



How To Choose The Best Contractor For Your Industrial Project



Experience & Reputation

While it's true that every construction company has to get a start with the first project of its kind within an industry or market, it's important to know that a contractor can handle your project and has experience building similar projects—whether it be within healthcare, education, banking, hospitality, manufacturing or another industry.

When you embark on a new construction, addition or renovation project, there is a lot at stake—budget, schedule, productivity, and a host of other concerns. So, how do you choose the right contractor—one who can understand your company's needs, can work within your budget, meet your deadlines, work as a team player and provide solutions and innovations along the way? The short answer is: do some research.

Past Experience

A good place to start is with the prospective contractor's past experience. Ask the contractor for a list of references, but don't stop there. Check out their website and social media channels for projects profiles and news about projects they recently completed. A few calls to the contractor's past clients will be worthwhile. Find out what kind of experiences their plant managers and directors

of operation had with the contractor. Find out if the company has a reputation for being flexible, friendly, easy to work with—as well as responsive and reachable at all times. Remember, you'll be working with the contractor's team for months. The day-to-day experience of previous clients is valuable information.

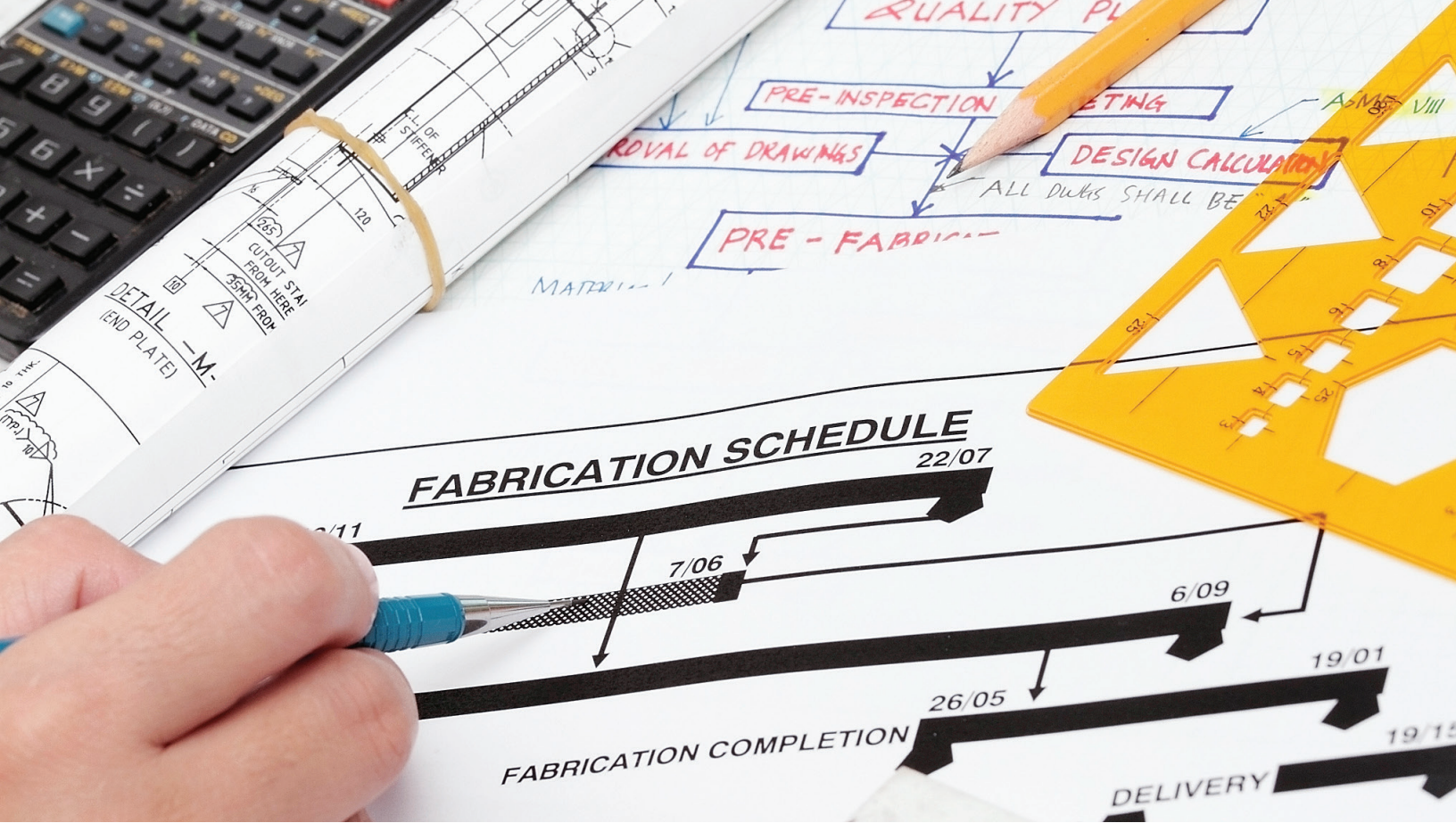
This research will provide you with the kinds of recommendations that help you make great choices, avoid problems and end up with the facility you envisioned from the start.

