



The One Trial Graphic You Can't Go Without in a Construction Case

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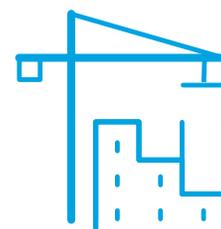
The Importance of Construction Timelines

Construction schedules are the most critical piece of any construction project. They show in visual form the many steps and procedures fundamental to project completion. So, it follows that a trial graphic created to represent such a crucial project document is equally crucial to the presentation of your case.

The clearer the graphic representing the pertinent components of the construction schedule, the clearer the jurors will be on the series of events—and the point where things went wrong.

Construction schedules (like projects) come in all shapes and sizes: whether it's for a single-family home, a development of condominiums, a commercial property, or a large, multi-use manufacturing or chemical plant. Nevertheless, they all have a unified set of characteristics that need to be represented, no matter which side of the case you're on.

The overall intention of the schedule is to display the allocation of equipment, material, and labor resources with respective project work tasks over a designated period of time. **In essence, it shows who and what go where and when.** But they can also be packed with additional information, including suppliers, important dates, meeting times, and the various teams assigned to each step. As a result, the schedule can look a bit busy.



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Take a look at this hypothetical construction schedule:

ABC RESIDENTIAL TOWER PROJECT SCHEDULE													
Task	Est. Days	Week 01			Week 02			Week 03			Week 04		
1 DESIGN	3												
2 PERMITTING	1												
3 SITE PREPARATION	5												
4 EQUIPMENT ARRIVAL	1												
5 MATERIAL PREP	3												
6 TEMP ELECTRIC SERVICE	1												
7 WATER AND SEWER TAP	2												
8 SOIL TREATMENT	1												
9 FOOTINGS	3												
10 FOUNDATIONS	5												
11 SECURITY DOOR INSTALLATION	6												
12 MASONRY	6												
13 WALLS / FINISHING	5												
14 WINDOWS / DOORS	3												
15 ELECTRICAL	5												
16 HVAC	5												
17 PLUMBING	7												
18 CLEAN UP	5												

As the above graphic (which is relatively simple as such schedules go) demonstrates, there are a lot of parts in play. Each task has its own timeslot, but each new task is often dependent on the completion of the previous and often also on the acquisition of certain permissions. Moreover, tasks frequently coincide or overlap.

Is the schedule a graphic? Yes. Does it tell a simple story? Absolutely not. So, the natural question is: *With such a messy, interlocking chain of events, how do I present my client's story in a way the jury will understand?*

The most efficient and effective way to communicate the essence of your construction schedule is through a **construction timeline graphic**. The goal of this graphic is to provide context for your arguments, without needlessly overwhelming the jury with irrelevant schedule information (of which there is usually a fair share).

Much like a construction schedule distills the key tasks and deadlines of the construction project, your construction timeline will distill the construction schedule. It will direct the jury down a logical, chronological path leading to the issue or incident in question.

Even so, construction timelines usually still contain a substantial amount of data. We can partner with your legal team to sort through the construction schedule, pick out the key information, and display it in a simple manner. Ultimately, the goal is to show the jury your client's role in the project, and why your client was not responsible for any failures or missed deadlines.

Telling a Story with Your Construction Timeline

Before diving right in to the creation of your timeline, consider the following:

What Are You Trying to Show?

The jury needs to see a series of logical events leading them step by step to your conclusion. When did the problems occur? In what order? Where were the missed opportunities or mistakes? Where is the cause and effect?

What's Next?

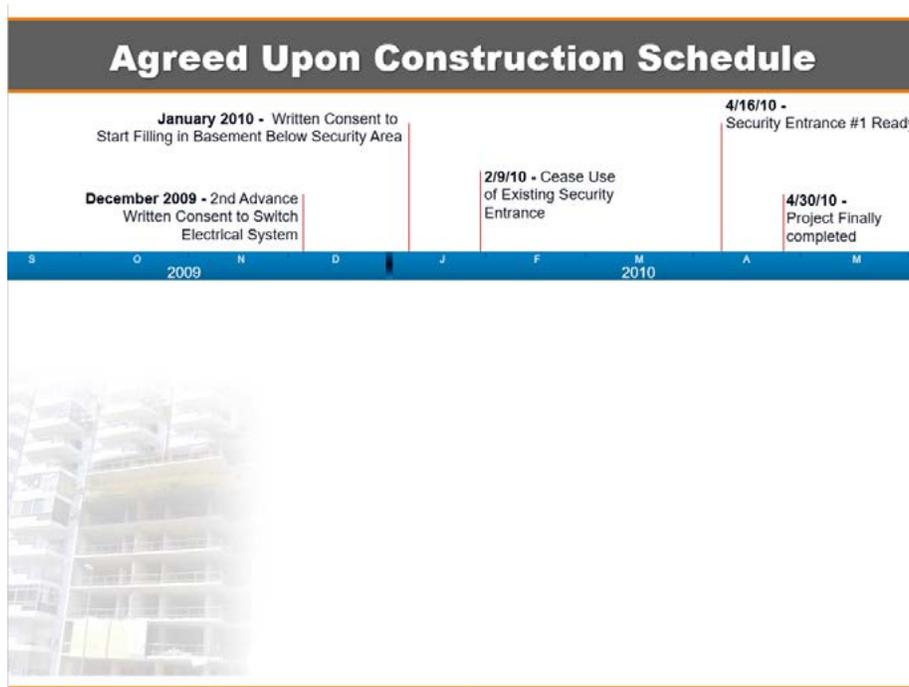
Once you have translated and simplified the data contained in the construction schedule, you can identify a clearer sequence of events. You can then begin plotting out that chain of events in the form of a story jurors will understand.

