

What to Consider When Selecting Your Construction Partner

by Harry Scheid, President Horst Construction



With over 32 years in the business, Harry prides himself on being a community leader, exceptional building provider, and client advocate. As President & CEO of Horst Construction, he provides leadership to Horst's multi-disciplinary teams throughout all stages of a project—from discussion through ribbon cutting. His creative approach to value engineering, constructability, and planning is one of the reasons clients come back to Horst time and again.

**“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”
— Stephen R. Covey**

This quote by Stephen Covey has always spoken to me, and is one that I reference in training and internal meetings with my employees frequently. At Horst Construction, our approach to every project is to listen intently to our clients with the goal of clearly understanding their needs. Without first gaining clarity, it would be very difficult for us to meet and exceed our clients' expectations.

One point of pride for me is that by bringing our collective experiences to the table — experiences gained by working with a variety of clients over the past 120 years in business — Horst can bring additional depth to our approach, often anticipating needs our clients will encounter before they even realize they exist.

Are You Initiating a Transaction or Developing a Long-Term Relationship?

When our clients start to investigate and plan a major capital expenditure, they can sometimes overlook the fact that they are getting involved in a relatively long-term commitment. Of course, each project will have a unique schedule and timeline; however, for many clients the process can take several years from start to finish. For example, which churches we work closely with the building committee — typically consisting of church members who lead the major service areas within the church, such as education programs or community outreach — as well as the religious leader.

That relationship begins with planning, whether informally or through an in-depth Master Planning Process, and continues through program/budget development, selection of options, and phasing approach; as well as through preconstruction, construction, and ribbon cutting. Obviously, it is crucial that your interests are well represented and accurately interpreted by your construction partner.

Senior living projects, whether for profit or non-profit, also constitute a very long term relationship that can last for years. This often includes ongoing maintenance and refresh programs after the facility is open for business. Here, the relationship needs to be even more dynamic. Not only the owner, but also staff and residents become part of the relationship with our firm. We work alongside them every day, so trust and mutual respect are key components to a successful and long-lasting relationship.

Many for-profit institutions are familiar with buy commodities — such as food or cleaning services — so they don't automatically understand the value of life cycle costs when it comes to construction. If you must replace your windows every 5 to 7 years, that inexpensive window is now pretty expensive. If you purchased a low cost, inefficient heating system, that decision may come back to bite you when you have to deal with the climbing utility bills.

The knowledge that you have a trustworthy construction partner in your corner is priceless. Our relationship-based approach keeps our clients and their best interests first and foremost in our minds.

Using our Expertise to Help Make Educated Decisions about Your Wish List

From my experience, most churches have long wish lists — and for very good reasons! This is likely one of the largest projects they will ever be involved with, and can also have a multi-generational impact on their community. Another reason is that committee members are often approaching the project primarily from their personal or religious viewpoint, without having an understanding of the construction process. This is where it is our obligation, as the construction partner, to provide our knowledge and education to

We do not see our projects as simply transactions; we are committed to the quality, respect, and communication that our relationships are built upon.

help bring an understanding to your team. While creating a wish list is an excellent start, most committee members either do not realistically consider costs when creating a scope of work, or they feel that the construction itself should automatically adjust (up and down) along with their fundraising efforts.

To guide our clients along the journey, we often begin the conversation by asking about needs versus wants, and by asking if they are willing to approach their project in phases. Life cycle costs and operational costs are also a noteworthy factor that can make a huge impact in the future.

To illustrate, here are just a few examples:

- Considering a higher quality tile may be a better option than a less expensive option.
- A reasonably priced tile and has a good option to add value and stay on budget.
- An on/off sensor on the hood that is not immediately thought of.