

## Flying Solo: How it Helps My Construction Clients



Two and a half years ago, on July 1, 2010, I opened [my solo practice](#). At the time, I really had no insight into how big this change would be from a positive, customer service, perspective.

When I made the decision to go solo with my construction law practice, I knew I wanted to have flexibility to serve my client base of contractors and subcontractors in Virginia. I started some flat rate billing and had the ability to take cases that were below the dollar value of those that my old firm was willing to take. I also knew that I would be a master of my own destiny for better or worse (and it has been [much more of the former than the latter](#)).

What I did not realize is the impact that owning my own business would have on my perspective. I have always believed

that, in most cases where construction disputes occur, [mediation](#) is a great option. However mediation only occurs with conflict. For any business, whether construction or otherwise, conflict creates expenses that were not likely to have been anticipated or built in to the budget. Litigation is not something that most businesses can, or should, build into their operating budgets.

Avoidance of litigation and conflict, not by bending after the fact with the inevitable loss of money (whether through attorney fees or just the lost business opportunity because of time spent in litigation), but through good business practices, [strong contract drafting](#), and early advice from a solid advisory team (including as you might guess an [experienced construction lawyer](#)) may just be the "stitch in time" that your construction business needs.

While I've always pushed this, what I believe to be a practical (occasionally referred to as a M\*A\*S\*H unit), approach to problem solving and [dispute resolution](#), I had never

owned a business. Being a business owner myself has further pushed me toward the desire to emphasize my counselor role even further. I see the "bottom line" better. I understand the "If I don't get paid, my business is in trouble" aspect of small business ownership in a way I did not while being a principal at my prior firm.

All of this is a fairly long winded way of getting back to the title of this post. I firmly believe that my insight as a business owner gives me a different view of things from some other attorneys who do not fly without a net like many of their clients do. Being able to empathize with the angst, anger, and even desire to pursue "the principal" of things helps me with the balancing act of dealing with a bad situation caused by others while also looking to the future and what all construction companies need to do: make money and provide quality service to their clients. It took my jump into solo construction practice to truly understand this balance.

What are your thoughts? I'd love to hear them.

Image via [Wikipedia](#).

*Please check out my [Construction Law Musings Blog](#) for more on Virginia construction law and other topics.*