Building Your Construction Timeline Trial Graphic

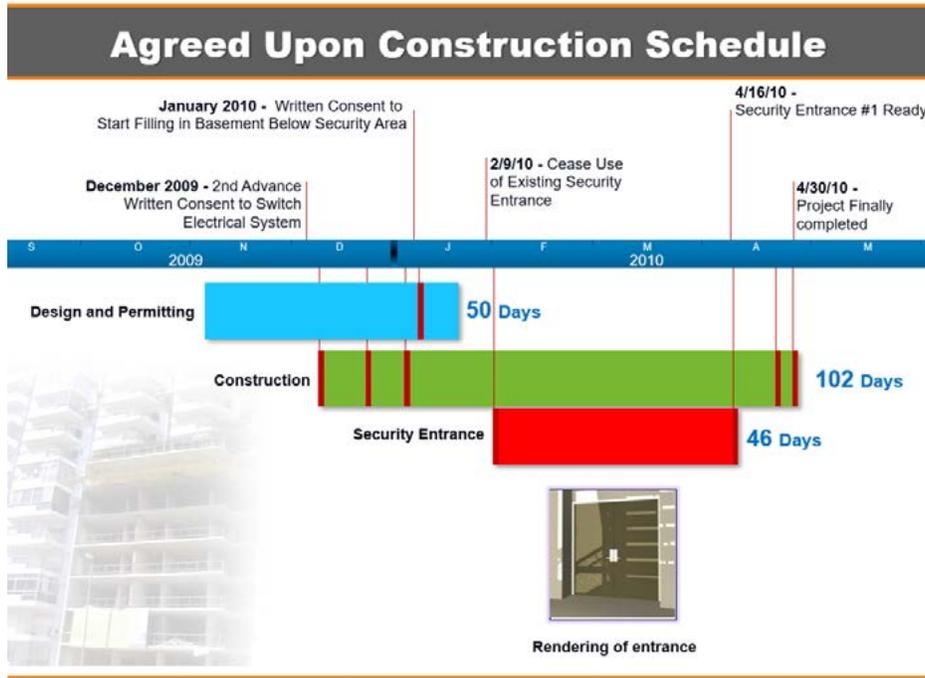
One of the best ways to present your timeline is through a series of slides. This technique allows you to build up the jury's understanding from a simpler foundation, introducing additional detail without overwhelming them.

To demonstrate, we'll walk you through the creation of a hypothetical construction timeline. In this case, we want to emphasize to our jury the causes for—and consequences of—a lengthy delay in the construction of a security elevator:

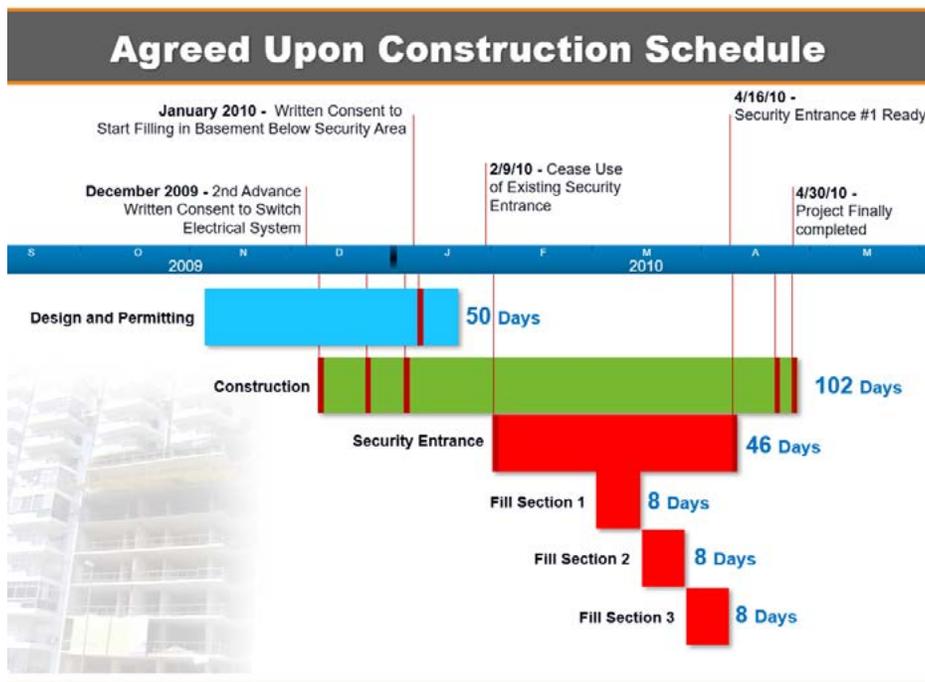
1) We start simple, using a straightforward timeline to establish relevant agreed-upon completion dates.



