



‘Getting the Builders in...’

Our Managing Director, Gary Crosbie discusses planning essentials and potential pitfalls of managing a construction design project.

At some stage when you are undertaking a design and build project, there will come a point when you will need to engage with a building contractor, and this is often met with a shudder.

We all watch Grand Designs and hear stories of huge budget overruns, jobs taking many more months to complete than originally planned and undue stress for all involved.

Planning and Preparation – the key to success

At CDG, we have overseen projects from multi-million-pound fitouts to those of a few thousand pounds. No matter the size there is no magic formula that makes a project successful for clients, designers and contractors alike. However, one of our favourite mottos here at CDG is ‘Proper Planning and Preparation...’ (those of you with a military background will know the rest...!).

For any commercial project the main aim of investing is to make

money. You’ve spent months designing and planning and quite often the purchase of the construction element is left to the last minute. You have an opening deadline. You’ve taken bookings. You search for a contractor - and if they actually bother to turn up and give you a price, the differences in costs can be significant.

It is worth noting that for a reasonable sized project of, say £250k and depending on the level of detail and specification, a building contractor will need around two to four weeks to provide you with a well-considered price, not just a stab in the dark estimate. Most building contractors will then need around four weeks to mobilise trades and order materials before they can start onsite work, so from a time perspective you need to be speaking with potential contractors at least 3 months before the project build start date.

And on the topic of timelines, be aware that all industries

are suffering from extended delivery periods in the current climate. Finishing materials such as carpets normally take 8 - 10 weeks, bespoke fabrications and furniture require 12 to 18 weeks lead time and some of the popular catering equipment manufacturers are now quoting 20 weeks or more before they can deliver. Supply chain timescales need to be factored into your project schedule well in advance.

Setting the Right Price

Notwithstanding current inflation rates, the prices that a building contractor quote will often be more than you expected and quite often vary wildly. So how do you compare like for like?

One of the recurring issues we encounter is a lack of detail provided to us. Maybe as little as an A4 layout sketch and a few photographs of what “mood “is required. Providing a vague brief can be a dangerous game, as each design house that you engage will have a slightly different interpretation and the last thing you want is a week before you open you

engage will have a slightly different interpretation and the last thing you want is a week before you open you see your venue coming to life you think, "that's not what I wanted or expected". This might make for good TV but not a good night's sleep!

Of course, everyone wants the best possible price (i.e., the lowest), but the lowest estimate might not be the lowest actual price if your design brief is not as tight as it can be from the outset.

Providing your contractors with comprehensive information at the planning / pricing stage is integral to the success of your design and build project. This should include the following;

- drawings of both plans and elevations
- a specification of what materials and finishes you want
- details of power requirements - is your electrical and water supply sufficient where does the waste go?
- is there asbestos present?
- is the building listed and do you have permission to make any major structural changes?

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

A final and important consideration is to have a good awareness of The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015.

As a commercial client, you are responsible for compliance with this act for the management of health and safety risks. Whatever the project size, the commercial client has contractual control, appoints designers and contractors, and determines the budget, time and other resources for the project. Where planned construction work will last longer than 30 working days and involves

more than 20 workers at any one time (or where the work exceeds 500 individual worker days), commercial clients must notify the HSE in writing of the project and ensure a copy of the notification is displayed in the construction site office.

Building regulations must also be considered. Whether you're building a small extension or undertaking a large-scale renovation, building regulations will apply to any alterations of existing buildings and most new buildings in England and Wales. They outline the minimum standard of building construction and health and safety. Instead of granting you the initial permission to build, building regulations deal with the standards of health and safety in and around a building project. Compliance must be carefully managed with local authority building inspectors and is a legal requirement.

The UK Government Building Regulations and Approved Documents index is updated regularly and can be accessed here; <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/approved-documents#approved-documents>

Overall, careful planning and awareness of both legal requirement and supplier expectations will help to make your hospitality design and build project run as smoothly as possible.

A small investment engaging a professional designer to guide you through the journey, to take your brief and develop the design, and provide your contractors with good quality information they can cost, as well as managing alternations at design stage is much more cost-effective and pain

free than managing changes whilst on site. Early engagement with your contractor will enable them to be productive and cost-effective from day one on site.

Engaging with CDG you can be assured that all these stages will be taken by our own in-house team from the initial brief to the handing over of the keys to your new venue. Changes and challenges will be encountered and over-come, and you will be dealing with a dedicated Project Designer and Project Manager who has the expertise and know-how to make the magic happen.