



# Don't make the sacred project a secular journey

Common mistakes for leadership to avoid in the church building process.

Building churches is not about bricks and sticks, it's about building the Kingdom. Relocation or a new facility provides a spiritual journey for the entire congregation. It's important to focus on prayer and spiritual growth and not a bunch of buildings alone.

Building committees should consist of people with skills and experience in design, building and finance. When there are a lot of people in the room there will be plenty of opinions and desires to make decisions. This process will involve times of adversity and challenges as well as interaction with contractors and consultants who may not be believers.

Churches should have a project manager or single staff member to funnel all efforts and information through. The senior pastor should strongly consider stepping out of the details and turn the entire effort over to a project manager or executive pastor who leads the team. Church leadership should try to minimize all other staff contact with architects, engineers, consultants and contractors. Staff members have a tendency to focus on their own ministry and not see the big picture.

## Owner's rep sets priorities

A church usually has more needs and wants than money. An owner's representative for the church can set priorities, >>

### ITEMS OFTEN NOT INCLUDED IN CONSTRUCTION COSTS

- AV equipment and installation
- Computer system installation
- Specialty construction (stained glass, library equipment, etc.)
- Shelving and cabinetwork installation
- Kitchen equipment
- Platform furniture
- Interior decoration
- Window treatment and installation
- Irrigation systems and landscaping
- Construction related insurance
- Performance and payment bond for contractor
- Interim interest
- Fund raising expenses
- Contingency — 10 percent recommended
- Land cost and financing
- Architectural and engineering fees
- Printing expenses for documents and bid packages
- Project manager
- Signage
- Moving expenses
- Parking lot
- Sidewalks
- Materials testing
- Image magnification
- Seating
- Lighting
- Cables (voice and data)
- Security equipment

By Mike Buster

get a functional lasting design that looks strong and be a good steward of limited funds. Owner's representatives can help relieve stress by keeping an aggressive timeline for consultants and staff.

**Establish budget early**

Often architects do not take into account final costs; however, builders do. When evaluating building costs it's necessary to involve the contractors. At every opportunity, verify all cost estimates with

your contractor before proceeding to the next step. Decision makers should establish the budget early and in writing. Churches should not pay for designs that are not within the budget.

Church leadership needs to be aware of potential problems with architects. In many cases architects work on a percentage — which can have an adverse effect on bottom line costs. Architects, through their own creativity, can sometimes over design and not suffic-

iently communicate their concerns.

It is an advantage for churches to bring the builder in before design begins. Churches should hire a general contractor who specializes in church construction and who has built a facility about the same size and scope. If a church brings in early help for the land selection, building placement, floor plan, and overall design it is likely to reduce change order costs. Change orders are not part of the original project bid and can prove costly if not closely watched. Change orders are expensive and a sub-contractor will be delighted to change a light fixture or add a door — at a cost.

**Don't rush process**

By bringing in a general contractor early on in the process churches can still have competitive bidding for contracts. Church leadership needs to shop hard and control the costs. If a guaranteed maximum price is set, churches can then build in incentives to save money and bring the project to completion on time.

When churches rush the design/build process problems can arise. Fast tracking — starting construction before all the plans and specifications are completed — can be a temptation. This process is seldom faster and usually means extensive change orders for the project.

Church leaders need to be aware that construction costs will often end up higher than expected. There are many development expenses that are not normally included in cost estimate reports. It is essential that an all-inclusive total project budget is prepared early in order to reduce unpleasant surprises. As a general rule of thumb, church leaders should plan on estimated construction costs plus 50 percent for a final cost.

Mike Buster is executive pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, TX, where the church is breaking



ground for a children's building and a second campus, Prestonwood North, for a total cost of \$35 million.

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