A WORKING MODEL FOR COLLABORATIVE PARTNERING

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May 2010
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INTRODUCTION

Our Mission
We believe that it is imperative for the Design and Construction industries to make a culture shift toward collaborative partnership. We sincerely believe that we must restore our productivity by changing the culture of how we work together on projects. The Working Model for Collaborative Partnering provides a path for this shift to occur.

Partnering Redefined!
Research done by the International Partnering Institute (IPI) identified the need to educate facility owners and other industry stakeholders on partnering. We need to have a “common definition and model.” When we talk about partnering we all need to be talking about the same thing.

IPI’s definition of partnering is:

“partnering is a collaborative process that works to develop a “culture” of partnership between the organizations and teams that must work together to achieve the successful delivery of construction projects.”

This is NOT an informal undertaking; if we truly want culture change, we must change values, and that takes a concerted and consistent effort over a period of time. Facility owners are the ones that must DRIVE the culture change that is needed. They are the ones with the “power” to do so. They must do this within their organizations, within their projects, and within the industry. The values of an organization are embedded in its policies, procedures and practices – until we make changes at all three levels, partnering will NOT become the culture of construction.

A Working Model for Partnering
The 2009 International Partnering Institute’s Think Tanks recommended that IPI adopt a working model for partnering, one that is designed and proven to produce culture change. Rather than reinvent the wheel, IPI has adopted the California Department of Transportation’s (Caltrans) Partnering Program Model as our IPI working model. This model has proven to provide outstanding results within a large and complex organization that delivers ~$10 billion of construction every year through twelve different districts around the State of California, in a low-bid environment. The example deliverables in this paper are from the Caltrans program.

We believe that this model is scalable for programs that are much smaller, and that it works for all types of projects, (building, engineering, mechanical, environmental, transit, etc.). It is suitable as well when new collaborative tools and delivery methods are deployed (i.e. BIM, LEAN, IPD, etc).

It is our hope that this model can provide an overall guide to how a partnering program should be developed and implemented to achieve true culture change.
The IPI Working Model

The IPI Working Model Collaborative Partnering has four phases. Each phase sets the stage for the next, with the goal of each phase to contribute to developing a culture of partnership – internally within the organization and on each project, through all phases of delivery. It can’t be expressed strongly enough that the senior-most levels of the organization must drive this change throughout their organization.

Phase I: Partnering Program Initiation

Partnering Program Objectives for Facility Owners

To get started, the facility owner must identify what they hope to achieve through their partnering program. These objectives could be

- that you feel that your construction projects are not “predictable”, consistently over budget and/or behind schedule and you’d like to improve the situation
- you could want to make sure you don’t end up with disputes and claims that eat up your budget and staff’s time
• you could want to improve on your current results (assuming you have data) so that you can lower your overall installed cost

• or, you might want to implement some of the other collaborative tools/delivery methods that are not effective without a culture of partnership

Objectives are very specific to each organization’s requirements and constraints.

Organizational Assessment for Partnering Alignment/Readiness

As the facility owner, it is important to understand where you are starting from. Only then can you know what you need to do to develop a partnering culture. An assessment on what you are currently doing and how your staff feels it is working is a good place to start. It is also a good idea to poll your industry stakeholders from design and construction (and perhaps regulatory agencies) as well. You want to ascertain how you are currently perceived as an “owner” and if you have a consistent culture and policy of working together.

Joint Partnering Steering Committee

Knowing that people don’t argue with what they help to create, having a joint Partnering Steering Committee is a very powerful way to get your internal leaders and industry stakeholders to help you to know what you need to do (and how to do it) to develop a partnering culture within your organization and on your projects. Your Partnering Steering Committee is comprised of senior management from the owner (you), and from the design and construction industry. This team will meet regularly over the life of your effort and will “steer” you toward what is needed for true culture change. One lesson learned from other programs is that this effort takes time and commitment. If you stop your effort too soon, before the culture has truly shifted and been embedded in the organization, things will just go back to the way they were.
Your Partnering Steering Committee will develop a CHARTER with its objectives, commitments, governance, membership, and timeframes. This group will use the partnering assessment and its own research to establish Lessons Learned. From these the Critical Success Factors are formed.

**Phase II: Partnering Program Development**

*Critical Success Factors*

The Critical Success Factors are developed based on your partnering program objectives, your assessment, and the wisdom of your steering committee. These are the lessons learned regarding what works on your projects and what is not working, as well as other improvements you would like.

A subcommittee is developed for each critical success factor. The subcommittee will work to develop Partnering Improvement Proposals (PIPs) which will be vetted by the entire Partnering Steering Committee (and other decision makers as needed) until a recommendation is agreed upon and the PIP is signed and dated.

