

## Contracts: More Than Just A Handshake



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Despite what some lawyers may say, an enforceable contract does not have to be filled with a bunch of legal jargon. However, there are some contract issues that will require a good small-business construction lawyer. The following tips can help you draft or review enforceable contracts.

1. **Keep it simple:** Too much of the time, the provisions included in architectural and construction contracts are difficult to read or worse, to understand. The goal of any contract your church signs is that it should be understood by anyone who reads it. The objective of any good contract is to be clear, concise, and complete.

Remember. If you don't understand some part of the contract, get it revised into clearly understandable language. And, don't worry about the length of a contract. It is better to understand than it is to worry about brevity.

2. **Get it in writing:** Thinking you are going to get something that is not in a contract will put you in a position of not getting it. Though oral agreements are binding and legal in some situations, they can be difficult to enforce in court or arbitration hearings.
3. **Include key terms:** Identify the parties and addresses; carefully describe the services to be performed; clearly spell out the obligations of the service provider and the church, including timeline, payment and payment terms; termination provisions; specify how disputes will be handled; and decide beforehand which state's laws will prevail.
4. **Make sure it is legal:** A contract regarding an illegal subject matter will not be enforced. Each of the parties has to have the authority to negotiate and sign the contract. Finally, don't be afraid to ask a construction lawyer to review the contract before it is signed, but make sure you meet with the lawyer to cover the basics of what you want in the contract, as well as any ambiguous language you are having difficulty in understanding.

