

How a Project Manager should be in Multi Storied Building Construction

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Abstract— India is poised towards substantial economic growth due mainly to the fact that its concentration is on rapid industrial development. India is considered to be the most sought after country for foreign direct investment and also for joint ventures. Most of the Multi National Companies prefer to have their manufacturing facilities established in India. All these contribute to wide spread employment opportunities. More number of factories are being opened up in urban areas and outskirts of cities. This is causing mass movement of people to cities. Cities are synonymous with prohibitive rental costs. The attitude of people is to initially move in to a rental space and soon enough to buy an apartment of their own. The present salary structure of the industrial standards is also giving people a reasonable disposable income. The availability of institutional finance, particularly for a longer duration of repayment for youngsters, is motivating younger generations to book an apartment first, immediately after their marriage. The alarming cost of land, which is also getting scarcer now, makes it impossible for, especially the salaried class of people, to buy land and construct house. The industry is finding it apt to concentrate more on residential construction of apartments to cater to the growing demand in this sector.

Keywords— Clear Planning, Workers skills, Communicative Ability, Leadership Qualities, Be Enabler.

I. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Personal visit to sites. Observation and Discussion methods.

Contours	Details
No. of sites visited	2
No. of floors	3 and 6
Covered Car Park, Round the clock Security and uninterrupted Power Supply, CCTV	In Both
Statutory Compliance	Ensured in Both
Migrated Labour	Present in Both
Use of construction machinery	Commendable in Second
ATM, Super Market, Swimming Pool, Guest Lobby	In Second only

Small Builders Vs Big Builders

Small Builders are characterised by their own functioning of each and everything. All the activities must be carried out under their nose. They are the deciding authorities of even the day to day activities. Basically, a feeling of distrust will prevail in their minds and that is actually the cause for doing everything under their own surveillance.

Decision Making is influenced by their comfort and not by the situation confronting the site. Many times inappropriate decisions are taken by their whims and fancies. In other words, by and large, in small builders case, the decision is not directed towards problem solving but rather leaving it at that or proceeding simply unmindful of the occurrence of a problem.

They do not have qualified personnel at the site. The site will be full of labourers. Work progress is determined by the owners which is controlled by their purse. Organised activities are pretty less, though the work would be going on.

In the event of a problem, the work would be simply stopped for resumption at a later date. In other words, the activities would be just suspended without a definite date of restart.

As their style of operation is “sales after built”, they are not in a hurry to complete the project as it does not have any timeliness.

The big builders are known for their organised behaviour. They show professionalism in all their activities. Each and every step of the project execution is perfectly systematised.

They work the project budget at the inception stage itself. Finance sources are carefully planned and comfortably channelized. All the supply sources are planned in advance and they would be advised of the project and the requirements till completion of the project.

All necessary contracts would be entered into with (a) suppliers (b) subcontractors (c) other vendors and (d) Labour contractors.

While with the small builders owner is for everything, in the case of Big, Established and Reputed Builders, there are various people with different calibre handling various activities with both individual responsibility and collective accountability.

The important feature of big builders is segmentation of activities with appropriate people assigned for the same.

The notable thing in the second site is that it had a Site In Charge and also a Site Engineer, both of them reporting to Project Manager (the Site in Charge via Site Engineer). The requirements of the builder are passed on to the Project Manager who in turn earmarks set of people for each activity going by the volume of workload.

All these people functionally report to the identified persons who in turn report to the Project Manager, appropriately.

All the personnel have individual responsibility to the Team and also collective responsibility to the Project Manager.

The second site is the best example for organised execution of construction projects.

What is the need for a Project Manager?

In small construction units, there is hardly any need for a Project Manager. Perhaps, a Site In Charge will run the show.

In a fairly big sites, in addition to the Site In Charge, a qualified Civil Engineer would be there as a Site Engineer.

In large scale construction units, a full time Project Manager will be posted at the site with an exclusive office to himself as "Project Manager Office". He is fully responsible for the execution of the project.

The practice of reputed builders is that they would be undertaking construction projects at many places at a time. While the functional management is handled by them, overall, for all the individual projects, they will be posting a Project Manager with full freedom of operation and of course, with accountability.

