THE LEADING BUSINESS MAGAZINE FOR CONTRACTORS

SEPTEMBER 2025 | CONSTRUCTIONBUSINESSOWNER.COM

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FROM THE EDITOR

MEGAN BEAM



Editor-in-Chief
Megan Beam

Just like that, summer has come and gone. School is in session, pools will close for the season and for some of our closets, jackets may even be resurfacing from their long hibernation. As for Construction Business Owner (CBO), our team is ramping up for a lineup of fall media events, online webinars and planning for our 2026 editorial calendar. We would love to hear about what you are most interested in reading over the next year!

In September's issue, we've focused our feature series, both in print and online, on a topic that's only gaining momentum across the built environment: technology. Whether you're exploring automation for the first time or trying to measure the return on investment on a high-tech purchase, the pace of change can feel both exciting and overwhelming. This month's features aim to meet you and your leaders wherever you are in your tech journey.

Beginning on page 26, Deltek's John Meibers lays out a practical road map for introducing digital tools without losing your time, budget or sanity. It's an ideal starting point for contractors looking to dip their toe in the waters of artificial intelligence while ensuring teams are still able to adapt smoothly, no matter their level of skill.

On page 30, Robert Salaj from Quickbase takes a look at how ongoing labor shortages, new tech and shifting workflows are creating friction on some jobsites while helping others move faster and more efficiently.

And for those already experimenting with advanced tools, in our final feature on page 32, Jason Hood from Leica Geosystems digs into the value of laser scanning technology, breaking down its costs, benefits and how to determine if the investment is worth it for your business.

Whether you're exploring new tech or refining your current systems, our goal is to provide insights that help you build smarter and lead with confidence.

As always, we are grateful for your continued support.

Thanks for reading,



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VOLUME 22 ISSUE 7

FREE • September 11 • 1 p.m. CT

AI IN FINANCE: TRENDS, TOOLS AND TRANSFORMATION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is everywhere — from your newsfeed to industry conferences. But beyond the buzz, AI is rapidly becoming a foundational tool for modern finance teams.

From automating manual tasks to enhancing decision-making, construction finance and accounts payable (AP) departments are embracing AI to increase efficiency, reduce risk, and unlock new strategic value. Yet, successful AI adoption isn't just about technology — it also requires the right policies, training and change management to fully realize its potential.

Join AvidXchange on September 11th at 1 pm CST for an insightful look into what AI in finance really means — and how your team can get ahead.

In this webinar, you'll learn:

1. How AI is transforming construction finance and AP workflows today
2. Key considerations for AI implementation — from data governance to tool selection
3. Tips to overcome common challenges and prepare your team for change

Whether you're just exploring AI or looking to optimize your current tech stack, this session will equip you with the insights and tools needed to take your finance operations into the future.

CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNER webinar



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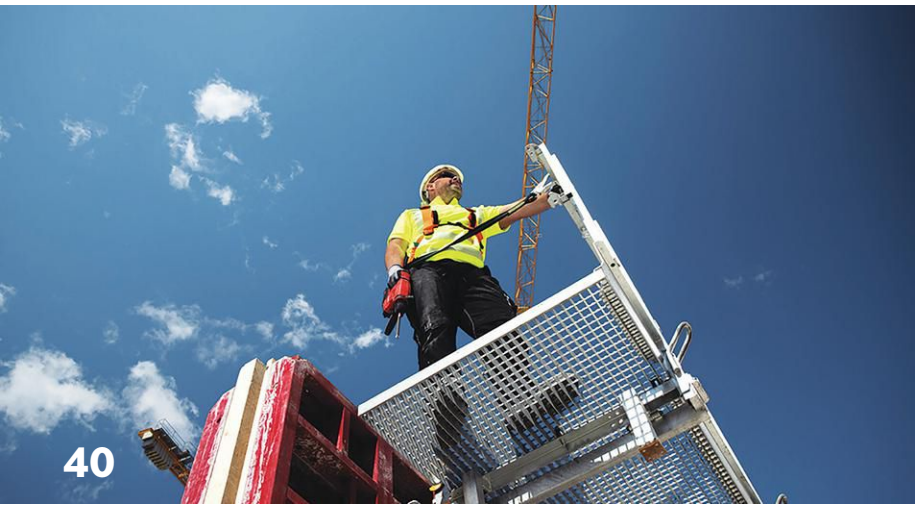


Michele Retzbach
Principal Solutions Consultant
AvidXchange

As a Principal Solutions Consultant for AvidXchange, Michele specializes in helping companies streamline accounts payable operations by creating efficiencies through automation and best practices. Michele brings an arrangement of passion and knowledge to the role based on her experience. Her expertise is in Construction and Real Estate verticals.

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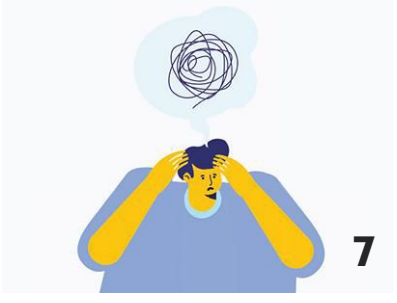
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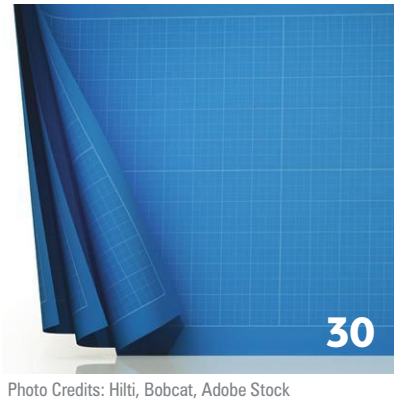
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ON THE COVER Photo Credit: Leica Geosystems

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CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNER webinar

Maximizing Operational Efficiency Through Idle Time Management With Geotab

ON DEMAND

Learn how small amounts of engine idle time add up to big expenses — fuel waste, equipment wear, project delays and compliance risks, to name a few. This webinar will show you how to spot the difference between necessary and wasteful idling, and how Geotab's telematics solution gives you the visibility to take control.

