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Your Goal: XYZ Concrete Always Hits Their Schedule



A goal for your company should be to be masters at scheduling. You want your customers to be saying, “These guys always hit their schedule, we can depend on them.” You want to be known for knocking jobs out on the day that you say and in the right amount of overall time.

Here are four ways to do just that: [Continue >](#)



1) Set proper expectations with the customer going in to the job

Don't over promise! Too many contractors will say what the customer wants them to say and what they say will bite them later. When you were getting going in the concrete business, you were probably impressed with yourself by how fast you could go. If you could knock out a tract of 15 homes in 15 days you would tend to want to lay it all on the table with the client on what you could do- and maybe even push on that a little bit and say you're going to go for 14 days (Man, you sure knew how to get yourself in a pickle).

That's all fine but the problem can be that if you tell someone 14 days and you take 16, in many cases that can make you the goat. You've done a great job, it's only taken you 16 days (in this example), but you're a goat because the customer had to back off other trades because although it was fast, it wasn't as fast as you said it was going to be. If you had mapped out the job with a little buffer in the schedule, say for 18 days (which the client would still have been happy with), and then you knock it out in 16 days, you look like a hero.

Under promise and then over deliver and ...

you'll be in a situation of constantly delighting your customers.

I've seen this time and time again with scheduling: If you're one day late even though you did the job rapidly- you're a goat, and if you gave a longer schedule to begin with and then you beat it you're a hero (and you weren't even as fast as you were when you over promised- go figure). Perception is everything. So under promise and then over deliver and you'll be in a situation of constantly delighting your customers.





2) Know Early the Job Won't Happen as Scheduled

To read the full Concrete Sherpa report click on the link below:

[KNOW EARLY
THE JOB
WON'T
HAPPEN AS
SCHEDULED](#)

To manage jobs properly, a concrete contractor needs to be a scheduling expert. The key to scheduling expertise is to know things early. At least know as many things as possible about upcoming jobs as early as possible.

Here is an example of how you can find things out early that will affect your scheduling: Two weeks before your job is going to start (the customer's superintendent has already called in and scheduled the job 3 weeks or a month prior to that), make a call to the superintendent: "Hey how is it going over there? Are you going to be ready to start? I need to pick up a precise grading plan for the job, when do you think you might have it?" Make notes based on what the superintendent says.

Oftentimes a surprising thing will happen. The superintendent will often say: "You know what, we've got a snafu with the bank and we can't get financing to get started over here, I'll call you back," or, "Move me forward three weeks in the schedule. We are not going to have building permits". Then reschedule the customer's project to the appropriate place on the calendar.

Find out about scheduling problems or changes earlier in the process rather than later. If you don't make these kinds of "checking in" calls, it is going to cost you. While it is true you won't always be able to find out about scheduling changes early- oftentimes you will and it will really help you.





3) Go Where the Job is Ready to Be Worked On

This sounds too logical. Why would anyone be working on jobs that are not ready? It happens all the time.

Some customers offer up a myriad of reasons about why the job isn't ready, they know it, but they need you to get started. They don't have permits yet but they will shortly, but they need you to get started. They don't have the plumbing awarded yet, but they need you to get started. The driveway isn't rough graded yet, but they want you to start in the backyard- even though you figured to do the entire job at one time. The customer needs to make an impression with the lender...you've probably heard them all!

Find out about scheduling problems or changes earlier in the process.

There are a hundred variations of jobs not being ready but customers want you to be there. You want to be working on the jobs that are ready to be built, can get inspection, can get poured, and then get out of there and turn in your invoice.

By working where the job is ready you're going to be a stronger company and the kind of company that people want. You are going to get better at predicting how long jobs take and getting in and out on jobs quickly. So work on jobs where the customer is ready for you. Working on jobs where the customer wants you there but they are not ready just reduces your overall ability to meet schedules and weakens your company.





4) Build a Buffer into Your Activities

Concrete construction is very hard to manage when everything is in a state of crisis:

- It's the afternoon and you are waiting for the inspector to approve the work so you can confirm the concrete for the next day
- The architect needs to approve the color today so concrete can be ordered.
- The owner's representative needs to get out to the job this afternoon and approve the layout so you can pour tomorrow.

The list of crises inducing items goes on and on.

What you can do is build in a buffer. If the inspector comes in the afternoons, don't pour the next morning after inspection- pour the morning after that. You don't want to be under the gun each and every day. Better decisions can be made.

