

Evaluating Subcontractor Quotes for Sitework

If you are employed by a General Contractor and your duties include the review of proposals submitted by Sitework Subcontractors, there are many things to consider beyond price that may determine if a particular subcontractor has a useful quote.

Understanding the scope of the project is paramount – a good Estimator will not only read and understand the technical specifications for Sitework related items (CSI Divisions 31-33), but will also read and understand the “front end documents” (CSI Divisions 0 and 1), which elaborate on the responsibilities of each trade contractor and will often give clues to the owner’s expectations and contract requirements. Allowances and alternates are usually identified in the front end documents, as are any supplemental unit pricing items that may be used to make contract adjustments at a later date.

Be certain that your Sitework sub has thoroughly reviewed and understood the proposed project, and insist that the quantities be estimated using current available earthwork estimating software technology. Regarding site balancing (export – surplus cut onsite that must be hauled offsite; import – insufficient cut dirt onsite that will require additional dirt to be hauled into the job and placed; balanced – equal amounts of cut and fill), ask them to tell you (in writing on their proposal) how they see the project. If it agrees with your understanding then you are ahead of the game. If not, it tells you that one of you may have



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8 Rules for Better PowerPoint Presentations

1. Remember that you are the presenter, not PowerPoint. Use your slides to emphasize a point, keep yourself on track, and illustrate a point with a graphic or photo. Don't read the slides.
2. Don't make your audience read the slides either. Keep text to a minimum (6-8 lines per slide, no more than 30 words per slide). The bullet points should be headlines, not news articles. Write in sentence fragments using key words, and keep your font size 24 or bigger.
3. Make sure your presentation is easy on the eyes. Stay away from weird colors and busy backgrounds. Use easy-to-read fonts such as Arial and Times New Roman for the bulk of your text, and, if you have to use a funky font, use it sparingly.
4. Never include anything that makes you announce, "I don't know if everyone can read this, but..." Make sure they can read it before you begin. Print out all your slides on standard paper, and drop them to the floor. The slides are probably readable if you can read them while you're standing.
5. Leave out the sound effects and background music, unless it's related to the content being presented. If you haven't made arrangements with the conference coordinator before your presentation, your audience members might not be able to hear your sound effects anyway. The same goes for animated graphics and imbedded movie files. Your sounds and animated graphics will not be functional on the synchronized version of your webcast.
6. Sure you can make the words boomerang onto the slide, but you don't have to. Stick with simple animations if you use them at all. Remember that some of your audience may have learning disabilities such as dyslexia, and swirling words can be a tough challenge. These animations will not be functional in the webcast version.
7. Proofread, proofread, proofread. You'd hate to discover that you misspelled your company's name during your presentation in front of 40 colleagues, with your boss in the front row.
8. Practice, practice, practice. The more times you go through the presentation, the less you'll have to rely on the slides for cues and the smoother your presentation will be. PowerPoint software allows you to make notes on each slide, and you can print out the notes versions if you need help with pronunciations or remembering what comes next.

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missed something. Know if the spoils generated from your site's utilities are needed to balance the site's grading requirements, and even more importantly, if they are suitable. Insist that your Sitework sub tell you in his or her proposal if this is a necessity or simply a possibility.

Be certain that the architect and engineer have an understanding of the balancing factor on your project. Is it an import or an export? If the A-E can't tell you, your Sitework sub is going to win the mid and post construction battles for claims and schedule adjustments. This is a good question to ask at a pre-bid meeting.

Insist that the Sitework sub has READ and UNDERSTANDS the geotechnical report, including any significant conclusions or recommendations contained therein (undercutting, soil stabilization, etc...) Do not leave anything in the Sitework arena open to interpretation.

Clearly identify WHO is responsible for obtaining and paying for fees and permits for such things as utility tap fees, meter installation costs, permit fees, and street restoration costs.

Be certain if a Sitework sub's price includes structural excavation as part of their overall earthwork grading scope. This can include excavation and backfill of basements, footers, walls, safety over-digs, loading dock cut-outs, and handling spoils generated by drilled pier and other specialty subs. Again, are these spoils needed to balance the site? Are they suitable for re-use as fill on the job?

For site utilities, does the Sitework sub include the proper backfill in the trenches or are they planning to re-use the excavated trench spoils? Do they plan to leave these spoils onsite for another sub to handle or use? If so, where will they be left on the site? If the specifications do not allow utility spoils to remain onsite, does the Sitework sub include trucking them offsite and any required disposal fees? Have they included the necessary trenching and excavation support, such as over-digs, laybacks, and trench boxes?

Be certain the Sitework sub's quote addresses who will install and MAINTAIN erosion control features. Many jurisdictions today have strict penalties for allowing dirt and sediment to leave the site on a rainy or windy day. Erosion control has in recent years become a construction trade all by itself and can add significant costs to a project. It is no longer an afterthought or an incidental item on a project; it MUST be taken seriously. In Ohio, the county soil and water conservation district usually has jurisdiction to issue permits and enforce compliance, but oftentimes the local

building department too will play an active role in erosion control enforcement.

Be aware of Scope Creep – this occurs when a single contractor's (or sub's) responsibility (scope) begins to blend with another's. This can lead to not accounting for complete costs when estimating a project. For example – temporary seeding (for erosion control) is accounted for but not final seeding. The temporary is usually performed by the excavator or Sitework sub, while the final is performed by the landscape sub. Failure to recognize this could lead to only accounting for seeding once in a project budget, when in fact it must occur twice. Be certain that the responsible party for topsoil redistribution and finish grading is established and known to both excavating and landscape subs – this is often a source of contention on projects.

Regarding paving, does the paving sub include any aggregate base or geotextile under the actual concrete or asphalt pavement? Often the drainage fill gravel base immediately under a floor slab is specified in CSI Div. 31, but many GCs or concrete subs will perform this work as part of the floor pouring scope so they can insure that proper subgrade elevations are met.

Landscape and paving subs often must deal with leftover debris from preceding subcontractors, such as masonry spoils being left on base pavement or in planting beds. Who is going to win those arguments? One thing is certain – the GC will serve as the referee between the two, and that time could be better served effectively managing the construction process.

Lastly, a scope review meeting with a potential subcontractor should be held in person between the GC and the Sitework sub(s) with a set of the bidding documents and plans open prior to the award of the subcontract. A review of this nature is not usually possible on bid day because of the inherent hectic and last minute nature of a bid day. Even if a Sitework sub is plugged in on bid day to what is eventually a low bid and contract award for the GC, it may be wise to look at another Sitework sub if the scope review meeting reveals likely problems once the project begins. As the GC, the sub's problems will become your problems once the job starts, and whether or not the GC played a role in the creation of the problem, the owner will look to the GC to solve it. ■

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