You'll discover how to:

- Identify and quantify the true costs of idling on your jobsites
- Distinguish productive vs. unproductive idling using Geotab data
- Use alerts and reports to track and reduce unnecessary idling
- Apply field-tested strategies to improve fleet efficiency
- Learn from real-world success stories
- Measure ROI with ongoing idle time analysis

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SPEAKERS



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Solutions Engineer
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SCAN ME

TMG Construction Corporation Announces Key Promotions



Joe Rodenbeck



Bill Ruschaupt



Taylor Vogel

TMG Construction Corporation (TMG), a general contractor and design-builder, announced key promotions to leadership to support the company's growth and geographic expansion. Joe Rodenbeck, PMP, has been promoted to vice president of Capital-National. Rodenbeck has been with TMG for over nine years, and his dedication to his craft, high levels of project execution and customer satisfaction are reflections of his outstanding leadership. As part of his new responsibilities, Rodenbeck will be joining TMG's executive committee, helping with the strategy and development of the firm. Taylor Vogel has been named director of estimating and field operations. Vogel has been with TMG for 19 years and is a strong force to the team. His passionate drive for results has allowed TMG to perform increasingly complex work in both scope and size. Bill Ruschaupt has been promoted to program manager. Ruschaupt started as a senior project manager at TMG in 2023, and he has achieved great success in growing TMG's portfolio with new and existing customers. Ruschaupt's extensive industry experience will support TMG's strategic initiatives and his drive to build relationships. Visit tmgworld.net.

HD Hyundai Merges Construction Equipment Divisions

HD Hyundai, headquartered in Seoul, South Korea, will merge its construction equipment divisions to create a new company, tentatively named HD Construction Equipment, effective Jan. 1, 2026. The merger will combine HD Hyundai Infracore and HD Hyundai Construction Equipment. The Hyundai and Develon brands will continue to coexist. The two companies currently operate independently in North America through distinct dealer networks. The independent brand and dealer network structure will remain in place. Pending shareholder approval and regulatory review, the merger will create a stronger global construction equipment business while maintaining the current success for the Develon and Hyundai brands in North America. The expected advantages of the merger include the following: providing greater price competitiveness through increased scale; speeding up innovation in smart and electrified equipment; enhancing supply chain efficiency and product quality; expanding aftermarket support, including parts and service; and growing the product lineup, ranging from compact to ultra-large machines. Visit na.develon-ce.com.

RBA Builders Promotes New Vice President of Finance



Eric Thai

RBA Builders LLC, a full-service general contractor in California, announced that Allan Quan, vice president finance since 2017, is retiring in 2025 to spend more time with family. Quan has played a pivotal role in guiding the company's financial strategy during times of significant growth and industry change. Succeeding Quan is Eric Thai, a seasoned finance and operations leader who joined RBA in 2024. Thai brings nearly two decades of cross-sector experience in financial management, strategic planning and organizational development. As vice president of finance, he will lead RBA's financial strategy and support its long-term initiatives as RBA continues to expand within a competitive construction landscape. Before joining RBA, Thai held leadership roles such as operations manager, director of finance and director of mission impact investments. He is recognized for his ability to blend financial sustainability with social impact, driven by a leadership style rooted in both empathy and operational excellence. Visit rbabllc.com.

The UP Companies Relocates Kansas City Office to Support Continued Growth

The UP Companies (UPCO), including its divisions Square Up Builders and Hustle UP Laborers, has relocated its Kansas City metro office for a third time in six years to accommodate continued growth and improve accessibility across the region. The new office location in Grain Valley, Missouri, a rapidly growing suburb just 22 miles east of Kansas City, features a combined office and warehouse space to meet its growing needs. UPCO Kansas City supports commercial, warehouse and data centers, and health care projects for some of the region's most recognized and established general contractors. The company currently employs nearly 50 carpenters and drywall finishers, as well as a team of office staff at its new location. UPCO began pursuing work in the Kansas City area in 2016 to better serve its general contractor clients, and established its first local office and warehouse in 2020. The company is signatory to the St. Louis-Kansas City Carpenters Regional Council and is actively expanding its workforce to serve general contractors, owners and facility management customers within a few hours of its new base. Current Kansas City-area projects include a partnership with St. Louis-based KAI Enterprises and Turner Construction on a new headquarters for Community Builders of Kansas City (CBKC). The new 60,000-square-foot, three-story office building will feature private rooftop terraces and is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. Visit theupcompanies.com.

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Insight from industry aces & answers to construction's biggest questions

ASK THE EXPERTS

How do you navigate stressful situations at work?



"Navigating stressful situations at work starts with leaning into your support system. I rely on our leadership team and subject matter experts across the company, as there's usually someone who's seen a similar challenge before. Open communication, both upward and downward, is key because it ensures alignment, reduces uncertainty and builds trust during uncertain moments.

I've learned not to overreact, since most situations aren't as extreme as they feel in the moment, and taking a step back allows for a more balanced view. I also try to stay positive. Asking myself, 'What's the best possible outcome here?' helps shift my mindset toward solutions. And if time can help, I don't hesitate to ask for it, because sometimes just a bit of space can lead to a much clearer path forward."

– Chris Hopper, Executive Vice President - General Manager
(Skanska USA Building)



"At ICM, our preconstruction team is constantly executing bids to keep our project pipeline strong. Since the fast pace can be demanding, we manage stress by holding weekly preconstruction meetings between our Denver and Pueblo offices. These sessions are an opportunity to share ideas, pool resources and support one another. By fostering a collaborative environment where no one feels isolated or overwhelmed, we keep morale high and reinforce our core value of being 'One ICM.' A culture of teamwork and mutual support is something we actively promote across the company, because it keeps employees happy and our business profitable."

