



# Construction Quality Control Good or Bad?

**A**re construction quality control and assurance good for the country or is it another unwarranted pay item for the owner to incur? That is a critical question with a broad base impact that seemingly has not been addressed to date.

Without question, the construction industry in the Bahamas generates a substantial amount of revenue that adds significantly to the GDP each decade.

During the past decade the "construction starts" average revenue generated for residential, public, and commercial/industrial construction valued \$111,260,000, \$22,355,000, and \$69,638,000 respectively. The total value of construction during the past decade for those sectors averaged about 1.6 billion dollars.

Given the total value of construction investment yearly in this country, is it not reasonable, if not practical, for the owner to consistently demand a sustained quality control and assurance (QC/QA) effort to ensure value and a quality end product? Moreover, is this not essential for the competitiveness of the Bahamas as it marches inevitably toward globalization? Without QC/QA being the mantra of the Architectural, Engineering, or Construction (A/E/C) industry, private investors are adversely impacted and so is the GDP of the country whenever we accept and tolerate myopic practices that ought not to be accepted.

Experience has shown time and again that any shortcutting or non-conforming works, which are allowed to be accepted and approved, cost you, the private investor, and the country dearly when viewed from a macro perspective.

To the extent that public funds are used for construction projects without the necessary sustained QC/QA plan is unimaginable. There are very few progressive countries that invest tax dollars for substantial contracts where the quality control and assurance aspects are so miniscule if not nonexistent as it is in this country. As a direct result of the lack of tenacity as a country in demanding an acceptable level of workmanship from the A/E/C industry that is consistent with national and/or international standards and specifications, you the private investor and country experience a miscarriage of justice.

As a result of the existing low bid competitive environment (which should be revisited and replaced with a value base tender selection process, or other acceptable forms of competitive tendering), and given the propensity for shoddy workmanship or work that does not meet minimal acceptable standards, a perpetual conundrum is

spurned that has dire and far reaching consequences for the country. Approval and acceptance of substandard work coupled with the low bid selection environment in which we operate, provides little motivation for the A/E/C industry to improve services and necessary QC/QA. As a direct result, internal decisions by companies to abide by stringent internal ethics, integrity, and quality control places that company at a distinct disadvantage with respect to other competitors. In an industry where successful low bid tenders are sometimes determined by the slimmest margins, this could mean being forced out of business. Therefore, a continual situation is created which renders most companies or sole proprietors unwilling or unable to raise standards absent of consistent and thorough external forces and pressure.

The result places the local A/E/C industry in a poor stead when competing in a very competitive industry outside of our shores. The contributing factors of low expectations, acceptance of poor workmanship and the environment within which the A/E/C professionals have to operate significantly reduces competitiveness within our region for the local A/E/C industry. Instead, the country bears the burden of the potential loss of additional foreign revenues, and the ability to produce a body of professionals who are capable of competing in any region and country, at any given time.

In an industry and/or country for that matter, where the propensity and wherewithal to demand an acceptable level of workmanship and quality standards has not been the status quo, a prudent balance may be struck if owners invest in quality management and QC/QA for any project undertaken. How is this cost effective for you as a private investor one may ask? It is because the value that you receive for your investment by hiring an A/E/C professional to introduce a quality control plan and/or monitor your project to prevent cost overruns, timely completion, and acceptable workmanship will perhaps be much less than the monies paid for "do over work," cost and time overruns. In addition, value is received from the absence of premature maintenance headaches and a future cost from shoddy workmanship that is exacerbated in a harsh climatic condition such as exists in the Bahamas.

Therefore, the billion-dollar question is whether monies would be well invested for the drafting of acceptable standards and specifications that will govern good quality workmanship. Is it not circumspect to invest monies for a sustained and tenacious approach to enforce those standards, specifications, and regulations to ensure QC/QA and acceptable workmanship? Whether a private investor or investing with public expenditures, it makes good sense when looking at the situation from a personal, value, national, or global perspective.

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