Three Reasons to Consider Connected Construction Management Software

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HOW OPTIMIZED OPERATIONS DRIVE BOTTOM-LINE BENEFITS

Today's contractors are swimming in data, much of which is in separate systems that don't talk to each other, prohibiting contractors from having truly actionable data.

For example, sometimes a contractor's project management software does not connect to the firm's accounting system. Human resources (HR) often operates as its own entity, with time tracking and invoicing completely disconnected from a project's progress. This can frustrate existing employees and cause inefficiencies and miscommunication, which can lead to mistakes and rework, not to mention prohibit contractors from earning more business.

In order to retain current clients and employees and attract the next generation of talent, the industry must be open and interested in incorporating technology into business workflows, which is why connected, cloud-based suites of construction management software are increasingly adopted by contractors.

These connected platforms enable multiple systems to share the same data, which updates in real time. Users across both the construction organization and extended project teams can easily access shared data and workflows to ensure accurate, real-time collaboration. This means data about the project can automatically populate into other workflows. So, when a project manager reports job progress or labor hours, the accounting team uses the information for invoicing and billing, while HR uses that same information to track time accrued by

employees and ensure they are paid on time and the project is adequately staffed.

All this information can be collected and accrued by mobile applications on smartphones or tablets as well as through web-based data portals, streamlining workflows, and empowering contractors and back-office staff with actionable intelligence so they can make the best decisions for their projects, teams and the bottom line.

While the benefits of connected construction management software are numerous, below are some top-line reasons contractors of all sizes are adopting it across their industries.

1. CONSTRUCTION EFFICIENCY REALIZED

At a time when construction margins are razor thin, contractors

can use all the help they can get when it comes to beefing up the bottom line, particularly as material prices remain high and labor is in short supply. This is where connected construction management suites can have the most immediate impact as they condense multiple systems into one, allowing data to be accessed and shared between teams so that everyone is working off the same information in real time. This process can eliminate manual or double entry of data, remove unnecessary paperwork, and automate and streamline workflows.

Connected construction management suites also make it easier to take advantage of new technologies like machine learning, which uses data to spot trends that help better forecast future project performance, identify risks ahead of time, and set and achieve stronger, clearer benchmarks.

Perhaps most importantly, with only one set of data, issues can be caught and remediated quickly, reducing mistakes that lead to costly rework that eats into profits. With full information at one's fingertips, new efficiencies can be found and maximized, including switching materials out for less expensive options or optimizing equipment management to help rein in fuel usage.

2. DEMOCRATIZED DATA ACROSS ALL PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS

When the same data is available across the organization, its benefits extend to various roles and responsibilities from the C-suite all the way down to the junior accountant. For example, with a connected construction management platform, a chief financial officer (CFO) can easily see the health of the entire business in one glance, enabling them to make companywide decisions quickly and easily.

Owners, designers, and engineers can share their plans digitally and quickly respond to change requests or issues with an immediate understanding of how they'll impact construction. Project managers can get quick insights into projects as they happen, enabling them to catch mistakes early in the process before things go off track. Project teams and subcontractors can access project data when and where they need it, keeping up with changes and updates as they happen.

Finally, accounting, HR, and payroll teams can keep bills and employees paid and cash flow fluid, invoicing on time so the project can be completed in accordance with its deadline.

When all stakeholders have real-time insights as a project progresses, projects turn out safer and smarter, with improved profit margins. Employees also have the information they need to do their jobs better, more easily and with greater satisfaction, helping retain employees and satisfy clients.

3. EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

In addition to helping employees do their jobs more easily, technology advancement is also working to attract — and retain — the next generation of talented construction professionals, who tend to be much more tech savvy and are actively looking for companies that utilize technology day to day. This is particularly important as labor remains in short supply, with many contractors trying to recruit new talent to further build their workforces.

The more connected an organization is, the more likely it will attract the next generation of young workers who are accustomed to using mobile devices, tablets, and computers and thus expect their company to implement them within their roles and across their projects.

The expectation starts with the hiring process. With connected construction management workflows, potential candidates can fill out their applications online and be onboarded and trained using digitized processes. Employees can also upload all necessary paperwork and self-service a lot of their own HR needs like choosing benefits, submitting paid-time-off requests, and updating their information, all without reaching out to an HR staffer.

Once on the job, the benefits of connected construction can help keep workers satisfied by providing them with access to the information they need to do their jobs well, giving them insights to make the right decisions at the right time for the best outcomes.

With connected construction software technology deployed, contractors can move from a series of disconnected systems to a unified platform that connects the organization across functions, people, and projects. The results are streamlined operations and workflows, enhanced profits from improved efficiencies and employees who can do their jobs better. Connected organizations also attract new talent who increasingly want to work for tech-forward companies.

About the Author

Rachel Blair Winkler is the vice president and general manager of the construction-specific finance and human capital management enterprise resource planning (ERP) business at Trimble Viewpoint. Trimble's solutions help contractors around the world operate more efficiently, safely, sustainably, and predictably. Winkler has roughly two decades of product development, go-to-market, and management experience working in the transportation, geospatial, and construction industries.

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