



Advice to Contractors on Domestic Client's Expectations.

This advice is intended to provide something of a 'check-sheet' for small contractors on how to manage the expectations of a domestic client.

Pricing.

Ideally pricing should be carried on with access to the approved plans. Reference should be made wherever possible to the dimensions, specification, and notes on the plan providing the basis for the quotation. This makes any agreed changes during construction much easier to cost.

The quotation should be in writing, refer to the plans, and ideally be categorised by activity. Point out at this stage that any changes, however small may entail extra cost.

Included in the written 'contract' should be the payment terms, and any deposits required before commencement.

Before Starting on Site.

Satisfy yourself that all the appropriate Planning and Building Control permissions are in place, and who will be responsible for arranging the necessary inspections during the course of the works. Also agree with the client who will liaise with other third parties such as the utilities and neighbours should it be necessary.

You should give the client an idea of timescale, subject to weather. Bear in mind that many clients will have no experience of building works and no concept of the level of activity, disruption and dirt that will arise. Also, discuss and agree the following issues:

- Give the client a contact telephone number;
- Any issues in relation to the householder's own insurance cover during the works;
- Access to site and storage of materials;
- Toilets, refreshments provision;
- Shelter for workforce at breaks;
- Level of mess that can be expected;
- Intrusion into property of the work;
- Keeping property weatherproof;
- Keeping works and property access clear and safe (children, elderly people);
- Brief the workforce, sub-contractors on use of radios, swearing, children in the house etc.

On Site.

Meet regularly with the client and discuss any issue before they escalate. If change or additional work is requested, react quickly and provide details of any savings or extra cost.

Make sure the client knows that you have other work as well as theirs, and issues such as weather, workforce sickness etc might require you to go to another job and not be on theirs for a period of time. Keep in touch by telephone and keep them up to date.

If the works fall behind time, advise the client, give the reasons, and how this will affect completion.

Regular dated progress photos are very useful.

Some clients can be difficult. Don't get into a face-to-face argument on site, without the facts to hand. Better to consider the details of the issue and discuss it calmly.

Payment and Completion.

Hopefully payments will be made as per contractual agreement. Be careful that not too much work is carried out prior to payment. There are disreputable and dishonest clients and you should make an informed decision on how to deal with your particular client.

Completion of the works will preferably be agreed by both parties satisfactorily. Avoid being drawn away from the job in the final weeks and letting it drag on. Also be wary of a client who 'nit picks' minor issues to avoid making the final payment.

Remember that most domestic clients when seeking a contractor ask friends who they might recommend. If you have done a good job this will probably lead to other work via that satisfied client.

Assistance.

At any stage in the process, the staff at the Construction Federation are always available to offer help and advice.