SKILLS OF A GREAT UTILITY COORDINATOR

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Presentation Vision

Discuss the technical skills of a good utility coordinator and..... some non-technical skills that make a good Utility Coordinator great!
Top Five Answers on the Board!

• Name a skill of a great utility coordinator
Top Answers on the Board!

1. Strong Communication Skills
2. Technically Proficient
3. Knowledgeable, yet willing to learn
4. Builds and maintains good relationships
5. Multi-task, Organized and Time Management
6. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) / builds trust
7. Respect for Others
8. Confident and Persistent (great nag!)
Definition

Great Utility Coordinator is one who can *facilitate* and *promote cultural change* internally and externally while successfully *negotiating* the coordination and relocations of utility facilities necessary to accommodate completion of your project on time and within budget.
Agenda

• Technical Skills
  – Education: To PE or not to PE
  – Knowledge and Experience
  – Assessing Risk
  – Organization and Time Management
  – Conduct Effective Meetings

• Non-technical Skills
  – Teachable attitude of continuous improvement
  – Culture Change Agent
  – Emotional Intelligence
  – 5 Habits of Highly Successful Utility Coordination
  – Communication Skills
  – Builds relationship between DOT and Utility

• Conclusion
Education

• To P.E. or not to P.E.
  – Consider skills needed for the job
    • Must have technical engineering skills
    • Look for leadership skills and other non-technical skills
  – Consider duties and job title
    • Utility Coordinator - coordinate between DOT and Utility
    • Utility Engineer - design utility relocations and stamp plans
  – Degree may be advantageous
  – PE requirement limits pool of applicants
  – Example
Knowledge and Experience

- **Laws and Codes**
  - 23 CFR 645 Parts A & B
  - State Utility Accommodation Policy
  - State Legislation

- **Understanding Plans**
  - Plan & Profile
  - Cross Sections
  - Difference between existing and proposed
Knowledge and Experience

• Understanding Utility Requirements
  – Design standards
  – Clearances from utilities
  – Safety clearances
  – Order of relocation and responsibility

• Identify Utility Conflicts
  – Between the proposed design and existing facilities
  – Between relocated facilities and existing and/or proposed utility relocations
Knowledge and Experience

• Recommend Design Solutions
  – Requires some knowledge of State Design Standards
  – Understand what can be adjusted and what can’t
  – Apply learned experiences from past projects
  – Understand when to use SUE and why

• Constructability
  – Installation of sewers
  – Driving piles
  – Use of cranes
Assessing Your Risk

• Utility Coordinators should quantify risk...
Assessing Your Risk

... and know when the risk is TOO high!

Communicate risk clearly=no surprises!
Effect of Risk in Bid Packaging

- Contractor manages risk with higher bids on project.
- Comprehensive, accurate utility documentation in bid package reduces level of risk.
- If level of risk is reduced, contract bids are more likely to be lower.
- Lower bids reduce the overall cost of the project.
Organization and Time Management

Question: How many projects do you / can you manage at one time?
Organization and Time Management

Answer: - It depends
Organization and Time Management

• Ability to Multi-task
  – Organize and Archive E-mails
  – Maintain Files neat and orderly
  – Create To-Do Lists
  – Prepare status reports
  – Tracking tool
Organization and Time Management

• **Self Management**
  – Works independently with little supervision
  – Aware of schedules
  – Keeps the project moving
  – Thinks through the constraints
Organization and Time Management

• Understands the process and time involved
  – Keeps each utility company active
  – Responsive and follows through
  – Turn-around time
  – Works to avoid delays
  – Schedule meeting in person if needed
ANOTHER MORNING MEETING?

ARE YOU KIDDING ME!!
Three Steps to Meetings

- Prepare: 25%
- Conduct: 50%
- Follow Up: 25%
Conducting Effective Meetings

- Doesn’t have unnecessary meetings
- Defines clear objectives in an agenda
- Insures the right attendees are invited and present
- Provides advance notice of key topics
- Uses a parking lot to control discussion
- Insures notes are taken and action items are assigned with clarity
I Survived Another Meeting That Should Have Been an Email
KNOWLEDGE IS KNOWING A TOMATO IS A FRUIT. WISDOM IS NOT PUTTING IT IN A FRUIT SALAD.

