

# The Retail Contractor

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SUMMER EDITION • 2026

# NEWSLETTER

## Finish Strong: The Contractor's Playbook for Managing Customer Expectations

### Insights from the RCA Annual Conference



**In construction and retail development,** surprises are inevitable. A permit delay. A subcontractor issue. A last-minute design change. The difference between a stressful project and a successful one often comes down to one thing: how well expectations are managed.

At the recent RCA Annual Conference, contractors and retailers gathered for a candid roundtable discussion on lessons learned in the field. The conversation surfaced a clear theme: strong communication and accountability are the keys to keeping customers confident—even when challenges arise.

#### **Start by setting the tone early.**

Expectation management begins long before the first wall goes up. Several contractors emphasized

the importance of establishing communication protocols during the pre-construction phase. Clients should know how often they will receive updates, who their point of contact is, and what kind of reporting or technology—such as jobsite cameras or digital progress updates—they can expect. Clear structure builds trust and prevents confusion later in the project.

#### **Acknowledge issues quickly—even if you don't have the answer yet.**

One of the most repeated pieces of advice from the roundtable was simple: don't guess, and don't go silent. When a client reaches out with a concern, the worst response is no response. Contractors noted that most customers understand that problems can't always be solved instantly. What

they want is acknowledgment. A quick message such as "I'm working on it and will follow up soon" can go a long way in lowering stress and maintaining confidence.

#### **Remember that construction is a relationship business.**

Technology has made project communication constant. Between texts, emails, and real-time reporting tools, contractors are often reachable far beyond traditional business hours. While that can be challenging, many conference participants noted that strong human relationships still matter most. Clients want to feel that their contractor cares about the outcome as much as they do—and that their

*(Continued on page 2)*

concerns are being taken seriously. Respect, responsiveness, and transparency remain the most valuable tools in the jobsite toolbox.

### Prepare for the unexpected.

The stories shared at the conference made one thing clear: unexpected events are part of the industry. Participants recounted projects delayed by everything from environmental discoveries to major system failures. While contractors can't control every surprise, they can control how quickly they communicate the issue, document approvals, and work with partners to adjust timelines and budgets.

### Finish strong. That's what clients remember.

Perhaps the most memorable advice from the conference was a simple but powerful reminder: *"We're always the favorite until we're not—so finish strong."* Even projects with bumps along the way can leave clients satisfied if contractors remain responsive, accountable, and focused on delivering the final result. In the end, clients often remember how a project concludes more than the obstacles encountered along the way.



For contractors and retailers alike, the takeaway is clear. Managing expectations isn't just about avoiding problems—it's about building trust, communicating honestly, and ensuring that every project ends on a high note.

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# President's Message

Justin Elder, President, Elder-Jones, Inc.



**It always amazes me how quickly time flies** after the annual meeting each year, and now suddenly we find ourselves amid summer. It's certainly one of the busier times of the year. Not just busy bidding and managing projects but also trying to balance that work with the glorious days of summer. These beautiful days bring kids' summer vacations, and we try to fit in as much with them as we can before time once again flies by and they're all grown up. Or time flies by and you

let relationships with friends or family weaken, telling yourself you'll "do something with them soon".

Many of us in this industry get lost in the whirlwind of fast-paced retail construction, deadline after deadline, rollout after rollout, and you think that one day you'll get all caught up... maybe when that 20-store remodel rollout is over. You think to yourself that you'll finally take that day off to take your kid to the lake, or to the park, or to do whatever it is they'd like to do with you. Or to spend more time with friends, or your significant other... whatever it is for you. But here I am 25 years later, and I can tell you that it turns out you never catch up – it's always something!

The good thing is, somewhere late in these 25 years, I learned that there can be a fix. **You just have to stop and be mindful of your priorities.** Be purposeful with your life outside of work this summer. Be present. The work we do is important and it is work we should be proud of. Our customers and their store teams rely on us to do what we say we'll do

and to finish projects when we say we will for the price we've agreed to. This all sounds relatively simple but we all know it's not. We must deliver these things without compromise, and we have to do them exceptionally well.

Our customers hire us precisely because our job isn't easy. If it were, they would do it themselves. However, we're all people who need balance; we need to be able to do the things we enjoy in life, and that usually means at least a handful of things outside of our profession. **We need to spend meaningful time with the people we care about most.** It's not just important, it's critical. A person who disciplines themselves to maintain this balance will be happier and more successful, both at work and at home.