They bank upon the Project Manager totally for all the activities going on in the project. In this way, the Builders are able to pay attention on greater aspects such as further projects at different places, uninterrupted flow of funds to all the projects, addition of newer features in their construction etc.,

In fact, the secret of reputed builders is that they do not get involved in the day to day activities of the site but fully assign the same to dependable, qualified and faithful Project Managers.

A Senior Official of the second unit made an off the record mention that their Project Managers are their actual assets to them. They are not only carrying forward their projects without any hassles to the builder, by embracing all the responsibilities on themselves, but are also "Think Tanks" in supplying novel ideas to the builder who happily and gratefully implement the same in his projects.

The indisputable reputation they enjoy in the field is purely due to Project Managers only – with a sense of pride, he opined.

As such, it is necessary that for bigger projects, a qualified Project Manager is to be identified and the responsibilities assigned.

It is important to note that it is not merely a civil engineering qualification alone that is needed to be a Project Manager. There are a number of other more important qualities that determine the success of the project and bring glory to the Project Manager.

These attributes are worthwhile dealing at length.

He should be a Master of All Subjects

What this essentially means is that he should thoroughly know all that is required for the construction projects. So to say, more than the Sand, Cement, Brick and Steel, he should also be conversant with other administrative aspects.

A reasonable level legal knowledge is a blessing.

He must be an adept in contractual dealings and obligations.

He should also be well versed in dealing with Government Agencies. He must keep himself abreast of the latest in the construction field.

It should be his avid endeavour to continuously upgrade himself in knowledge and practice of construction projects. Apart from deeply knowing the subject, he should also have

the verve and vigour in implementing the same safely in his projects.

He should have the wisdom and vision for the profession.

In other words, he is not a glorified worker at the site but an icon of the project itself.

A Good Planner

The builders, particularly, the large builders basically look into finance aspects of the business. They would try to ensure uninterrupted flow of money into business. They will be busy planning further projects in the same locality or elsewhere.

The current trend with big builders is that they are busy scouting around for lands. They purchase lands and propose construction later. The reason is land cost is shooting up day by day, particularly in the city and outskirts.

As such, they devote more time in acquisition of land than in physical construction. The construction portion is assigned to skilful and reliable Project Managers. A talented and track record Project Manager is always a hot cake in the construction industry.

The most essential trait of a Project Manager should be that he ought to be a good planner. Construction is a series of big and small activities and if there is a snag in one thing, however small it may be, the whole work will come to a halt.

Right from organising and physically ensuring availability of all the men and materials for the work to start at the site, he should go on doing carefully the other important chain of activities such as wages to workers (for the additional and extra labour arranged on adhoc basis for exigencies - this is apart from the payment to Labour Contractor for the contract labour), compliance of site instructions such as the workers wearing helmet, hand gloves etc.,

He need not have to do all these physically himself but should ensure through Site Engineer and Site In charge. The ability of a Project Manager lies in getting things done the way that is required, by his subordinates and the operating personnel at the site, without any murmur or indiscipline.

Planning assumes greater importance. If the materials ordered through JIT arrive a few hours late, it only implies that half a day wages are wastefully paid to the personnel (for no productivity).

Assign Responsibilities and fix Accountability

A wise Project Manager would always assign responsibilities to workmen with freedom of operation. The attitude of workers is that they are prepared to work for extended hours also but would not like to be issued instructions every now and then. They consider it more as a disturbance.

This attitude, more prevalent of late, is due to their doing the same job in different construction sites before. The nature of job being same, with sites only differing, they have developed a sort of mastery in the job.

It was observed that the productivity is more when they do the job with freedom than under stressed condition of frequent instructions and altercations.

The Project Manager should be an expert in sensing the psychology of the workers. If he gains their trust, he won their

heart. Nothing is a task to him, for he can assign any load of work to his personnel who, surely will do without a word of question.

Unless this is established, there will always be frequent quarrels between workers and site in charge/site engineer. Even a marginal delay of half an hour due to whatever be the reason, it will result in concomitant delays curtailing the progress of work.

