

COGENCE Alliance

Owners + Architects + Engineers + Contractors

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Cogence Central Ohio Chapter Roundtable Series on Developer-led Projects

Program 3: Building the Future: Defining Success and Strengthening Relationships Between Developers, Architects, Engineers, and Contractors March 20, 2025

Panelists:

- Chris Tumblin, VP Residential Development, Casto
- Mackenzie Makepeace, Managing Director, DiGeronimo Companies
- Steve Wathan, CEO Equity/ECS



Building the Future: Defining Success

Summary:

- As Developers, they do not often do competitive selections. They award business based on the relationships that they have with their vendors.
- They look for relationships with vendors that specifically have experience with loans, push/pulls, and schedules.
- They appreciate designers who are willing to share the risk and who understand working with developers and have knowledge of the local market.
- Bringing on the Construction Management Team at the right time is critical to overall success.
- Casto has in-house AE staff to execute cookie cutter projects. They stressed how important land planning is for all their projects.
- Projects start with a budget and the project must fit:
 - Do not let the Architect design the project, have your hand on theirs during design!
 - Have a strong Pre-Construction person assigned to the project early to keep it on track.



Building the Future: Defining Success

Summary:

- Partner with your groups early. This provides an opportunity to build trust.
- Have your CMR/GC bring on subs early on complex projects.
- For an AE to get exposure to an organization that awards business based on past relationships by using degrees of separation. For example, team with a vendor who has established relationships. Price is important, but relationships are more important.

Lessons Learned: Demonstrate a skill set and attitude that accomplishes the following:

- a. Ability to solve problems
- b. Creativity and analysis. Creative suggestions that save money
- c. Timely communication
- d. Passionate about design and construction
- e. Making it fun!



Building the Future: Defining Success

Miscellaneous:

- Roll with the punches and keep an even keel. Projects "die" over and over during the life of the project. Help the developers stay on task.
- Construction knowledge. There's not a lot of confidence in design teams understanding cost.
- The whole team needs to understand the standards of the market in which you are developing.
- Columbus is strong as a market. Inflation has not halted development
- Municipalities want offices that generate employee income tax revenue.
- Positives - taxes and easing of regulation will likely benefit growth



Building the Future: Defining Success

Miscellaneous:

- What are the developers offering to offset the stigmas around development?
- Get over the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)
- Questions on contingency. How much do they allow? Owner contingency drops to 0 at closing of the deal. Allow the GMP to retain construction contingency.
- DiGeronimo wants to still carry owner's contingency. FFE costs always go high
- Casto also carries owner contingency, especially when hiring 3rd party CM.
- Who is carrying tariff risk on material cost in current climate? Previously bought futures on lumber.
- Recognize the need to work through the tariffs once they actually occur. Don't want to see partners go out of business.
- **Break Out Groups:** Each group was given time to strategically think about how to present themselves to the panel to win a project.



Building the Future: Defining Success

Mentimeter Polling Results: *What are your key takeaways from today's roundtable?*

- Relationships. Shared risk. Complexity offers opportunities.
- Developer-driven projects are completely bottom-line driven, and very formulaic in how they are realized.
- The relationship matters on finalizing the deal
- Good discussion on project cost risk.
- Flexibility and speed to respond, bring ideas to the table. Pertinent experience is critical.
- Interesting what and how services are procured for developers
- Understanding what is important to developers when selecting contractors and designers for their projects.
- Relationship building involves shared risk.



Building the Future: Defining Success

Mentimeter Polling Results: *What are your key takeaways from today's roundtable?*

- Great perspective from significant developers. Unguarded advice and fun round table prompt.
- Differentiate
- Percentage Allocation
- Being a team player and willing to share risk with the rest of the team goes a long way.
- Partnering/Collaboration/Relationships
- Very informative
- Great examples of successful experiences in the developer world and noted common thread that working together is common across all project types.
- Relationships and building trust with partners