

## Member Communication Experience

# Capturing The Day: Why Activity Summaries Matter

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No two days are ever alike on a capital project. What's captured, evaluated, and learned from each day can impact its construction progress and performance and, ultimately, its success as a built asset.

That's what makes activity summaries, also known as construction daily reports, one of the most essential types of deliverables to produce during a project. It's well-understood that they should be recorded. Yet it's the why of it all that can be misunderstood. In truth, the reasons for activity summaries are compelling, and understanding them can make a marked difference in the strength of their impact.



### What Goes Into an Activity Summary

Activity summaries are only as useful as the details that they capture. At a minimum, they should address the following:

- » **Jobsite details:** What are project vitals, such as date, location, project number, client, etc.? What were the site conditions? What was the weather? Who was onsite, including crews, managers, stakeholders, inspectors, and visitors?
- » **Activity completion:** Who worked on what task? What tasks were accomplished? What is the status of those tasks?
- » **On-site resources, including labor, materials, and equipment:** What materials and equipment were onsite, where, and in what quantities?
- » **Risk management:** Did any glitches occur requiring fixing or rework? Did delays occur, and if so, what was the cause and was a resolution decided upon? Were contingency plans launched? Did any accidents or injuries occur? What actions were taken in response?
- » **Supporting documentation such as screenshots, photos, and video:** What can help show progress and compliance? Were repairs or inspections visually verified? What mistakes, violations, or hazards require documentation for rework or safety reasons?
- » **Onsite meetings:** Were any on-site meetings held? What was the intended purpose? What was discussed? What decisions and action items resulted?

It's what goes into the summaries that directly supports the reasons they matter.

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## Why They Matter

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Activity summaries provide a consistent, organized framework to record the day's events and developments. Consistency in structure builds on the consistency of the summaries' daily frequency. The same kinds of information are always logged, with nothing inadvertently overlooked or incomplete. And because no two projects are alike, summary templates can be customized to collect the details unique to each project's activities.

That consistency does something else: it ensures continuity in maintaining progress and resolving ongoing issues – from one day to the next, one shift team to the next, one decision maker to the next – by building on the decisions and activities that came before it. Even as back-office staff and site crew members come and go throughout a lengthy capital project, having this continuity ensures that everyone has access to the project's backstory so they're up to date. Activity summaries become reliable reference points for decisions, collaboration, productivity evaluations, and resource allocations going forward, no matter who's reading or completing the summaries.

Activity summaries from past projects can serve as a guide for the kinds of risks encountered during construction, their impact, and the success or inadequacy of any corrective action or backup plans. They enable you to better troubleshoot and manage similar evolving or ongoing issues and risks by providing some decision-making context. And don't forget the value of hard data. You can use summaries in tandem with it. If you're already relying on earned value management (EVM) metrics like schedule performance index (SPI) and cost performance index (CPI) to monitor and flag emerging risk factors, the summaries can provide insights and clues into what has led up to any deviations. Think of activity summaries as filling in the rest of the story and giving context to what the metrics are telling.

Activity summaries can help in trust-building. Clients are heavily invested – financially and otherwise – in the success of their projects. Simply knowing how things are progressing can go a long way for them. Activity summaries provide that awareness. And in the process, they provide transparency into how their project and any risks are being managed and prove

accountability by showing continual compliance with client requirements.


Activity summaries also act as official records or evidence, playing a vital role in helping to head off potential disputes and legal claims. By providing the ongoing documentation – essentially a virtual paper trail – of all tasks, circumstances, events, and decisions, all the necessary details are captured in one long project narrative that can help minimize the effects, and even occurrence, of such conflicts.

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## Digitizing the Activity Summary Process

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Construction software with reporting capabilities streamlines the entire process, making it easier for project teams to log capital project vitals in real time every day.

From customizable template forms to standard inspection checklists to document upload capabilities, activity summaries can be the comprehensive project narrative you need them to be, supporting you as you manage each project. 

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## About the Article

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