

5 Ways You Can Prevent Delays On Your Next Construction Project




Summary

Construction delays are an almost universally accepted part of the industry. In fact, they are so common that according to a McKinsey Global Institute report, 77% of megaprojects around the globe are 40% or more behind schedule.

As construction projects and sites are the sum of so many moving parts and individuals, it is understandable that even the smallest change can negatively impact schedules. However, with delays come fines, and construction companies faced with repeat setbacks can lose profits and potential customers.

Whilst it is reasonable to understand that missed timelines may be out of a construction company's control, some factors causing delays can be mitigated to avoid huge cost overruns. It pays to be aware of the varying degrees of construction-related disruptions and of the factors causing them so that you can plan accordingly. With proper forecasting, communication, software applications, labor training and reliable subcontractor and supplier partnerships, you can be better prepared. Delays can be made shorter and less frequent, helping you stay on time and on budget.



This paper highlights ways in which you can keep to your timelines on your next construction project.

Index

Mitigating Delays

1. Better Communication

2. Easing Budget And Resource Shortages

3. Managing Unskilled Crews And Laborers

4. Better Management Of Unexpected Changes

5. Partner With Reliable Subcontractors And Suppliers

Overview

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A successful construction project is one which is completed on schedule and handed over to the client within the allocated time, on budget, with required specifications, and to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Delayed projects exceed resources, incur costs and cause disputes and litigation between parties. Clients suffer hardship, expenses and a loss of revenue, whilst the construction company faces costs from unproductive workers, equipment and disrupted construction and material delivery schedules.

There are many factors that can influence construction deadlines. **A July 2018 study in Saudi Arabia, for example, found that choosing the lowest-price supplier led to a cost deviation of 25.3%, adding USD 31,355,923 in costs to the total project.**¹ Studies conducted across the region recommend that streamlining processes, improving communication, and partnering with efficient and reliable consultants and subcontractors can greatly mitigate delays.

In this article, we highlight ways in which you can prevent delays on your project timelines.

Mitigating Delays

Avoiding costly delays is one of the most important aspects of project management in the construction industry. As a best-case scenario, construction delays reduce your annual revenue figures, and demonstrate to your clients that you're disorganized or incapable of delivering. Worst case, your firm could face damages from legal suits –especially if delays cost your customers money.

Detailed below are factors that can help you keep to schedule:

1. Analysis of Cost Overruns in Saudi Arabia Construction Projects: A University Case Study, Jacob and Dean Kashiwag, www.researchgate.net/publication/326960517_analysis_of_cost_overruns_in_saudi_arabia_construction_projects_a_university_case_study

1. Better Communication



Effective communication between various groups and levels involved in a project is critical for maintaining schedules.

- **Planned organizational structures:**

To accelerate communication and decision-making among parties, develop and maintain appropriate overall organizational structures and communication systems linking all teams throughout the life of a project. The roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined, and the designated decision-makers should also be unambiguously identified.

- **Site knowledge:**

Insufficient knowledge of a site causes delays in projects. The investigation of site conditions, together with the design of groundworks and foundations, should be thorough, complete, and clearly presented before construction commences, so as to reduce the impact of any unforeseen ground conditions.

- **Awareness of weather constraints:**

Poor weather, like excessive summer temperatures, strong winds, shamal, and rain, can derail your construction schedule and threaten your profit margins with each passing day. Rain can ruin an excavation project, whilst strong winds can put a stop to high rise construction or a roofing job.

You need to build weather mapping technologies into your construction site so that you can plan timely contingencies into your contracts and reschedule activities. Jobs like concrete pouring have to work around weather conditions. Similarly, maintaining water pumps on site can be handy in disposing water that accumulates and interferes with construction.

- **Better prediction models and expectation management:**

Given the lack of trained resources and subcontractors in some countries, building companies need to develop realistic time-prediction models for local constructing and civil engineering industries. This will not only provide realistic deliverables, but also help manage ambitious client expectations.



- **Access to real-time data:**

Once a job is underway, having real-time access to data is critical to see how job progress is matching up with job costs. Unfortunately, many contractors are still relying on non-integrated, on premise software solutions, which often means delayed data reporting between the field and office.

What's more, people tasked with analyzing project productivity are often working from information that is days, weeks, or even months old. A cloud-based, integrated construction management solution solves this by automating workflows and delivering powerful data and analysis tools in real time.

