



Cooling off period can allow engineers to take advantage of the most valuable service: consulting

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Hurry up and wait is the trend right? Everyone wants the proposal and the job done yesterday. How many times does that phone ring at 5 p.m. (and you know it can't be good news) but you answer it and commit to another deadline along with the long list of the other ones. Welcome to construction boom of the last few years. But now the tide may be changing and that leaves uncertainty in people's minds. We are seeing the asking price on class A rents drop and vacancy rates seem to be climbing and this usually indicates fewer projects in the commercial office market and perhaps a little cooling off period. A cooling off period can allow you more time to take advantage of the most valuable service an engineer (or any design professional for that matter) can offer...consultation.

The last few years were very exciting. Just tons of work and firms were drowning in it. A good thing from a financial perspective but there are many perspectives that help create a successful project. During these busy times, we often see the planning stages "rushed" faster than we would like. The planning stage is like the foundation of the project and without it, it will be shaky at best because the scope of the project is not clearly defined. This of course is assuming design professionals were even involved in the planning stage, which often we are not. This of course makes things even more confusing.

Now is the time to reach out to your engineers or architects and begin planning for your existing facility or perhaps even your new facility. I can't stress enough to have both parties involved. MEP engineers have to know what the architect is doing but even more important to make you aware of the choices available to you that concern energy and life safety. If you do not have an architect or engineering team currently, take some to interview a few firms now and make them aware of why you are doing so. We don't expect to be hired on the spot and realize budget constraints may prevent you from doing. We understand it takes time (maybe even a few months) and we prefer to take that time to fully understand your needs. Hiring architects and engineers is still, for the most part, relationship-based and long lasting relationships develop over time.

To take this a step further, especially if you have an existing facility or facilities, it's a perfect time to hire an engineer (in this case an MEP) to do a building evaluation and provide you a report with recommendations and cost estimates. Design professionals are happy to get involved in this stage because we are becoming familiar with the facility and also demonstrating our capabilities. Once the report is produced, this can now become the basis of work for the project.

There is a cost associated with proceeding like this and it will actually help you avoid mistakes in the future and in turn help save money. Firms often market themselves as being "on time and in budget." I can guarantee, regardless how good or experienced they are, if the planning stage is rushed, it will make it extremely difficult to meet schedules and in turn budgets.

The relationship between the owner and the design professional is very much like the one with your

doctor. Yes you see them when you are sick but ideally you go to him or her once a year for a psychical to help prevent any problems or to attack them early. Pretty much the same holds true for your facility. If things are slower for you, it's an opportune time to take advantage of your engineer's consulting services.

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