



PROJECT MANAGEMENT OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION SITE DEVELOPMENT

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Successful development of a wireless communication site requires several different specialties. For a project manager, knowledge of acquisition, zoning, construction and budgeting are just a few of the tools necessary to bring a site from concept to development.

The primary objective of project managers is to ensure a site, or sites, is completed correctly, on time and within budget. They will likely oversee the development of multiple sites for a particular project or area.

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As such, project managers will also be managing people, time, reports and possibly money in order to complete the project.

GROUND RULES

The very basic components required to develop a site includes site acquisition, zoning and construction. Certainly this process is far more intricate in defining where a site should be located, placement in the build schedule and budgeting. In this article, an overview of the basic steps and tools needed to oversee the development of a site are discussed.

Site Acquisition

During this first stage of developing a site, project managers will be managing multiple functions. Many things need to happen fairly concurrently to move the site forward in a timely manner. One to three sites are identified as potential locations for a site. These candidates are reviewed and then ranked as to the best candidate based on location, zoning,

leasing and RF issues. The highest ranked is the primary site which the acquisition agents need to proceed to acquire. Negotiations/leasing needs to be instigated, and surveys, construction/zoning drawings, geo-technical, title and environmental reports all need to be ordered. Depending on the company, the acquisition agent may be responsible for ordering these items; there may be departments who handle some or all of these items; or the project manager may be responsible. Any item missing could cause delays later in the process.

Zoning

After the site is leased, or when there is a 75 percent confidence level, the site will be leased and zoning needs to begin (if required). Zoning can be the timeliest portion of the

process and the project manager may be required to submit the following along with the application: drawings, landscaping plans, RF plots, photo simulations, Intermodulation studies, FCC licenses and proof of insurance, to name a few. The project manager will need to assist the zoning agent in obtaining all the necessary information as well tracking the submittals. All the required information must be submitted to avoid denial of the application. Additionally, testimony by knowledgeable individuals may also be necessary. The project manager may need to testify or ensure RF engineers, marketing individuals, and/or anyone who will help justify the need for the site is available.

Construction

The initial part of construction is ordering the equipment and scheduling its arrival. Depending on the company, this could be done before or after issuance of a building permit. The project manager orders

the tower and building; Interconnect orders utility related items; and the purchasing department orders the actual operating equipment from companies like Lucent or Nortel. Due to the large number of people involved, it is imperative that the project manager controls the schedule and delivery of all items as well as ensures they have been ordered.

Once equipment is in the hopper, a contractor needs to be hired. This requires a bid walk with several contractors, each given a scope of work detailing the project and a set of plans. A good practice is to have each potential contractor complete a bid form to ensure all bids are being evaluated equally. After the bid is awarded, the contractor submits a construction schedule based on a

turn-up date provided by the client. The schedule needs to be coordinated with the delivery schedule of the equipment, which will be overseen by the project manager. A final punch-list needs to be completed before the site is signed off.

FINE POINTS

Project managers will also be managing people, time, money and reports to accomplish the basic components of site development.

People. Managing people is probably the highest priority. People will be working for and with the project manager to develop a site. Knowing individuals' strengths and weaknesses and what motivates them can increase the productivity and quality of the product. Some people are great at negotiating and others are better at zoning. Perhaps they are great at both, but may not get along well with the RF engineers. While one person may thrive on difficult projects, another may be overwhelmed by

them. Recognizing these traits in people, assigning the appropriate tasks, and managing each individual based on this information will provide long-term benefits and success to everyone.

Additionally, the project manager needs to provide support to those

Time. Time is very much of the essence in the wireless industry. Frequently when a search ring is issued, the carrier is in need of the site to cover an existing deficiency in their system. Project managers need to strive to meet many different time frames. Most carriers have preliminary time frames based on

is being completed to meet this schedule. How long to get title reports, geo-tech reports, environmental reports, SHPO reports? How will these reports fit in within leasing, zoning and construction? Will the time to obtain these reports meet the turn-up date? For construction, what is the lead-time to have a building



performing the tasks. If information such as RF plots, proof of insurance, and licenses are needed for leasing or zoning, the project manager should assist in obtaining them. If certain people do not get along well, but must work together, the project manager must support each individual and act as a communicator/mediator when necessary.

past experiences and/or need for the site. When a site is issued, this time frame needs to be followed until research on zoning, leasing, construction and budget changes this base-time line.

Once the time frame has been modified based on known information, the schedule is set. A project manager needs to ensure that everything

and tower delivered? What about equipment, antennas and batteries? What's the weather going to be like? Will construction be able to be completed prior to winter? How long before the utility company delivers the necessary services to the site? The project manager will need to know all this information to ensure the project is on time.

Money. Every site has a budget and some sites cost more than others. Project managers need to be acutely aware of the money being spent in the development of a site. Depending on the carrier, a project manager's

and creating reports. There are budget, status, individual site, project and construction reports. After receiving reports from people working on the sites, project managers must compile the information into a

While many different people have roles in a portion of the development, project managers are there from start to finish. An understanding of the phases of site development, site acquisition, zoning and construction,



budgeting duties vary. Contract agents are generally told to work within the budget and will need to get approvals for changes, but they do not set the budget.

Reports. Possibly the most time project managers spend is reviewing

report for their supervisor. While it can be seemingly never ending, reports can be the best method to ensure people are accountable and all projects are moving forward in a timely and cost-effective way.

Project managers are the constant through the development of a site.

as well as being able to manage people, time, money and reports are all essential to any individual wishing to oversee site development.❖

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