

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with FBI and the pod series Digging Deeper. Thanks for tuning in today. I saw a quote the other day, which is not a new quote at all, a very old quote, it said, "The devil is in the details." And certainly, in construction, I think the devil is in the details. And I think as an organization, as a leader, you want to make sure you keep the devil at bay, that the devil doesn't penetrate and cause all kinds of chaos in your organization.

And so, where in construction is the details and what details are oftentimes being neglected in construction? And I think in my experience, having interviewed all kinds of project managers, superintendents, other folks in the construction realm, I think there are several areas of focus there where you've got to be in the details in construction, and there's no substitute for that.

The first is the contract. All right? You have a contract with your customer. If you are a trade company, that's oftentimes with a general contractor or construction manager. If you're the general contractor, that's with the owner. But the devil is in the details in the contract. And what I've found is probably more than half of project managers and superintendents actually do not read their contract. And unfortunately, the devil is in the details again. Especially on the trade side, your contract is oftentimes specifically subject to the owner contract. And how many times have you actually requested the owner contract and gotten that down to your project managers, superintendent teams so that they know what's actually in that contract and what they're subject to? Because almost all of those contracts are subject to the owner contract.

And then I think as a project manager or superintendent, you need to read it, you need to understand it. If there are areas you don't understand, get with your executives, and make sure you understand it because there are nuances, particularly in timeframes that you have for issues, problems, change orders, all of those things. And you need to be very clear about what those requirements are because you can end up in a dispute. And if you didn't follow the contract requirements, you're likely to come out on the bad end of that dispute.

As you do read and understand your contract, make notes, highlight the key provisions so that you can go to them very quickly, be reminded of them, maybe sharing them with the other folks on your team so that they understand them as well. Of course, beyond the contract, the other things that actually are part and parcel of the contract are the plans and specs, and oftentimes even the schedule. So, the plans and specs, the devil is in the details, well, this is where a lot of the details are obviously. They're in the plans, they're in the specifications. Your plan book may be this thick, and your specification book may be this thick. So that's a lot of details.

But within that is the scope of work. And probably nothing more important in construction than fully understanding your scope of work and making sure that nothing's missed within your scope and you end up having to fix it or provide it at a much later point, because that can be costly. The other requirements that are in the specifications are also things that you need to know whether it's your requirements for submittals, your requirements for mock-ups, inspections, all of those things.

What I've also seen in terms of great habits of project managers and superintendents is you have that initial turnover meeting where everything from pre-construction or estimating gets turned over to you and there's a lot of information there. Well, I've always found that the best project managers and superintendents always take that set of plans and go over it again in a very detailed manner, along with the specs I might add. They read it; they go through it in a very detailed manner to make sure they understand every little nuance that's down there in the details again.

On the execution side, the details remain important. It's the lack of following details that end up with leaks and other latent kind of defects, construction defects that can really be expensive down the road. Anything that's got to be fixed after the building is completed and turned over gets to be super expensive. So, execution's very important along the way. Submittals. I've seen submittals come and go and just a quick rubber stamp. "Yeah, I saw this. Send it on to the next party."

But the submittals are there for a reason. As explained in the plans and specs, they're there to confirm the details, to confirm the materials, to confirm the constructability of any little place.

And those submittals are very important. The best contractors solve those problems on those submittal drawings before they hit the site. Again, if it goes to the site and you've got a problem within those submittals, something that's not correct or the right process to get it done, rework is always much more expensive than getting it right the first time. And then what are the other tools to make sure that you don't have rework? Well, there's mock-ups, doing a mock-up, and oftentimes those are called for within the specifications. But even if they're not called for to do a mock-up to make sure your window treatment's going to remain airtight or leak tight, watertight, very important.

Of course, you find mistakes with your punch lists and pre-punch lists. But remember, pre-punch lists are super important, probably more important than punch lists because these are the things that you can fix before they get covered up behind a wall or something else and again it becomes more expensive to go back and fix something later. Or let's just say you've got a repetitive thing, let's say you've got a hundred rooms and you start it off the wrong way the first time and the wrong way gets repeated a hundred times.

Well, those pre-punch lists and things like that, and again the mock-ups and inspections, all of those things prevent your mistakes from being repeated, get them caught at the beginning. And again, the devil's in the details there. And then of course, there's just quality control and the forms you use and safety, and again the forms you use, those various inspections that may happen. If you lack a quality control plan, you'll have a lot of rework. If you lack a quality, safety, or a good safety plan, you're probably going to have incidents and injuries.

So, the devil is in the details. Make sure that you, individually and as an organization, you're paying attention to those details. And then you can keep the devil at bay as well. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.