

# Owner Briefing: What Commissioning Should Actually Prove Before Turnover

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*A practical guide for owners, developers, and project managers who want stronger turnover confidence and less closeout theater.*

## **Commissioning should prove more than good intentions**

Commissioning is often spoken about as if it were a general quality label. That is not good enough for owners making turnover decisions.

Before turnover, commissioning should provide evidence that the building systems were not only intended to perform, but were actually verified in a disciplined way. The right question is not “Was commissioning done?” The right question is “What was actually proven, by whom, under what conditions, and with what evidence?”

## **Five things owners should expect to be proven**

### **1. The expected performance was clearly defined.**

The Owner's Project Requirements should state what the building is expected to do. The Basis of Design should explain how the design intends to meet that expectation. If those foundations are weak, the rest of commissioning becomes harder to judge.

### **2. The systems were installed, started, and made ready for testing.**

Prefunctional readiness is not glamorous, but it matters. Owners should expect checklists, issue tracking, and clear accountability for what was completed before functional testing began.

### **3. Critical functions were tested under meaningful conditions.**

This includes the control sequences, safety responses, economizer behavior where relevant, ventilation delivery where relevant, and other project-critical modes. Test results should be tied to measurable criteria, not just narrative reassurance.

### **4. Open issues and deferred tests are visible.**

A building can move toward occupancy with some deferred items, but only if they are tracked, assigned, and accompanied by a real closure plan. Hidden open items are not closeout; they are risk transfer.

### **5. The operating team received a usable handoff.**

Turnover should include a systems manual, verified sequences, key reports, and training that helps the operations team understand what the building is supposed to do. Install completion is not the same thing as operational readiness.

## Documents owners should ask to see

Owners do not need every raw file on day one, but they should expect a coherent acceptance package.

Ask for:

- the Owner's Project Requirements
- the Basis of Design
- the current Commissioning Plan
- a preliminary or final commissioning report, depending on project stage
- the open-issues and resolution log
- TAB status and balancing evidence where relevant
- functional test summaries tied to critical modes
- any deferred testing plan with responsible parties and due dates
- training status and the systems manual or turnover package

## Questions that sharpen owner-side visibility

What exactly has been tested and passed?

Which critical functions have not yet been proven?

What evidence supports ventilation, sequence behavior, and other performance claims that matter to this building?

What issues remain open, who owns them, and what is the closure path?

What information will the operating team actually receive and use after handover?

## Bottom line

Strong commissioning gives owners something more valuable than the word commissioned. It gives them defensible turnover confidence.

If the building cannot clearly show what was proven, what remains open, and how the operating team will carry that knowledge forward, the handoff is not as strong as it needs to be.

### Next step

Use this briefing to sharpen owner-side expectations before occupancy. Clear expectations upstream create stronger documentation, better issue visibility, and more defensible turnover decisions.