AGEC 484:
Agriculture Economics Internship Program

Participating Company:

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Supervisor: Jeff Fuller
Agriculture Economics Internship Program: Joeris General Contractors

This past summer, I participated in an internship with Joeris General Contractors. The duration of my internship was from May 12, 2014 to August 27, 2014. I worked 72 days for a total of 571 “on-the-clock” hours. The project I was assigned was the building and construction of Shadowglen Elementary located in Manor, TX. My official title was “Project Intern” where I performed many duties that an employed project engineer would do. At the beginning of my internship, many of these responsibilities were new to me, but through mentorship and practice I felt more and more confident in completing tasks as the internship continued.

As Project Intern, one of the first tasks I participated in was the Pre-Construction Handover meeting where the pre-construction department updates the operations department regarding potential subcontractors, price estimation, budgeting, project deadlines, overall cost and returns goal, and other pertinent information that assists with the building of the project. This was a great way for me to get an overall view of the project as well as incorporate many skills I learned in agriculture economics regarding price estimation, budgeting and cost control. After the Pre-Construction Handover meeting and approval of the subcontractors, my main role was to review and send submittals to the architect/engineer for approval. Submittals are either certifications, shop drawings, product data, or any other information sent from the subcontractor that must be approved by the architect/engineer in order to ensure quality control and adherence to the project specifications. This is a very important process and one of my main roles as project intern, because timely approval of submittals allows the project to stay on schedule and prevent miscommunications and errors later on. In addition to submittals,
I would create “Requests for Information,” also known as “RFI’s,” for the architect/engineer if any questions arose from the subcontractors due to discrepancies or need for further clarification. Using excel techniques I learned from AGEC 217, I kept submittal, material expediting, and document change logs in order to track all documentation regarding the project. I was also responsible for giving status updates on submittals and RFI’s at Owner, Architect, Contractor or “OAC” meetings. In addition I was responsible for creating, updating, and distributing meeting minutes for all OAC and pre-construction meetings. Overall and in addition to these responsibilities, my main objective was to assist the project manager in coordination of all participating parties in the task of completing the project in a safe, high-quality, and timely manner.

Joeris General Contractors began in 1967 and is based out of San Antonio, TX. In 2013, Joeris opened up two locations with one in Austin and one in Dallas/Fort Worth. Joeris has multiple departments all working together to increase its market share in the construction industry in Texas. Joeris’ executive team is located in San Antonio and has at least one representative of each department. The business development department is responsible for outreach and building relationships with potential clients. After a potential job arises the pre-construction/estimating department evaluates the logistics and profitability of the job. They hold a “Bid Day” which involves subcontractors giving price estimations on all the different areas of the job, which Joeris uses in their bid to the owner/client. If the owner chooses Joeris as the general contractor for the job, then the pre-construction department holds the “Hand-Over” meeting mentioned earlier, and turns the job over to the operations department, which is who I worked with. Both Dallas/Fort Worth and Austin have a project executive who oversees all the projects occurring in
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each respective location. San Antonio’s office has multiple project executives due to it being well established in the area and having a large number of jobs. Each individual project has a project manager and a superintendent. The project manager and superintendent responsibilities vary slightly from job to job, but typically a project manager is responsible for communication and interaction with the owners, architects, engineers, as well as coordinate with the subcontractors before their individual jobs begin in the field. The superintendent is responsible for quality, safety, and timeliness of the physical construction of the project in the field. It is imperative for the project manager and superintendent to be in constant communication in order to efficiently move the project forward. During my internship, I shadowed the project manager and completed many of the tasks that are under his responsibility for the project. The last department is the human resources department who is responsible for payment, office meetings, and processing various other documentation that help each office function.

