

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

From Ancient Projects to Modern Practice: The Role of Construction Management in Project Success



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Since ancient times, people have been drawn to large construction projects, often as a way to solve everyday problems or meet the practical needs of a community. The concept of a central leader managing the day-to-day work on a site can be traced back thousands of years, with one of the earliest examples being the construction of the Great Pyramids of Giza, where teams of skilled contract laborers were organized under clear direction (Shaw, 2003).

What is clear is that any large project has always required coordination: labor, materials, schedules, procurement, and above all, capital. This need for structure eventually shaped construction management into the profession it is today.

Over time, several delivery methods evolved to meet these needs. The **General Contracting Method** has long been valued for its competitive pricing and clear separation of roles between architect and constructor. The **Design-Build Method** integrates design and construction under one contract, streamlining communication and delivery. Each has its advantages: general contracting emphasizes cost control through competition, while design-build emphasizes speed and efficiency through integration.

Yet both approaches can present challenges for owners, whether it is limited collaboration early in design or reduced independence in construction oversight. This is the gap that gave rise to Construction Management: a methodology created to provide owners with a dedicated advocate who brings clarity, consistency, and accountability to every phase of a project.



Although the role and title of a construction manager are still relatively new within the industry, their definition and core responsibilities continue to take shape. In recent years, the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA) defined the field as “A professional service that provides a project’s owner with effective management of the project’s schedule, cost, quality, safety, scope, and function” (CMAA, 2013).

As Chris Rudolph, Project Director at WIELAND, explains,

“Construction management is more than a checklist of day-to-day responsibilities; it is about creating alignment and trust among every stakeholder from the first sketch to project closeout.”

1. Planning and Coordination

One of the key distinctions of the construction management delivery method, compared to design-build or traditional general contracting, is the early and continuous collaboration among the owner, architect, and CM. In this method, both the architect and CM are contracted directly with the owner, creating a partnership from the initial schematic design.

A major advantage of working with a CM is the emphasis on proactive scheduling. By integrating historical data and ongoing feedback from the design team, the CM can develop detailed schedules that map out every phase of the project. These schedules help guide communication and coordination, typically outlining:

- **Duration** – Overall project timeline
- **Resources** – Financial, material, and labor requirements
- **Milestones** – Key achievements that define project progress
- **Tasks** – Specific work activities tied to each milestone

2. Preconstruction

The preconstruction phase adds another layer of strategic planning. Here, construction managers support the owner by estimating material costs, soliciting trade contractor bids, evaluating proposals, and securing approvals to move the project forward.

A critical function during this phase is the constructability review, in which the preconstruction team assesses the architectural drawings for feasibility. This process helps reduce potential delays and costly change orders down the road. Value engineering (VE) also plays a crucial role, offering cost-effective alternatives in materials or methods without compromising quality, and even extending the building’s lifecycle.

3. Operations and Personnel

During active construction, the CM serves as the central coordinator of all on-site activities. Trade contractors, suppliers, and laborers are dedicated to ensuring that work is progressing safely, on time, and to the highest quality standards.

Construction managers also monitor and report project progress, resolve conflicts as they arise, and address any issues that may affect the outcome. Their presence ensures that months of planning are translated into real-world execution throughout the project’s lifespan.

4. Communication

According to a 2023 study conducted by the Project Management Institute, ineffective communication accounts for 33% of project failures and contributes to delays in nearly half of all projects (PMI, 2023).

Communication breakdowns on a job site often mirror the children's game of telephone – the further a message travels from its source, the more distorted it becomes. In construction, this distortion can lead to missed deadlines, budget overruns, and scope creep.

A construction manager helps close these gaps. As the primary point of contact among the owner, architect, engineers, and trade contractors, the CM provides regular updates on progress, finances, and emerging challenges, ensuring clarity and transparency with all project stakeholders.

5. Budget Resources

A final core responsibility of the construction manager is financial oversight. This includes tracking costs, reviewing invoices, managing change orders, and ensuring all expenditures align with the approved budget.



Cost-saving strategies, such as value engineering and material substitution, remain a focus throughout the project. These efforts help minimize job site waste, optimize resources, and deliver results that meet the owner's goals, all without exceeding financial limits.

Construction Management has evolved into a well-defined discipline and a critical delivery method for projects of all sizes. When applied effectively, it ensures projects are delivered not only on time and within budget but with a high degree of transparency, collaboration, and long-term value.

As the construction industry continues to adapt, firms like WIELAND are refining their approach – responding to changing project needs and advancing industry best practices. With a history dating back to 1958, WIELAND has played an active role in this evolution, utilizing the CM methodology in over 75% of its annual work.

“WIELAND's philosophy is simple,” stated CM thought-leader, Chris Jurkoshek. “Every project deserves clarity, consistency, and collaboration. That's the value construction management brings, and it is the standard WIELAND holds itself to each day.”

Whether planning a new build or a complex renovation, WIELAND is equipped to guide your project from concept to completion. Fill out a card on the contact page to explore how WIELAND can deliver results tailored to your goals.

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EXCELLENCE IN CONSTRUCTION