



ECLIPSE INSIGHTS: THE DESIGN-BUILD ADVANTAGE STREAMLINING YOUR CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

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In today's fast-paced business world, where time and resources are always in short supply, the design-build approach offers a compelling alternative to traditional construction project delivery methods. This article explores why the design-build method could be the best choice for your next commercial project.

By combining design and construction services under one agreement, design-build firms provide business leaders with a simpler, more efficient, and more cost-effective way to bring their vision to life.

UNDERSTANDING THE TRADITIONAL DESIGN-BID-BUILD APPROACH

The design-bid-build approach has historically been the standard in construction. It follows a linear process in which the business leader (or project leader) first hires an architect to design the project. Once the design is finalized, the leader solicits bids from general contractors, who then submit their proposals based on the architect's plans. After reviewing these bids, the leader selects a contractor to carry out the construction.



At first glance, the design-bid-build model seems logical: create a design, get competitive bids, and hire the contractor offering the best value. However, this approach can come with significant downsides, particularly for business leaders juggling multiple responsibilities and seeking a streamlined process.

THE COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE

In the design-bid-build method, business leaders often become involuntary mediators between architects and contractors. When issues arise during construction, each party typically blames the other—the contractor may point fingers at the architect, while the architect may blame the contractor for misinterpreting the plans. This lack of coordination creates misunderstandings, friction, and expensive project delays.

Without a single point of responsibility, project conflicts become the business leader's burden. Instead of focusing on core business operations, you're forced to navigate the competing perspectives, goals, and communication styles of separate design and construction teams.

DELAYS AND BUDGET OVERRUNS

Another common drawback of the design-bid-build model is its potential for budget overruns. **Since the design and construction phases are separate, you may not have a clear understanding of the project's total cost until after the design is complete and bids have been submitted.** If the bids come in higher than expected, you might need to go back to the architect to adjust the design, which can further delay the project.

Additionally, once construction begins, unexpected issues with the design can lead to change orders—formal requests to alter the project scope—which often come with added costs and timeline extensions. As a result, many projects using the design-bid-build method end up going over budget or past their expected completion date.



This seamless collaboration allows for more creative and flexible solutions

STREAMLINED COMMUNICATION

One of the greatest benefits of the design-build approach is the streamlined communication between all parties involved. Because the design and construction teams are part of the same organization, they collaborate from day one. **This early and ongoing communication minimizes the risk of misunderstandings and ensures that everyone is aligned throughout the project.**

In a design-build firm, architects and construction professionals work side by side, sharing insights and feedback that lead to better decision-making and more efficient problem-solving.



DESIGN-BUILD: A UNIFIED SOLUTION

Enter the design-build approach, a method that is quickly gaining popularity for its streamlined process, single point of accountability, and ability to keep projects on time and within budget. In a design-build model, the business leader works with one firm that handles both the design and construction phases. This firm takes responsibility for the project from start to finish, offering a more cohesive and collaborative experience for the owner.



Fewer delays also mean fewer budget overruns. Since the design-build team is responsible for both the design and construction, they have a vested interest in ensuring the project stays on track. Any potential issues can be addressed immediately, without the need for time-consuming change orders or renegotiations.

This efficiency often translates to lower overall project costs and a quicker completion time—both of which are critical for business leaders eager to start using their new or renovated space.

If a design change is needed mid-project, adjustments can be made quickly, without the need for lengthy negotiations or conflict between separate teams.

This seamless collaboration allows for more creative and flexible solutions. If the design team proposes a feature that would be too costly or time-consuming to build, the construction team can offer alternatives early in the process, ensuring that the final design is both feasible and aligned with the project's budget and timeline.

TIME AND COST EFFICIENCY

Another major advantage of the design-build method is its potential for time and cost savings. **With a design-build firm, you often have a clearer understanding of the project's total cost before construction begins.** Many design-build firms offer a guaranteed maximum price (GMP), which means you'll know the project's upper cost limit upfront, with fewer surprises along the way. This pricing transparency gives business leaders more control over their budgets and allows for more accurate financial planning.

Because the design and construction teams are working together from the start, the entire process tends to move faster. The design and construction phases can overlap, allowing certain aspects of the project to move forward while others are still being finalized. This **"fast-tracking"** can significantly reduce the overall project timeline.

A COHESIVE EXPERIENCE

At its core, the design-build approach offers a smoother, more cohesive experience for the business leader. By consolidating responsibility into one team, the design-build model reduces the leader's role as a middleman and eliminates many of the headaches associated with traditional project delivery methods.



With a single point of contact, business leaders have more clarity and control over the project. You'll spend less time managing conflicts between different teams and more time focusing on your core business operations. ***With a unified team working toward a common goal, the risk of miscommunication, delays, and cost overruns is significantly reduced.***

This simplicity is especially appealing to business leaders with limited time or experience managing construction projects. Instead of coordinating between multiple firms, you'll work with one integrated team that is fully accountable for the project's success.

Hiring a design-build firm might be the smartest decision you make



CHOOSING A DESIGN-BUILD FIRM

While the design-build approach offers many advantages, it's not the right fit for every project. Smaller, simpler projects with limited budgets may still benefit from the traditional design-bid-build method, especially if you're looking to shop around for the lowest bid. However, for larger, more complex commercial projects—such as office buildings, retail spaces, industrial facilities, and significant renovations—a design-build firm is often the better choice.

Whether you're expanding your business, renovating an existing space, or building from scratch, ***the design-build approach can help ensure that your project is completed on time, within budget, and to the highest standard of quality.***

Business leaders who value speed, cost control, and a streamlined experience will find that the design-build method provides the most efficient and reliable path to project completion.

SUMMARY

When embarking on a commercial construction project, business leaders face many critical decisions, but none are more fundamental than choosing the right project management approach. For many business leaders seeking efficiency, cost control, and a smoother construction experience, a design-build firm can offer significant advantages.

If you're considering your next commercial project and want to minimize stress, reduce risk, and ensure a successful outcome, hiring a design-build firm might be the smartest decision you make.