



CPD ACADEMY

BEST PRACTICE FOR BUILDERS

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sick of playing the blame game?



When you put what you know on paper, it makes it easier to communicate with clients and others who may have unrealistic expectations of what you and your trade should deliver, writes Jerry Tyrrell.

CPD Academy is a new series of 'lessons in print' for Building Industry Connection readers to help you improve your trade skills and business know-how so that you can keep your edge in today's competitive market. Well-known Sydney consultant Jerry Tyrrell, a co-founder of Tyrrells Property Inspections, will share his insights into the basic principles of building practice – what to do, what not to do and where to go to find out more. Jerry has 30 years' experience as a labourer, tradesman, contractor, architect, mediator, building consultant and author, and has been involved in the inspection and building of more than 55,000 properties (including 30,000 timber pest inspections).

Unreasonable criticism. Media exposes. Waiting to get information. Doing your best and not getting paid. Looking silly for fixing other people's mistakes. Blame. Bureaucrats who've never worked a day on site running your industry. Insurance that never made sense costing five times more than you expected.

These are just some of the problems faced every day by Australian building practitioners – problems that the Government says will be fixed by improved education. But 'improved education' is not a matter of force-feeding practitioners with expensive packages of inaccessible information.

Continuing education within the industry is most effective when there is a strong commitment to learn from the builders' side and the delivery of well-paced 'bite-sized' chunks of accessible, relevant information from the side of the educators. By 'relevant', we mean information that will help prevent practitioners from making expensive or otherwise damaging mistakes.

Tony Ransley, my co-writer on the *Property Maintenance Handbook* and a licensed builder with many years of practical experience in building and pest control, puts it like this: "Education's got to be the only answer. Nothing else has worked over the past 30 years. Education keeps solutions in the hands of knowledgeable contractors and building professionals."

This is exactly what we plan to do through CPD Academy. In the first article, we will look at the typical steps you go through in completing a building.

The building process

How often do you hear people complaining that building or renovating is a confusing process? Yes, you builders and contractors know what you're doing, but the trouble is that your clients, the designers and other professionals involved with the job don't know what you know. Instead of finding out, their first response will be to throw mud at you if something happens that they should have known about (but didn't).

The clearer you are in communicating the overall building process to your clients, the clearer they will be about what to expect.

I have dealt with thousands of contractors over the past 30 years, and have been involved in the building, design or inspection of thousands of buildings. Using that experience, I've prepared the flowchart shown here, which details the process involved in designing and constructing a typical building.

From the flowchart, you can see that some parts of the process will require careful management,

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particularly the following areas:

- Who is doing what?
- Are there problems with the documents that need to be solved?
- Will you be blamed for latent defects in a building you are renovating – rising damp, rotting fascias or timber stairs?
- Who is recording the condition of neighbours' and council properties so that no one gets you to fix up damage that was already there?
- Have you and the client agreed on who is responsible for quality assurance and how important it is to get the subbies to fix up or finish everything while you are still on site?

