

Construction Quality

It's a Bottom Line Builder or Breaker



Are you delivering construction quality to every client?

Delivering construction quality is extremely important to any construction company. The level of quality produced affects a company's reputation, bidding opportunities, customer satisfaction, and the bottom line. But despite a high level of importance, it's becoming harder than ever before to deliver it successfully and consistently in the eyes of customers.

Construction companies are under attack and being bombarded nearly daily with changes from persistent trends like rising material costs

and labor shortages. Obstacles are also popping up from stricter regulations on safety, cleanliness, reducing errors, waste, and more. They are all barriers for a construction company to complete a project on time and within budget. It all adds up to a scenario that can at times, seem daunting.

But there are ways for a construction company to overcome these challenges, meet goals and deliver quality. Plus, do it consistently for every client. It requires making changes in current operations for monitoring, measuring, and managing all variables of a construction project

effectively from start to finish. It requires a Construction Quality Management (CQM) program and executing it effectively.



Better CQM Starts by Defining Quality

The first step to building or redesigning a CQM program is gaining a clear understanding of what the word ‘quality’ means in the mind of clients. In the Construction industry, quality is defined most often as completing a project within the defined guidelines outlined in the Scope of Work.

However, in the mindset of clients, there is more to it than fulfilling scope. Performance in all construction activities is also considered a part of quality. For example, if a construction company leaves a job site covered with trash, are the workers exhibiting quality in their performance? It should be clear they are not.

Plus, if you ask three clients ‘What is quality?’ there will be three different answers. Therefore,

it is crucial to establish a shared meaning with all parties—the construction company, customer, subcontractors, suppliers, etc. Basically, anyone working on the project. It is critical to meet expectations that affect customer satisfaction.

CQM Needs to Become Sophisticated

The second step is moving to a higher level of CQM sophistication. It requires the construction company:

1. Establish a quality standard for the company or revise its current one.
2. Create CQM Assurance Practices or improve current ones to the point where they reach and maintain a set quality standard consistently.

Accomplishing both is essential to achieving short- and long-term success.

QA Programs Need Policies

Quality Assurance (QA) is another critical area to deliver construction quality consistently. QA policies and procedures need to be created, revised, communicated, implemented, maintained, evaluated, and enforced.

Providing QA training for employees based on the standard is another step forward. It should include the meaning of quality to customers, the quality standard that has been set, how to produce quality consistently, and safety.

QA activities also often include reward programs. Employees receive incentives when they contribute to quality by paying attention to details, exceeding expectations, and introducing innovative ideas.

Quality Control (QC) Plays a Big Role

Quality Control (QC) also plays a big role because it ensures quality is maintained and delivered consistently throughout a construction project to every customer. It requires having a dedicated QC team of experienced members who monitor, inspect, measure, and evaluate activities.

QC Team members compare construction activities to the established quality standard, client needs, and expectations. The results indicate any amount of variation. Differences beyond acceptable parameters are an indicator that changes are needed.

Gaps identified will also provide insight into the actual changes needed, who will be affected, and how to implement them. It is a process that ensures consistency for a construction company in delivering construction quality.



Quality of Conformance

Another area that needs evaluation is Quality of Conformance (QofC). This step measures the degree a construction company has conformed the design and specifications to the project requirements. The results will clearly indicate whether goals are being met during the project and after completion.

QofC activities include conducting frequent risk assessments to identify and address issues before they become problems. They are key for effective alignment and management of expectations between the construction company and client.

Failure to maintain alignment and meet expectations can negatively impact project quality. It can also affect a construction company's reputation and ability to secure future projects.

Additional Ways to Improve Quality

There are more ways to improve construction quality. They include:

- **Create a Worklist Earlier**
Before the project begins, create a worklist rather than waiting until the end. As milestones are completed, check off them off the list. The process adds value for both the company and the customer by practicing good project management

skills. It also keeps everyone on the same page.

- Establish workflows earlier to show ownership and accountability.
- Learn from past jobs, using the lessons to standardize processes and reduce risk.
- Add software programs and apps for managing, assuring, controlling, and improving the quality delivered on projects.

The Bottom Line

The bottom line is for a construction company to deliver quality in customers' eyes and consistently requires making changes. They include establishing new ways of thinking, planning, working, operating, etc.

Standards must be established, communicated, monitored, measured, evaluated, and managed consistently. Plus, compliance must come from not just everyone in the construction company but also subcontractors, suppliers, etc.

Plus, adding or redesigning the current QAM program is essential, along with having a dedicated team of experienced

people in QAM, QA, QC, QofC to gain consistency.

These changes will add value that brings:

- More satisfied customers that provide referrals
- Better reputation that leads to more bid opportunities
- Better bottom line

It all comes from using the 4 'Q's for construction quality.