One great way to find a balance of work and fun is to attend one of RCA's upcoming regional networking meetings. We've already had a few very successful and well-attended meetups this year, and the schedule will continue with monthly events through the summer and into fall. We'll be in Chicago in July, Orlando in August, Minneapolis in September, and back to Atlanta in October! Check out the RCA website for more details and watch for registration information in your inbox. These meetings are a great way to build relationships and learn from your peers. We hope to see you at an event this summer!

Stay Cool,

One great way to find a balance of work and fun is to attend one of RCA's upcoming regional networking meetings.

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COMPANY	CONTACT	PHONE	STATE	EMAIL	MEMBER SINCE
Acme Enterprises, Inc.	Jeff Lomber	810-499-7127	MI	jlomber@acme-enterprises.com	2009
Asa Carlton, Inc.	Bradley Martin	770-945-2195	GA	bmartin@asacarlton.com	2025
Atlas Building Group	Brian Boettler	636-368-5234	MO	bboettler@abgbuilds.com	2017
Bayley Construction, LP	Steve Grasso	206-621-8884	WA	steveg@bayley.net	2024
Bogart Construction, Inc.	Brad Bogart	949-453-1400	CA	brad@bogartconstruction.com	2008
Buildrite Construction Corp.	Bryan Alexander	770-971-0787	GA	bryan@buildriteconstruction.com	2013
CE Gleeson Constructors	Charles Gleeson III	248-647-5500	MI	cegleeson3@gleesonconstructors.com	2024
Comanche Construction, LLC	Andrew McClung	405-740-6950	OK	andrew.mcclung@comanchellc.com	2024
Commercial Contractors, Inc.	Kenneth Sharkey	616-842-4540	MI	ken.t.sharkey@teamcci.net	1990
Commonwealth Building, Inc.	Chris Fontaine	617-770-0050	MA	cfontaine@combuild.com	1992
Connor Construction, LLC	Benjamin Connor	856-599-1765	NJ	bconnor@connorconstructionllc.com	2021
Construction One, Inc.	Bill Moberger	614-235-0057	OH	wmoberger@constructionone.com	2015
Construx Co. LLC	Laurence Mason	860-709-9280	CT	lmason@construxco.com	2025
D&G Construction Services, Inc.	Greg McReynolds	940-387-6700	TX	greg@dgcscinc.com	2026
David A. Nice Builders	Brandon Nice	757-566-3032	VA	bnice@davidnicebuilders.com	2011
De Jager Construction, Inc.	Dan De Jager	616-530-0060	MI	dandj@dejagerconstruction.com	1990
Desco Professional Builders, Inc.	Bob Anderson	860-870-7070	CT	banderson@descopro.com	1995
Diamond Contractors	Lori Perry	816-650-9200	MO	loriperry@diamondcontractors.org	2015
Division 9 Commercial Inc.	Cheryl Montour	770-919-9941	GA	cmontour@division9inc.com	2021
DLP Construction Company, Inc.	Dennis Pigg, Jr.	770-887-3573	GA	dpigg@dlpconstruction.com	2008
E.C. Provini, Co., Inc.	Joseph Lembo	732-739-8884	NJ	jlembo@ecprovini.com	1992
Eckinger Construction Company	Phillip Eckinger	330-453-2566	OH	phil@eckinger.com	1994
Elder-Jones, Inc.	Justin Elder	952-345-6069	MN	justin@elderjones.com	1990
Encore Construction, Inc.	Joe McCafferty	410-573-5050	MD	joe@encoreconstruction.net	2018
FCP Services	Tim Hill	630-816-0631	MN	thill@fcpservices.com	2024
FMGI Inc.	Darin Ross	678-903-2200	GA	darin.ross@fmgi-inc.com	2022
Fortney & Weygandt, Inc.	Mitch Lapin	440-716-4000	OH	mlapin@fortneyweygandt.com	2013
