

Role of the quantity surveying profession



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In order to identify the role of the Quantity surveyor in the modern UK industry we will review his implications and duties during all the different stages of the construction cycle.

Also and for information we will review how a Client appoints a Quantity surveyor and when, in order to understand his early involvements in the process.

And finally we will explain how the surveyor claims his fees and how the Client paid the QS services.

But firstly, let's go in the past to understand where the job of quantity surveyor comes from and when it first appears in the UK.

HISTORY

The quantity surveyor profession can trace its roots back to the rebuilding of London after the Great fire

ROLE OF A QUANTITY SURVEYOR NOWADAYS

Quantity surveyors are the accountants of the building profession - planning and managing costs of construction projects from start to finish. Quantity surveyors (or QSs as they are known, since it's a bit of a mouthful) either work for a private QS practice and act on behalf of clients or for a contracting firm which carries out construction work.

This profession is certainly not all hard hats and wellies. In fact the role of the quantity surveyor has changed so dramatically in recent years that the profession doesn't always answer to the name of quantity surveying anymore!

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You will often see private practices referring to themselves as ‘ cost consultants’ and ‘ project managers’ because of the nature of the work they now handle. Due to the recession, QSs have had to adapt or die and there are now fewer, larger private practices than ever before taking on a broader remit of work.

No longer do quantity surveyors just measure and price work, they have a more strategic role. Nowadays the QS is involved at all stages of a project from preparing tenders and planning costs to preparing final bills of quantities; essentially, making sure projects are planned and completed to cost and quality, on time.

UK construction professionals are respected abroad and, partly in response to the depressed home market, many UK firms have developed an international outlook.

WHEN TO APPOINT A QUANTITY SURVEYOR

In order that maximum benefit can be gained from his skill a Quantity surveyor should be appointed by any client as soon as possible in the life of a project, preferably at the inception of a scheme, so that the QS’s advices can be provided on:

The costs of the project (meet the Client’s budget).

The best procurement route can be selected according to the Client’ requirements.

Selection of others consultants and contractors.

It is recommended that a Client and his Quantity surveyor should meet and discuss the appointment before any agreement is reached, unless the services provided by the Qs is to be restricted in the process.

HOW TO SELECT AND APPOINT A QUANTITY SURVEYOR

There are three methods available when it comes to select a Quantity surveyor;

Selection based on existing knowledge

A Client may select and then appoint a QS using existing knowledge of the surveyor's performance and reputation. This may a result of past successful project, good relationship or by recommendations from others.

Selection from a panel maintained by a Client

A Client may maintain a panel of Quantity surveyors. He will have records of their experience which will enable him to make any selection or appointment.

Selection from an ad hoc list produced by a Client

If a Client cannot make a decision using any of the two others methods it may be more appropriate produce an ad hoc list.

Whichever of the above methods of selection is used it is important for the selection criteria to include the following:

The financial standing of the QS under consideration

The experience, competence and reputation of each candidate for equal chance.

Their ability to provide the services required by the Client.

SERVICES OFFERED BY A QUANTITY SURVEYOR

This diagram shows the different phases of the construction cycle. The Quantity surveyor is involved in each of these phases. The following will explain what the duties of the QS are during the construction cycle.

Quantity surveying in Construction phases

Inception and feasibility

At inception and feasibility the Quantity surveyor has the duty of:

- Liaise with client and other consultants to determine the Client's requirements and development of the full brief.
- Advise on selection of other consultants.
- Advise on implications of proposed project and liaise with other experts to develop such advice.
- Advise on the most appropriate procurement route.
- Establish Client's order of priorities for quality, time and cost.
- Prepare initial budget estimate from feasibility proposals.
- Prepare overall project cost calculations and cash flow projections.

Design stage

During the design stage the Qs will:

- Prepare and develop preliminary cost plan.

- Advise on cost of design team's proposals.
- Monitor cost implications during detailed design stage.
- Maintain and develop cost plan, and prepare periodic reports and updated cash flow forecasts.

Tender documents

During this stage, the Quantity surveyor will:

- Advise on tendering and contractual arrangements taking into accounts the Client's priorities and information available from designers.
- Advise on insurance responsibilities and liaise with Client's insurance advisers.
- Advise on warranties.
- Advise on bonds for performances and other purposes.
- Prepare tender and contract documents in conjunction with the Clients and members of design team.
- Provide copies of documentations as agreed
- Advise on use and/or amendments of standard form of contract or contribute to drafting of particular requirements in association with Client's legal advisers.
- Draw up form of contract, obtain contract drawings from members of the design team and prepare and deliver to both parties contract copies of all documents.

Tender selection and appraisal

At this stage of the tender actions phase the Qs has to:

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- Advise on shortlisting prospective tenderers.
- Investigate tenderers and advise the Client on financial status and experience.
- Attend pre-contract interview with tenderers.
- Arrange delivery of documents to selected tenderers.
- Check tender submissions for accuracy, level of pricing.
- Advise on errors and qualifications and, if necessary, negotiate the offers.
- Advise on submission of programme of work and method statement.
- Prepare appropriate documentation if necessary, to adjust the tender received to an acceptable contract sum.
- Review financial budget in view of tenders received and prepare revised cash flow.
- Prepare tender reports with appropriate recommendations.

Construction

During the construction the Quantity surveyor will:

- Prepare recommendations for interim payments to contractors, subcontractors and suppliers in accordance with the contract requirements.

Post contract

During this last stage of the construction cycle the Qs will:

- Value designer's draft for varying the project before issue.

- Prepare periodic cost reports in agreed format at specified intervals including any allocations of cost and/or copies as requested by third parties.
- Prepare the final account.
- Attend meetings as provided under agreements.
- Provide copies of documentation as provided under the agreement.

PAYMENTS

The Client shall pay the QS for the performance of the services the fees and charges in such instalments as are set in the fee offer clause. All fees and charges under the agreement are exclusive of value added Tax which if due shall be paid concurrently in addition. The due date for payment shall be 7 days after the date of the submission of the invoice. The quantity surveyor when submitting his invoice shall on each invoice confirm the basis on which the stated amount is calculated.

The final date for payment has to be 21 days after the due date for payment. The payment has to be made no later than the final date for payment.

Any amount due to the Quantity surveyor under the agreement which remain unpaid by the client after the final date must be bear interest at the rate stated in the fee offer clause.

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