Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers
Management, Procurement and Law 163
November 2010 Issue MP4
Page 194
doi: 10.1680/mpal.2010.163.4.194
Paper 900076

Book review

FINANCE AND CONTROL FOR CONSTRUCTION; OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION
Chris March (ed.), Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, 2009, ISBNs: 978-0-41537-115-5; 978-0-41537-113-1, £24·99 each, 256 pp., 224 pp.

Students who are studying construction management and related subjects will need to have a broad understanding of the major aspects of controlling the building processes. *Operations Management for Construction* is one of three closely related texts (*Business Organisation for Construction*, *Operations Management for Construction* and *Finance Control for Construction*) written by Chris March to cover the field in its entirety. There are eight chapters to this text and an inevitable overlap in all three of his books so the author cross-references from one book to the other and within each subject. The aim is to aid readers but does mean that ideally all three texts should be to hand.

Focusing on construction sites and the running of challenging operations, the author explores issues such as the setting up of the site, planning the works, looking at productivity issues, deciding on the methodology of construction and the sequence of work and resourcing. As changing and increasing regulations affect the way sites are managed, he also considers the issues and methods of successful administering, safety, quality and environment. Finally, the contractor's responsibility to the environment, including relationships with third parties, selection of materials, waste management and sustainability is discussed.

The author's practical experience from the construction industry and his knowledge of what students need comes across in the style of his writing. In the chapter on contract planning, he compares the principles of planning the construction of a building to everyday life and in particular to events that take place every weekend in millions of UK households in the preparation of the Sunday lunch of meat, two vegetables, gravy and a pudding!

Operations Management for Construction covers aspects of finance and control for the entire lifespan of a building from development, through the design, procurement and post-contract processes. Some 15 chapters are included and the aim is to offer the reader the opportunity to track the control of finance through each stage of the building process. The text considers four main areas: deciding whether or not to build in the first place; controlling the costs of the design; establishing a cost upon which there is a basis for a contract with a constructor; finally, how the constructor controls costs of the construction process.

There is a surprising but most appropriate quotation from William Shakespeare in *Henry IV* which is well worth reflecting upon and I question if the construction industry has universally and consistently grasped the concept of a business case! It was also nice to see the issue of morality and ethics finding their way into the chapter on purchasing – with the consideration of exploitation of labour particularly in developing countries, and of environmental concerns.

Rather than have a mass of references and bibliographies at the end of each chapter in these books, the author limits these to a few well-established texts. There are some nice quotes in the introductions of these books from the author's memory of other people's comments and thoughts that have influenced his way of thinking over the years.

These are very handy and easy to read books that do not assume a certain level of knowledge from readers. They will be of benefit to those who want to grasp the main aspects of operations management, finance and control for construction before perhaps delving deeper elsewhere into more specialist texts.

Robert Gerrard