

# Cost Management and the Quiet Power of Good Judgement

by

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## Cost Management and the Quiet Power of Good Judgement in the Middle East

Cost rarely fails because numbers are wrong. More often, it fails because decisions are made too late, assumptions go untested, or complexity is underestimated. In the Middle East today, where ambition continues to accelerate and delivery pressures grow, this reality is even more apparent. Cost is not simply a financial measure. It is a record of choices. It captures intent, discipline, and the degree to which uncertainty has been acknowledged rather than ignored.

Every project begins with optimism. Ambition is high. Constraints feel negotiable. Yet this is precisely the moment when cost has the greatest influence. As soon as a project gains momentum, flexibility narrows quickly. Options disappear. Decisions harden. What remains is management rather than shaping.



Cost management, when practiced properly, intervenes early. Not to restrict ambition, but to test it. In a region where design programmes are large, timelines are compressed, and project requirements vary significantly from sector to sector, that early testing matters. A clear scope. A realistic programme. A budget grounded in risk rather than hope. These are not administrative tasks. They are acts of judgement - requiring experience, context, and the confidence to challenge assumptions before they become commitments.

For nearly ninety years, the legacy of Thomas and Adamson (T&A), now part of Egis, has been shaped by this understanding. Rooted in the United Kingdom and established across the Middle East, since 2009, our Cost Management practice has evolved with shifting procurement models, changing market dynamics, and rising client expectations. What has remained constant is a belief that cost management works best when it is embedded in the thinking from the outset rather than applied as a corrective after decisions have already been made. It is this early, integrated approach that brings clarity, strengthens outcomes, and ensures ambition is matched by deliverability.

## Where cost is really decided

The most consequential commercial decisions are rarely the most visible. They sit in early feasibility conversations, in the choice of procurement strategy, and in the way design development is paced and informed. These early decisions carry even more weight in today's regional environment, where projects are larger, more complex, and often operating within tight labour, skills, and materials ecosystems.

The Middle East continues to push the boundaries of scale, integration, and delivery ambition. Projects now operate within ecosystems that are more interconnected, time-sensitive, and commercially exposed than ever before. Clients increasingly expect clarity earlier, decisions grounded in reality, and delivery strategies capable of adapting without losing control of cost or purpose. In this environment, cost management has evolved beyond analysis into a form of early leadership, aligning ambition with deliverability from the outset.

Pre-contract cost planning provides the first moment of truth. It shows whether a project can be delivered as imagined or whether adjustments are required before momentum builds. It is not about producing a single number; it is about understanding ranges, sensitivities and trade-offs. It is about identifying where value truly lies, where risks sit, and where cost can be absorbed without undermining intent.

Design to budget remains widely misunderstood. It is not a constraint placed on creativity; it is the foundation that allows creativity to progress with purpose. In an environment where specialist resources are in high demand and delivery schedules are under pressure, clarity of financial boundaries ensures decisions are sharper, not smaller. Value engineering, applied with discipline rather than desperation, protects what matters most by challenging what matters least. And critically, our cost management approach is not an external bolt-on to the design process. It is embedded from the outset - shaping options, guiding decisions, and ensuring that commercial intelligence moves in parallel with design intent.

This integration allows projects to maintain ambition while remaining grounded in reality.

Bills of quantities and tender documentation then translate this understanding into something the market can respond to with confidence. Clear documentation is not simply a contractual requirement, it is a tool for reducing ambiguity, avoiding unnecessary premiums, and helping bidders compete on the basis of delivery rather than interpretation.

Across mixed-use developments, cultural assets, commercial workplaces, residential communities, hospitality destinations, and increasingly digital infrastructure projects such as data centres, this approach adapts to context while maintaining consistency of method. Cost is managed best when it is visible, intelligible, and owned collectively rather than defended individually.



## Stewardship through delivery

Once construction begins, cost management becomes an exercise in stewardship. Forecasts give way to control. Assumptions are tested against reality. Information must move quickly, and decisions often need to be made with incomplete data. This is especially important in the Middle East, where supply conditions, logistics, and site constraints can shift rapidly, and where the pace of development can compress decision-making windows.

Post contract cost management provides the structure to navigate this phase. Monthly valuations, cost reports, change assessments, and cash flow forecasts are not ends in themselves. They are tools that support trust. When reporting is consistent, transparent, and evidence based, conversations stay focused on resolution rather than attribution.

Change is inevitable. Design evolves. Site conditions vary. Market dynamics shift. What matters is how change is handled. A disciplined approach ensures variations are assessed promptly, impacts are understood in context, and decisions are made with full visibility of commercial and programme implications. This protects outcomes and relationships in equal measure.

Behind this discipline sits people. Dedicated pre contract and post contract teams working together provide continuity across the project lifecycle. That continuity matters. It allows early assumptions to be carried forward with intention rather than rediscovered at cost. It ensures lessons learned inform future stages rather than being lost between them.

Trust, once earned, becomes cumulative. Long standing client relationships in the region reflect not only successful project outcomes but also a consistent ability to navigate complexity without unnecessary escalation. Being trusted and respected over time is not about avoiding difficult conversations. It is about having them early, clearly, and with evidence.



## Integration, Legacy and Expanded Opportunity

Eighteen months on from establishing Cost Management within Egis following the T&A acquisition, we have made meaningful headway. What began as a transition of our legacy capability has matured into a fully integrated, regionally aligned function embedded across our projects and sectors. Our teams now operate with shared systems, shared principles, and a consistent commercial discipline that mirrors the broader Egis project lifecycle. This integration has strengthened our ability to support clients earlier, provide continuity throughout delivery, and bring a unified standard of judgement across every stage of a project. It has also enabled us to deepen the value we bring to existing clients and projects, while extending our reach into new opportunities and sectors, broadening both our capability and our impact across the region.

Cost management is often most effective when it attracts the least attention. Its success is visible in projects that remain commercially coherent, defensible, and aligned with their original intent. Even as conditions evolve around them.

This perspective aligns with Egis' broader commitment to combining technical capability with commercial understanding and long term thinking. Cost management is one expression of that commitment. It does not promise certainty. It offers something more useful.

**Clarity — when certainty is not available.**



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Operating in 70 countries, Egis puts the expertise of its 22,000 employees at the service of our clients and develops cutting-edge innovations accessible to all projects. Through our wide range of activities, Egis is a key player in the collective organisation of society and the living environment of citizens all over the world.

Our operations in the Middle East are underpinned by key strategic acquisitions and a deep understanding of local market conditions. Egis' long and distinguished history, providing a comprehensive suite of engineering, consulting, and project management services makes us a trusted partner for the region's governments, investors, and developers alike.

With 4,000+ employees, across 8 countries in the Middle East, Egis has successfully delivered over 700 complex development projects in the region, stimulating economic growth and enhancing quality of life. We are firmly committed to sustainable development, positioning us as one of the top five firms, according to the Engineering News Record (ENR) rankings.

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