

## **Construction and Infrastructure Bid Audits Result in Significant Budget and Time Savings**

Politicians chasing headlines wanting to show how quickly projects are being executed has lead not once to professional negligence among planners and builders. The public can be saved a fortune and its quality of life improved by utilizing a simple change in conduct. So, how can money be saved without being stingy and how does being patient at first pay off at the end?

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A high-quality project is generally considered to be one that meets three elements – time, quality and budget. I would also add that it must comply with public opinion.

Let me begin with the first component: the influence of projects that started off as bids is widespread and can be perceived on a daily basis. Projects such as the Carmel Tunnels, Light Rail in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Road No. 1 and the construction and improvement of interchanges all raise public interest and affect the quality of life of us all. Errors and faults during work aren't buried in the ground. They are felt above the surface as well.

Surprisingly, despite all of the above, many prominent figures choose to bury their head in the sand, solely due to political considerations.

Narrow considerations lead to quickly green-lighting projects without adhering to quality of planning. The result: bids issued for work that is supposed to benefit the public end up being sloppy and poor, and even worse – wasteful. The paradox is that on the one hand we find ourselves in very welcome territory where the public eye is wide open and always watching and the need for infrastructures is a national priority, but on the other hand some of these projects are pushed off schedule with faults and failures that civilians are forced to deal with on a daily basis.

There is no practical or theoretical option to substantially shorten the schedules for planning and preparing the bid and pushing the project forward. On the contrary, when a bid is issued that isn't "airtight" in the professional sense it may seem that two or three months have been shaved off the process, but at the end of the day this carries with it significantly higher costs, longer execution times and eventually lower quality and a waste of public money.

Schedules are also prone to immaterial influences: for example, when a politician wants to make an impression and hurries to alert the press in front of the cameras he is actually causing valuable basic principles, like coordinating between the various plans or clearing obstructions, to be lost along the way. Sometimes, a land survey report is simply forgotten, though its impact can be crucial. Handling these deficiencies, waiting for planning updates in the field, and mistakes that need to be torn down and reinstalled all mean that shortening the schedule actually extended it significantly.

The issue with the budget is even clearer and much more tangible – quantities not checked during the bid, extraordinary and unplanned works that cost taxpayers a lot of money. All because no one thought to audit the planning documents. Doing so would have saved the budget from being blown out of proportion down the road.

We pay for it with shoddy quality of work, first and foremost. It is obvious that in these cases haste is waste, with works already performed needing to be redone. These delays cause even more stress on all the entities involved who at this point are thinking how to save money, use lower quality items and try to stay within the budget that has already been significantly exceeded.

Project budget deviations due to unaudited bid materials cause planned quality expectations to be lowered. For example, classrooms adjacent to where loud air conditioning units are housed in a school in Israel were fitted with regular doors instead of the acoustic doors planned for in advance, in turn creating a poor learning environment and all to make up for budget variance.

Infrastructure bids are being negligently handled to this very day. In order to prevent problems, and even disasters, an efficient bid audit must be conducted with three main elements in mind: schedule, quality and budget. Meeting all three will bring success in the fourth: public opinion.

Over the past few years, some of the leading government bodies and state authorities in Israel have come to understand that the best remedy is to have a mechanism of quality control in place during the bid process, performed by an independent outside entity, before passing it along to the contractor for execution. The audit allows for an integrative assessment of all plans put forth by the various advisors and consultants while examining the desired final outcome of the project. The trouble is that there are still those with vested interests who continue to hold reservations.

**This article was written by Eng. Ilan Feder, owner of D.I.F Engineering and Construction, Ltd. and D.I.F New York. Feder has 25 years of experience and a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from the Technion.**