

## Optimize Workflows to Reduce Inefficiencies and Improve Business Operations

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Recent events have shined a bright light on construction companies and how they do business. From preconstruction to close-out, a lot of companies are taking a step back to see how they can improve—not just in the extraordinary circumstances of the past year but moving forward into the new normal.

### Efficient and Responsive Workflows Have Become Even More Critically Important

First and foremost, what is a construction workflow?

Workflows are abundant in the construction industry and vary depending on what the company does specifically. But, in a nutshell, workflows are the coordination of tasks between people in an organization. They include the passing of data and information, and the action that is required based on that data. They also usually follow a hierarchy of approvals and privileges based on job description. But the goal is that they are optimized to maximize profits in the organization. Examples could include the accounts payable process, payroll processing, the submittal process, RFIs, and close-out.

As simple as those sound, a lot of companies have found a lot of ways to improve on these processes. When looking closely, there are usually a lot of inefficiencies, redundancies, and opportunities to improve the quality of work. All of these can



lead to completing work in a timelier manner, using fewer resources and resulting in happier customers—and ultimately more profit.

### Where Are the Problems?

While every business is different, the workflow problems are usually very similar. In fact, they almost always fall into one of three areas.

- » **Communication:** As mentioned above, one of the main parts of a construction workflow is the passing of data and information. Without a smooth and efficient means of data

transmission and communication, whether in the field or back office, workflow will not be optimized.

- » **Data management:** If data is not in a centralized, accessible location, silos are created in the business and workflows become redundant. Not only is this inefficient, but it can lead to missing, incomplete, or incorrect information being communicated through the workflow.
- » **Visibility:** When workflows are “enclosed,” it is difficult for employees to keep track of where they are in the process. To ensure that the team is on the same page, they need transparency in the workflow and the progression of events.

Stop for a moment and think about a company’s many workflows. Are there places where there are breakdowns in any of these areas? The good news is that these breakdowns can be fixed.

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## How Can These Workflows Be Fixed?

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To succeed in correcting workflow issues, focus on CASE: collaborate, automate, standardize, and eliminate.

### COLLABORATE

Most employees are good at what they do and are critical thinkers when it comes to solving problems and completing tasks.

The problem a lot of companies face is that whether this is true or not is of no consequence if those employees cannot collaborate with each other to improve processes. Employees must be empowered through collaboration. There are lot of available tools to help employees collaborate across companies and improve workflows.

### AUTOMATE

Administration of workflows is a huge drain on company profit. Reducing data entry, approval pathing, and general clerical work not only make workflows more efficient, but also more accurate. What if staff could do their work in half the time?


What if something that takes two people could be done with just one? There are a wide range of workflow automation tools in the construction industry to accomplish this reduction in manpower.

### STANDARDIZE

Very often, as companies grow and expand, they also become more and more compartmentalized and siloed. Project managers use different software than the back office. Sales people use different software than estimators. And all the data is kept in different places in different forms. The more “common” the platforms are and standardized the process, the less redundancy and potential for error. In addition, the data being kept in a common data platform makes it easier to access and use, which reduces manpower.

### ELIMINATE

This one is a bit all encompassing and really applies to the three previous letters in the acronym. To improve on workflows requires eliminating a lot of things. Eliminate redundancy, excess manpower, human error, inefficiency, silos, and compartmentalization. There is a laundry list of things to eliminate to improve workflows and make a construction company more efficient.

For construction leaders looking to improve in these areas, there are comprehensive technology solutions that can help optimize workflows. System reviews and trusted technology business partners are excellent steps towards achieving business goals. 



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### About the Author

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Tarry Schabel is in Aktion's Maumee, Ohio, office where he leads a national sales team focused on helping construction companies modernize their operations by implementing next-gen software for the construction industry, including Sage Intacct Construction, Sage 300 CRE, Sage 100 Contractor and Sage ISV/Third Party applications. [Aktion Associates](#) is a national ERP software reseller and IT infrastructure provider focused on the Architectural Engineering & Construction, Distribution and Manufacturing industries.

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### About the Article

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