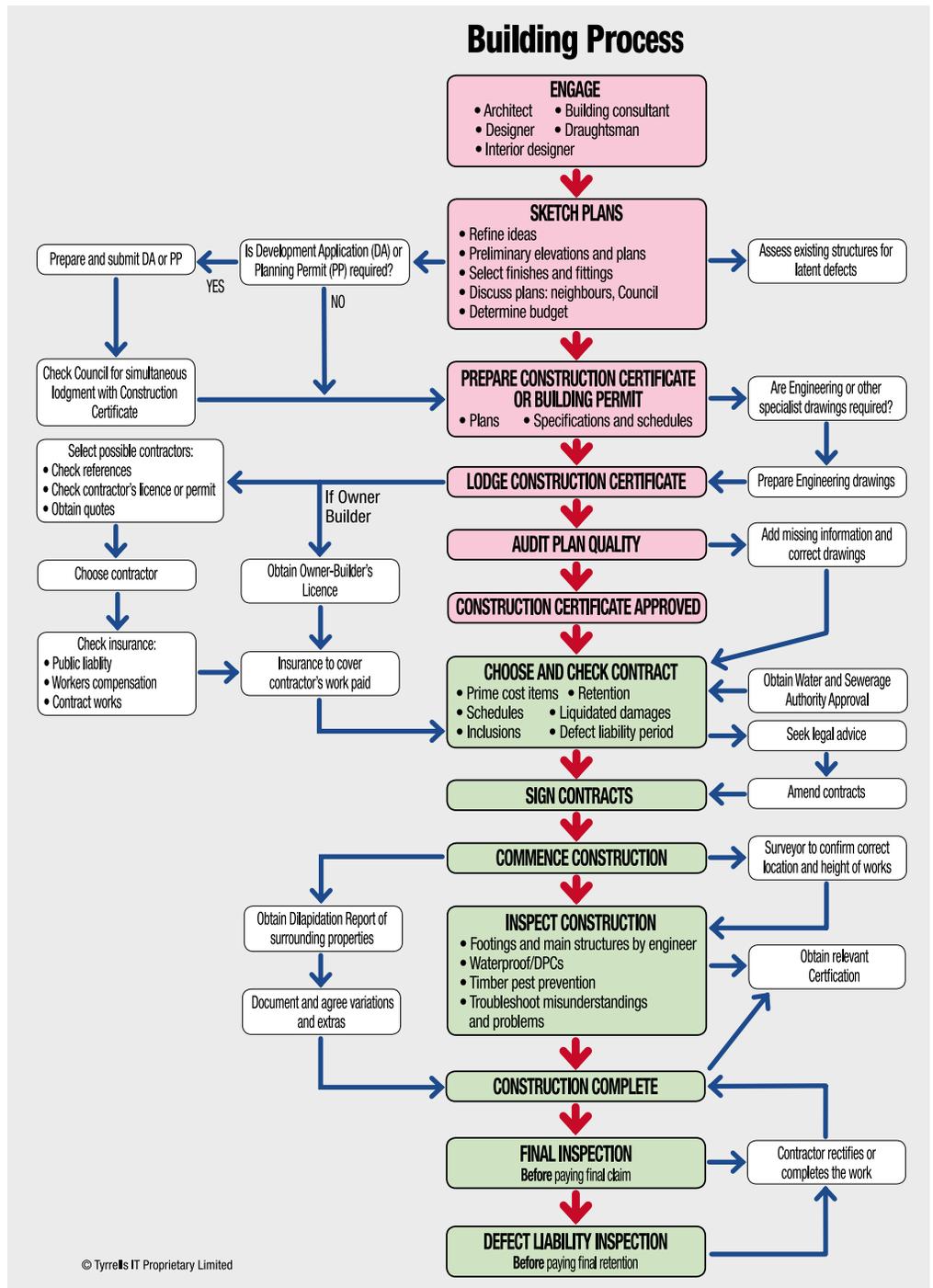
In the past, it seems that the contractor has usually been the fall guy if anything went wrong.

Perhaps it's time for a change. Why not throw responsibility back on the client to know what will happen? Give him or her a copy of this flowchart (which you can also download from www.tyrrells.com/reports/building.php).

Finally, I'd like to get ideas and case studies from readers – whether you are a contractor, designer, architect or engineer – about how to prevent the same sorts of problems happening. We'd also welcome constructive tips that everyone can use to place the building industry back where it should be – respected and appreciated! Please email me at jttyrrell@tyrrells.com ■

NEXT ISSUE:

'Mr and Mrs Perfect?' or 'How to avoid the client from hell!'



Teamwork works!

More than any other profession, building requires teamwork from the start. Not just within your organisation, but between you, the client, the designer, engineers and council officers. So it makes sense that if a minor misunderstanding or error occurs, everyone in the team should work together to solve the problem. Want to know more? See 'Who's Who in the Building Zoo' at www.tyrrells.com/reports/building.php