– Greg Naylor, Vice President of Preconstruction
(Industrial Constructors/Managers Inc. [ICM])

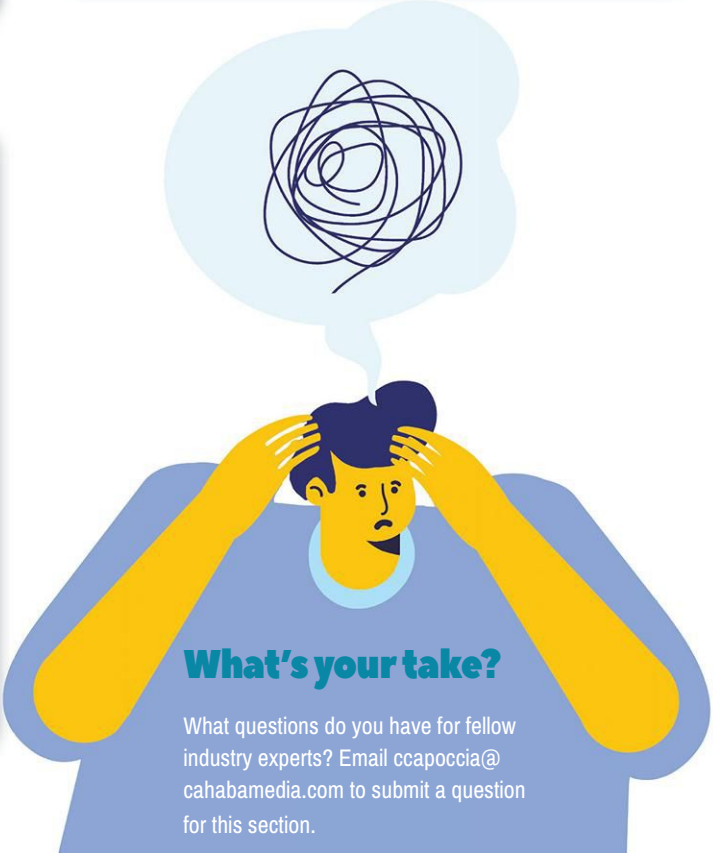


"Stressful situations at work are something we all face regularly — but have we ever stopped to ask why? In today's fast-paced environment, we rely heavily on Teams, texts, emails and other digital tools to communicate. While convenient, these platforms often lead to misunderstandings. We agonize over how to word our responses and still worry we'll be misinterpreted, which only adds to the stress.

Most of us have received a vague or confusing message that prompted a phone call — only to hear, 'Oh no, that's not what I meant. I'm sorry it came across that way.' It's a reminder that real-time conversations often offer the fastest path to clarity. When we speak in person or over the phone, we can hear tone, ask follow-up questions and align perspectives — nuances that are lost in written messages.

While technology improves efficiency, we can't forget our need for human connection. In my experience, the most effective way to reduce workplace stress is through meaningful, real conversations. Encouraging more of them can foster stronger relationships and a healthier, more dynamic work culture."

– Marty McCarthy, CPA, CCIFP, Mid-Atlantic Construction Leader
(CBIZ)



What's your take?

What questions do you have for fellow industry experts? Email ccapoccia@cahabamedia.com to submit a question for this section.



Scott Stamey
President of the Southeast Region
Cooper Tacia General Contractors

Helping people, building the industry

BY KRISTIN EASTERLING

With a degree in mechanical engineering from North Carolina State University (NC State), Scott Stamey had many different career options. After a stint in manufacturing, he ended up working with a consulting firm for the wood products industry, designing large-scale wood products facilities. Many of the projects during his 22-year career were focused on the engineering or project management side of the construction site. But about three years ago, John Cooper, a classmate from NC State, extended a job offer to manage projects in the Atlanta area for Cooper Tacia General Contracting.

With his new role, Stamey said he finally made it into the construction field. His main focus, however, is growing Cooper Tacia's presence in the Atlanta area. The Atlanta branch of the company opened early 2024.

"I'm looking for those next projects," he said. "Where can we go? What's something new and bigger and better? I'm always looking at our current challenges and how I can solve those. One of our biggest challenges is hiring people. I'm always looking for the best talent who will fit our culture and help us continue to take on new projects and grow the company."

The Atlanta area is competitive for both talent and projects, Stamey said, so helping the company grow in recognition helps with both challenges.

"We have a couple of projects going on locally here in Atlanta, and we've worked across the Southeast for much longer," he said. "We're building a very good reputation. We're very active in the community. That's our approach: Continue engaging, continue doing a good job on our projects, and eventually the problem will solve itself."

Stamey believes an open mind is key to his ability to grow in his role and help Cooper Tacia grow in Atlanta and beyond. He said there's always new things to learn, and keeping up with evolving labor markets, employee expectations and technology changes requires people to explore opportunities whenever they can. He also believes in treating people fairly and offering help whenever possible, which aligns with Copper Tacia's philosophy of work.

"Any time I can help people in the industry — whether they're our client or our employee — treating people with respect and dignity makes the entire work experience a whole lot more pleasant," he said. "I think those things come back around. People recognize how you do business and the type of person and company you work for, and that pays you back over time."

When Stamey still lived and worked in North Carolina, he extended a helping hand to other engineers through the Professional Engineers of North Carolina, volunteering in leadership roles within the organization for 12 years. He mentored young engineers and gave back to the wider

PROspecs

COOPER TACIA

Founded: 2003

Employees: 60

Primary region served: The Southeast and Utah

Clients: Industrial, commercial and municipal projects, including schools, higher education and government buildings, as well as airports

Purpose/Mission: We believe in always doing what is right, even when no one is watching.

community. Today, his role at Cooper Tacia keeps him busy, but the company is active in local chapters of the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) and various associations for minorities in the industry, such as Commercial Real Estate Women Network (CREW), the National Association of Minority Contractors and the National Organization of Minority Architects, so he works with those efforts. He's also a long-standing member of Rotary International.

"When I moved to Atlanta, I made a point to find a local club," he said. "I think that service-mindedness is important."

Cooper Tacia is focused on growth in Atlanta and throughout the country, and that involves community engagement. According to Stamey, engagement and the work environment the company offers are key to building the future of the construction industry.

"Other companies start the same way we did," he said. "We were a small company doing kitchen and bathroom remodels, and we ended up being a $150-million-a-year business doing large industrial and commercial builds. But we still maintain the values of treating everyone with respect, engaging in our communities and giving back to our communities."

John Cooper started the Cooper Charitable Foundation in early 2024, which seeks to close funding gaps for housing through housing stability grants. These grants provide financial assistance to those who are working but cannot keep up with expenses due to life circumstances. Stamey sits on the board of directors for the foundation. He said the example the company sets with its impact should inspire others to take up similar causes, which will improve the future for everyone.

For young people considering a job in construction, whether that's in the office or in the field, Stamey advised, "Just do it."

"It's an absolutely rewarding, fantastic, dynamic industry, full of tons of opportunity," he said.

