

HOW SOFTWARE UNCOVERES THE BLIND SPOTS THAT SABOTAGE CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT



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ARE YOU PREPARED TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE PROJECTS AND RUN A TIGHT, EFFICIENT CREW?

What will it take for your workers to be better at their jobs? Today's answer looks much different than the answer from just a few years earlier.

Not long ago, success in construction was all about brute strength, working harder, and putting in longer hours. But now, the industry is shifting.

At least that's what Mark Dyke says. He's the assistant professor of construction technology and management at Ferris State University and owner at Construction Technology Consultants.

Escalating material and labor costs, talent scarcity, increased competition, and dwindling margins make it difficult—if not impossible—to continue the lessons and best practices of the past. "What matters most today — and tomorrow — is finding ways to be more efficient, being smarter about how work is done, and keeping employees happy," he explains. This change creates an environment that cultivates





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winners—and losers. Companies that have the right tools, processes, and mindsets in place to perform in the face of rising costs, never-ending labor challenges, and supply chain disruptions will be the ones that ride the wave of momentum, particularly around government-funded projects where many civil contractors have more work than they can schedule for.

As a licensed mental health professional, Dyke also says that skills surrounding technology, communication, collaboration, and decision-making are now more important than the size of a team or the strength of its workers. “I’ve been teaching technology and construction throughout my whole career, and I’m finding that success in this field comes down to people being able to adapt to change and learn how to communicate and work with others.”

While technology used to be a differentiator, it’s now an expectation. “In the near future, if your team doesn’t use technology, such as construction management software, then you won’t get the job — plain and simple,” says Dyke. “You won’t be working in the industry 10 or 15 years from now if you don’t adapt.”

Think of construction management software as another tool in your toolbox, explains Ronnie Kurlander, CIO and construction and real estate practice lead for Hartman Executive Advisors, an independent technology leadership and advisory firm. “Whether you’re dealing with schedules, quality and inspection checklists, work-in-progress (WIP) reporting, or forecasts, you now have tools you can carry with you that—when paired with the right technology—offer a clear viewpoint into business and projects at any time. The data your devices connect you to is central to understanding performance and guiding decisions.”

Software's Role in Construction and the Digital Transformation

With construction's many moving parts and unexpected challenges, construction management software can reduce paperwork, create workforce efficiencies, decrease costs, and keep track of people, equipment, and resources to help you be better at what you do — and how you do it.

Tracking your operations also results in data. When data is easily retrievable, you can not only use it to identify ways to improve, but also present it on the fly to clients when job site questions arise. Here's what else software can do for construction:

- Plan, schedule, and deploy crews and equipment all from one place
- Get the right people on the right jobs at the right time
- Share real-time data between the field and the office
- Track progress and measure profitability at every step of a project
- Help you understand how well your business is running
- Reduce payroll, invoicing, and other traditionally manual tasks
- Simplify documentation and compliance processes

"With construction management software, everything can be housed in one spot, which makes jobs run much more efficiently," explains Dyke. "It's easier to keep schedules on track. Everyone knows where the project stands, and it keeps everyone accountable."

Construction management software also helps contractors extend benefits to owners, says Kurlander. Instead of working in a vacuum and only updating clients during meetings or job site walk-throughs, the right tool can help break down barriers and keep owners satisfied and informed. Contractors can generate detailed reports that drill down into critical information to keep stakeholders updated on everything from schedules to finances.





Workflows that Benefit from Construction Management Software

While every phase and workflow involved in a project is important, some longstanding processes are begging for efficiency improvements.

For example, preconstruction—from estimating and prequalification to quoting and pricing—is extremely difficult to manage without the right tools and information. Although this preparation phase is vital to the success of a project, most construction companies still have room for improvement.

“Many preconstruction departments do great at pumping out estimates, but at what cost?” asks Kurlander. “Every construction company should be able to answer that question to streamline their precon work. How do you really know how competitive you are if you aren’t looking at the data you generate from running your business? Without that information, how can you make decisions to create more efficiency and a competitive advantage?”

Safety is another workflow that often experiences major improvements after implementing construction management software. It can be used to manage and complete site audit reports, environmental inspections, and risk assessments, simplifying the compliance process and helping you identify and avoid potential hazards. This information can be logged against workers, equipment, projects, and clients, with time stamping to verify when and where incidents occur.

