

## **CM-At-Risk V/S Bridging CM at Risk V/S CM-Agency: Which is Better & When?<sup>1, 2</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Selecting the right construction management project delivery method is the most important decision which is made by the owner before starting any construction project. However, it is easy to get confused when it comes to construction management project delivery methods. But, it is extremely important for the owners to know and understand these methods before starting any construction project. During making the decision the owner should know and have a clear understanding of all the options available and should compare each project delivery method's advantages & disadvantages to maximize the objectives and minimize the risk. Selection of the most appropriate construction management project delivery method reduces the risk & improves the likelihood of attaining projects quality, cost and schedule goals. Selection of the right project delivery method has a direct impact on the level of success of the project. Hence, it is important to know the numerous factors which should be taken into account while making a decision. While there are many different types of delivery methods, for our purpose, we will discuss the difference between the three major delivery methods and understand which method is most appropriate to use in a particular situation. To explain this, we have used Disjunctive Reasoning to rank our criteria and further, we came to the decision of which construction management project delivery method is the best with the help of Compensatory Model of Additive Weighting Technique.

**Keywords:** Construction Management, Project Delivery Methods, Construction Management Agency, CM at Risk, Bridging CM at Risk.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Globalization has led to rapid development of construction projects and the research has identified the increase in projects from past 100 years. The Construction Projects are large in size and it plays a significant role in the economy. With the evolution of construction projects, they tend to grow larger and have more complexity. In recent years projects have witnessed an increasing number of construction failures. Project owners are continually attempting to balance power, responsibility and control. However, do owners have confidence in their ability to meet quality, schedule & budget? Are they sure to know each and every contractual policy? Are they trained enough to deal with the issues?

The fact is unless an owner undertakes a great deal of construction, he reasonably is not aware that there can be many different ways of structuring a construction project. Even though an owner is frequently involved with construction, there is a possibility that he may not realize that his regular approach to construction is not the only way that it can be done, and he most probably is not familiar with the manifolds of variations in structuring construction projects.

Project delivery method selection is of very high importance. It's a system used by owners for organizing and financing operations, maintenance of services, design, and construction by entering into legal agreements with one or more entities. This selection is done at the beginning of a project. This is the best position that the owners can be in to affect its outcomes. There isn't a best or worst form of construction project delivery. But each approach has corresponding advantages and disadvantages depending on the circumstances and situation. The project owner should as such select a method wherein its advantages would maximize his goals of the project and its disadvantages would be of least importance to him.

### **STEP 1: Problem Recognition, Definition and Evaluation**

Construction Delivery Methods are easy to get confused with, however, a better understanding of them is important to select one for the project. The level of their success mainly depends mainly on selecting the correct delivery method.

This article will thus identify and discuss the types of construction project delivery methods such as CM Agency, CM at Risk and Bridging CM. It will also describe the advantages and disadvantages of using these methods with a view from a practical standpoint, to assist owners in selecting a method that best fits their project.

To summarize this paper is mainly written to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the differences between CM-At-Risk, Bridging CM & CM Agency?
- ii. When & under what circumstance each method would be most appropriate to use?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **STEP 2: Development of Feasible Alternatives**

To avoid all the problems mentioned above, fixing Construction Project Delivery Method is one of the most important decisions made by the owner. Selection of any method starts with a good understanding of the choices available. Owners must think of the impact of each choice because the delivery method influences the choice of contractual relationships.

From this, it is possible to define 3 alternate methods:

- CM-At-Risk
- Bridging CM-At-Risk
- CM Agency

### **STEP 3: Development of the outcomes for each alternative**

To state that a particular delivery method is appropriate to use under a certain situation, it is necessary to first know what each type is. For this, a research on papers and books specifically linked to the topic construction management project delivery methods which are published till now on the subject is realized to identify the definitions utilized by authors and then choose the one that is the most relevant to the construction management project delivery method. The research on these papers and books is made with the help of different databases such as Google, Google Scholar, Guild of Project controls, etc.

The collected information is from the official sites and documents are valid enough to rely on as a solid reference for this paper.

- **CM-At-Risk**

The easiest way for the owners to manage the construction and the design of a project is through CM-At-Risk, provided with a fact that owner's organization can depend upon the relationships which are involved in the procurement of construction. Under this method, usually, the owner first selects the engineers and the architect who are then involved in the selection of a CM or vice versa or CM and Engineers/Architect are selected at the same time. If the owner wants to hire an external program manager, then an external program manager is selected first and then he helps the owner in the selection process and contract preparation for both CM and Architect/Engineers. The CM helps the owners and Architect/Engineers with constructability, estimations on costs and cost-effective construction material, continuous consultation, guidance on sequencing & scheduling issues and inputs on design and construction, throughout the pre-construction design phase.