My internship experience was extremely valuable in that I was able to implement many of my preplanned learning objectives. My first objective was to study the cost analysis of an ongoing project. I received a “crash-course” in this objective during the Pre-Construction Handover meeting. We evaluated the expected cost of building our project, margin of error, and our expected return on investment. My next learning objective was cost control of the project. The project manager is ultimately responsible for keeping the project under budget, so this was an ongoing goal throughout my entire internship. We would hold “Scope” meetings to ensure each subcontractor provided exactly what was needed for the project in order to prevent double-ordering or unexpected costs to arise in the future. We also kept a solid working knowledge of the
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project specifications and kept in constant communication with the architect in order to provide high-quality materials at the best possible price. The next learning objective was economic analysis of scheduling. This was one of my main responsibilities as Project Intern. Overall, our main goal was to produce a high-quality elementary school that exceeds building standards in the shortest amount of time. By completing the project quickly and correctly, it would reduce overall labor and repair costs. I contributed to this goal by reviewing and coordinating submittals and RFI’s as quickly as possible. I also kept open and constant communication between the owner, architects, engineers, subcontractors and the Joeris team to make sure we moved forward as one cohesive unit. This is one of the most important roles of a general contractor and is often how their reputation is formed. The next learning objective was marketing program analysis. Joeris places a huge emphasis on building trust with their clients through a successful track record as well as having a professional reputation with standards well above minimum policy. I was required to be clean-shaven and wear business professional clothes at all times which is not always the standard at most construction locations. This assisted the business development department in marketing the Joeris brand to potential clients. I certainly learned a lot about the importance of having a well-established mission statement, branding and overall reputation of a company. Another learning objective was implementing management through supervision of the labor force. Toward the end of my internship, I was given responsibility to open and close the jobsite, conduct walkthroughs and safety inspections, and coordinated with field managers on the physical erection and construction of the project. I learned many leadership techniques and styles in order to motivate the employees and maximize productivity. My last learning objective was
networking and coordinating with the client/owner of the project. I interacted with the owners most often through the OAC meetings, which were held bi-weekly. This allowed the owner to get updates on the status of the project and ensure the project is aligned with their purpose and vision. I was also able to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the project, which was a great way to interact with school officials as well as residents of the neighborhood and see the impact of our work in their community.

I absolutely enjoyed my internship experience and it had a great influence on my career aspirations. In looking for a career, I closely followed Dr. Siebert’s PMRG model. This is a company that is Privately-owned, has Moderate debt, a good Reputation, and positive sales Growth. Joeris fits all of these categories and currently has a large demand for trainable employees. I also want to work for a company that has a culture that aligns with my mission and values. I want interactive leadership that looks to develop their employees through delegation and indirect leadership. Also, I want a company that promotes a positive atmosphere and fun work environment. Joeris possesses both of these qualities by having talented leadership indirectly supervise projects and allows project managers to complete their project in a manner that works best for them. Also, they greatly emphasize a family atmosphere through multiple corporate picnics, holiday parties, and other social events. Lastly, I want to be associated with a company that respects individual family time through appropriate hours and work schedule. My internship consisted of eight-hour workdays, Monday through Friday. I also received holidays off which allowed plenty of time for me to devote to my family and friends. I also was able to utilize many courses I took in the Department of Agriculture Economics throughout my internship. I was able to use the models given in AGEC 340 to properly
evaluate a successful company as well as conduct yourself appropriately in a professional work environment. I used many of the excel skills I learned in AGEC 217 for material expediting, submittals, and document change logs. This made my work much more productive, accurate, and organized. I also used many techniques taught in my ACCT 209/210 courses for record keeping and material tracking.

I highly recommend Joeris General Contractors to any student looking to enter the construction industry. The estimating department has the closest relation to the Department of Agriculture Economics. I would highly recommend taking a materials and methods course to learn the basics of construction and lower the learning the curve at the beginning of the internship. Overall, I used skills I learned in agriculture economics everyday and highly recommend it to students who want to try a new industry.

My internship definitely played a role in my career aspirations. I enjoyed working both in the office and out in the field as well as see the fruit of my labor in a successful project. On the last day of my internship I was given a job offer as a salaried project engineer and I plan on accepting it by the end of the week. This internship gave me real world experience in the workforce as well as provided me a job as soon as I graduate. I highly recommend students to take advantage of AGEC 484 and explore potential careers they are interested in!