The Myth of the Quick Estimate

Capital Projects and Construction receives many calls asking us to give a quick estimate for work in a given space. This is usually easy to do if the scope of the project is moving furniture, hanging pictures, painting rooms or installing new carpet. The issues become more complicated when the work involves demolition and construction because this type of work invokes the City of Portland Building Code and Design Review processes, the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), and various other health, building and fire codes. We would like to explain some of these challenges to you so that we may better serve you in achieving your project goals within your allotted budget and time schedule. As an example, here is a typical request: A large meeting room needs to be converted into several offices for new staff. Below are some of the issues that need to be resolved before we can provide an estimate:

**Hazardous materials:** If the space is in a building built prior to the mid-1980’s there is a good chance there may be asbestos containing materials in the fireproofing, pipe insulation, floor tiles and wall and ceiling plaster. We will visit the area to determine if the area contains hazardous materials and if so, will abate them as required as part of the project.

**Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC):** Each building on campus has a different HVAC system. We need to research how these systems work in the project area and determine what is needed to modify the system. Each new room needs a supply and return air source. Reconfiguration of ductwork and new terminals and thermostats may be required.

**Electrical:** Additional power outlets will probably be needed for the offices and some research is needed to determine where the existing power is coming from, whether the existing power panels have the capacity to provide additional power and how the new power will be routed from the panels, etc.

**Lighting:** Lighting requirements are different for a meeting room versus offices. We will determine if the existing lights can be reused, need to be relocated or must be replaced. In addition, each office will require separate light switching and this will require recircuiting, even if the existing lights can be reused. In addition, emergency and exit lights will most likely need to be reconfigured.

**Plumbing:** The project area needs to be researched to see if there are plumbing lines in the vicinity that will be impacted.
**Data:** The new offices will need additional data and phone outlets. We will need to research what the best path will be to run the lines back to the data/phone closets. In addition, it will need to be determined if the existing system has the capacity to handle additional circuits. If not, a new telephone switch may need to be purchased – a costly proposition.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** All new remodels must comply with the ADA. This usually means upgrades to door hardware, making sure doors meet the required minimum width, and that there are proper maneuvering clearances in the remodeled area. If the project is large enough, we may be required, as part of the project, to upgrade nearby restrooms to bring them into compliance with the ADA. This can incur significant costs associated with relocating plumbing fixtures, counters, doors, etc.

**Signage:** Building floor plan signage will need to be modified, in addition to the creation of new room signage.

**Finishes:** Time needs to be spent on determining if existing finishes can be reused or matched. Can the carpet be reused or does it need to be replaced? Can we still get the ceiling tile that was used or do we need to replace the entire ceiling? Do we need to repaint the entire corridor if a new door is put in or removed or can we paint only a portion of it?

**Furniture:** If new furniture is to be provided as part of the project, what are the requirements and what is the budget?

There are other items that need to be researched in even simple projects, but these are the main items that impact a project.

What this means for you is, after the initial meeting to determine your needs, we will be asking you for funds to cover the costs to develop an estimate for your project. This will vary from project to project. If you agree, you will need to provide us with written or e-mail approval for an agreed upon fee to produce the estimate, and an index number to charge to. If, after you receive the estimate, you decide to proceed further, additional funds to cover the project will need to be approved by you and the project can move forward.

We at CPC hope this helps you understand some of the challenges in estimating projects. Please contact us if you have any suggestions or questions. We are here for you.

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