- **Bridging CM-At-Risk**

This method is the output of the combination of the Bridging Method and CM-At-Risk Method. In this the benefits are retained by the owner and his position is improved significantly in many aspects.

According to Brookwood Group, the befitting method of preparing the Bridging Contract Documents gives an owner an enforceable price as compared to the ones which they get with a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GPM). GPM is based on anything which is less than complete 100% traditional Contract Documents.

Moreover, the addition of the Bridging concept to CM-at-Risk results in significant reduction of owner's exposure to change orders which are contract initiated. Even if compared to any other method which does not employ the bridging method, this combined concept should reduce the owner's exposure to disputes which are mainly because of the flaws in construction or design and they are discovered after the occupancy. These disputes usually arise after the construction in post-construction phase. There is no conflict in combining Bridging and CM-At-Risk methods because Bridging CM-At-Risk is based on the framework of employing the widely used CM-at-Risk method but with the Bridging method overlaid<sup>3</sup>.

- **CM-Agency**

This is the basic method which emerged in the 1960's and is also known as Pure CM. In this, the owner utilizes a Construction Manager as its principal agent. The Construction Manager advises on or manages the process on specific phases of the project or throughout the project's life. The owner has both the subcontractor's and the vendor's contract and the Construction Manager makes a contribution to an extension of their staff, who manages all the contracts, however, does not hold any financial risk. In CM Agency, the subcontractor then becomes the prime contractor and holds himself responsible for managing the cost, safety, quality and the schedule for the project. The risk is further contracted with each subcontractor and the prime contractor. The construction manager usually bids the different elements of construction competitively to trade contractors and subcontractors.

#### **STEP 4: Selection of criteria**

To understand which criteria affect the selection of our alternatives, we will take a look at all the criteria first:

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<sup>3</sup> Bridging CM-At-Risk. (2011). [ebook] Brookwood Group, pp.1-3. Available at: [http://www.brookwoodgroup.com/downloads/2011\\_CMatRisk+Bridging\(web\).pdf](http://www.brookwoodgroup.com/downloads/2011_CMatRisk+Bridging(web).pdf)

- The **size of the project** does matter in the selection process of the project delivery method. Depending on the size the responsibilities are taken into consideration and the method is selected.
- Often Owners consider how much the **risk is involved** before going into any contractual relationship and the project.
- While selecting particular method owners do consider the **services offered** and take a decision based on their requirements.
- Owners need to check and consider the **type of fee contract** which they will sign for a work contract.
- Sometimes owners consider the **experience** of a construction manager. They feel safer if the construction manager is experienced rather than with less experience.
- The **design** refers to the structure of each construction management project delivery method.

After this, we will conduct a pairwise comparison to understand which criteria is most important as compared to other with help of a question, ‘Which is more important?’. We will score 1 for the important one and 0 for the non-important one. After that we will add up all the score received for each criterion and the highest scorer would be the most important criteria and the lowest one will be the least important criteria. This will help us decide which criteria the owner is ready to tradeoff for another depending on his preference or requirement at that time.

CRITERIA	SIZE OF THE PROJECT	RISK TO OWNERS	SERVICES OFFERED	TYPE OF FEES CHARGED	EXPERIENCE	DESIGN
SIZE OF THE PROJECT		0	0	0	0	0
RISK TO OWNERS	1		0	0	0	0
SERVICES OFFERED	1	1		0	0	0
TYPE OF FEE CHARGED	1	1	1		0	0
EXPERIENCE	1	1	1	1		0
DESIGN	1	1	1	1	1	
SCORE	5	4	3	2	1	0

Based on the Disjunctive Reasoning, we got the ranking order of our criteria. This ordinal ranking will be preferable while selecting the alternative under the particular situation. This will help us to choose an appropriate construction management project delivery method under that particular situation. This will help us rank the preference which needs to be given while selecting a best and a better construction management project delivery method.

**FINDINGS**

**STEP 5: Analysis and Comparison of the Alternatives**

Comparison of feasible alternatives will ensure that the alternatives are analyzed prior to making any decision. This analysis will help us to compare each alternative with each criterion.

