

## Five Ways Software Is Impacting Construction

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### HOW TO MODERNIZE YOUR BUSINESS BY DIGITIZING ESSENTIAL PROCESSES

Construction businesses are on the hunt for solutions as consumer demands and newly passed legislation become increasingly more complex. Customer change requests, evolving permit requirements and ongoing supply chain hiccups have created in-flux circumstances that shift on a daily or hourly basis.

Although no single silver bullet solution exists, there are many methods inching the industry toward greater efficiency. Solutions that help save money, increase collection and control of data, assist with talent acquisition, simplify scheduling, and ease the ongoing burden of consistent communication have become necessity. The fundamental core of those solutions is software, which drives websites, portals, applications, and programs.

Software solutions are so powerful, they transform the ability of one person into that of three or four. The construction industry is evolving as a result of years of analysis and emerging trends – many of which are rooted in the use of software as a service (SaaS).

#### 1. THE DEMAND FOR INSTANT DATA

Any time during which contractors are not actively working on a job literally eats away at profits. No one enjoys the waiting game. The demand for instant data has driven software



developers to create self-serve portals connected to secure repositories that contain up-to-date information, architect renderings, permit applications (and approvals), schedules, purchase orders, and just about anything a team member needs.

Should a foreman need to know if a permit was filed or whether trades have been scheduled for a specific jobsite, status can be checked on-the-fly and on-the-go. With the demand for instant data comes the reality that data itself ages quickly. Reports become “old” the minute they hit paper or as they get emailed given that in that short span of time, a permit application may receive approval, a warranty uploaded, or a request for repair placed. The industry is poised for more live data feeds and once that becomes commonplace, it is unlikely any will return to historic practices.

#### 2. COMMUNICATION WITHOUT UNNECESSARY CONVERSATION

In construction, time is money. A 15-minute conversation each with a supplier, foreman, inspector, tradesperson, and permit office adds up to a full hour. What if all the questions asked and answered during those calls could have been managed within a web-based portal in 95% less time?

Software applications streamline access to information. Need to know the status of a site permit? Curious if a new piece of equipment has arrived on-site? Need to shuffle trades to avoid slack time? SaaS options allow teams to communicate without unnecessary conversation. Information can be posted, manipulated, adjusted, updated, downloaded, and accessed from a centralized database from any location.

### 3. TAILORING ISN'T EXCLUSIVE TO FASHION

The most innovative software solutions are designed to be easily tailored to a business' unique needs. Software developers are today using universal application programming interfaces (APIs) and coding structures which serve as the foundation for individual customization. These details are important at different stages of build and communicating or sharing it with one or more individuals takes time.

Homebuilders have consistently requested centralized portals in which critical documentation, scheduling templates, and workflows can be stored, accessed, and updated in real-time. Further, those portals can be designed so that others that require access can see if permits have been filed, documents signed, inspections completed, escrow opened, and more. Software developers can create portals to provide an instant, live view of necessary data so that they can fulfill their responsibility along a project timeline.

### 4. SAAS MEANS BOTH SOFTWARE & SERVICE

Dependency on digital has revealed tremendous possibility, however without proper support, users may never fully grasp the full capability of their investment. The transition toward more consistent use of SaaS also increases the need for, and value of, customer service. Software designers and engineers exist in order to problem solve. For example, should your business depend on older spreadsheets that everyone has grown accustomed to using, the problem may be how to transform that spreadsheet into something that can be easily updated, manipulated, and shared. Many contractors purchase construction management software but fail to invest in

training to learn how to stretch it to solve numerous business challenges. That is where the true value resides.


Understanding how to use your new "power tool" is a first step, but the strength of your software service provider adds even more strength. Bring to them your problems and they will formulate a solution. Do you need several programs to "communicate" with one another? Do you need an individual module that connects teams via the internet that can be easily accessed and updated using a common cell phone and Wi-Fi? If you are struggling with how to eliminate the hassle factor of something in your workflow, a software provider could be your saving grace, especially one that prioritizes training, service and problem solving.

### 5. DATA DUMPS ARE ACHIEVABLE

The more digital our data, processes, operations, and communication becomes, the greater the need to monitor and analyze to determine its value. The data collected must, at some point, transform into relevance. Some businesses depend on statistics such as how many items of one brand were installed and had associated repair calls. Others want to save money by successfully negotiating raw material costs, shifting process flows, housing inventory, or modifying planned labor.

Business owners may wish to track who, how, and when individuals log into portals, what elements are the most used and even if the correct team members are leveraging the right information.

Resulting information from data collection and "dumps" helps inform what is valuable versus expendable, or which portals are useful to vendors and partners versus those that are not. Software empowers teamwork and allows owners to instantaneously review what's working and what isn't.

A report by McKinsey & Company revealed that construction continues to be one of the least digitized industries. Software solutions are no longer something downloaded to individual desktops. The value of today's software is in its limitless potential. Software won't get stuck on a barge off the coast of Southern California and cause a ripple of delays. It doesn't walk off the jobsite or experience inflation. An investment in software can save time, money, and deliver information that, once realized, helps to minimize revenue drain and becomes a powerful tool to accelerate business growth. 



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### About the Author

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### About the Article

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