Fred Olivieri Construction Company	Dean Olivieri	330-494-1007	OH	dean@fredolivieri.com	1992
Fulcrum Construction, LLC	Willy Rosner	770-612-8005	GA	wrosner@fulcrumconstruction.com	2014
Go Green Construction, Inc.	John Castellano	412-389-2577	PA	john@ggc-pgh.com	2017
Graves Construction	Anthony Graves	949-467-1799	CA	anthony@gravesconstruction.com	2022
Gray West Construction	Eric Berg	714-491-1317	CA	EBerg@GrayWC.com	2005
Groom Construction Co., Inc.	Dwight Groom	781-592-3135	MA	dwgroom@groomco.com	2023
H.J. Martin & Son, Inc.	David Martin	920-494-3461	WI	david@hjmartin.com	2016
Hardesty & Associates	Scott Hardesty	949-723-2230	CA	scott@hardestyassociates.com	2020
Harmon Construction, Inc.	William Harmon	812-346-2048	IN	bill.harmon@harmonconstruction.com	2017
Healy Construction Services, Inc.	James Healy	708-396-0440	IL	jhealy@healyconstructionservices.com	1996
Hirsch Construction Corp.	Adam Hirsch	978-762-8455	MA	ahirsch@hirschcorp.com	2025
Infinity Building Services, Inc.	Adam White	410-255-9281	MD	awhite@infinitybuildinginc.com	2026
International Contractors, Inc.	Bruce Bronge	630-834-8043	IL	bbronge@icibuilds.com	1995
JAG Building Group	Matt Allen	239-540-2700	FL	matta@jagbuilding.com	2019
James Agresta Carpentry Inc.	James Agresta	201-498-1477	NJ	jim.agresta@jacarpentryinc.com	2013
JG Companies, Inc.	Adam Shihadeh	909-993-9393	CA	adam@jg-companies.com	2024
Kerricook Construction, Inc.	Ann Smith	440-647-4200	OH	ann@kerricook.com	2012
KPS Commercial Construction	Kevin Sullivan	317-984-7764	IN	kevin@kpsconstruction.com	2025
Lakeview Construction, Inc.	Marc Delsman	262-857-3336	WI	marc@lvconstruction.com	1998
M. Cary, Inc.	Bill Tucker	631-501-0024	NY	btucker@mccaryinc.com	2014
Management Resource Systems	Travis Jarrett	336-861-1960	NC	tjarrett@mrs1977.com	1992
Marco Contractors, Inc.	Martin Smith	724-741-0300	PA	marty@marcocontractors.com	1994
Market Contractors	Kerry Lobbestael	503-255-0977	OR	keryl@marketcontractors.com	2019
Menemsha Development Group, Inc.	Matt Frank	781-337-9012	MA	mfrank@menemshasolutions.com	2026
National Contractors, Inc.	Michael Dudley	952-881-6123	MN	mdudley@ncigc.com	2018
OLIO Development Group	Matt Salts	614-286-2938	OH	msalts@oliodevgrp.com	2026
Open Ventures Group, LLC	Cory McFarlane	561-855-6649	FL	cory@openventuresgroup.com	2026
Pinnacle Commercial Development, Inc.	Dennis Rome	732-528-0080	NJ	dennis@pinnaclecommercial.us	2012
PMA Construction LLC	Kamesha Washington	678-878-4141	GA	kwash@pmacllc.com	2025
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R.E. Crawford Construction LLC	Jeffrey T. Smith	941-907-0010	FL	jeffs@recrawford.com	2011
RAYWEST DESIGNBUILD	Greg West	910-824-0503	NC	greg.west@raywestdesignbuild.com	2021
Rectenwald Brothers Construction, Inc.	Art Rectenwald	724-772-8282	PA	art@rectenwald.com	1996
Retail Construction Services, Inc.	Stephen Bachman	651-704-9000	MN	sbachman@retailconstruction.com	1998
Retail Contractors of Puerto Rico	Sean Pfent	586-725-4400	MI	spfent@rcofusa.com	1996
Right Choice Development & Construction	Danielle Wright	832-567-9648	TX	danielle@rightchoicedev.com	2023
Royal Mechanical Services	Cindy Heigl	800-728-1155	KS	cheigl@royalsolves.com	2024

