



What to Look for in a Construction Consultant

A practical guide for project owners and developers

Selecting the right construction consultant can determine whether your project stays on track or becomes reactive, expensive, and adversarial. Below are the key qualities and capabilities every owner should look for when engaging a construction consultant or owner's representative.

1. Independent, Owner Aligned Representation

Your consultant should work exclusively in your interest, not as a contractor, trade, or designer with competing priorities.

Look for:

- Clear separation from construction contracting
- No financial incentive tied to change orders or scope growth
- Willingness to challenge consultants and contractors when required

If a consultant avoids difficult conversations, they are not protecting you.

2. Proven Site and Constructability Experience

Effective consultants understand how projects are actually built, not just how they are drawn or scheduled.

Look for:

- Former site, construction, or general contracting experience
- Ability to identify buildability issues early
- Practical input on sequencing, logistics, and risk before construction begins

Early constructability insight prevents downstream cost and schedule issues.



3. Strong Pre Construction and Planning Capability

Most project failures originate before construction starts.

Look for:

- Feasibility and execution planning experience
- Realistic cost and schedule modeling
- Clear risk identification and mitigation strategies
- Support during design to keep scope, budget, and constructability aligned

A good consultant helps you make informed decisions before capital is committed.

4. Clear Cost, Schedule, and Risk Control

Your consultant should actively manage, not just report, project performance.

Look for:

- Transparent cost tracking and forecasting
- Disciplined change management processes
- Schedule monitoring with early warning of risks and delays
- Clear, concise reporting you can rely on for decisions

If surprises occur frequently, controls are not working.

5. Procurement and Tender Expertise

Poor procurement creates long term project problems.

Look for:

- Experience with fair, defensible tender processes
- Clear scope definition and risk allocation
- Ability to review bids beyond price alone
- Familiarity with public and institutional procurement requirements

Good procurement reduces disputes and improves project outcomes.



6. Professional Standards and Accountability

A credible consultant operates under recognized professional and ethical standards.

Look for:

- Industry memberships or certifications
- Professional liability and general liability insurance
- Formal health and safety programs
- Ethical conduct and conflict of interest management

Professional standards protect both your project and your organization.

7. Direct, Practical Communication

You should receive clear advice, not filtered or overly technical explanations.

Look for:

- Direct, honest communication
- Solutions presented alongside problems
- Clear escalation of issues before they become critical
- Respectful but firm interaction with all project parties

Your consultant should simplify complexity, not add to it.

Final Thought

The right construction consultant does more than manage tasks. They protect your interests, reduce risk, and help deliver a project that meets your goals for cost, schedule, quality, and accountability.

Choose a consultant who is independent, experienced, practical, and willing to act in your best interest at every stage of the project.