Stamey added that there's a misconception that construction is just boots-on-the-ground or hands-on-tools — or, for project managers, spending time buried in spreadsheets — but with evolving technology and business practices, people with different degrees and life and career experience have opportunities to get involved.

"There's a team that works on nothing but technology [at Cooper Tacia]," he said. "They fly drones and model things in 3D so we can build them virtually before we build them physically. People think construction is just analog machines pushing dirt around or hammers putting up boards, but it's so much more than that. ... There are marketing people and creative people doing branding, and salespeople making pitches. There's an infinite number of ways you can contribute to construction."

"If you're even slightly curious, just look into it, maybe through an internship," he said. Cooper Tacia offers an internship program with their North Carolina offices in a variety of construction settings. "If you think your interests don't align with construction, you're probably wrong. Find someone in the industry, and find out what you can do and apply to that role." ▲

Kristin Easterling is a freelance writer for Construction Business Owner Magazine & Digital Media.



Photo Credit: Cooper Tacia

Does the Song Really Remain the Same?

What happens to an organization's culture & strategy as the leadership changes?



GREGG M. SCHOPPMAN is a partner with FMI Corporation, management consultants and investment bankers for the construction industry. Schoppman specializes in the areas of productivity and project management. He also leads FMI's project management consulting practice. Prior to joining FMI, Schoppman served as a senior project manager for a general contracting firm in central Florida. He has completed complex construction projects in the medical, pharmaceutical, office, heavy civil, industrial, manufacturing and multifamily markets. He holds a bachelor's degree and master's degree in civil engineering, as well as a Master of Business Administration. Schoppman has expertise in numerous contract delivery methods, as well as knowledge of many geographical markets. Contact Schoppman by email at gregg.schoppman@fmicorp.com. Visit fmicorp.com.

As I was planning a few summer date nights with my wife, I came across an email from one of the venues in my city advertising their summer lineup of concerts. As a lifelong music fan, it was exciting to see the names on the docket. There were several that piqued my interest. It wasn't because I felt the need to buy their overpriced T-shirts, but rather because I was surprised they were still on tour (or even still in existence).

Let's be honest: Some of my artists are closer to retirement than Coachella. After a little bit of research, I determined that several of these bands were in fact composed of entirely new members — or at a minimum, the only original member was the bassist. Before the bassists of the world feel slighted, I asked myself, "When does a band cease being 'original' and become a cover band that charges $100 a seat?" Then I started thinking about succession planning. Sure, this lane departure was one you could only expect from someone who spends so much time with construction organizations and his iTunes playlists.

Here is my thinking. There comes a crossroads for many organizations as they navigate senior leaders becoming more senior and a need to install new leadership team. As the new leadership team ascends, they also install new managers, including their replacements, to move the organization forward. Early in the transition, the organization is more than likely "playing the same catalog of music." Put another way, the new generation approaches the business with a certain level of diligence and care to "maintenance." There is a level of cautiousness: "We don't want to lose our audience, so we are going to play our proverbial greatest hits, keeping on with what got us to this point."

However, there comes a point where that new leadership generation completely assimilates and Brand X Construction starts thinking about adding "new songs" to their setlist. One can only imagine the internal upheaval that might occur from the ranks of the loyal team members who straddled both generations: "We've never done that before," or "You know, the other leadership team never wanted to go in that direction."

What about the external market? "You are known for <INSERT NICHE TRADE HERE>, so why are you trying to do something new?" For example, how many contractors begin as a plan/specifications, low-bid contractor but stretch their thinking to be a design-builder? Ultimately, an existential crisis emerges. Leaders recognize that their businesses need to change — market conditions erode, customers go away, etc. — but if they change course, will the "band members" refuse to play? Will the audience revolt and go see another band?