2. Easing Budget And Resource Shortages



Fluctuating oil prices and the global coronavirus pandemic have made markets more volatile and unstable. Now more than ever, it's imperative to plan budgets carefully so that both you and your client know what to expect. This ensures that you meet project objectives on time. You don't want a situation where a client has already paid, and because of delays you're having to dip into your own pocket to get the job done.

As a contractor, misquoting a job estimate can be massively detrimental to the project's overall timeline. Accurate assessments ensure that there is always enough money for materials, wages, and more. Using estimating software simplifies bids, valuations, and financial project planning, making the process easier.

Here are some additional tips on averting project delays through accurate budgeting.

- **Updated financials:**

It is vital that construction managers have access to accurate and complete job costing utilities, as well as real-time updates on the firm's financial health in order to ensure that a project doesn't eat up allocated resources.

- **Using financial software:**

A well-maintained and updated costing software will help you accurately estimate expenses and ensure that each job is on schedule.

- **Bank loans:**

In the event you find that you're likely to exceed your budget, banks can be flexible with providing loans, especially if you're an established firm with collateral to offer. This last resort works well if you need some cash to purchase near-end materials for a project, pay workers, and avoid costlier delays.

3. Managing Unskilled Crew And Laborers



A study of the causes for delays in large building projects in Saudi Arabia observed that most construction projects used a workforce of relatively unskilled labor. By implementing extra planning at the very early stages of construction you can minimize delays and cost overruns.

Here are some additional tips on mitigating delays from unskilled labor.

- **Developing human resources:**

Proper training and classification of craftsmanship can help build a more professional workforce that can deliver more efficiently.

- **Training courses:**

Additional training courses should be scheduled to teach time and cost control, information systems, and management and collaboration between different labor forces — subcontracted and in-house.

- **Better management across job sites:**

Many construction firms take on too many projects, overbook their crews, and end up falling behind on one or more jobs as their exhausted employees move from site to site trying to get everything done. Hiring more crews lightens the load for everyone, avoids delays, and keeps morale higher throughout your firm.

- **Construction management software:**

Technology can be used to track and assess the productivity of your crews and determine whether more labor is required to keep your projects on track, or if your existing teams can handle the load.

4. Better Management Of Unexpected Changes

Unexpected changes are always going to be a part of the construction business. Sometimes a requirement emerges that was different from what was originally planned. Conversely, the client can change his mind, and you are not in a position to say no!



- **Expectation management:**

Managing expectations is a crucial skill when you have to coordinate between so many different teams working across a project. Let the client know about the change, why it's needed, and the delay it will cause.

If the client requests the change, let them know that a deadline extension will be required in order to make it happen, or suggest a bonus for incorporating the change into the existing work schedule.

- **Track changes:**

Keeping a paper trail that tracks modifications through a signed change-order form ensures that there is evidence for why a project took longer than initially planned. Electronic change forms are the best means of tracking as they are harder to lose or misplace.

- **Minimizing variations:**

Comprehensive strategies need to be formulated to minimize variations, whether client-initiated or consultant-related. A clear and thorough client brief is the most useful strategy for reducing changes and delays.

5. Partner With Reliable Subcontractors And Suppliers



One of the biggest problems noted across multiple delayed construction projects in Saudi Arabia, as an example, was the role of unreliable subcontractors and suppliers. Untrained crews waste time on a job site and are seen as the biggest factor contributing to derailed timelines. Additionally, the lack of effective and efficient material procurement systems cause further interruptions to targets.

Detailed below are some factors that can mitigate delays.

- **Procurement processes:**

Material procurement has the potential to cause major delays to construction projects. Supply-purchasing processes should be executed properly by partnering with a reliable supplier in order to avoid delays. It helps if your supplier is also equipped to source from international and local manufacturers, as well as adequately manage contingencies to cover increases in material costs due to inflation.

