



Waiting Game

Now that travel is back as a possibility, I am reminded how similar my two regular pre-covid activities were.

Building and travel. They are both necessary and equally create the unwanted by-product of wasting lots of time.

Travels seems to take longer waiting for a third person activity to occur before you can get on with the job of actually moving from point A to B and onwards after a further delay to C. New regulations are introduced, improved and superseded in record time.

Construction is similar with codes of practice amended and reinterpreted and materials sourced from all over the globe. The supply chain delays are such a normal part of the process that they do not rate a mention.

The biggest delays do not always feature the most far flung products with the usual suspects often coming from a location near you. The old saying that the 'people who live closest to the church always arrive late' prove that this is not a new experience.

The delay is from the supplier to the builder, or is it?

Is the builder reckless by not providing information in a timely manner or is the supplier too careful and not moving forward until all his questions are answered to the last unnecessary detail?

Is it the reckless builder who is to blame or is it the careful supplier?

The reckless builder selects a product, places the order and thinks that his work is done. With the careful supplier nothing is further from the truth.

The careful supplier takes the order placement as if it's their first contact and they question every choice and selection. You thought they offered a standard design but the reality dawns that everything is special and all must be decreed before a section of material is considered let alone run off. Questions come thick and fast and each answer must be returned in their format and without ambiguity. Once you have passed on your decisions on everything you are swiftly into Phase 2.

Everything you have agreed needs to be approved and all sections drawn up and details re-checked and confirmed as correct. Any deviations and it's all back to the beginning and everything stops. Then the waiting appears to start, you think it is all going well and the careful supplier thinks you are a little casual as there are still 57 points outstanding and nothing will progress until they are all resolved.

You check on progress and they ask you when you want it?

You suggest any day next week should be OK and after the conversation you are laughing, crying or both.

The actual waiting part begins:

- No windows and doors - no lock up
- No services design signed off - no wallboard
- Any part of off-site modules outstanding - no anything at all

This is all taking place outside of the normal situation of operatives from various contractors with different employers carrying out individual tasks but all wanting to do so in a single space. Most galling to you as the builder is that they are not only concerned with your project but with others completed, ongoing or yet to start. As they are not only focussed on you this causes delays and time spent waiting.

This takes us to the second part of the waiting game.

A consultant I know has run professional training courses for designers all over the world. His favourite question is to ask if anyone in the audience has ever been involved in a project that did not initially suffer from air handling plant problems. He has never had anyone raise their hand. It could have been telecoms or some electronic smart feature and got a similar result. As the house nears completion you are waiting for the one operative to attend who understands the particular nuanced problem that stops the electronically operated curtains opening or the cameras working. Whatever the issue in the end it comes down to a human fixing the glitch. It could be that more than one feature has these problems. The repair often causes holes to be cut out and cables fitted or located and as you may expect more waiting for the damage to be put right.

How do you get your project completed on time?

With both travel and construction, you need an iron will and the ability to see both the big picture and make sure that the little details are signed off and in place. If there is a trick it is to be in touch with everyone and question everything. The careful supplier has learnt from bitter experience not to guess at finishes and hold the builder responsible in writing for all design and technology points. The reckless builder just wants to make progress and does not appreciate that the careful supplier is protecting him from himself.

After that it's hoping that it's not a case of *breakfast in London, lunch in New York and luggage in Mumbai!*

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