



Operational
Excellence



DELIVERING A COMPLEX CAPITAL PROJECT AGAINST THE ODDS

A massive capital project is among the most challenging undertakings a company can face. It involves not only engineering and construction complexity but also financial risk, safety assurance, and organizational alignment.

What successful strategy-critical capital projects of any size have in common is a trusted leader who takes ownership and delivers.

A MASSIVE UNDERTAKING



A global food manufacturer embarked on the largest capital investment in its history. To meet surging demand, it was converting a brownfield site into a 1.2 million-square-foot facility, including adding more than 800,000 square feet to the existing structure. The scale was daunting: more than 1,800 construction workers on site each day, millions of labor hours, and thousands of pieces of equipment to install and commission.

But the project was in trouble. The general contractor was millions of dollars over budget and a year behind schedule. Construction safety performance was the worst in the division, with frequent injuries and no clear culture of accountability. Cost controls were weak, schedules were unreliable, and the company's long-time end-to-end capital projects director retired just as the project was escalating in difficulty.

Failure was not an option. The new facility was essential to fulfilling demand, protecting market share, and safeguarding hundreds of millions in revenue. The company needed a partner who could take full ownership of the project and bring it under control.

They engaged IPM to provide end-to-end project leadership, acting as the company's on-site representative managing safety, quality, delivery, and cost. The consultant served as the highest-level manager at the site, reporting directly to company executives and the project steering committee, which included the parent company's CEO and COO.

SAFETY FIRST



One of the first actions was a complete reset of site safety. IPM assessed the existing program, confirmed it was inadequate, and replaced the entire safety team with experienced professionals who knew how to drive a safety culture while balancing the demands and risks of heavy construction. IPM's consultant worked with legal to reduce and redefine the general contractor's responsibilities, in part due to the GC's poor safety record.

Within weeks, the tone shifted: safety became visible, reinforced daily, and celebrated. Simple but powerful programs—such as awards for maintaining hazard-free work areas where all equipment, materials,

and processes were organized—built engagement and accountability. To prevent heat exhaustion and encourage hydration in a memorable way, initiatives included a “hydration challenge” and weekly snow cone trucks. Over time, the site transformed from the division's worst safety performer to its best.

The IPM consultant balanced tough oversight with collaboration. The team established weekly executive briefings and rigorous documentation of quality and cost issues. They brought in owner's representatives for mechanical and electrical work to ensure standards were met.



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CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS



The consultant anticipated risks and proposed unconventional solutions to keep the project moving. One challenge: the specialized equipment startup team needed for commissioning, qualification, and verification was spread across the country, losing days each week to travel. IPM arranged for the company's private aircraft to bring them in together on Monday mornings and return them on Fridays. This investment more than paid for itself by accelerating commissioning and avoiding costly delays. And it improved the quality of life for critical employees.

The project was not without setbacks. For example, a flawed piping system required costly replacement, and a regional construction boom led to labor shortages. But IPM worked with the team to meet challenges head-on. On-site, they held daily standup meetings with leaders from all the subcontractors to align on scheduling decisions and cost-benefit solutions. Weekly updates to the C-suite and quarterly presentations to the board included transparent cost and schedule expectations and reinforced alignment with corporate priorities. Above all, the consultant's persistence, availability, and problem-solving built trust at every level.

SUPPORTING COMPANY GROWTH



Despite inheriting a project that was late and over budget, IPM led the completion of construction and handover of the new \$1 billion facility without losing additional time. From the time the first production systems came online, it has exceeded output expectations.

Most importantly, the transformation in safety culture was remarkable. The facility logged over 5 million total labor hours with only a handful of recordable incidents and no serious injuries.

By instilling discipline in cost and schedule tracking, resolving conflicts with contractors, and finding creative ways to maintain progress, IPM enabled the company to regain control of its high-stakes project. The facility now supports the company's growth strategy, and is proof that with the right leadership, even the most daunting capital projects can succeed.



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