

Store Construction Remodeling Tips

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In today's competitive market place, remaining current and working efficiently are essential elements to continuing a thriving business. As your business grows, your business plan changes, or a new competitor enters the market, you may consider remodeling, expansion or rebranding. The thought of a remodeling project may feel a bit overwhelming. Deciding on the changes needed and what will work best is no small task. Before you start a new construction project, here are a few time and money saving tips.

Determine Realistic Benefits of remodel and construction and Return on Investment.

- Increase Sales
- Increase Labor Efficiency
- Maintain Sales against new competition
- Reduce Store Maintenance Costs
- Reduce Store Operating Costs

GETTING STARTED WITH PLANNING

ESTABLISH A REALISTIC TIME LINE. Many owners fail to recognize realistic time for planning, permitting, getting bids and construction periods.

ESTABLISH A BUDGET. Work with an industry related person, group, or company familiar and experienced in your business type to identify all costs including equipment and installation costs associated with the project.

ESTABLISH YOUR PROJECT PLANNING TEAM. To begin, search for a competent fixture/space planner. They have the tools to lay out the plans quickly and with efficiencies in mind. Some owners elect to have the architect serve in this role, but typically, architects are not industry savvy to provide the best advice.

FINALIZE FIXTURE PLAN/EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATIONS. It is very important for the owner to finalize the fixture plan and equipment make/model throughout before handing off to the architect. Plan and equipment revisions after the fact create confusion, project delays and increase the probability of needless change orders.

FIND AND RETAIN A PROJECT ARCHITECT. After the fixture plan is complete, the best choices for architects are those familiar with your specific business type; i.e. commercial retail. A good architect should be able to provide cost/benefits for various construction and material options so you can make informed decisions.

LOCATE A GENERAL CONTRACTOR TO ASSIST WITH BUDGETING CONSTRUCTION COSTS. Many contractors will provide this service at little to no cost to the owner. This information allows the owner time to revise plans if necessary to maintain the budget.

STARTING CONSTRUCTION

THE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT. There are several contract types to choose from; i.e.: Guaranteed Not to Exceed, Stipulated Sum, Cost Plus. Ask your architect or project manager which type is right for you. If the construction period is several weeks long, the architect

and/or your hand-picked project manager can assist with construction management issues or work in progress payment determination and implementation.

CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE. Most contractors can lay out on a calendar how they envision the project to unfold and its duration. However, most contractors do not factor in items such as equipment arrival and installation or how the construction affects daily store employee involvement. It is important to identify and communicate certain milestones that are unique to your business that may impact the construction schedule.

CONSTRUCTION COORDINATION. Most construction projects require the general contractor to retain several sub-contractors: i.e. electricians, plumbers, framers, dry wall companies, flooring contractors, etc.. to work on the project simultaneously. After construction starts and for maximum efficiency, hold frequent job meetings to review the scheduled work plan and facilitate communication among all team members. These meetings, often held weekly, alert the project team how best to achieve their assigned tasks to maintain the overall schedule. In most instances, the owner or owner's project manager should attend each of these meetings.

CHANGE ORDERS. Occasionally unanticipated items arise or you may identify an additional modification needed during the course of the project. It is important to have your project team run a financial analysis to determine the true cost of the change. What may appear as one small change could affect additional aspects spiraling into other costly revisions.

CONSTRUCTION CLOSE-OUT. Construction completion, referred to as Construction turnover, as the project is now "turned over" to the owner/customer includes several important items. First, is the punch list review. The owner walks the project with the general contractor to identify any potential defects in material and/or workmanship that are not acceptable. The timeframe to complete the punch list is established before the final payment to contractor is made. Second, the contractor delivers to the owner all operation and maintenance manuals for mechanical/electrical equipment as part of his contract. Finally, the contractor turns over the as-built plans showing the final project inclusive of any modifications or changes.

CELEBRATION. Regardless of the size and duration of the project, its completion is an exciting time. It marks the end of construction, but also the beginning of achieving the goals, which spurred the idea to pursue the project in the first place. So celebrate and make sure your customers share in the joy.