While generously extending freedom, he should also be a taskmaster in getting the result from them. Freedom without accountability is also as bad as responsibility without authority.

He should be impartial in his action. An errand should be punished whether he is a bricklayer or site in charge. His impartiality should evoke respect and confidence from his workmen.

He should gauge the extent of freedom, limit of responsibility and also the point of accountability.

These three play a crucial role in determining the success of a Project Manager.

Be an expert in Risk Management

Construction activities are laborious and risk prone. In fact, taller the building is greater the risks are. The onslaught of risks can take place from any side and in any manner. These risks can be basically classified in two:

The inherent risks at the site. Soil condition is the basic thing. The experts sound that however strong the foundation is, the risk occurrence is imminent if the site is near lake. The undercurrent of water near the water plenty areas is always difficult to be predicted for sure. Very tall structures experience the risk of violent winds as well.

The depth (foundation) and height (tallness) of the building always require the meticulous attention of the Project Manager. While the Structural Engineers and Soil Experts give guidance and recommendations, it is the duty of the Project Manager to properly execute the same during the stages of construction.

The attention in identical measure is needed for incorporation and compliance of fire and safety measures at the site. Electrical fires are common feature in multi storied building construction. Preventive measures must always be exercised.

The unpredictable risks from outside. To make a plain statement, the Project Manager faces more of risks only in this. Various extraneous factors contribute and compound the problem over which he has little control. A smart Project Manager, would, nevertheless be more careful in circumventing the problems by his sheer prudence and continuous corrective action.

The assault takes place chiefly from two angles – suppliers and contractors.

It is the practice with all eminent builders to have more than one source of supply in their business. This is only to pre-empt delays. However good and dedicated the supplier be, a single source is a risky one. Their experience got them wisdom. They share the business with two builders so that they are always safe with delivery.

The role of Project Manager assumes importance only here. He cannot be just a clerk at the site to receive the materials as and when they arrive in. He must monitor the requirement and delivery, on a daily basis.

He must push the Site Engineer to give a status report of the site on a daily basis. This would give an overall picture of the situation. More importantly, the Project Manager himself must maintain contacts with all the people concerned – both at the site and also outside.

His essential contacts list includes Suppliers, Contractors, Vendors and Sub Vendors. While the Site in Charge/Site Engineer can talk to them at their levels, it is expected that the Project Manager should also keep himself fully informed of the status by the suppliers themselves, perhaps, by talking to the Senior levels of people.

This gives him the comfort of twin advantages. First, he can check the commitment and calibre level of his people by their performance and second, he is appraised of the true situation prevailing at the site.

It is the experience of big builders that even supplies under JIT(Just In Time), fall short, many times, by a day.

Under such circumstances, the contractual clauses are there only on paper to govern the contractual obligations whereas the continuous contacts only drive the things to perfection.

It is expected of the Project Manager to bestow personal attention on these aspects as well, in the interest of the project.

Problem Solving Skills

When the activities are myriad, it is quite true that more problems erupt in one way or other. Construction activities involve more of supervisory, inter personal and administrative skills even for the day to day operation.

While all the problems are to be attended, it is the responsibility of the Project Manager to assign the responsibility to operating staff to find out solution then and there. Anything that could not be tackled by them should be brought to the attention of the Site Engineer.

The Site Engineer is entrusted with reasonable powers to take on the spot decision depending on the nature of problem to redress the same. A smart Project Manager would encourage his colleagues to take appropriate decision and also back them up, if required. They should never be let down, under any circumstances. The quality of the Project Manager is rightly reflected in this.

The Project Manager should quickly grasp the issue in all earnestness and come out with appropriate solution immediately. His strength lies in decision making and giving out correct solutions.

While the job is just over with solutions for the people of down the line, for the Project Manager, it just started. He has to analyse the root cause for the problem and find out appropriate line of corrective action to iron out such deficiencies so that the problems would never occur again. In other words, he has to find out permanent solution to any issue.

He should be a Trouble shooter in anticipating problems and take proactive action for arresting such.

