

Four Digital Transformation Outcomes Beneficial for Environmental Compliance

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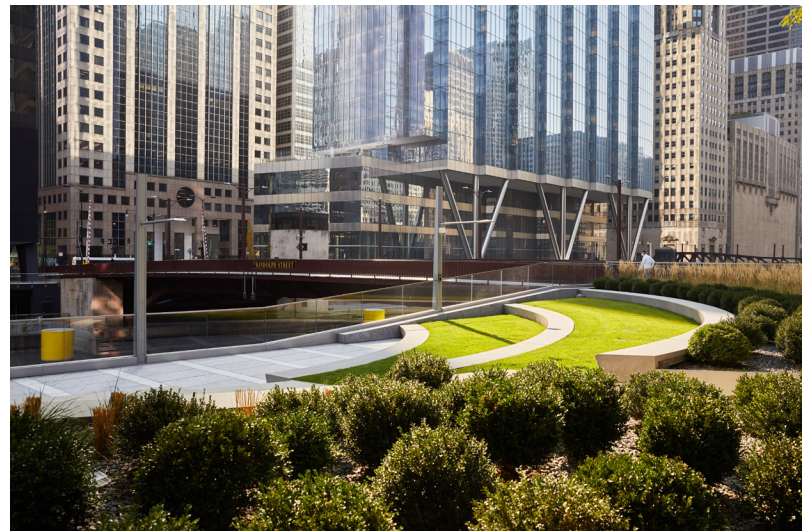
The latest numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau show nonresidential construction work spending up nearly 12% compared to the previous year. As this spending continues to rise, so could the number of projects, broadening the scope of inspections needed and requirements in place to ensure environmental compliance.

Each stage of every construction project has a measurable impact on the environment. Companies need to plan for:

- » Handling hazardous materials and toxic substances.
- » Managing stormwater runoff.
- » Disposing of waste properly.
- » Mitigating air pollution.

Meanwhile, environment, health, and safety (EHS) teams track compliance notifications, plans, inspections, and environmental training related to these activities. To minimize obstacles, avoid project delays, and maintain sites' environmental compliance, the EHS sector of construction must undergo a digital transformation.

More construction companies have recognized the value digital technologies bring, and more than 70% consider digital transformation a priority. By transitioning from unorganized manual reporting methods, EHS teams become better equipped to submit local, state and federal reports accurately and on time. Solutions like compliance management software include digitalized processes and digitized data that provide EHS teams with four critical outcomes beneficial for environmental compliance.



1. SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

Nearly every work task for reporting and compliance documentation generates data. Decentralized and siloed data forces EHS teams and project staff to wander hopelessly through a maze to get the information they need - a process that delays critical paths and slows other project tasks.

Digital solutions centralize information into a single source of truth, giving employees a 360-degree view of all construction sites, teams, and compliance activities. This approach enables EHS teams to complete quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC data) checks to verify that information is complete, up-to-date, and accurate. Data quality issues lead to missed, inaccurate, or incomplete reporting, especially in companies operating sites across multiple states, each with different regulations.

2. COMPANY-WIDE COLLABORATION

Construction companies oversee various projects in different stages with diverse challenges. Efficient collaboration and teamwork, therefore, are imperative as a requirement of the reporting process and as an underlying driver of risk management and compliance.

Digital capabilities ensure easy collaboration by standardizing processes and making them more systematic. For example, having a single source of truth increases collective visibility into all compliance functions, key details about construction sites, performance metrics, and historical trends. When collaboration is lacking (or non-existent), EHS teams struggle to manage processes and complete reporting tasks, and they can miss data and deadlines. Confidence in the process - and in environmental compliance - suffers as a result.

3. ENHANCED PRODUCTIVITY VIA AUTOMATION

Over half of businesses say automated processes facilitate worker productivity. Automation helps EHS teams replace point systems and spreadsheets to efficiently manage information and access data faster, minimizing human error and hours spent resourcing. The reporting process also stays consistent from year to year. EHS teams don't need to start from scratch each reporting cycle.


With the help of technology, EHS teams can reallocate their time to more extensive projects - such as waste and emission reductions - with the potential to positively impact their business and the planet. Employees feel more empowered, which helps reduce employee turnover within compliance operations.

4. AVOIDANCE OF NON-COMPLIANCE FINES

Incomplete or inaccurate filings for the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and other regulations are a significant non-compliance risk - not to mention quite expensive when violations and hefty fines accrue. For example, under RCRA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can fine companies up to \$81,540 per day per violation until they resolve the non-compliance issue.

Non-compliance also puts a company's reputation at risk, creating other negative financial impacts. Companies can lose stakeholder trust and advertising dollars spent to establish their brand. Non-compliance risks are real, and companies should take all appropriate steps to avoid them. The right digital environmental compliance solution maximizes proactive compliance management, helping organizations eliminate costly mistakes.

Digital tools like automation provide an opportunity for EHS operations in the construction industry to proactively mitigate risk and champion and lead environmental compliance. This technology also alleviates some pressure by allowing EHS professionals to deprioritize data collection and tracking, trust in the automated processes, and redirect human capital to address other critical tasks.

As regulatory complexities and sustainability goals evolve, organizations must embrace digital transformation to increase the efficiency, accuracy, and environmental compliance of all construction processes. 



About the Author

Luke Jacobs is Encamp's CEO and helped launch the company in November 2017 as one of its co-founders. Before [Encamp](#), he was an Environmental Scientist at GHD and a Research Associate III - Project Manager for Montana State University, a position funded through the National Science Foundation & U.S. Department of Energy and based in Bloomington, Indiana. As an advocate for the environment, Luke is an active researcher, writer, and speaker on its behalf.

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