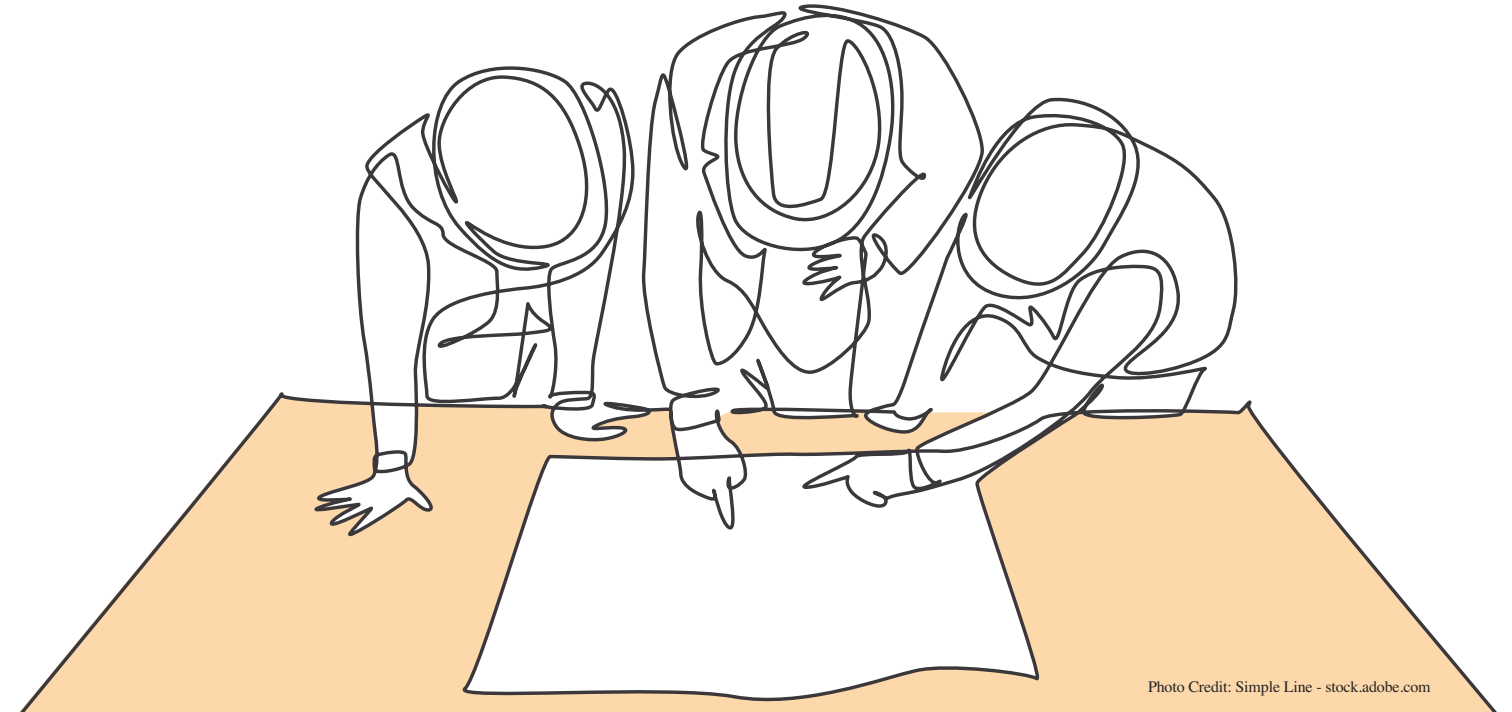


Photo Credit: Simple Line - stock.adobe.com

There are no simple or right answers to this business conundrum. Every business is faced with evolutionary choices:

- What should we chase?
- Where should we operate?
- How should we deliver our services?
- Should we grow or contract?
- What new things should we integrate into our business?
- What roles do we need on the team?
- Who will fill those roles?

Even without a leadership succession, these same choices would be staring that group in the face. It is possible that new leadership groups find it easier to enact change, as they may see this as a natural order of things. This is not to say they are going to do something simply to be contrarian. However, many visionary leaders who are appointed to roles for at least two reasons:

1. They are in alignment with the company's core values at a microscopic level. Put another way, these individuals bleed the company colors.
2. They are, in fact, visionary. They ideate and think about growing a fruitful business, which may be some degree different than the existing engine for the business's revenues.

And there is the rub. Whether the successors are homegrown or brought in from outside of the business, they will hopefully check the box on Bullet 1. Bullet 2 is where the scrutiny commences, in that it may be viewed as a drastic departure what is perceived as "normal." We all know everyone loves change — ahem — and this new leadership cohort is moving in a different direction rather than the tried and true "What-Got-Us-Here-Should-Be-a-Hit-Going-Forward" strategy.

This is not to say every idea that the new regime has will be correct. For instance, there are countless studies that show how some historically successful businesses failed abysmally as they transitioned from generation to generation. Was the failure rooted in bad strategy, bad execution or simply the inactivity to make a timely decision for fear of upsetting the organization?

Once again, the new generation or old generation can make the same mistakes, but there seems to be less tolerance of an error in judgment from the newer generation.

Every passionate music aficionado recalls that one bad album where the artists potentially tried something new stylistically. The fans gave the artist a "free pass" since they had a long history of successful hits.

However, when a reconstituted band decides to change direction, it is usually met with derision and vitriol: "Who are these guys? That's not the band that I've listened to for years." Of course not! Short of the logo behind the drummer, nothing about this band is the same, so why would they make the same music?

Constructors should change and evolve. Does that mean they go from being a hard-bid roadbuilder to a design-build school-builder with self-performance capabilities? There should be a compelling reason why a firm makes that shift, which should be predicated by some fact-based analysis rather than a knee-jerk compulsion to install lockers in an elementary school.

More importantly, the new generation of leaders must navigate their strategic business journey with confidence, discipline, knowledge, passion, support and rigor.

Hopefully, the roadies will remember to pack the bass with care. And don't forget my T-shirt. ▲

Powered by People: VECA's Blueprint for Growth

How this rapidly expanding firm protects its culture



CAL BEYER, CWP, is senior director of SAFE Workplaces for SAFE Project. Beyer is a longtime national advocate for workplace mental health, substance misuse, suicide prevention, and opioid risk reduction and overdose prevention. This grew out of his work on human capital risk management and worker well-being. Since 2016, he has served as a member of the editorial advisory board for Construction Business Owner. Reach Beyer at cal@safeproject.us or 651-307-7883. Visit safeproject.us.

In a construction landscape where growth can sometimes stretch companies too thin, VECA Electric & Technologies is proving that it's possible to expand without losing sight of what matters most — its people.

Headquartered in the Pacific Northwest, VECA has more than 1,500 employees, and due to the company's unique expertise in niche markets, it is seeing significant opportunity for growth. But no matter how large the company becomes, its commitment to building up people remains the core of its success.

Empowering Success, 1 Employee at a Time

At VECA, culture isn't a slogan: It's a daily practice.

"Our values — 'Empowering Each Other to Succeed, Creating Value for Our Customers, and Accountability, Appreciation and Abundance' — aren't just posters on the wall," said Laura Rannow, chief administrative officer. "They live in the way we mentor, support and celebrate one another."

Empowerment means more than promotions or training. Rannow described "empowering each other to succeed" as the heartbeat of VECA, and said "Believing leadership is about lifting others up." It means standing by employees through challenges as well as victories. It shows up in flexible support during personal hardships, in access to mental health resources and in opportunities for growth, no matter the starting point.

"When we invest in our people, they invest right back into the company," Rannow explained.

Regional Roots, National Reach

VECA has historically been concentrated in the Pacific Northwest, but today, it's licensed in 19 states and rapidly expanding. With new opportunities in the semiconductor sector, particularly in Idaho, the company expects to grow from 1,510 employees to more than 2,500 in the next three to five years.

Growth on that scale could risk diluting both company culture and operational excellence. VECA's leaders are determined not to let that happen.

"We're growing with intentionality," Rannow said. "We embed seasoned VECA leaders into new regions, host onboarding that reinforces our values, and double down on leadership development. Culture doesn't happen by accident — you have to protect it."

The 'Largest Small Family Business' in Action

Inside VECA, size doesn't stand in the way of personal connection. The company operates with the mindset of the "largest small family business" — a phrase that's much more than a tagline.

Flat organizational structures encourage open communication across all levels. Employees are celebrated for tenure milestones with VECAversary awards, field crews are acknowledged with pancake breakfasts on jobsites, and every month individuals are recognized with VECA's



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peer-to-peer "Abundance & Appreciation" award program. Leaders are accessible, and collaboration is encouraged across departments.

Rannow's own story is proof that VECA practices what it preaches. She began her career at VECA as a file clerk and rose steadily through the company.