In this context, it is ideal to note that “effective leaders are steady performers, even under heavy workloads and uncertain conditions. Effective leaders clarify the paths to attaining goals, help Group Members progress along these paths and remove barriers to goal attainment”

(Source: Pages 159 – 161. Book Name: *Leadership – Research Findings, Practice and Skills, 6th Edition*. Author: Andrew J Dubrin. Published by: South – Western CENGAGE Learning, South – Western, 5191, Natorp Blvd, Mason, OH 45040, USA. ISBN: 13 : 978 – 0 – 547 – 14396 – 5 and ISBN: 10: 0 – 547 – 14396 – 6) [1]

Communicative Efficiency

Another important and essential trait the Project Manager must possess is communicative efficiency. Many problems occurring in the site are due to either miscommunication or poor communication.

It is a fact that the operating personnel show total dedication in the work whether the Site In Charge is there or not. The problems creep in basically due to lack of clarity in work instructions. They become more pronounced with more and more diverging instructions, ending in total mess. This is to be avoided.

A Smart Project Manager is one who chalks out the work schedule for the whole week in advance. He places the job chart to all in crystal clear style so that everyone in the site is fully aware of their job role. This also enables the whole group to get fully teamed up to execute the tasks in a coherent manner with concerted efforts.

As a Commander at the site, he must take full responsibility for all the activities taking place in the site. From the builder’s point of view also, he is credited for all the niceties in the site and the same way, he is only pulled up for any slips in the performance or delay in execution.

He is the primary responsibility holder for the project he is heading.

It does not end with just site alone. He is answerable to all the stake holders of the project. Workmen, Suppliers/Vendors and also Government Agencies. As he is the first to be contacted for anything in connection with the project, he must be fully aware of what is happening in the project and also absolutely alert in the execution.

One more important thing is organising Weekly Meetings at the site. While it is true that work instructions are passed on to workmen in a manner thoroughly understandable to them, it is the duty of the Project Manager to organise this.

This is essentially to take stock of the situation of work progressed against the plan. The deficiency, if any is to be discussed threadbare for fully eliminating the same. He is to inform the Builder on the status of the project.

This also gives an opportunity to the workmen and staff at the site, to voice their opinion and feelings about the activities going on in the project. In fact, the Project Manager should encourage his subordinates and workmen to speak freely as it is only for the good of the project.

In this regard, it is worthwhile noting that “if you hold regular staff meetings, welcome employees’ suggestions for

topics they’d like included on the agenda, it makes it “their” meeting not just “yours”.

(Source: Pages 149 – 150. Book Name: *Communicating Effectively*. Author: Lani Arredondo. Published by: McGraw Hill – A Division of The McGraw – Hill Companies. Copy right © 2000 by The McGraw Hill Companies Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. ISBN: 978 – 0 – 07 – 136429 – 4 and MHID: 0 – 07 – 136429 – 3) [2]

While he can take up the matter with suppliers on issues pertaining to timely deliveries, any stalemate erupting on account of contractual issues are to be dealt with only by the Builder. The Project Manager, however, has the authority to call the suppliers’ representative to the site for meeting with him.

As the contract is between the Builder and the Supplier, the Project Manager cannot go beyond a limit. He is responsible to bring the issues to the Builder for appropriate action either reprimanding the supplier for timely supplies or cancelling the contract and choosing alternative supplier.

The Builder is the sole authority for taking this management decision. However, the Project Manager must be instrumental for the right action by the builder.

Should be a Motivator

Project Manager is the crucial position in the project execution. He can be best termed as the representative of the owner on whose behalf he is acting at the site. Hence, he has the moral responsibility for the success of the project completion as planned.

The promulgation of RERA (Real Estate Regulation Act) brings in more stringent clauses on builders. It is the general feeling of all the builders that this act is easing the purchasers and squeezing the builders.

If the project completion is stretched over beyond a reasonable period of time, the builder alone is answerable to government and people (who have booked the apartments).

The success of the Project Manager lies in his managerial abilities. He can wield authority on workmen, but he should act within the precincts of his limit. If over acted, it may strain the relations with people all around. The outcome will only mar the project.

