



# **Managing the Line Between Cx Provider and MEP Coordinator**

***Kevin Fish, P.E., LEED™ AP***  
***Northwest Engineering Service, Inc.***

*‘An important and difficult thing in life is discovering what is and isn’t our responsibility.’*

*‘The person best able to perform a task, may not be the best person for the task.’*

## ***Topics to be discussed include:***

- Roles of Cx provider (CxP) and MEP coordinator (MEPC)
- Problems with the CxP acting in the role of MEPC.
- Determining the boundary on various tasks.
- Working effectively with an MEPC.

# Roles of CxP and MEPC

## ***The role of CxP***

- Implement a quality-focused process
- Understand required performance.
- Maintain focus on quality and requirements.
- Help ensure issues are thought through.
- Foster communication, respect, and cooperation.
- Know controls?

# Roles of CxP and MEPC

## ***The role of MEPC***

- In a nutshell: coordinate & direct work of the MEP subcontractors.
- “MEPC” refers to whoever from the general contractor is performing this role.
- Facilitate efficient and timely execution. “On time and on budget.”
- Knowledgeable in all facets of MEP scopes?
  - TAB, HVAC controls, fire alarm, lighting control, emergency power, telecom, etc.

# Roles of CxP and MEPC

## ***Crossing the line between roles***

- MEPC's often don't have a thorough understanding of specialty systems, in particular control systems.
- MEPC's are typically very busy.
- CxP often has taken the time to understand what is needed.
- On certain issues, the CxP may be better able to identify and coordinate solutions.

# Roles of CxP and MEPC

## ***Downsides to CxP acting in role of MEPC***

- Liability when Cx proposed solutions create problems.
- Unnecessary expense for client.
- Unrealistic client expectations of CxP involvement.
- Cx budget being expended on un-scoped coordination time.
- Blurred lines of responsibility, contributing to contractor sluff.

# Drawing the Line on Specific Tasks

## ***Scheduling & Coord'n of physical routing***

- Incorporating the Cx schedule into the overall construction schedule.
- Responsibility for the schedule...
- Cx provider can transmit a list of the needed Cx activities, in order, with approximate durations.
- Coordination of physical routing is the responsibility of...

# Drawing the Line on Specific Tasks

## ***Coordination of startup***

- CxP may have a clearer picture of startup needs than the MEPC.
- The opportunity for active, front-line involvement can be an excitement for CxP.
- CxP can communicate startup needs with the MEPC.
- Before coordinating with sub-contractors...

# Drawing the Line on Specific Tasks

## ***Controls issues***

- Many controls issues typically arise.
- CxP is often more knowledgeable.
- If CxP recommends a certain solution...
- Try framing input in the form of questions.
- Keep a clear line of responsibility.

# Drawing the Line on Specific Tasks

## ***Meetings and meeting minutes***

- Lesson learned on a recent project.
- Should a CxP attend construction coordination meetings?
- Cx meetings, meeting content, and meeting minutes.
- What about coordination issues that arise during Cx meetings?

# Drawing the Line on Specific Tasks

## ***Clarifications, & Punchlists / Items Lists***

- When there is an RFI process, resist temptation to circumvent it.
- When there isn't an RFI process...
- Who tracks issues from engineers' project observations?
- CxP tracks quality related issues.

# Drawing the Line on Specific Tasks

## ***Communications with sub-contractors***

- Hands on laborers determine quality.
- #1: CxP communicates only with the MEPC.
- #2: CxP communicates extensively with subs.
- #3: CxP communications with subs in presence or knowledge of the MEP coordinator.

# Drawing the Line on Specific Tasks

## ***General guidelines***

- Refrain from whatever could be construed as giving direction.
- Resist leading or documenting coordination discussions.
- When communicating with subs, consider the role and responsibility of the general contractor.

## ***Working Effectively with an MEPC***

- Listen, talk, and consider the MEPC's interests (i.e. schedule, budget, safety, quality).
- Respect the MEPC's position as having authority over the sub-contractors.
- Assertively communicate Cx needs.
  - Make it clear that you will ask lots of questions, but not dictate or direct activities.
- Conduct yourself in a way that fosters communication and goodwill.
- Use email with caution.

## ***Dealing with Ineffective MEPC's***

- Effective MEP coordination is even more critical on complex projects, or sketchy designs, or with in-experienced sub-contractors.
- Many different approaches and styles can get the job done. Talk...
- If you have an open door, you might make some suggestions.
- If job quality is in jeopardy, the CxP should communicate with the owner / client.

I challenge us to exercise discipline (i.e. think before we act) with the hope that by so doing we will gain clarity on the boundaries of our responsibility, and the freedom that comes from living within them.

-Kevin Fish



**Let's hear your reaction,  
ideas, and experiences...**