"They didn't just tolerate my growth — they championed it," she said. "They believed in me before I even believed in myself."

Executive leadership, including Tom Fairbanks, executive chairman, and Dave Reed, CEO, set the tone by consistently prioritizing growth from within. Their philosophy: A person's future at VECA isn't limited by their starting point, but by their willingness to learn and grow.

Growing Leaders at Every Level

Central to VECA's expansion is VECA Academy, an internal development program offering structured career pathways from project engineer to senior project manager.

VECA Academy curriculum blends technical expertise with people-focused leadership skills. Monthly in-person field leadership training — led by Amanda King, a leadership coach for the electrical industry — builds critical skills for field leaders, uniting field and office staff into a cohesive team.

Coaching and mentoring are a regular part of life at VECA, with internal and external leadership coaches providing guidance to employees at every stage of their careers.

"We want our people to not just get better at what they do, but to become better leaders, better communicators and better at developing future leaders," Rannow said.

Showing Up for People When It Matters Most

In an industry that often equates toughness with self-reliance, VECA defines it as fostering a culture where support and well-being are prioritized. Mental health is treated as a core part of overall safety. The company provides confidential mental health and addiction resources, suicide prevention education and flexibility for employees going through personal crises.

"We say safety is No. 1, and that has to include mental health," Rannow said. "It's not enough to care when things are easy — you have to care when things get hard, too."

This deep commitment to supporting the whole person not only helps individuals thrive but strengthens VECA's teams, productivity and loyalty across the board.

Beyond the Company Walls: Growing the Industry

VECA doesn't just focus on internal growth — it actively works to strengthen the construction industry as a whole. Company leaders participate in industry organizations like National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), Associated General Contractors of America (AGC), and various workforce and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

Engagement at this level also brings fresh ideas back into the company and provides emerging leaders with critical exposure to industry innovations and best practices.

"We have a responsibility to help shape the future of this industry," said Rannow. "And that makes us stronger, too."

Culture, Carried Forward

During this season of expansion, VECA knows that protecting its culture is mission-critical. Whether onboarding new hires with intention, mentoring across departments or celebrating every VECAversary, the company is committed to carrying its people-first spirit into every new market.

As Rannow put it, "Culture doesn't scale itself — you have to build it, brick by brick, just like any project."

A Legacy of Growth & Belonging

After 22 years at VECA, Rannow still feels a deep pride in the company she calls home.

"We have field and office staff who have been here 20, 25, even 30-plus years," she said. "That kind of loyalty isn't luck. It's the result of a culture that sees people not just for the job they do, but for who they are."

While VECA's reach may expand and projects grow in scale, the company's focus remains unchanged: putting people first. The heart of VECA has always been — and will continue to be — its people. ▲

Best Practices for Managing Construction Costs

Analyzing CBIZ's survey results on the industry's biggest pain points



KEN GODIN is a manager in the business enterprise service division at CBIZ's Melville, New York, office. Godin has over 20 years of experience providing assurance and consulting services to construction and real estate clients. He primarily works with owners of privately held businesses, assisting with financial statement compliance, tax planning and industry-specific solutions to maximize savings. Visit cbiz.com.

In the active and complex world of construction, effective cost management stands at the very core of project success and long-term business sustainability. The industry's ever-evolving nature, with its fluctuating material prices, increasingly complex projects and tighter timelines, means that keeping costs in check is no longer just a financial necessity: It is a fundamental element that impacts profitability, client satisfaction and a company's competitive reputation.

Yet in today's construction environment, the challenge of maintaining a strategic focus on cost management is more pronounced than ever. The latest CBIZ National Construction Survey reveals that construction company leaders are, more than ever, preoccupied with immediate workflow demands. When asked to identify their top business priorities for 2025, respondents selected all available options at lower rates than in past surveys. Notably, just 38% indicated that organizational planning was a leading priority — marking the lowest figure ever seen in the survey. Those prioritizing strategic planning dropped from 60% to 42%. This points to a troubling trend: Business owners may be so consumed by day-to-day operations that they neglect critical long-term strategy.

This lack of focus on high-level strategy can be detrimental. As one survey respondent warned: "One of the biggest challenges we face is inadequate planning, which often leads to straying from the project's objectives and budget. Additionally, mismanagement of funding can create a backlog. This situation mainly arises from insufficient internal administration and lack of proper oversight on projects."

These findings reinforce an essential truth: In construction, unmanaged costs can quickly spiral out of control, leading to budget overruns, project delays, strained client relationships and, ultimately, damage to a company's reputation and profitability.

Conversely, meticulous and strategic cost management delivers a host of benefits. It fosters financial stability, improves decision-making, and builds trust among clients and stakeholders. In a sector where reliability is paramount, developing a reputation for cost control positions a construction firm as an industry leader.

Given this landscape, it has never been more important for construction companies to embrace best practices in cost management — not just as a tactic for keeping individual projects on track, but as a strategy for building resilient, thriving organizations. Below, we'll explore how effective budgeting, rigorous cost tracking and proactive variance analysis form the backbone of project and business success, and we'll share practical steps construction leaders can take to implement these practices.

Developing a Budget

It starts with planning the project.

- Clearly define the project's objectives,

scope of work, deliverables and timeline.

- Estimate costs accurately. Use your prior work knowledge to your advantage. Break down the project into specific components to estimate materials, labor, equipment needs and other related expenses.
- Remember to include your soft costs, such as insurance, security, permits and project management labor.
- Utilize industry-specific software to leverage technology for tracking costs.
- Think about possible cost savings. Buying out the contract at a profit is an art. Giving your team time by not waiting until the last minute to buy out contract items will provide opportunities for cost savings.
- We strongly recommend having a kickoff meeting between estimating, project management and the field supervisors. This is the time to ensure everyone is on the same page; questions can be answered and the field supervisors understand how the job was established.

Cost Tracking

This is an area that will make or break a contract. Too often, I see clients not properly tracking costs throughout the project, and only when the accountant comes to help with the financial statements do they learn if the project was profitable or lost money. I have a client who has this sign in their office: "If you don't know your labor costs, you have already failed!"

