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The Getty, a luxury apartment project in Manhattan, was audited by DIF New York Construction LLC on behalf of the owner. DIF New York discovered critical mistakes in contractor payment confirmations and other errors.

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SAVING TIME AND MONEY

DIF New York Construction reviews construction documents with an eye for problems

by Licia Jackson

When it comes to saving construction companies millions of dollars in costs, *DIF New York Construction LLC* is the company to call, according to Founder and President Ilan Feder. “Research worldwide recognizes that in the construction bid, documents are hiding most of a project’s problems. We analyze these drawings and documents to look for mistakes and contradictions and find ways we can maximize efficiencies.”

A civil engineer, Feder brought his company to Long Island in 2015. He has an engineering firm in Israel, *DIF Israel Civil Engineering Ltd.*, which began in 1999 as a construction management company. As that company grew in knowledge and experience, Feder realized the company could help many more clients with this special service reviewing documents.

“When we check drawings and pre-construction bid documents, we find mistakes and save so much money and time for a project,” Feder says.

DIF New York conducts reviews for large-scale construction and infrastructure projects, helping clients refine expenses and streamline and coordinate work.

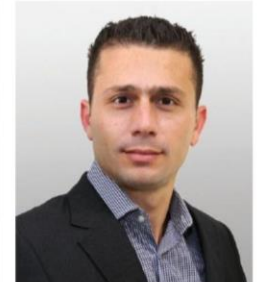
Cristian Vimer, Ph.D., a close colleague who works with the firm, explains that consultants check over documents at many points in the construction process. “We review requests for proposals to make sure everything is included and instructions are clear. We check bid documents to ensure they are all-inclusive

and drawings are coordinated, and we review bids for completeness and detail,” he says. Additionally, the company examines bid-to-bid leveling during the bid process to compare prices, checks final documents and reviews construction and design paperwork.

Since starting this service in 2009, Feder says his staff of civil engineers has reviewed documents for more than 500 projects in Israel and the U.S., with an average 10% savings on project costs.



Ilan Feder is Founder and President of *DIF New York Construction LLC*. He is also President of *DIF Israel Civil Engineering Ltd.*



Hai Bar-On is CEO of *DIF Israel Civil Engineering Ltd.*, an engineering firm in Israel founded by Ilan Feder.

HOW IT WORKS

Feder explains that with some projects, the developer may need assistance in matching the requirements in the contracts to what is actually submitted by the construction manager. For example, on one project, the contract gave specific instructions on the type of workers and the labor cost per hour. When DIF New York reviewed the requisitions during the project performance, the company discovered that the construction manager had specified a different level of worker with a much higher hourly rate, which meant millions of dollars in incorrect payments.

In another case, the submitted bid specified for air conditioning ducts to be installed inside beams, which is not possible. "The bid drawings should have called for the ducts to be installed below the beams. The way it was written, the ceiling would have to be lowered to accommodate the ductwork. Because we found this problem on time during our review, we saved time and money instead of finding this crucial problem during the work on-site," Feder says.



In 2016, DIF New York Construction LLC reviewed the asset management plan of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's East Side Access megaproject.

"A subcontractor gives prices or amounts of materials, and the manager doesn't know how it is calculated. I know how to calculate these prices, and I check them against the drawings."

Ilan Feder, Founder and President,
DIF New York Construction LLC

"Clients often have trouble making sense of a subcontractor's bid," Feder explains. "A subcontractor gives prices or amounts of materials, and the manager doesn't know how it is calculated. I know how to calculate these prices, and I check them against the drawings." For larger, more complex projects, bid documents are often dozens of pages.

REVIEWS AT MANY POINTS

In most cases, DIF New York works with the owner of a construction project to review documents, according to Feder. Sometimes a general contractor will seek the firm's services to check a subcontractor's change orders.

Reviewing documents requires sensitivity on the part of the engineer, Feder

says. "Our function is not so easy, checking others' work. We have a nice attitude. We treat them like a colleague and try to improve the project."

At times, the developer/general contractor needs help choosing a subcontractor. "If a subcontractor is allowed to make exclusions in his bid, then comparing bids can be like comparing oranges to tomatoes," Feder says. "The lowest price may not really be the lowest price, but non-engineers may not be able to tell this from what's submitted."

COMPLEX CONTRACTS

Among the larger projects that DIF New York has reviewed is one for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's East Side Access. The public works project extends the Long Island Rail Road service to Manhattan's East Side and is one of the largest infrastructure construction projects underway in the U.S. In 2016, DIF New York conducted a review of the long-term project to help the client with its Assets Management Plan.

Under a complex management plan, MTA Capital Construction had to purchase expensive equipment years before it was to be installed. DIF New York helped with a plan for extending warranties and maintenance of the equipment.



DIF New York Construction LLC examined bid documents, contracts, change orders and schedules for The Bristol at Englewood, a 273-unit assisted living development by The Engel Burman Group.

DIF New York also reviewed bid documents and requisitions for The Engel Burman Group, a developer of senior-living housing, and for Victor Group and Extell Development Company, developers of high-rise housing, and office and hotel buildings in New York City.

"These are very big companies doing expensive projects," Vimer says. "Ilan has good ideas to make things better—some great ways to save money."

OPPORTUNITY FOR COMPANY

Feder explains that he decided to bring his company to the U.S. because of the great opportunity provided by such a big market. "If people can understand the contribution of this service, my company will be a very big company," he says.

Five years ago, he immigrated with his wife and three children. He was granted an EB-1 (employment-based) green card based on his work in the engineering field in Israel and the potential to do the same in the U.S. In Israel, he served as Treasurer of the Israel Organization of Consulting Engineers & Architects (IOCEA). He was also a member of the governing committee for the organization. His original company, DIF Israel Civil Engineering, continues to thrive under the leadership of a new partner that joined him who now serves as the general manager, according to Feder.

In Israel the firm has worked with many government companies and ministries, including the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Construction and Housing, and has

audited projects for cities such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. DIF New York would like to work with other government entities in addition to Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Feder says.

Feder and his Israeli partner Hai Bar-On hope to educate developers and builders about the value of their services and the potential to save millions of dollars and many months from projects' schedules. "We work to improve the construction industry," Feder says. "It is a very old industry, but we think we have a great deal to offer."

Freelance writer Licia Jackson, with 45 years in journalism, has served as associate publisher for the Columbia (SC) Regional Business Report and as special projects' editor for SC Biz News.



Ilan Feder (second from left) and his family on a trip to Mexico in 2017. Others shown left to right are son Assaf, daughters Eilona and Tal, and wife Isabel.