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Russco, Inc.	Matthew Pichette	508-674-5280	MA	mattp@russcoinc.com	1995
S.M. Wilson & Co.	Chris Hawn	314-645-9595	MO	chris.hawn@smwilson.com	2024
Sachse Construction and Development Corp.	Jeff Katkowsky	248-647-4200	MI	jkatkowsky@sachseconstruction.com	2009
Scheiner Commercial Group, Inc.	Joe Scheiner	719-487-1600	CO	joe@scheinercg.com	2012
Schimenti Construction Company	Matthew Schimenti	914-244-9100	NY	mschimenti@schimenti.com	1994
Shames Construction Co., Ltd.	Carolyn Shames	925-606-3000	CA	cshames@shames.com	1994
Singleton Construction, LLC	Denise Doczy-Delong	740-756-7331	OH	denisedelong@singletonconstruction.net	2012
Solex Contracting	Gerald Allen	951-308-1706	CA	jerry@solexcontracting.com	2015
Sullivan Construction Company	Amanda Sullivan	954-484-3200	FL	amanda@buildwithsullivan.com	2012
Taylor Brothers Construction Company, Inc.	Jeff Chandler	812-379-9547	IN	Jeff.Chandler@TBCCI.com	2014
TDS Construction, Inc.	Robert Baker	941-795-6100	FL	inbox@tdsconstruction.com	1994
Thomas-Grace Construction, Inc.	Don Harvieux	651-342-1298	MN	don.harvieux@thomas-grace.com	2012
Tilton Pacific Construction	Robert Schroeder	916-630-7200	CA	rschroeder@tiltonpacific.com	2023
Tom Rectenwald Construction, Inc.	Aaron Rectenwald	724-452-8801	PA	arectenwald@trcgc.net	2010
Trainer Commercial Construction	John Holmberg	415-259-0200	CA	john.holmberg@trainorconstruction.com	2012
Tri-North Builders, Inc.	David Brown	608-204-7227	WI	dbrown@tri-north.com	2015
Triad Retail Construction	Jay Dorsey	281-485-4700	TX	j.dorsey@triadrc.com	2013
Vision General Contractors of GA, LLC	Tony Durand	770-769-4674	SC	tonyd@viscongc.com	2021
Warwick Construction, Inc.	Walt Watzinger	832-448-7000	TX	walt@warwickconstruction.com	2008
Wayne Contracting LLC	Brad Burns	314-497-9485	MO	brad@waynecontracting.com	2026
Weekes Construction, Inc.	Chandler Weekes	864-233-0061	SC	cweekes@weekesconstruction.com	1990
Westwood Contractors, Inc.	Robert Benda	817-877-3800	TX	bbenda@westwoodcontractors.com	1990
William A. Randolph, Inc.	Tony Riccardi	847-856-0123	IL	tony.riccardi@warandolph.com	2011
Winkel Construction, Inc.	Rick Winkel	352-860-0500	FL	rickw@winkel-construction.com	1990
Wolverine Building Group	Michael Houseman	616-949-3360	MI	mhouseman@wolvgroup.com	2012
Woods Construction, Inc.	John Bodary	586-939-9991	MI	jbodary@woodsconstruction.com	1996

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## From Leadership to Labor: Takeaways from the 2026 RCA Annual Conference



Retail construction leaders from across the country gathered March 6–8 at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland, for the RCA Annual Conference—three days of conversations on leadership, workforce challenges, economic trends, and the policies shaping the construction industry.

The conference combined networking and candid discussions about the forces affecting retail construction today—from labor shortages and rising costs to shifting regulations and economic uncertainty.

Opening keynote speaker **Henna Pryor, PCC, author, workplace performance expert and CEO of Priority Group**, focused on leadership under pressure. Her message centered on the difference between “leading from clarity” and “leading from clench”—a mindset contractors know well in an industry

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driven by tight schedules, complex logistics, and demanding clients.

**Workforce retention and commitment expert Joe Mull** addressed one of the construction industry's most persistent challenges: attracting and keeping skilled employees. Mull argued that what has often been labeled the "Great Resignation" is actually a "Great Upgrade," where workers are moving to jobs that offer better conditions and quality of life.

**Economist Dr. Anirban Basu, Chairman & CEO of Sage Policy Group, Inc.**, delivered the conference's economic update, weaving insights together with references to Sylvester Stallone movies for a memorable presentation.

Another session turned the spotlight on government policy. **Alex Etchen, Vice President of Government Relations, Associated General Contractors (AGC) of America**, walked attendees through the legislative and regulatory issues affecting construction.

The conference included ample opportunities for networking and making connections, including a welcome reception, an offsite dinner reception at Bobby McKeys, a dueling piano bar, and a casual morning of golf at Top Golf.



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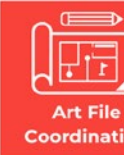
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