- **Experience and expertise:**

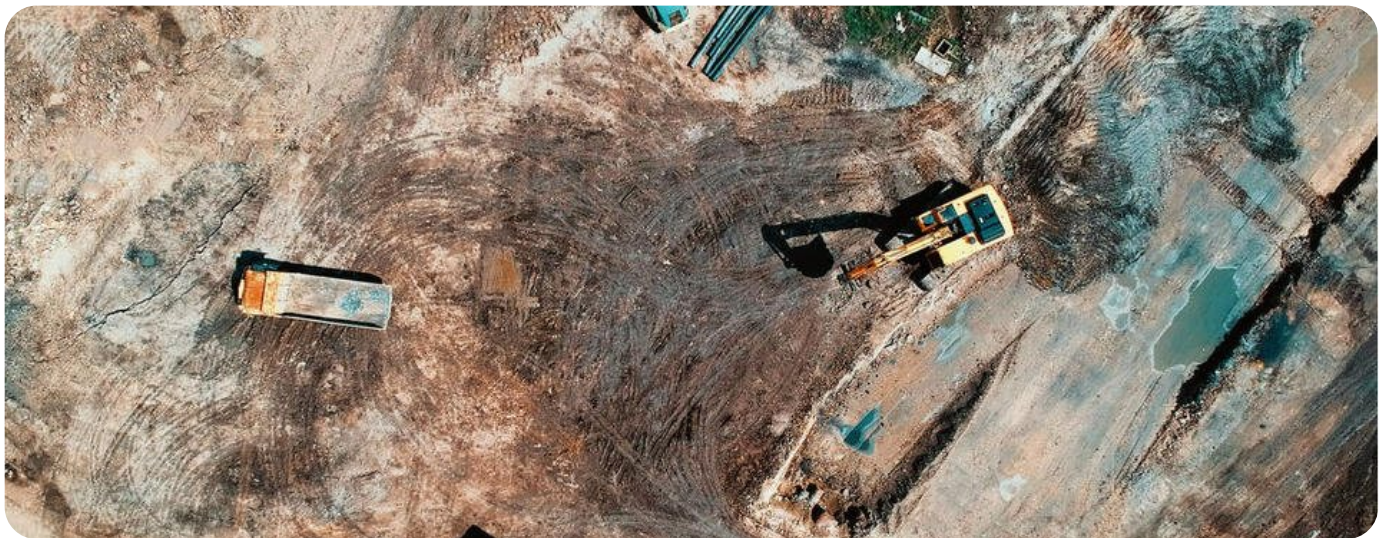
Supplier reliability and competence requires having the appropriate technology, experience, and specialties available to cater for the needs of a project. Without the latest, up-to-date technologies, multidisciplinary tools and a competent team giving instructions to your crew, you will not be able to function optimally.

- **Check for resources and capabilities:**

There is an overwhelming trend worldwide to award contracts to the lowest bidder without reviewing for deliverable capabilities. Having a supplier who can minimize change orders during construction to avoid delays can greatly help you hit your target timelines.

- **Planning and scheduling:**

There are multiple processes during construction that require coordination between subcontractors, suppliers and your construction objectives. A professional supplier can match a shifting need for resources to avoid cost overruns and disputes.



- **Site management and supervision:**

Even if you had reliable and skilled laborers available, you need administrative and technical support from a supplier. Ensuring that a proficient supplier is assigned as soon as the project is awarded mitigates costs and delays.

- **Hiring the right people:**

Hiring independent supervising engineers to monitor the progress of the work can ensure timely delivery of materials, as well as assuring a project is hitting its timed objectives.

Overview

It pays to note here that most of the factors discussed in the report are personnel-related. People, especially those whom you partner with through the course of a project, can play a decisive role in determining your success or failure.

In an effort to implement timely deliverables:

- Ensure that resources, efforts and leadership are well aligned for the implementation of the project. This can be achieved through adequate funding, comprehensive documentation, availability of resources, continuing involvement of stakeholders, and competent project managers.
- Ensure that all parties concerned with the project and all levels in the management hierarchy of each participating organization are willing to manage, plan, design, construct and operate the facility professionally and harmoniously. This includes commitment to the project, clear objectives and scope, and top management support.
- Ensure clear lines of communication as this helps clarify and disseminate all necessary project information to all internal and external project stakeholders. This includes community involvement, clear information/communications channels, and frequent progress meetings.

Some delays may be unavoidable, but with proper planning and by implementing some important strategies and processes in-house, you can mitigate or avoid costly delays. And once your reputation as an on-time and on-budget construction company spreads, you'll soon find yourself in higher demand for more profitable projects as well.

To learn about how Binex can help support you in mitigating construction projects delays, get in touch [here](#).