting tool

The website is continuously updated thereby providing all of our partners another way to communicate with us in a very effective manner. Check us out online at www.acitexas.com.

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is published for the friends and team members of American Constructors.

4330 S. Mopac Expressway
Suite 230
Austin, TX 78735
Phone: 512.328.2026
Fax: 512.328.2520
E-mail: aci@acitexas.com
www.acitexas.com

Charity Golf Outing

Congratulations to all of you who participated in our 2007 Boys and Girls Clubs' Charity Golf Tournament. It was a huge success. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you!!