



Seven points for selecting a Subcontractor Overview

1. Safety Procedures

Safety is always a top priority when it comes to construction, so selecting a subcontractor with an excellent track record is key. Start with the subcontractor's previous experience — a good contractor should be able to provide a full report that includes Experience Modification Rates, Work Safe BC recordable incidents, and time loss due to accidents.

It's easy to think that a company's safety record speaks for itself, but it's still important to review your subcontractor's safety policies and procedures. A subcontractor's safety officer (if available) should take the opportunity to walk through the procedures in detail. Your prospective company should have a detailed safety plan in place that outlines injury and illness prevention. The plan should also cover environmental checks as well. After reviewing the policy, you should have a clear understanding of the company's processes for identifying workplace hazards, correcting unsafe conditions, establishing safety training programs, and establishing environments where safety issues can be expressed without concern. A general contractor must be confident that partnering with a subcontractor won't result in any potential WorkSafe BC violations or fines.

2. Past Projects & References

In an industry like construction, reputation and word of mouth referrals are everything. Subcontractors are heavily reliant on references and positive reviews for new work. A prospective subcontractor should be able to provide recommendations from previously satisfied customers. If a subcontractor has done high quality work in the past, they will be able to secure positive feedback from others in the industry, which is usually a good sign. A company that has been around for years may have a stronger reputation, while younger companies may require more due diligence.

3. Adequate Staffing and Manpower

When selecting a subcontractor for a construction project, adequate staffing is an absolute necessity. A subcontractor should be able to provide details relating to their staff's experience and qualifications. Since a subcontractor's employees will be representing your company, due diligence is critical. It's important to ask for details regarding the hiring process, training process, and overall organizational chart.

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The last thing a general contractor wants is for a subcontractor to be short-staffed or unable to provide resources required for project execution. A good subcontractor will ensure they have an adequate number of workers and resources available to meet the needs outlined in your proposal.

4. Adequate Equipment

The quality and quantity of a subcontractor's staff is important, but so is the condition and availability of equipment. When selecting a subcontractor for a residential construction project, your candidate should be able to provide detailed confirmation of their ability to provide the necessary construction equipment required. The subcontractor's equipment should meet all of your standards, and should be readily available for your project. Additionally, your subcontractor should own the responsibility of maintaining their equipment and ensuring it's in the right condition to meet the requirements of the project. They should also be responsible for equipment transportation and any related costs.

5. Price

Price is obviously always going to be an important factor when choosing a subcontractor. We know to be competitive, general contractors need subcontractors that can deliver results at a competitive price. However, choosing a subcontractor solely based on price can really expose a general contractor to a lot of risk. If a subcontractor has a poor safety record, limited experience, or a track record of delivering second rate work, it can not only lead to expensive problems down the line, but it can also damage your reputation. While price is important, paying fair market value is essential for hiring a subcontractor that can get the job done right.

6. Communication

Working with a subcontractor that is transparent and accessible is absolutely key to construction project success. A good subcontractor will set expectations upfront around communication and will be easy to track down. Your subcontractor is an extension of your team, so your communication lead should be there when you need them. It's also important to ensure your subcontractor isn't juggling too many construction projects at once, and that they have the bandwidth to give you and your project the attention needed. Bottom line – after meeting with a subcontractor, you should feel confident that they'll be an accessible partner and more than willing to err on the side of over communicating.

7. Double Check Licenses And Insurance

Prior to making a final decision, double check that your prospective subcontractor's applicable licenses are up to date and that they possess the right credentials, training, and certifications necessary

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for your construction project. Even if your insurance policies cover subcontractors, your prospective hire should at least have general liability and workers compensation policies.

While subcontractors ultimately lessen financial risks associated with construction projects, selecting the wrong one can ultimately have the wrong effect. At the end of the day, a general contractor is responsible for all the work outsourced to subcontractors. Before you endorse a subcontractor for a commercial construction project, be sure you're working with a company that prioritizes safety, accountability, and transparency.