If you need an architect or owners approval- allow for that in the schedule and allow the amount of time that lets you operate efficiently and in an organized manner. If you get asked why you are not pouring the next day when you get a late inspection or approval, your answer is that your next days work is already scheduled out by 10 a.m. It is impossible to change things around late in the day. Of course, answers like this hold water if your company has a fabulous record at meeting schedules. Answers like this won't go over well if you are always running behind and are always full of excuses.





Working with a buffer is really a mindset. Do you always want to be begging the concrete dispatcher to hold trucks for you- you'll let him know by 5:00 P.M. if the concrete is confirmed? That is hardly fair to your concrete supplier. Do you want to be disorganized in scheduling your crews? Forcing them to call the office in the morning to find out where they are going that day (since it was unknown at 5:00 P.M. the night before where their job for the next day is). This is not an efficient or fair way to run crews. When a company gets used to working in crisis mode it just feeds on itself in a negative way.

A side benefit of having a buffer in your activities is if a job were to cancel, you have another job that you could slide in that slot and make use of that manpower you have available now. It gives you options.

When you get used to working in a more controlled manner life will become much easier.

Working with a buffer is counter intuitive. It seems like building a buffer costs time in the schedule, but it really saves a ton of time because you are working in a much more efficient and controlled manner. Aim to have concrete, materials, supplies, and people dialed in for the next day by the morning of the previous day. For instance, by 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, Wednesday's schedule is buttoned up.

When you get used to working in a more controlled manner life will become much easier. You'll hit be hitting your schedules like clockwork, and looking like a hero!





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SUMMIT DATE

This document reached the summit (was created) on February 1, 2005 and is based on the best information available to the Sherpa at that time. To check for updates please click here <http://www.ConcreteSherpa.com/schedule>.

NAVIGATION & USER TIPS

You can move around this guide by using your mouse or keyboard arrows. Left mouse button goes to the next page, right mouse button goes to previous page. Click on the right arrow (→) for the next page and the left arrow (←) to go the previous page.

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ABOUT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

The Concrete Sherpa is a team of people that represent the experience, teaching and learning of our team members and other industry leaders *on a mission to make life better for the concrete contractor*. We are an idea center striving to deliver thought provoking ideas based on “Concrete Advice for Business and Life” to stimulate you to reach new heights. As a user, you should remember to consider all information you receive, here at the Concrete Sherpa or elsewhere, not as a *cast in concrete* recommendation, but rather as an idea for you to consider and ponder.

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THE JOURNEY LEADING TO THE CONCRETE SHERPA PROJECT

The Concrete Sherpa Project (A [Sherpa](#) is a “guide”) was born at The Concrete Network in mid 2004. Here is how it happened:

The biggest surprise, or gift, since starting The Concrete Network in 1999 has been the concrete contractor friends from around the country we’ve made and witnessing the passion they have for what they do. These people include Dave Pettigrew, up in the San Francisco Bay Area, or the Verlennich brothers in Minnesota, or Bob Harris in Georgia, the list goes on and on. It’s quite inspiring.

We were once asked, “How are you so excited every day about concrete?” Well the answer is simple, it is impossible to not be excited about concrete when you have the job we do—interacting with hundreds of concrete contractors from every state in the country.

The thing we’ve learned about concrete contractors is that most are passionate *craftsmen*—they are often less passionate and experienced in the “office stuff”. Human nature channels us to do what we are most comfortable with; learning how to use a new saw-cutting tool is comfortable; learning and implementing a new estimating strategy, or job management tool, is not so comfortable.

Sherpa info

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

So Sherpa was born to provide FREE and easy to use information on topics many contractors are not too comfortable with.

- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help to contractors who are often ‘Lone Rangers’ and don’t have anyone to get solid business advice from.
- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help for contractors who have to work too hard and too many hours in their business, and one day realize they need to work *on their business, not in their business*.
- Have fun with Concrete Sherpa and go faster towards reaching success than you might have on your own.
- To skeptics who think something free can’t be valuable, or there must be a trick- visit Concrete Sherpa and decide for yourself.

We hope you make great use of the Concrete Sherpa and it helps you to become an awesome success for yourself, your family, your church, and your community.

VISIT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

To visit the Concrete Sherpa click here <http://www.ConcreteSherpa.com>.