



[Resolve to Set Construction Project Expectations Early and Often in 2012](#)



As we enter 2012 expectations for the new year are in all of our thoughts. The best laid plans are made and possibilities seem endless. New Year's resolutions will be made (and possibly broken).

As a [construction attorney here in Virginia](#), if I could ask contractors and subcontractors to make (and keep) one resolution for 2012 it would be to set expectations for a construction project before, during and after the project. More construction claims and

lawsuits arise out of poorly managed expectations for the project. Everything from a poor explanation of the costs and benefits of [green building](#) to the simple failure to [draft a solid contract](#) with a well defined scope of work can lead to claims and conflicts that can only make attorneys happy.

Contractors (and even subcontractors and suppliers) *must manage expectations* through education of those "upstream" of them on the job site to avoid shock on the part of those with the money. Such education takes many forms, I've listed several key ones here (you will notice that many are the same things that we lawyers love to see in contracts).

- A solid contract with a well defined scope of work.
- [Written Change Orders!](#)
- A pre-construction "educational" meetings
- Consistent communication throughout the project with status updates, etc.
- Resolving issues as close to their occurrence as possible
- E-mail confirmations of field changes
- Payment "reminder" letters

Setting realistic and understandable expectations for a project, and reinforcing them on a regular basis throughout, keeps all of the players in a commercial or residential construction project on the same page. Following these relatively simple steps will keep expectations in line and avoid most issues on a construction job site.

I hope you have a great 2012. Resolving to keep expectations and reality in line during construction will help.

I am happy to hear any other items that should be added to the above list in a comment or [e-mail](#).

Image via [Wikipedia](#)

Please check out my [Construction Law Musings Blog](#) for more on Virginia construction law and other topics.