

## Program Management: Strategies to Increase Efficiency

Excerpted and adapted from *Program Management: Concepts and Strategies for Managing Capital Building Programs* by Charles Thomsen, FAIA, FCMAA. May 2008

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### SUMMARY

Portions of this Best Practice were excerpted and adapted from the book, *Program Management: Concepts and Strategies for Managing Capital Building Programs*, by Charles Thomsen, FAIA, FCMAA.

Program management involves taking the broad view, rather than a project-by-project view. Thomsen points out that this approach allows the program manager the ability to identify common aspects of multiple projects—people, processes, and products—and to learn from them to improve the cost, schedule, and quality of future projects.

### THE ROTATION PROCESS

Thomsen explores the benefits of rotation throughout his book. Thomsen equates rotation to that of learning something new, becoming good at it, and continuously improving it through practice. When you improve one process it stimulates improvement in other related areas.

Building program managers can examine individual projects and find similarities, failures, and successes. When a similarity exists they can rotate it to the project workflow.

Thomsen describes the rotation process as a three-step process that requires:

1. Analyzing projects in a program to identify similarities
2. Choosing the similarities that are most repetitious and offer the greatest possibilities for standardization and continuous improvement
3. Focusing on ways to improve these standards at the program level

Rotation turns a custom, project-oriented activity into a continuous, program-oriented standard. Standard processes, standard products, and standard human participation save time and money. Thomsen writes, standards shouldn't be static; they should be a platform for improvement.

### THE ROTATION PROCESS DEFINED

Production of a single product is a linear activity. As the number of reproductions increases, many project tasks, many products, and many services can rotate into a building program. Once in rotation, they can be made available to each individual project without the need for re-invention.

To better understand rotation opportunities consider the functions involved in a project; people, processes, and products.

#### People

A building program management function emerges when an organizational leader has multiple building projects to oversee. As Thomsen explains, the first step for an owner is to hire someone to manage their building programs—either as an outsourced program manager or as internal staff. That person may hire architects, engineers, and construction managers to work on multiple project assignments simultaneously.

#### Process

Since so many people are involved in delivering a building, designing a process for engaging the entire team is as important as designing a building. Program managers develop and standardize approaches to hundreds of procedures like team selection, approvals, and communications. Standard processes make sure everyone knows what to do and how to do it. This system does not create more project steps instead it clarifies processes for everyone involved and increases project efficiency.

#### Product

If programs are thought of as a series of individual projects, each project is a separate intellectual smokestack executed by a separate team. One project fails to inform another. Even though an owner may require buildings with unique designs, hundreds of functional requirements are common among each building in the program. Products that are amenable to standardization include equipment, building systems, and functional layouts.

Effective building program management creates an opportunity to choose repetitive tasks, figure out how to do them efficiently, standardize them, improve them relentlessly, and apply selective technologies—eventually the overall production of building projects will dramatically improve.

#### **About the Book**

“I believe that the construction industry has, without fanfare, changed from a project industry to a program industry...and I believe many managers have missed this change.” In those words, Chuck Thomsen, FAIA, FCMAA, sums up the motivation for his forthcoming book, *Program Management: Concepts and Strategies for Managing Capital Building Programs*, published by the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA).

#### **RESOURCES**

##### **More Best Practices**

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 11.08.05 Facility Management: Operational Security Factors
- 11.08.06 Facility Management: Building Security Access Control Measures
- 11.08.03 The Building Commissioning Provider

##### **For More Information on This Topic**

See also “Project Controls” by Lowell Getz, CPA, and Frank Stasiowski, FAIA, in *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 14th edition, Chapter 13, page 718. *The Handbook* can be ordered from the AIA



Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending an e-mail to [bookstore@aia.org](mailto:bookstore@aia.org).

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##### **Key Terms**

- Practice
- Project delivery