Reputation In The Community

Research shows, if a company has a good reputation in the community (as well as within their industry), consumers will have a preference for that company even if there are similar businesses offering the same products or services for different prices.

A company that possesses a culture of “giving back” indicates goodwill and responsibility. Check out your prospective contractor's community involvement as well as their affiliations with trade and industry groups. This will illustrate that they are keeping up with trends, learning from their peers and staying connected to their industry.





Safety, Schedule & Budget

It's helpful to know your prospective contractor's track record. Sure, it's essential to evaluate the finished products of their previous projects—but it's their work ethic, safety, ability to meet deadlines and budget mindfulness throughout the process that matters the most.

Schedule

Has the contractor demonstrated their ability to manage deadlines as well as the various subcontractors and trades? Ask the prospective contractor what software they use to manage project schedules and what will happen if weather, material delays or other issues crop up. Remember, time is money, and for every day you are delayed getting into your new production, distribution or warehouse space, it will cost you money.

Budget

Speaking of money...developing and maintaining your budget is—apart from the design—one of the

most important aspects of your project. Be sure that the contractor you select will help you develop your budget, value engineer your project, effectively control costs and communicate with you about potential budgetary issues. Ask the contractor to describe their cost-control procedures and how changes in scope will be dealt with.

Safety

Safety records are another thing to examine. Were there any safety issues that arose during the firm's previous projects? Did the contractor adhere to worksite safety regulations?

One thing you don't want to do is risk having your worksite become a hazard area. Hiring a safety-conscious contractor will help you avoid disasters like falls, electric shocks, or scaffold collapses—and lawsuits, too.

Skills & Certifications

Knowing if a contractor has specific certifications can also be extremely helpful. Certifications and proof of competencies indicate that the company has invested time in learning specific skill sets—and went through the cost and trouble of making it official.

Ask about unique skill sets, especially if you are looking for a contractor with distinct abilities in things like sustainable construction, pre-construction services, pre-engineered metal buildings, or a specialty in construction management or design-build delivery systems.

Is your prospective contractor involved in trade organizations and continuous learning? Members of Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC) and the Construction Leadership Network (CLN) take advantage of advanced safety training, focus

groups and peer roundtables on subjects such as project management, technology and innovative techniques. These contractors are typically at the top of their game and stay there by honing their skills and certifications each year.

Know Your Options

A contractor who values your budget and schedule will likely approach your project with a few construction options. Would the time- and cost-savings of design-build construction fit your project best? Does your project have a tight deadline that may benefit from the implementation of a pre-engineered metal building versus traditional steel construction? A true partner will strive to complete your project on time and on budget, all while ensuring your expectations and needs are exceeded.





You Get What You Pay For

Although it's tempting to hire the cheapest contractor, it's important to remember the old adage, "You get what you pay for."

