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Design and Construction (Sometimes known as Design and Build) is a procurement methodology used in the delivery of construction projects and differs significantly from the traditional Design – Bid – Build approach. For many years the standard way to procure a new building was to pay an architect to develop a suitable design and then to put the construction work out to tender and appoint a builder to deliver the project for a fixed price. This led to some projects taking an unacceptably long time and some clients took the view that the benefits of a faster process might outweigh the cost uncertainty that a different approach might bring.

The alternative solution developed was called Design and Construction whereby both the designing and building aspects are contracted with a single entity, usually the General Contractor. By overlapping elements of the work such as drawings, approvals, procurement and build, considerable time efficiency can be generated compared with the sequential approach involved in Design-Bid-Build.

While modern history places Design-Bid-Build as the traditional approach, some advocates of Design and Construction see the methodology as a return to a more ancient value citing the role of the Master Builder in the construction of edifices like the pyramids or the Parthenon. Whatever the history it is clear that the methodology is increasingly popular with clients who list a number of important advantages.

Design and Construction requires a far more collaborative approach with all sections of the project team working together to ensure “buildability” of the design. This creates an ideal opportunity for early involvement by the Facility Manager to influence the “operability” of the finished product. Traditional building projects have a poor track record in this regard with many examples of post-project rework delaying occupation and increasing costs where design has proved unfit for purpose.

A single point of undivided responsibility provides a focus for cost control, programme adherence, quality control and output. This centralisation gives the client improved control with the added advantage of continuously knowing the cost implications of their decisions. Although costs are not fixed from the outset and contractors will have to build in an element of risk provision, the financial situation is transparent and the benefits of parallel running and collaboration usually produce savings in excess of this.

For a useful reference point for more information on alternative construction procurement processes and best practice in the building discipline see the Constructing Excellence website www.constructingexcellence.org.uk