

Mastering the Art of Construction Client Communication

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Open client communication is the cornerstone of success for businesses across various industries. In construction, it is all too easy to become consumed by the pressing demands of deadlines, adhering to timelines, and navigating each project's development. In the midst of these endeavors, however, the importance of client communication and transparency can sometimes be overlooked, but transparent and communicative client relationship is essential to building long-lasting partnerships.

While building and maintaining such relationships might initially appear daunting – just as public speaking might – it is crucial to recognize that effective communication will become second nature with practice. By prioritizing open lines of communication from the very beginning of a project's conception, businesses can set themselves on a path toward establishing strong relationships with clients.

Weekly Updates and Progress Reports

Weekly reports provide a straightforward means of ensuring clients are made aware of the progress made on their projects. Dispelling the notion that these updates need to be elaborate summaries of project progress – it is, in fact, their simplicity that makes these updates impactful. It is essential to gain a deep understanding of each client's existing operational preferences ahead of sending weekly updates and progress reports. As projects begin to take shape, construction teams should understand their clients' communication preferences



and ensure their weekly reports align with the client's preferred practices. Most of the time, simplicity is key.

A simple, concise, and well-structured one-page report outlining the team's current and upcoming tasks and any noteworthy project updates for the client's awareness is ideal. In addition to written updates, including labeled progress photos with clear explanations of each image's content can greatly enhance comprehension. These reports serve as a means to keep clients informed and as valuable documentation for future reference should unforeseen issues arise. Construction team members can refer to these reports and images as a reliable guide to track progress.

Again, to establish effective communication, construction professionals need to customize the format and content of these updates to align with their client's preferred communication style. This tailored approach ensures a seamless connection and guarantees that all project updates are conveyed in a manner that will resonate with the client.

Tough Talk

It's no secret that hard conversations with clients are uncomfortable during construction. However, by initiating projects with upfront conversations that address potential challenges, clients can be better prepared for issues that might arise in the future. By being transparent upfront, construction teams can build trust and establish an open dialogue between themselves and their clients. For example, suppose the construction team anticipates delays in materials. In that case, clients appreciate being looped in on these potential delays on the front end, not after the expected delivery date has passed.

Unforeseen obstacles are an inherent part of the construction process and cannot be entirely avoided. However, it is essential to approach these challenges thoughtfully before communicating them to clients. Whenever issues arise, such as obstacles with builds, deliveries, or any aspect of the project, it is important to inform the client while also sharing potential solutions. By doing so, the impact of these issues can be mitigated, ensuring a more constructive and collaborative problem-solving approach.

Bolstering the Budget

Just as it is crucial to handle difficult discussions with clients, it is equally important to allocate a contingency within project budgets to accommodate unforeseen challenges that may arise during development. By including construction contingency plans in the initial budget, clients will be prepared – mentally and physically – should unexpected issues arise. It is helpful to put money away for potential bumps in the road, and clients are often thankful that they set money aside on the front end, rather than forking up more money halfway through the project. Construction contingency plans give the client and construction teams some peace of mind for unexpected expenses that may occur on the way to project completion.


A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

Project photography plays a vital role in keeping clients informed about the progress of their projects while also serving as a valuable visual record of the project's evolution.

While a simple cell phone image will suffice, construction teams should consider investing in hiring a professional photographer to take progress images. This investment serves not only to enhance client relationships but also to bolster their portfolio; clients are often impressed with strong imagery, and construction teams can use images for promotional purposes into the future. It's a win, win.

While the construction process often revolves around deadlines and protocols, the significance of transparent and consistent communication between contractor and client should never be overlooked.

Establishing and maintaining a clear client relationship might seem daunting initially, but it doesn't have to be complicated. Weekly updates and progress reports are crucial in keeping clients informed and engaged throughout the project while also serving as documentation for future reference. Engaging in difficult conversations upfront and providing potential solutions encourages open dialogue, ensuring that clients are prepared for any potential challenges. Incorporating construction contingency plans into the budget allows for unexpected circumstances, providing clients and construction teams peace of mind. Investing in project photography is a bonus as it not only impresses clients but also provides construction teams with images for personal portfolios.

By prioritizing open communication with clients, construction teams can establish long-lasting partnerships based on trust, transparency, and understanding. 



About the Author

Scott DeLano, principal at Certified Construction Services, brings 25 years of project management experience building educational institutions, hospitality, multifamily projects, medical/facilities, restaurant/service industry projects, and historical restoration work in Michigan and throughout the south. He's known for his commitment to building and maintaining relationships with clients, designers, and project partners. He has a reputation for finding valuable solutions to keep projects on budget and schedule and deliver on commitments.

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