These tips can help:

- Invest in software that tracks costs. Making a capital investment in this area will have long-term benefits.
- Utilizing software will allow management to track costs in real time. It is important to note that the software is only as good as the trained employees entering the information. This is where the old saying, "garbage in, garbage out," comes into play.
- Maintain detailed records of all expenditures and out-of-scope work; this will assist you in getting change orders approved in a timely fashion.
- Make sure multiple people are familiar with the software. We strongly recommend cross-training. This will reduce downtime.
- Regularly monitor costs. Establish meetings between executives, project managers and field supervisors — more often is better. We recommend weekly meetings. This is a great opportunity to determine if there are change order opportunities or if a job is not going as planned, so you can step back, figure out why and correct the problem as early as possible.
- Perform site visits. Being able to see the actual progress of a project and comparing it to the information reported by the software is essential.

This leads us into variance analysis. It is crucial to compare actual data to the budget in a timely manner.

- From the cost tracking software, compare the actual costs to the planned budget.
- Focus on variances. Don't wait until the end of the project to analyze variances; these should be analyzed on a regular basis. We recommend discussing them during the weekly meetings between project managers and field supervisors.
- Common causes for variances include changes in the scope of work, unforeseen site conditions and delays.
- With the information collected from the variance analysis, management can determine if changes to the project need to be made. This might involve negotiating with suppliers on cost and improving efficiencies on the project to help reduce labor overruns.
- From the variance analysis, management can determine if submitting change orders is necessary.
- At the end of a project, a post-project review is essential. Perform a comprehensive review by comparing final costs against the original budget. See what was successful and what was not.
- Document lessons learned to develop organizational best practices and help improve future estimating and cost management processes. ▲



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Say Goodbye to Rework, Mistakes & Delays

Inside innovations in construction data management

BY VICTORIA SALVADOR

You deal with more project information every day — emails, requests for information (RFIs), submittals, drawings, photos and contracts. If you can't find what you need, you lose time and money. Missed information leads to rework, delays and sometimes legal trouble. Without a better way to manage this chaos, your risk grows with every project.

The construction industry generates thousands of gigabytes of data daily. Firms that will be left behind still use disconnected tools such as email, spreadsheets, file shares and legacy systems. Seventy percent of architecture, engineering, construction and operations (AECO) firms rely on these methods, leading to missed deadlines, errors and lost revenue. Seventy-seven percent of firms miss deadlines, and 73% face costly rework due to miscommunication and scattered information.

The Real Cost of Disconnected Information

Let's get specific about the pain points:

- *Lost or inaccessible information* — Siloed data means you waste hours searching for the right file or email.
- *Delays and costly rework* — Outdated or missing information leads to mistakes, change orders and schedule slips.
- *Increased risk of disputes and litigation* — Incomplete records make it harder to resolve disagreements.

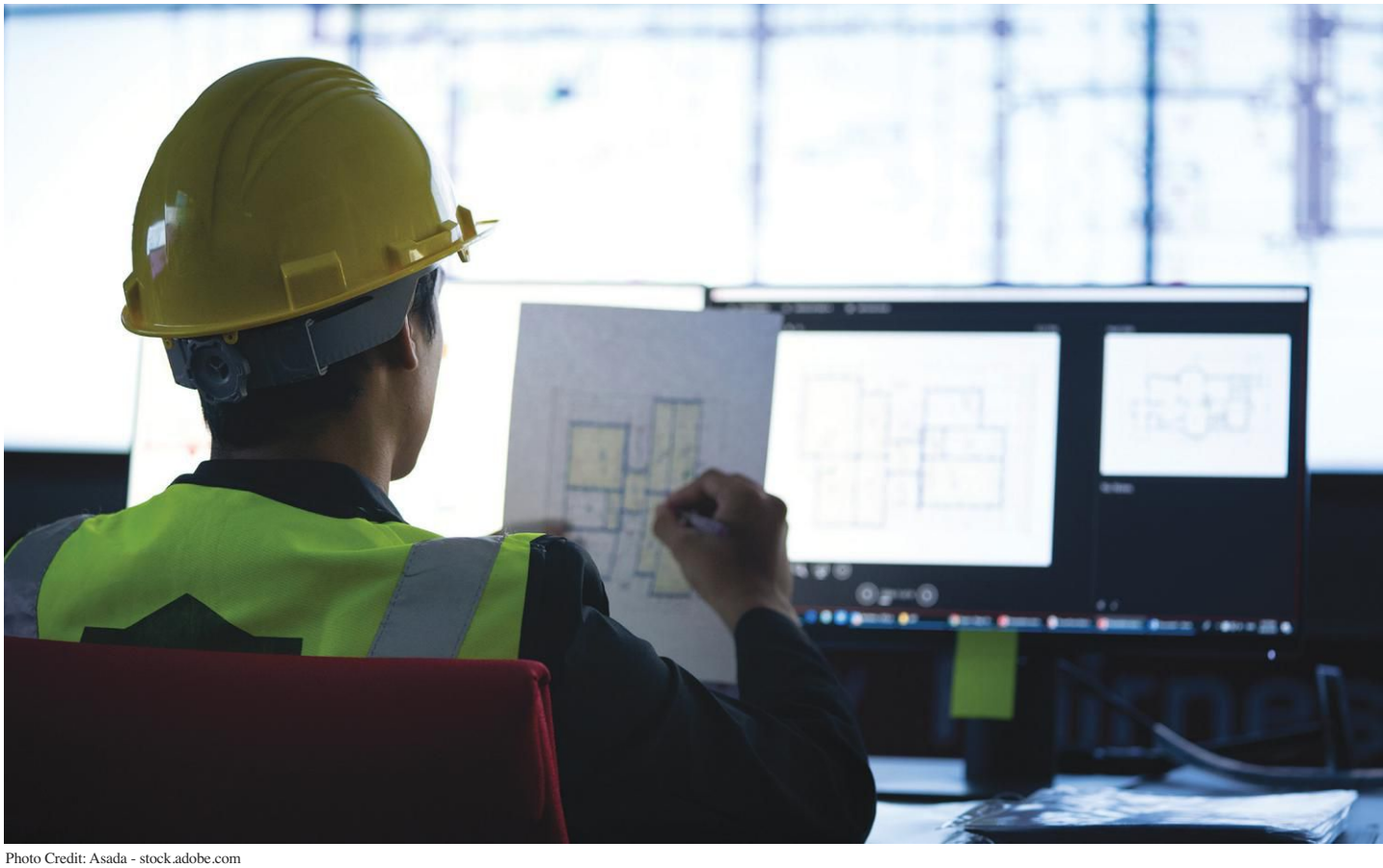


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- *Reduced productivity and morale* — Your team spends more time on administrative tasks and less on building.

