



COLORADO REAL ESTATE JOURNAL

THE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL OF THE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE COMMUNITY

APRIL 1, 2015 – APRIL 14, 2015

The new definition of a project manager

The definition of a project manager is ever-changing, and a new definition exists that requires the role to be nimble and flexible in its project approach to office construction. Often, a project manager is also referred to as a PM, owner's representative, construction manager or process manager. While varying definitions and unique identifiers come into play, one thing remains the same: A project manager, when scoped correctly, is the grounding point and conduit for an office project, and progressive adaptation of the project management role is underway.

While there are changing and varying titles to the role itself, the differentiating factor in a project manager's profile is the scope of services that a project manager is asked to orchestrate in any given project's lifecycle. The resultant changing workload affords the opportunity for clients to custom tailor their needs and ensure not only no duplication of efforts within their project team, but also to strategically source what they need from a project manager.

Determining the scope is critical to a project's realization and ultimate success, as is fully acknowledging and understanding that construction and nonconstruction workstreams play an equal role in the project. From architecture and engineering to general contract-



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ing and strategic partners encompassing sustainability, audio-visual, low-voltage cabling, security, furniture, sound-masking, artwork and move management – each workstream plays a mission-critical role in the success of the project. In addition, the specific workstreams can have project managers within their teams leading the efforts. While the industry has many definitions of “project manager” and strategic partners within any given project have project manager titles, the definition of the term can be defined depending on the role within the project team.

When onboarding a project manager, step back and assess the distribution of workload internally and externally within your organization. Ask yourself the following questions: Are there deliverables that can be managed in-house or does a current job description not support the time and dedication needed to focus on a one-time real estate effort? Does trying to allocate internal resources to a project distract the

internal team from their day-to-day role or efforts in a way that would adversely impact your operations or business? Can an external project manager augment or support in a hybrid role in partnership with an internal team member or team? Or does an internal team not exist for this one-time project effort and full outsourcing is required? The ability to strategically structure your specific need is key.

The value of a project manager can be realized at varying stages of a project. While typically hired early, project managers can join a team at varying intervals depending on the scope of services needed. Changes to the current project management profile are underway. While often clients onboard a project manager for full project support, variations can occur. There are times when a client may only need move-management support to help orchestrate the client's relocation from point A to point B. Likewise, there may be instances where a client only needs construction-management support and can internally handle the logistics of a move on his own.

In addition, a ground-up or build-to-suit project requires a different project management scope of services and has differing scope complexities than a tenant improvement project. You should know the nuances of a turnkey versus tenant

improvement project when scoping a project manager's role. It is also important to understand the variance of a landlord-managed tenant improvement project as a tenant-based project manager – while the landlord may be managing the construction aspects of the project, a tenant-based project manager can be the link between landlord and tenant, while maintaining oversight of the nonconstruction workstreams on behalf of the client. In addition, when a client is taking a subleased space, there are varying degrees of project management that are needed from oversight of furniture reconfigurations to low-voltage cabling and security adaptations for the space, with move coordination to follow.

Regardless of the project manager's scope and whether he is contracted for full service or a la carte, menu-based selections, project managers are being asked to take on a more consultative-based approach versus a task-based approach. Checking the boxes is easy for any manager, but fully engaging in a project as the project manager requires creativity, strategy, problem-solving and people skills. The art is in the ability to understand the clients' needs and expertly be exactly what they need, when they need it.▲