	<b>CM-AT-RISK</b>	<b>BRIDGING CM-AT-RISK</b>	<b>CM AGENCY</b>
<b>SIZE OF THE PROJECT</b>	They work on projects which are of size >\$1 Million+	They work on contracts involving multiple amounts.	They work on projects which are between \$0-\$7 Million
<b>RISK TO OWNERS</b>	Depending upon the contract type, Owners and Contractors share the risk but sometimes the contractors assume most of the risk.	Depending upon the contract type, Owners and Contractors share the risk but sometimes the contractors assume most of the risk.	Depending upon the contract type, it's either the owner or the contractor who assumes most of the risk or sometimes the owners and the contractors share the risk.
<b>SERVICES OFFERED</b>	The CM assists the owner, Architect and Engineers throughout the pre-design phase, design phase and construction phase by providing services such as continuous consultations and inputs on constructability, costs and cost-effective construction materials, sequencing & scheduling issues.	The CM provides typical Management Services to the Owners throughout their Pre-design phase, design phase and CD Prep and Construction Phase.	The CM manages the pre-design phase, design phase and the construction phase of the project. Along with this CM also helps with the procurements of non-construction items e.g. moveable equipment, telecom systems & security, furnishings, etc.
<b>TYPE OF FEES CHARGED</b>	The type of fee charged depends upon the type of contract chosen. The types of contracts which are used in this are Fixed Price Incentive Fee (FPIF), Fixed Price W/ Economic Adjustment (FP/EPA), Firm Fixed Unit Price (FFUP) and Firm Fixed Price (FFP). But mostly the cost statements are issued in the form of a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP).	The type of fee charged depends upon the type of contract chosen. The types of contracts which are used in this are FPIF, FP/EPA, FFUP and FFP. The method of preparing Bridging Contract Documents gives Owner an enforceable price by the mid-point of the architectural and engineering design phases.	The type of fee charged depends upon the type of contract chosen. The types of contracts which are used in this are Cost Plus Percentage (CPPC), Cost Plus Fixed Fee (CPFF), Cost Plus Award Fee (CPAF), Cost Plus Incentive Fee (CPIF), Cost Reimbursable (CR), Cost Sharing (CS), FPIF, FP/EPA, FFUP and FFP. Usually, the owners are compensated on a fee basis to reduce the adversarial relationship between the Owner and the builder.

<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	The experience depends upon the individual construction manager and the CM-At-Risk.	The experience depends upon the individual construction manager and the Bridging CM-At-Risk.	The experience depends upon the individual construction manager and the CM-Agency.
<b>DESIGN</b>	CM-at-Risk is a comforting way to manage construction and design of a project given that the Owner’s organization could rely on the relationships in construction’s procurement.	The Owner’s Design Consultants who are also called as the Bridging Architect are the designing team of architects and consulting engineers who work directly with and for the Owner.	The Owner’s representative i.e. the CM manages the whole design and construction program indicating that a CM’s firm has good capabilities in managing the design and pre-design planning.

On the other hand, in order to analyze what affects the selection of project delivery method, we will first rank the alternatives based on each criterion, for that we will use the below ranking scale:

QUALITY	
Excellent	3
Good	2
Fair	1
Poor	0

For an effective selection process, we indicated the performance and behaviour of each alternative in terms of ranking for each criterion.

CRITERIA	CM-AT-RISK	BRIDGING CM-AT-RISK	CM AGENCY
SIZE OF THE PROJECT	2	3	1
RISK TO OWNERS	2	2	1
SERVICES OFFERED	1	3	2
TYPE OF FEE CHARGED	2	3	1
EXPERIENCE	2	1	3
DESIGN	0	0	0
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.33</b>

As a suggested process for performing this evaluation, we first need to identify which alternative is better with regards to specific criterion in terms of owner’s perspective. For this, we need to use a Multi-Attribute Decision Making (MADM) analysis by using the Compensatory Model of Additive Weighting Technique. By using this method, we can easily find the best and the better construction management project delivery method.