-MILES KINGTON-
Cultural Change Agent!

- Knows what to do when the cheese is moved!
- Leads instead of reacts
- Understands the Speed of Trust
- Asks tough questions, QBQ

- These are quips of great books to read, which is indicative of Great coordinators!
Emotional intelligence is made up of four core skills.

Dr. Travis Bradberry  Coauthor EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 2.0 & President at TalentSmart
Emotional Intelligence, self awareness

• For instance, being honest about fear
• By being aware that I am masking my fear I can be aware of my responses to others
• What are other examples of applied EQ?
Emotional Intelligence

• Builds Collaboration
• Win-win Approach
• Attitude of Respect and Trust
• Persistent and Proactive, yet patient
• Conflict Resolution
5 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE UTILITY COORDINATION
What If...

• Instead of waiting until the end of the project to coordinate with utilities, we are **PROACTIVE**?

• Instead of moving forward without all the information, we **PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST**?

• Instead of expecting utilities to relocate, we **THINK WIN-WIN**?

• Instead of telling the utilities what we need, we **SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD**?

• Instead of doing our own thing without input from others, we **SYNERGIZED**?
What If...
Instead of Utility Coordination, it was called
UTILITY COLLABORATION?
Collaborative Operation

- Project Manager/Designer
- Construction Engineer
- Utility Coordinator
- Utility
Coordination vs. Collaboration

• Coordination looks like:
  – Holding meetings with utilities, obtaining information from utilities
  – Mostly done on paper
  – Signing work plans
  – Completing utility information for contract documents
  – Marking off the check boxes to complete a project
Coordination vs. Collaboration

• Collaboration looks like this:
Coordination vs. Collaboration

• Or this:
Collaboration

• Iterative *process*
• Asking *better* questions
• Seeking to understand the *why’s behind the what’s*
• Evaluating *risk* at each stage of the project
• Acknowledging that you *don’t know what you don’t know* and being willing to work with someone who *does know what you don’t know*
Proactive vs. Reactive

• Proactive Thinking:
  – Learn the WHO
  – Understand the WHAT
  – Know the WHERE
  – Ask the HOW

• Reactive Thinking:
  – Now what?
  – Why didn’t we know that then?
Proactive Thinking

• Asks BETTER questions
• Goes beyond emails and more meetings
• Leads to productive meetings
• Engages outside the box thinking
• Understands who we are talking to – DOT, Utility, Project Stakeholders
Put First Things First

• Goal is to Avoid > Minimize > Mitigate
• Understand what “IT” is
• Know where “IT” is
• Establish project goals
• Communicate expectations
• Understand and assess risks
Think Win-Win

• Creates partnerships
• Minimizes risks
• Gives everyone a voice
• Develops trust
• Results in goals being met, on time and on budget
Seek First to Understand...

• Don’t just ask “good” questions, ask BETTER questions
• Become knowledgeable in the utility’s needs
• Understand the WHY behind the What
• Aids in assessing and understanding RISK
Synergize

- Synergize is nothing more than teamwork
- Equal voice to all stakeholders
- Collaborative
- Mitigation Mindset
Communication

• Adapts communication to audience
• Asks better questions
• Become a better listener
• Reasonable response times to phone calls, emails, requests for information
• Avoids Acronyms
Builds Relationships

• Must have the ability to build and maintain good working relationships between DOT and the Utility
Resolves Conflict

• Conflict resolution skills
• Solutions focus
• Understands the Perspective of the Utility and DOT
Character Traits

• Respect and Trust
• Patient and Kind, yet persistent
• Humble, willing to assist
Conclusion

Education
Knowledge and Experience

Relationship Oriented

Emotional Intelligence

Communication and Collaboration

Great Utility Coordinator

Cultural Change Agent
Solves Problems
Cooperation from Utility

Assess Risk