*Program Elements*

The Partnering Improvement Proposals (PIPs) for all of the Critical Success Factors are compiled to develop the elements that are needed to establish your partnering program or to take your current partnering program to the next level. These elements might include writing a new specification, changing a policy and its corresponding guidance, implementing an organization wide survey, or establishing an awards and recognition program for partnering.

An “owner” for each Partnering Improvement Proposal is identified. The “owner” is charged with evaluating how to best implement each proposal, and then doing so. This may include bringing ideas for implementation back to the Steering Committee for its concurrence. For example, the “owner” may be charged with the development of new specifications or processes that implement the recommendations of a particular PIP.

*Program Structure*

In order to successfully deploy a partnering program, you must have an appropriate structure. You have already started this with the establishment of your Partnering Steering Committee and its Subcommittees. Now you need to look at what other structure is needed to ensure you are moving toward culture change. You will likely want to establish a Partnering Program Manager and staff along with Partnering Coordinators in the various regions/divisions of your organization. These are the people who will facilitate the development and implementation of your program throughout your organization.
Program Guidance

Once the program elements (PIPs) have been developed and agreed to, you will want to create guidance for how these elements are going to be implemented within your organization and on your projects. This includes writing new policies and updating your current procedures and processes to incorporate your partnering program elements. Many times this includes the development of a handbook with the partnering program requirements and implementation process. You may also need to develop guidance for the partnering facilitators who will work on your projects, as well as the contractors and designers with whom you will want to “partner.”
Phase III: Partnering Program Implementation

Program Training

You’ve put in a lot of time and effort developing your partnering program, and to gain commitment from many different levels within your organization and from stakeholders. It only makes sense to do a good job at training everyone within your organization and with whom you will partner, on how to fully implement the program. Joint training, including the owner, designer, contractor, and other key stakeholders has proven to be invaluable. This joint training is done by a team of seasoned project-level individuals from the owner, designer and contractor who have been trained to be trainers.

The training not only rolls out the partnering program elements, it also explains why each element has been included, what is required, and how to implement each element. It gives everyone the opportunity to share their “real life” examples of partnering and gives the trainers an opportunity to answer questions the participants have about the program.

Having a group of partnering trainers representing the owner, contractor and designer, who also work on projects, gives your partnering program a band of credible partnering experts who can help to make sure your program gets well implemented.

Program Measures

W. Edwards Deming, the “father of quality”, said that what gets measured gets done; we have also learned that what gets measured improves. Having some way to provide accountability for those charged with the implementation and follow through of your partnering program will be essential. It is also critical to have overall program level measures so you can see where progress is being made, and when it is not.

Project level partnering surveys (of the commitments made by the project team in their partnering session) should be done monthly. The survey allows the team to see how they are doing at follow-through as well as helping to identify new/emerging issues.

Program level measures need to be developed based on your partnering program objectives so you can make sure that you are achieving what you sought to with your partnering program.
Lessons Learned
Change happens incrementally over time. By establishing a lessons learned process and using those lessons to adjust your partnering program elements, your partnering program will continue to step up in effectiveness.

Phase IV: Partnering Program Continuous Improvement

New Critical Success Factors
As you gather lessons learned, your Partnering Steering Committee will use them to update/modify current elements or develop new elements so that you continue to move toward true culture change. You will likely find that you continue to raise the bar for what is possible as your program gains momentum.

New Partnering Steering Subcommittees
As you identify new partnering critical success factors, new subcommittees will need to be formed. They will follow the same process of diving into the critical success factor to identify the key issues and to provide recommendations.
New Partnering Improvement Proposals

The recommendations become new partnering improvement proposals (PIPs) that will then be vetted and eventually agreed upon or dropped. The new proposals will move along toward implementation in the same fashion as the original ones.

There is a natural progression for the focus of your efforts. It flows from Project Level, to Internal Strategic Level, to External Strategic Level, and back to Project Level. Each project is affected by what goes on between divisions and external stakeholders that offer support or are responsible for a part of the development of the project. Getting these folks in alignment with your partnering goals and working with you and the project is another critical element of your program.

Adapting the Model To Meet Your Needs

This paper offers an “overview” of a working model for collaborative partnering. There are many ways to implement this working model and to scale it to fit the size and flexibility of your construction program. To find out more about what you can do to implement the IPI Working Model for Collaborative Partnering, IPI offers consultation through its Owners Partnering Academy. Consultations are offered in a phased approach depending on the organization’s stage of partnering program development.

Phase I: Getting Started (Orientation and Setting of Objectives)
Phase II: Organization Assessment and Readiness (Culture Assessment and Partnering Alignment and History)
Phase III: Partnering Program Development (Program Elements, Structure and Guidance)
Phase IV: Implementation of Your Partnering Program
Phase V: Taking Your Partnering Program to the Next Level
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IPI is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to capture lessons learned and best practices for partnering concepts and techniques, ones that develop high trust relationships and organizational cultures for the successful delivery of construction projects, and then provides education and certification in those concepts and techniques.

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