



MANY HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

Integrated project delivery minimizes inefficiencies and maximizes the talents of every team member

By Jeremy Meek

Dancing Light, the custom home that won Project of the Year in the 2017 Professional Builder Design Awards, is one of the most challenging homes that our firm, Desert Star Construction, has ever built. Thanks to Integrated Project Delivery (IPD), every member of the team was committed to clear communication, mutual respect, and best practices, resulting in a stellar home and a delighted client.

IPD may not be a typical approach for custom builders, but it offers significant benefits, ensuring that the insight and talents of every participant, including the client, builder, architect, interior designer, and trade contractors, are utilized for the project. And it optimizes the value of the property by maximizing the effectiveness and the efficiency of the design and construction process. Applied early in the project life cycle, IPD synergizes the efforts of key participants and the power of structures, systems, and practices. IPD's main principles include:

1. **Respect and trust** among all participants. Ideas are based on merit, not hierarchy. There's leadership for each individual team, but pecking order—one team over another—is flattened.
2. **Collaboration** between the client, architect, designers, and builder early in the development of the project.
3. **Commitment to shared responsibility** of the project's benefits and risks.
4. **Unity of the entire team** so that tasks and processes lead to an optimal outcome.

It's best to implement IPD from the start, at the conceptual stage of design. Dancing Light was our third project for the clients, and they asked us to interview architects who could potentially design the home.

The interior designer, David Michael Miller, was someone that we and the clients had worked with several times before. Once architect Brent Kendle was selected, the core team set off down the IPD path for what Kendle describes as the most complex project he has ever designed. With that complexity came unknowns, subtleties, and challenges that had to be coordinated with the core team as well as with dozens of design and specialty vendor design-build scopes of work. Some 20 specialized disciplines had to be synchronized, including audiovisual, technology integration, kitchen design, and structural and mechanical engineering.

From a functional perspective, there are three major elements of IPD that help reduce costs, expedite the work schedule, and increase value:

1. **Repeated steps of do-undo-replan-do-undo-replan are bypassed.** Clients save on construction and design costs across all consultants. Considerable time is shaved off the overall project cycle, which saves money and gets the client into the home sooner.
2. **The nature of social dynamics makes for built-in accountability and competition.** Team members want to perform well for clients, and there's an added incentive to do so, quickly, for the clients. (Who can add the most value to the project in the shortest

amount of time?) This can set a professional and productive tone for the project from the start. Without having a team assembled and the accountability that comes with it, an independent design process without time constraints could go on forever.

3. **Hierarchy is flattened so clients are more likely to get the team's best ideas,** rather than all ideas being filtered through one head designer. The spirit and quality of the design needs to be maintained, as does organization. At the same time, the IPD philosophy means that contributions from all team members have equal value. Ideas being advanced through one gatekeeper and the fear of stepping on toes is reduced, if not eliminated, and the best ideas are implemented. Input from all parties can be presented to the client as a united front.

Building custom homes demands the highest standard of quality and professionalism. The sophistication and complexity of the modern-day custom residence requires a first-class team of professionals—including the core team of architect, interior designer, and builder—working together harmoniously in an integrated manner, guiding the project with integrity, and advocating on behalf of the client's vision. IPD is a real opportunity for participants to commit themselves to a collaborative experience that increases value while helping to eradicate inefficiencies typically found in non-IPD projects.

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