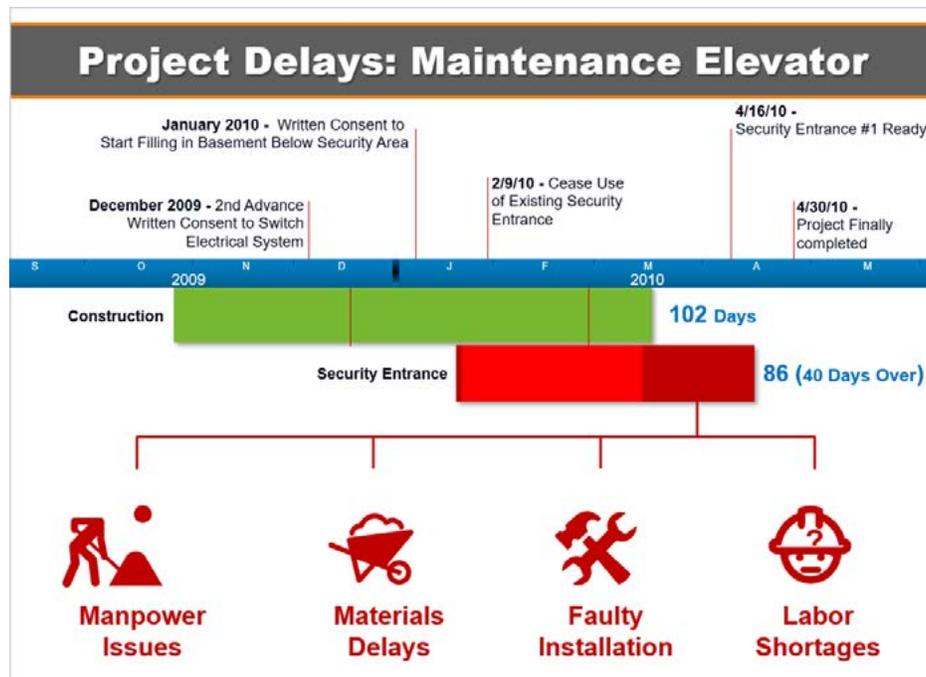
2) Our next slide introduces colored bars along the timeline to denote the respective completion times of major design and construction tasks, including that of the security entrance in question (within the larger construction period).



3) We then break down the construction of the security entrance into key steps, as well as the days allotted for each step.



4) Finally, we reveal the *actual* security entrance completion time. This slide points out the length of the delay, its effects on the construction project as a whole, and the specific causes of the delay. Icons come in handy here to serve as quick references for the jury as to the types of problems that occurred.



Maximizing Your Construction Timeline's Potential

- Include photos of buildings, materials, products, or personnel in question
- Use different colors to distinguish different tasks, types of work, and/or responsible parties for maximum clarity
- Use colored bars, dots, diamonds, bolding, font hierarchy, and/or stars to denote key milestones and goals
- Consider including functionality that connects your timeline to other graphical elements

This last point adds a nice touch and helps to keep your graphics clean. You can create clickable elements that link or animate to more detailed info, such as a checklist or document callout (e.g., specific contract language). You can also zoom in to particular phases in the construction process, breaking them down in more detail. Such functionality will allow you to quickly highlight key points while maintaining the context of the timeline.

Conclusion

Construction timelines are outstanding visual aids that mold messy construction schedules into persuasive stories, custom-built for your claims. In fact, the step-by-step approach we provide above can be adapted to a variety of issues and evidence, depending on what is key to the jury's understanding of your client's case.

As with any graphic, we recommend practicing several communication rules of thumb. Remember, the goal is not to just list events on a slide—you should stay focused on the story you want to tell and the clear, logical steps that will bring the jury along with you.

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