Construction firms that traditionally "lowball" cost estimates for construction projects are often the same firms that have add-ons throughout the project that render the final price much higher than originally estimated. And remember, if a low bid negatively affects your timetable for being up and running, the cost savings on construction might be wiped out by the delay in your production start date.

It's not as simple as comparing your budget to a potential contractor's cost; you have to consider how well your bid and the contractor's estimate mesh. Examine the quoted price carefully. Does the bid cover all your project needs? Are any items left out or left for later?

Take time to review construction bids carefully—the time spent here will pay for itself. A good contractor will want to drill down into the details of your project to do quality cost estimating, so be prepared to answer a lot of questions and be specific about your needs (immediate and future) and your preferences.

If the price includes additional costs you didn't account for, is it because you didn't do all your homework—or because those costs are actually excessive or unnecessary? A good contractor knows not to put a price on any project before understanding all project details.

Don't be afraid to ask for options. A quality contractor knows where costs can be reduced and where they should not. Finding a good contractor means creating an alliance with a partner who can help flesh out ways to meet all of the project's parameters—especially schedule and pricing.

Working Compatibility

A contractor should be your partner on your project. And, as with any partner, you should be able to work well with your design and construction team. Relationships can make or break a project's success.

You must have the ability to work in sync with your contractor and the people that they hire. Do you like to be contacted for regular status updates, or are you more hands-off? How much control over the project do you want to give your contractor? A partnership likely won't work if you're the type who needs constant updates while your contractor isn't up for including you in regular communication. You want to find a contractor willing to work well within the guidelines *you* provide.

How do you find a perfect fit? After you've found a firm with the relevant experience and reputation, meet the candidates in person, communicate your

needs and abilities, inquire about theirs, and make an educated decision.

In the end, the goal is to find a competent construction firm with whom you can build and maintain a strong working relationship. Your ideal contractor probably pairs a friendly demeanor with total professionalism—the kinds of things that might be hard to accurately judge if you don't meet candidates in person.

This will not only benefit your current project, but can come in handy on future jobs as well. If you take the time to find the right contractor now, it can save you a lot of time and trouble moving forward. In the end, you will not only have built a top-notch facility that will serve your needs today and well into the future, but an important new business relationship that could serve you well for years to come.



Delivery Systems Matter

There are several ways to manage or deliver a construction project. The “traditional” method includes hiring an architect to design a project, inviting contractors to bid on the design and then selecting the contractor. Quite often, the lowest bidder is selected.

Although there are other forms of delivery, such as construction management and construction management-at-risk, the design-build delivery system has become the system of choice for most commercial, industrial, and even municipal, clients. According to a Fails Management Institute (FMI) study in June of 2018, “design-build methods will represent nearly half, or 44% of construction put-in-place (CPIp) spending across many markets segments by 2021.” In addition, 58% of owners indicated they have used or plan to use the design-build delivery method in the future.

So, how does it work?

To begin with, the design-build process is much more fluid than traditional design-bid-build. Instead of long gaps of time (and remember: time is money) between different phases of a project being completed by different participants, each member of a design-build team works together from the start and during every step of the process to help move the project along quickly and more smoothly.

Design-build allows you to vet potential candidates based on experience, then dig into the details of your specific project. This design-build selection process often overlaps with the next phase—the pre-construction phase—since the design-build team selected will likely have already done a significant amount of research and analysis of the construction site and other particulars of the project. This pre-construction step is critical.