A Project Manager should be a Motivator. He should instil a feeling of confidence and comfort in the minds of people working with him. If he wins their love and support, nothing is impossible to him. If it is the other way, it is only detrimental to the project.

He should get the job done by kindness and compassion and never by force. A job demanded by force or got done by coercion results only in perfunctory execution – a step short of shoddy workmanship. This should be avoided at all costs.

It is a proven thing, like a thumb rule that a motivated worker is prepared to go extra mile in completing the task, however onerous it is. This is possible only by the Project Manager.

Expert in both Time Management and Team Management

A committed Project Manager is an asset to the Builder. If the project is going slow due to circumstances beyond ones

control, the Project Manager owes a moral responsibility to accelerate the process once normalcy is retrieved.

He can use either mild force or coax with the workmen but whatever it is, the work should, as far as possible, be progressed as per the original schedule. He has the powers to give overtime to workmen to get the work done. He can also use the other powers vested in him by the builder by offering monetary gains or some other incentives to workmen in getting the work done as slated.

This he can exercise commendably only when he enjoys the respect and trust of the workmen.

It is to be noted that Team Management is the prerequisite for Time Management. The behaviour of the Project Manager should be more of a Team Leader attitude.

If the workmen genuinely feel that they are the part of the Team headed by an honest leader, the result is only miracle.

It is pertinent here to mention that "You cannot build a Team that's different from yourself. So, be honest with yourself and honest with your Team"

(Source: Pages 54 – 55. Book Name: *What it takes to be No. 1* Vince Lombardi on Leadership. Author: Vince Lombardi, Jr. Copy right @ 2001 by Vince Lombardi Jr. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Published by: The Mc Graw – Hill Companies. Director of Special Sales, Professional Publishing, Mc Graw Hill, Two Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10121 - 2298. Printed and Bound: R R Donnelley & Sons, Inc. ISBN: 0 – 07 – 137060 – 9 (HC) and 0 – 07 – 142036 – 3 (PBK). [3]

II. CONCLUSION

Small builders do not feel the necessity for a Project Manager as they themselves are there at the site supervising the work. Large scale builders have, apart from Site In Charge and Site Engineer, a Project Manager also to totally take care of the construction activities of the given project. The reason for their success and reputation in the field lies in this.

In Supply Chain Management which all the big builders follow, delays, even for supplies under JIT, inevitably occur. This delay is restricted to a maximum of two days only. This is gracefully accepted by the builders, for all practical purposes.

It was observed that workers have discipline. Even in the absence of Site In Charge or Site Engineer, they were doing

the work with unflinching commitment. It is really an appreciable one.

The Project Managers are very important for large scale construction as they are the representative of the builder at site. Their supervision and guidance are essential for smooth flow of activities.

III. RECOMMENDATION

The small builders also must have a qualified person at the site, as their representative. It is not possible for the builder to be always at the site. In his absence, what is happening is not known to him. Hence, this is to be seriously considered by them.

The Project Managers must have a cushion in their planning and action for inevitable delays that would occur.

Time Management is possible only with Team Management. In fact, the Project Manager must have an efficient and dedicated team at his disposal which will do all the wonders and time management will become one under that.

Large builders who undertake many projects at a time have the habit of transferring the Project Managers from one site to another to take care of exigencies. This would better be restrained. In fact, the Project Managers also do not like this (they have a nagging feeling that they had left the previous project half way through). This would dampen their spirit.

In this regard, it is pertinent to note that "Derailment is most likely to strike during times of transition – a new boss, a new job or a significant shift in the business environment" (Source: Page no. 77. Book Name: *Real Time Leadership Development*. Author: Paul R. Yost and Mary Mannion Plunkett. Published by: Wiley – Blackwell – A John Wiley & Sons Ltd Publication. Copy right @ 2009, Paul R Yost and Mary Mannion Plunkett. Regd Office: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19, 85 Q, United Kingdom. ISBN: 978 – 1 – 4051 – 8667 – 4 and 978 – 1 – 4051 – 8675 – 9) [4]

A person identified as Project Manager for a particular site should be there throughout till the project completion. This imposes a sort of binding commitment on the Project Manager and equally the builder is also at ease in co-ordination for the progress of the site.