Learning From Movie-Sets Coordination

A comparative study of large, professional movie sets and construction sites revealed that conditions for movie production were far more complex and unpredictable, with sudden surprises, changing facilities and often hundreds of people from independent professional groups to be coordinated from hour to hour at different locations (Egebjerg, 2012). These are the uncertain production conditions that we usually hear of as an excuse for not being able to control construction sites. Yet the study also shows that the movie industry is far better at controlling production time, budget and quality exactly as initially planned (Deloitte, 2010). Part of the explanation for this different performance is a process management system that large movie studios have developed over the years including a digital tool for micro-managing the process in a flexible way to suit the dynamic processes. Both industries live with the reality of obstacles occurring on the ‘critical path’ and the process becoming not as fast as anticipated. So there is a need for a map of alternative ‘short cuts’ to get back on track.

Usually this work is managed inside the head of a professional construction manager, but even the best person in the job can become tired from keeping a high level of overview, information and coordination of escalating problem chains. This paper describes the innovative experiment of designing and testing on construction professionals a proto-version of a similar digital tool and system to that used on movie sets for detailed scheduling, coordinating and micro-managing construction processes. The current working name for this digital tool is “Short Cut”, and it is seen as a future supplement to common scheduling tools with application for project parts that are particular sensitive to deadlines or other complexities.