Attention to detail is paramount. This is when the design-builder will learn about the owner’s business, including its goals, challenges, budget, and overall vision for the project. It’s a time for asking as many questions as necessary, so as to get

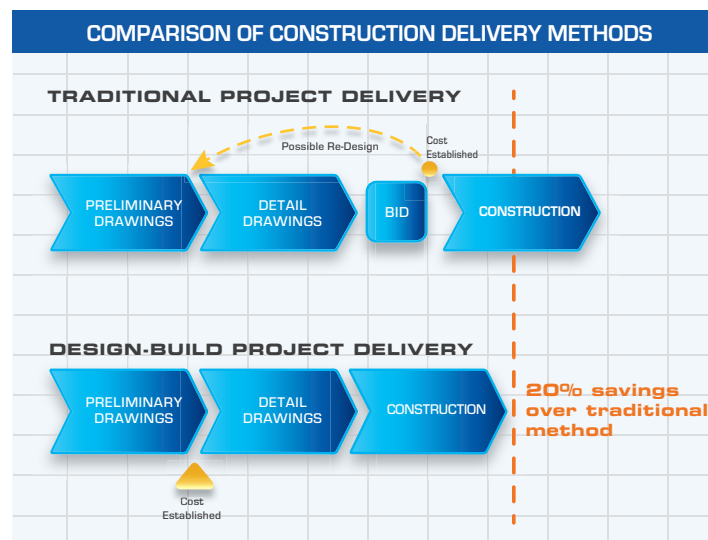
a solid picture of what is expected to be delivered. Efficiencies, added benefits, cost reductions, and enhancements have grown out of this collaborative, team-focused process.

During this phase, the owner, architects, engineers, contractors, and other consultants work together as a team to assess existing structures, electrical

systems, HVAC systems, and operational necessities to determine what needs to be done before construction starts. These assessments allow for a thorough analysis of the construction site, which helps the design-build team maximize efficiency throughout the project.

This stage offers an excellent opportunity to assess areas for cost savings and optimized productivity, while also meeting functional requirements and style preferences. A competent contractor will suggest ways to save time, money, or logistical hassles. This process ensures you receive a facility that suits your needs, budget and schedule.

Bottom line: Fewer design changes and mistakes are made due to miscommunication when design-build is employed. The increase in collaboration enables customization and innovation, which results in less time and fewer materials being wasted at each stage of the project. The result? A higher quality deliverable—ultimately resulting in increased satisfaction by the owner. Another major benefit: This method works beautifully for all types of projects: new construction, renovation or expansion.



Questions to Ask Before You Select A Contractor

- What is your company's expertise? Do you specialize in certain types of construction or construction delivery methods (design-build, design-build-lease, pre-engineered metal building, construction management, pre-construction services)?
- How will that expertise benefit my project?
- Can your company handle our project, given your current workload?
- What sets your company apart from the competition?
- How many years has your company been in business? How did it begin?
- What is the hierarchy of your company? What does your organizational chart look like? Who reports to whom?
- Specifically, who will be in charge of my project?
- Will I have one main contact or a team of contacts?
- Will I work directly with the president of your company?
- Can you provide me with a list of professional references and past clients?
- Is your company financially secure?
- Are your subcontractors financially secure?
- What are some of the things that can potentially go wrong with a project? How can you anticipate those and prevent or minimize them?
- What types of community service does your company perform?
- What services are included in the contract or stated price, and which ones are not?
- What should I expect after the contract is signed? What are the terms?
- Will you provide me with a timeline for the completion of my project? What happens if the timeline is not adhered to?

Questions to Ask Before You Select A Contractor

- How frequently will we meet while the project is underway?
- How will I be updated about the project's progress? How often?
- Are there special building codes, regulations, and permits that I will need? If so, will your company secure those for us?
- Is your work warrantied? What if we are dissatisfied with some aspect of the process? Who do we speak to and how will it be handled?
- What services does your company provide after construction is complete?

About Brindley Construction

Headquartered in Pulaski, Tennessee, Brindley Construction handles major building projects for commercial, industrial, warehouse, medical, church, retail, and other clients. In recent years, we have built numerous production plants for Tier 1 and Tier 2 auto supply chain manufacturing firms throughout Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia and Missouri.

Established in 1960, Brindley has built a reputation for service excellence and takes pride in its many repeat customers. Don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you have questions about our work or the process discussed in this guidebook.



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