Specialized Software to Keep Your Employees Safe

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HOW RISK MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY CAN UNLOCK A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Over the past several years, the pace of digital transformation in construction has accelerated sharply. Indeed, digital transformation in construction is overdue. As McKinsey & Company has pointed out in its research, industrywide annual productivity in construction has increased by only 1% over the past 20 years, while productivity in the total economy has improved by almost 3%. While there are a variety of reasons why construction productivity has lagged other industries, technology adoption is a big one.

Construction technology adoption is accelerating for many reasons. First, an explosion of innovation by new technology companies has brought to market new capabilities built on advances in big data, mobility, and the internet. Even the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the pace of tech adoption for building companies as many firms adopted new systems as a necessity to remotely manage and monitor jobsite safety, workers' health and remote collaboration with internal teams, owners, engineers, and architects.

But while the use of technology continues to expand, many firms still struggle with how to prioritize investments and how to ensure that technology initiatives are successful.

For any construction business, one of the big challenges is to identify which technologies are most relevant for them and what problems need to be addressed. There are many ways to improve safety and prioritizing specific objectives is a critical task on any successful project. Some of the most common goals I see today include:

» Save time for employees in completing jobsite inspections

» Improve compliance to OSHA and owner-defined safety requirements

» Enable remote jobsite monitoring

» Create objective safety performance indicators that executives can easily access

» Improve safety awareness and culture

Once goals are defined and prioritized, there are many resources to help identify potential technologies, vendors to consider and what resources are likely to be required. Many companies seek advice from friends or peers at other companies.

Where to Start

Increasingly, insurance brokers and carriers are helping their clients, too. According to Tom Grandmaison, chief broking officer for Aon's construction business, "Our team is constantly building our understanding of new and innovative technologies that help reduce risk. We share our team's technology experience with our clients to help them improve efficiency, better manage safety, and ultimately minimize losses. Our clients generally appreciate our insight as they navigate an increasingly crowded and complex universe of technology vendors."

Making it Work

Most managers know that adding any type of new technology for safety and risk management requires management support, implementation, or training resources, and a budget to pay for it. But maximizing the ultimate success of any project often depends on how easy it is to set up and use the new technology, measuring the business impact and making deliberate efforts to facilitate change management associated with doing things differently.

If new technology isn't easy to use, it will not get used to its fullest potential — especially in construction where there is at times limited proficiency with tech and remote work environments with power or connectivity constraints. With many types of safety software, for example, "making it easy" means ensuring it works on remote work sites, any mobile device, and with or without an internet connection.

Joe Poliafico, vice president of global risk and safety at First Onsite, a provider of property restoration services in both the United States and Canada, said, "One of our top goals was to find and implement software that could be quickly customized to make it easy to use, capture all of the data we need, so that we could act fast and manage any situation that arose which could negatively impact our business." As the First Onsite experience illustrates, user experience can be significantly improved when software systems can be tailored to closely match the existing business processes that it is designed to automate.

Measure Results

W. Edwards Deming famously said, "In God we trust. All others must bring data." A data-driven mindset is invaluable as a management skill in today's economy — and especially so when it comes to digital transformation. Data helps make the case for new technology initiatives as well as aligning and motivating teams to work toward common objectives.

For Poliafico, "Analytics is an essential capability where we've invested. By creating metrics that are both meaningful indicators of our business performance and easily understood in the field, we've been successful in driving safety behaviors in our people." Selecting the right metrics is critical, but equally important is making the data metrics visible within the organization. At many companies, key performance indicators (KPIs) are published and visible for all to see on signs or screens throughout the office. First Onsite implemented software that replaced spreadsheets with online dashboards so that all of its teams can access data online in real time, allowing the whole team to measure and contribute to meeting those goals.

Focus on People

The most successful technology initiatives put the business goals and people at the center, not technology. David Wald, Aclaimant chief executive officer and co-founder, has advised customers on hundreds of software implementations. "Technology by itself does not improve jobsite safety, people do," Wald said. "The best results happen when organizations take care on technology projects to clearly define their purpose and goals, communicate these objectives across the entire organization and measure results to ensure that the intended impacts are actually achieved."

The pace of digital transformation will continue to accelerate in construction. Owners, contractors, and insurance partners are all actively investing, and there remain incredible opportunities to use technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of how we manage risk and safety in construction. So, whether you're just getting started or working on whatever is next on your transformation journey, focus on making it easy, set clear goals and measure results and remember to communicate and align your teams to understand and actively participate in making technology work to drive the best results possible.

About the Author

Mike Perozek is a technology sales and customer success leader at Aclaimant, a leading provider of insight-driven safety and risk management software. Perozek is passionate about helping companies adopt new technology that delivers material operational and financial improvements. Over the past 20 years, Perozek has worked extensively in the construction, real estate, and staffing industries. Visit aclaimant.com.

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