What comes first?

It is impossible to construct a building and divide the service runs of pipes, ducts and conduit going through a wall or partition at some point. However, holes in walls cause big problems. If mishandled penetrations can seriously compromise the structural, fire and/or acoustic performance of partitions. So what is the best method of build? Should the partitions be constructed first or should service runs be installed and the partitions built around them? Here, six industry experts give their opinions...

**パーティションイースト with Prepared Openings**

**ADVANTAGES**

- The installers can erect the partition to the underside of the slab, and work in a safe manner.
- Deflection heads (if required) that allow the slabs to move as the floor is loaded with plant equipment and people; can be correctly incorporated in the design.

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Requires a coordinated approach.
- M&E services not needed to be agreed beforehand or partitioning is erected.

**Conclusion**

Main contractors are signing up to tighter and tighter programmes that mean the M&E contractor will have made a start, so partitions are formed around the services. This is usually the wrong method of sequencing the fit-out.

Difficult placing boards above services

Partitions situated after services

From a health and safety perspective, it’s about planning the sequence of works to provide the safest environment for those involved in the installation.

Before the WoF and Height Regulations 2005 it was stated that all work at height must be property planned and organised. I consider this to be more than just the choosing of appropriate equipment for access, or selecting the correct control measures for an individual application. It is about making correct decisions when planning the sequence of works. Current practices often place structural supports are allowed for, this will reduce the strength of the partition.

The top level of the installation, the penetrations and any associated fire/acoustic stopping. Best practice was for the M&E contractor to provide drawings showing the size of all penetrations required for services and the precise locations. This will enable the partition contractor to ensure the service installers and drywall contractors, especially in modular service installation will minimally become more common in the not too distant future.

**PARTITIONS FIRST with Prepared Openings**

**ADVANTAGES**

- Fitting services in place before partitions

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Difficult placing boards above services

**Conclusion**

- Deflection heads (if required) that allow the slabs to move as the floor is loaded with plant equipment and people; can be correctly incorporated in the design.

- Requires a coordinated approach.
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