CRITERIA	RELATIVE RANK	NORMALIZED WEIGHT (A)			CM-AT-RISK		BRIDGING CM-AT-RISK		CM AGENCY	
					B	A*B	C	A*C	D	A*D
Size of the project	5	5/15	=	0.33	2	0.66	3	0.99	1	0.33
Risk to Owners	4	4/15	=	0.27	2	0.54	2	0.54	1	0.27
Services Offered	3	3/15	=	0.2	1	0.2	3	0.6	2	0.4
Types of fees charged	2	2/15	=	0.13	2	0.26	3	0.39	1	0.13
Experience	1	1/15	=	0.07	2	0.14	1	0.07	3	0.21
Design	0	0/15	=	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUM</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>SUM</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>SUM</b>	<b>1.8</b>		<b>2.59</b>		<b>1.34</b>	

Based on the above table, it appears that depending on the situation the selection preference changes. It seems that Bridging CM-At-Risk is a good choice for the majority of the situations. While on another hand, CM-At-Risk is better in terms of experience and CM Agency is the best if we consider only the experience. While in some cases, if we consider risk factor, Bridging CM-At-Risk and CM-At-Risk are equal.

**STEP 6: Selection of the Preferred Alternative**

Upon limiting the universe of possible project delivery methods based on applicable criteria, its advantages and disadvantages of possible systems were evaluated to select the best possible alternative. The above table represents the sum total of the product of each alternative. As the table shows, each of these 3 alternatives has its own advantages and disadvantages and they have different responses to every situation, none of them can be ideal for all the situations. The convenience and priority keep on changing depending on the owner’s needs. However, based on the sum total of each alternative, we can say that **Bridging CM-At-Risk** is the BEST alternative which can be selected by the owner. Followed by Bridging-CM-At-Risk is the **CM-At-Risk** with second highest sum total and then is **CM-At-Agency**.

**STEP 7: Performance Monitoring and Post Evaluation Results**

The CM represents the owner and achieves the owner's interests by controlling the project and its various elements, and the effective application of the construction management delivery system is enhanced by the presence of a professional CM. The broad range of construction management services available may be provided under a wide variety of contractual arrangements.

The success path starts right from the selection of the right project delivery method. The owners should be made aware of the different methods and techniques which could be cheaper, more convenient and more owner friendly as compared to their regular method. Owners should know for a fact that no method is good or bad. All the methods are equally

good; however, some methods prove to be best in a particular situation. Awareness and knowledge of this will, in turn, educate the owner and help them to climb their first step of success by making the right choice in selecting the construction management project delivery method.

As all owners are not aware of all the construction management project delivery methods, they keep on following the method which they think is safe and right. Hence, for this, in my view, there should be easy availability of programs and material to educate the owners about the different types of construction management project delivery methods and they should be aware of all the advantages and disadvantages. This will help all the owners to select the right construction management project delivery method which will, in turn, lead to the minimization of the chances of project failure due to wrong selection.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

There is no 'One Size Fits All' prescription for construction management. We should understand that each project is unique and has a complex set of circumstances to consider before selecting a project delivery method. It takes a lot of training and experience to get it right in the first place. Hence, once the need of construction project is realized, the important decision which affects the outcome of the project 'how to structure it?' should be considered. Most owners blindly follow someone's recommendation or follow the practice which they are familiar with. Once the decision related to the selection of project delivery is made and after it is implemented, the owner's ability to affect the outcome stops there. Hence owners should not be adverse and talk to the contractors and learn from their varied experiences which could be good or bad with an array of delivery options. If it is not done so the owner can incur extra expense and loss. As there is a variety of construction project delivery methods available today than ever in the history, the owners should take a wise decision in choosing an appropriate method depending on the circumstances and his preference. By doing so the owner is more likely to achieve an advantage in today's competitive construction industry.

Originally, this paper was designed to research, analyze and answer the following questions:

### **i. What are the differences between CM-At-Risk, Bridging CM & CM Agency?**

In the first half of the paper, based on the research, we discussed the basic differences between CM-At-Risk, Bridging CM & CM Agency. CM Agency has its roots emerged from 1960's and is the first form of a construction management project delivery method. CM-At-Risk is an innovative approach to construction project delivery. CM at risk is known to be a cost-effective alternative to a traditional design-bid-build process. While on another hand, Bridging CM-At-Risk is formed by combining the Bridging method along with the CM-at-Risk method. In this, all

Owner's benefits of the CM-at-Risk method are retained and the Owner's position would be improved.

## **ii. When & under what circumstance each method would be most appropriate to use?**

Based on research and analysis, each project is unique has its own unique delivery requirements and one of the three methods would be the most appropriate to use given a priority to a particular situation for each individual project. The path to success should start by selecting the best delivery method for the given project based on the situation and circumstance and then the owner should apply the principles of constructability and partnering and complete that project in a professional manner.

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