And let's not forget the financial side of projects. Historically, construction companies have struggled to rein in accurate costs, present them to owners, receive timely approval, and manage all the meetings, emails, paperwork, and dual data entry required to move financial information from project management through accounting and to the owner.

Construction management software can streamline accounting and financial work, especially when ERP and accounting software is easily integrated with operational software. Cloud-based software ensures that everyone has access to the performance numbers they need. Once the numbers are approved from the field, information can flow easily into accounting and finance software with improved accuracy and forecasting.

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The Choice Is Yours — But How Do You Decide?

There are many tools to pick from, so how can you find the right fit? It starts with analyzing your existing solutions. Look at the tools you already have to see what capabilities they offer that you may not be utilizing. From there, you can pinpoint the best ways to bridge gaps.

As tempting as it might be, “don’t seek out new technology for technology’s sake,” advises Kurlander. “Instead, seek it out for the impact it will make on your business.”

Dyke agrees. When construction companies ask for his technology guidance, he says conversations typically start with a statement like, “We want this.” Before a technology investment is made, however, it’s important to think about what your company needs. What’s the real problem? Start by pinpointing an issue you want to address and why it’s occurring.

For example, why is your team not meeting its time targets? Search for answers that are grounded in fact, not speculation. Once you have an answer, ask “why?” again and again — until you determine the root cause.

Q: Why is your team not meeting its time targets?

A: Because work is being delayed and not completed in a timely manner.

Q: Why is work being delayed?

A: Because the site lacks workers who have the key skill sets necessary for the job.

Q: Why aren’t these key team members on the job site?

A: Because the scheduler or project manager doesn’t have insight into worker qualifications and availability—and didn’t understand what skills were needed for this part of the project.

Q: Why doesn’t the scheduler or project manager have the needed information?

A: Because it wasn’t communicated effectively and isn’t documented anywhere.

Q: Why isn’t this information documented anywhere?

A: Because no process, solution, or tool has been identified to capture and house this information.

If your questioning stops too early, you may choose the wrong solution. The seemingly obvious decision as you start to ask questions about time targets may be to ask workers to put in longer hours or hire more employees. But the root cause isn't being addressed, so the issue will resurface. If you boil it down, you'll find a solution that gets to the heart of the matter to overcome that hurdle.

"It's no different than having a toolbox in front of you filled with new tools," Dyke explains. "All those tools might be great, but you have to find the right tool for the job you're working on. Even though there are a lot of options available, not everything works for every company."

To find your company's right-fit solution, he recommends asking these questions:

1. Does the technology or tool do what you need it to do? Will it solve the problem(s) your company is struggling with?
2. What training is required before your workers can use the technology or tool? What support is available along the way?

In addition, Kurlander says, make sure the technology provider can show you how their solution will work for your business. "They should take time to understand your company. Using some of your data, ask them to walk you through how the tool will work when your team uses it — right down to what the screen will look like."





“Remember, you’re dealing with people. Don’t get so lost in the technology or solution that you forget who’s using it.”

Mark Dyke, Assistant professor of construction technology and management at Ferris State University and owner at Construction Technology Consultants.

Getting Buy-In for New Technology

Not everyone will be on the same page immediately. Some workers will be thrilled to weave new technology into their workdays, while others may hesitate. Based on their roles, ensure everyone understands how the new technology will benefit them and make their lives easier.

“You need to meet people where they are,” explains Kurlander. “Use language they understand. Everyone will need a different type of training based on their comfort level, capabilities, and competencies.” In the end, technology will make them better at their jobs—but only if they know how to use it.

He advises identifying early technology adopters—those who take to new technology quickly and tout what it can do for the company. Once you have those advocates, they can help you sell the idea to the rest of the team and show their peers how it works and what can be accomplished.

“Let your employees know that you won’t just throw them in the deep end and expect them to swim,” Dyke says. “You’ll walk with them along the way. Encourage them to take their time and ask questions as they learn.”



About Assignar

Assignar was founded in 2014 to serve the general contractors and subcontractors who execute work in the field. Today, the company is proud to serve over 600 contractors across the globe on thousands of infrastructure projects.

We focus on driving efficiency throughout operations and creating visibility for a healthier business and better project execution. Assignar helps you execute work with better efficiency, safety, quality, and visibility.

Our processes are personalized for each customer, from a neatly packaged implementation process to unlimited support from dedicated customer success managers who help you set up and run your operations.

We understand your challenges in the office and field because we've been there. We couple in-depth industry expertise with empathy to help you overcome disruptions.

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