

KEEP YOUR JOBS ON SCHEDULE AND YOUR PROJECT COSTS DOWN WITH THIS ROUNDUP OF PRACTICAL TIPS FROM INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Though it's nearly impossible to completely avoid excusable project delays (any delay caused by an unpredictable circumstance outside your control), there are things you can do to prevent inexcusable delays — that is, delays that are legally considered your responsibility or the results of someone you're responsible for.

You can also minimize the impacts of excusable delays and make sure they're covered in your construction contract.

Here are 24 tried-and-true tips from various industry experts you can use to:

- » Prevent delays from occurring.
- » Lessen the effects that delays have on project timelines.
- » Ensure your construction agreements protect your business.

key economic indicators. Then, make backup plans for any materials that won't arrive on time.

2. DIVERSIFY YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

Given the current state of the supply chain, relying on only a few suppliers to deliver materials and equipment doesn't cut it anymore. So, getting more reliable sources is a necessity.

"Use distributors, warehouse suppliers, and foreign competitive sources to ensure supply," Hough said. "Place orders with mills if your volume permits it and you normally would use a distributor. Place orders with distributors if you normally would be using the mill."

Once you've found a new supplier you want to work with, sign a contract with them ASAP. That way, you can mitigate the possibility of delays with them as well.

3. BE FLEXIBLE WITH MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT

Brian Turmail, the vice president of public affairs and strategic initiatives of The Associated General Contractors, advised

equipment, and processes for projects as necessary.

"Have a strong working understanding of building component options. Be familiar with other materials that can be used in a

Understand three to four other options that may be available for a project — some that may be different than what was originally spec'd."

Turmail continued: "Have a trusted relationship with the project owner so you can go to them and say, 'Look, I know you want this type of equipment or material, but this type of equipment or material is very close to that; let's use this instead because of supply chain delays.'"

Why is this important? Given the unpredictable state of the

them. Most criteria for achieving most favored nation status

10. BE CAUTIOUS WHEN BIDDING WORK

To protect your reputation and track record with a client (especially a new one), Turmail advised that you be cautious when deciding to bid on work at times when industry delays are more common.

“Be prudent, especially when it comes to predicting costs and timelines,” he said. “Don’t tell the owner you can bid on a project that will take six months if you’re unsure if you can complete it within that timeframe. You need to set the right expectations from the beginning.”

11. BRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO PRE-BID MEETINGS

“One of the most important things you can do when you go in and develop that business relationship — and before you make that bid — is to not just have the business development team attend,” Turmail said. “Have the project manager, the superintendent — the people who are running the jobsites — in the room. That will prevent your business development rep from overpromising, and set the right relationship from the beginning.

“Most owners would rather be told upfront what’s doable

“I cannot stress this enough: have a pre-job meeting to include the client, the GC [general contractor] (in our case), our rep

are all the main parties that can get in front of potential miscommunications that would otherwise happen later down the road.”

12. ADD PROVISIONS TO YOUR AGREEMENTS

While you can’t stop an outside party (the project owner, architect, or engineer) from interfering with a project, you can add provisions to your contract to help in case this happens — and possibly even prevent this from being an excusable delay, or at least minimize its impact.

our agreements that specify a daily work stoppage fee due to delays that originate from the client,” Shirley said. “These can

include deviations from building plans that were not shared and repeated change order requests that affect our work schedule.”

“A clause can also be written within the contract to ensure that change orders have a prescribed timeframe for approval,” said Benjamin Mensah, the founder and president of B.A.K Construction, Inc. “Any time past this timeframe will be compensated for as an extra cost incurred for delaying the project.”

A third provision Mensah suggested to work around change orders is to cap the amount of change orders for the contractor and the client — for example, at \$900,000,000 in the contract for all change orders.

"The best answer is to be proactive instead of reactive,"
Taylor Stroop, the operations manager at Stroop Design &

keep their talent — companies he describes as having built “strong, familial-like relations with their teams.”

“Do stay interviews one month in,” he said. “Meet with your workers and ask, ‘How are you feeling? How are things going? What are your ambitions?’ Have them in a sincere way. Ask yourself, ‘Is there a path for someone who’s hardworking? And is that visible for them?’ Make sure they feel they’re heard and their ideas can make the project more productive.”

“These guys are coming out of COVID on edge,” Dr. Sean Dixon, the owner of Simply Tiny Development, said. “You have to pay them on time and trust them. Quality workers understand the value of completing the job and being paid on time.

“The social contract has changed, and industry standards need

“Ensure the quality of labor and work; give them a small bonus or incentive. Pay them in phases instead of waiting until the job is completed. Foster teamwork. Be a leader and set an example.”

21. LEVERAGE CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY

Using construction technology can help with all aspects of a project, including preventing project delays. Depending on which app or software suite you use, you can:

- »
- » Notify your subcontractors about schedule changes.
- » Streamline communication between all parties involved in a job.
- » Contain easily-accessible backup plans for delays to stop them from halting an entire project.

Here are some types of software to consider if you’re not already using them:

- » Takeoff software
- » Estimating software
- » Scheduling software
- » Jobsite management software
- » Project management software

22. PROVIDE ALL PARTIES WITH IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Before you begin a project, establish good relationships with

everyone — the project owner, builder, architect, engineer, and subcontractors — and ensure they’re on board with all aspects of it. Have every party review the plans. Make sure there are no questions left unasked. Be upfront about any potential issues that may occur, such as supply chain holdups.

“Both the builder and trade partner must have excellent communication prior to commencement of any work,” Erik

“Provide prompt written notice to your customer of impacts to the project schedule to allow the customer to possibly mitigate delays on their end. They can collaborate with you on what you might be able to be done on your end, even if it requires additional costs (i.e., authorizing a change order) to expedite shipping/work overtime, etc.

24. DOCUMENT DAILY PROGRESS ON PROJECTS

Use technology to your advantage to keep meticulous records of your project daily.

“The builder remains in the driver’s seat managing the project

“That documentation and communication, photos, drawings, plans, etc. should all be documented in an online project management system.”

Craig Townsend, a lecturer at Clemson University and

- » **Keep meeting minutes, including the typical information recorded in any meeting’s minutes** (subject, date, location of meeting, names of people attending, and absent people, etc.).
- » **Have an “official” camera on-site for use by the project manager (or designated representative) with a timestamp imprinted on every picture taken.** “These photos should be carefully stored/preserved for future retrieval,” he said.
- » **Have project managers (or superintendents) keep a daily job log.** “This will preserve information, on a daily basis, such as:

About the Author

In her current role as a Content Strategist at Dumpsters.com, Michelle Philippon supports the content, creative, and sales teams in a number of ways, including developing promotional materials for the B2B division. She enjoys creating content that helps companies solve their waste removal problems and accomplish their business goals. Before joining the Dumpsters.com team, she worked in sales, marketing, education, and case management roles for

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