A recent report found that 72% of firms report revenue loss due to operational inefficiencies, and 54% have faced litigation because of poor project information management.

What Modern Information Management Looks Like

You can fix these problems by using a single place for all your project information. Here's how:

- Store all project emails, documents and files in one hub.
- Use mobile tools to capture issues and photos right from the field.
- Connect your email and chat apps so nothing gets lost.
- Track every change, decision and approval automatically.

You don't need to change how you work. Choose a platform that lets you work where and how you like to work — a platform that adapts to you.

Centralize Your Access to All Your Project Information

Keep Everything in 1 Place

This makes it easy to find the latest drawings, approvals or RFIs. You'll spend less time searching and more time building. Centralized collaboration eliminates communication gaps and information siloes, giving everyone a unified space to communicate, share updates and collaborate seamlessly.

Use Email & Chat Wisely

Don't let important emails get buried. File them to the right project folder as soon as they arrive. Link emails to RFIs, submittals or issues, so you always have the full story. If you use chat apps like Microsoft Teams, make sure you save key conversations. Even a thumbs-up emoji can be legally binding.

Automate Routine Work

Set up workflows that move RFIs and submittals to the right people. Use reminders to keep reviews on track. Let the system track who's responsible for each step. This reduces mistakes and keeps projects moving.

Make Field Data Easy to Capture

Give your field teams mobile access. Let them log issues, take photos and update statuses on the go. This keeps your office and field teams in sync. Mobile apps let you manage project emails, RFIs and submittals even when you're on the jobsite or offline.

Connect Your Tools

Don't force everyone onto the same software. Use platforms that connect with your existing systems. This way, you can share data without extra steps or manual entry. Integration with tools like Procore, Revit and Navisworks means you don't have to give up your current workflows — just make them smarter.

The Power of Centralized Collaboration

Centralized collaboration platforms provide three big advantages:

- *Communication and coordination made easy* — Everyone works from the same dataset, no matter where they are. Real-time messaging, file sharing and task management keep everyone in sync.
- *Improved efficiency and productivity* — Quick access to project documents and updates means less time wasted searching for information.
- *Enhanced visibility and accountability* — Dashboards show project progress, tasks and deadlines. You can see who's responsible for what, making it easy to fix bottlenecks.

Field Management & Mobile Innovation

Construction doesn't stop at the office. Mobile technology is transforming how you manage field operations:

- *Real-time issue logging* — Site teams can create RFIs, submittals or issues directly from their mobile devices, attaching photos and notes on the spot.
- *Instant notifications* — Stakeholders receive updates and reminders in real time, reducing lag and keeping workflows moving.
- *Offline functionality* — Teams can access and update project data even without internet connectivity, syncing changes once back online.

These capabilities drastically reduce the time between identifying and resolving field issues, helping keep projects on track and budgets intact.

Workflow Automation & Interoperability

Automated Workflows

Automating repetitive, manual tasks — such as RFI routing, submittal tracking and status notifications — saves hours each week and minimizes human error. Automated audit trails and dashboards provide transparency and accountability, making it easy to see who is responsible for each action and what still needs attention.

Interoperability Across Platforms

You rarely work in isolation; collaboration with subs, architects, engineers and owners is constant. Leading platforms now offer seamless integration with industry tools, allowing data to flow freely between systems. This interoperability does the following:

- Eliminates double data entry and

reduces errors.
- Ensures all parties have the latest information.
- Supports a more agile, responsive project team.

Risk Mitigation Through Better Access to the Right Information

A robust information management strategy is your best defense against risk. By maintaining a complete, accessible project record — including every email, decision and document — you can achieve the following:

- Resolve disputes quickly with clear evidence trails.
- Reduce the risk of litigation by ensuring compliance and transparency.
- Protect profits by avoiding costly rework and delays.

Moving Beyond Excel: The Case for Modern Tools

Spreadsheets have long been a staple of construction administration, but their limitations are now clear. Manual data entry, version confusion and lack of real-time collaboration make Excel a risky choice for managing complex workflows. Modern platforms offer:

- Automated document control and versioning.
- Real-time collaboration and notifications.
- Powerful search and reporting capabilities.

Switching to a purpose-built Information management solution can save hundreds of hours per project and significantly reduce administrative overhead.

How This Helps You

- *Faster decisions* — Find what you need in seconds.
- *Fewer errors* — Work from the latest information, not old files.
- *Less risk* — Keep a full record of every action and decision.
- *Better collaboration* — Everyone works from the same dataset.
- *Happier clients* — Deliver on time and avoid surprises.

Common Pitfalls & How to Avoid Them

- **Don't rely on memory or scattered notes.** File everything as you go.
- **Don't let each team use a different**

Spreadsheets have long been a staple of construction administration, but their limitations are now clear. Manual data entry, version confusion and lack of real-time collaboration make Excel a risky choice for managing complex workflows.



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numbering system. Agree on common terms and categories.

- **Don't skip training**. Show your team how to use new tools before the project starts.
- **Don't ignore overdue tasks.** Use dashboards and reminders to keep everyone accountable.

Practical Steps You Can Take

1. Assess Your Current Data Workflows

Identify bottlenecks, duplication and risks in your current processes. Where do you lose the most time? Which workflows are most prone to errors or delays?

2. Invest in Centralized, Cloud-Based Platforms

Look for solutions that integrate with your tools and offer mobile access. Make sure your platform supports the file types and workflows you use most.

3. Train Teams for Adoption

Ensure all stakeholders understand how to use new tools and the benefits they bring. Provide hands-on learning opportunities and designate "tech champions" to mentor others.

4. Automate Where Possible

Start with high-impact workflows like RFI/submittal management and issue tracking. Use automation to reduce manual work and keep everyone accountable.

5. Foster a Culture of Collaboration

Encourage transparency, shared responsibility and continuous improvement. Make it easy for teams to share updates and ask questions.

6. Standardize Systems & Processes

Establish consistent naming conventions, version control and data management practices. This eliminates confusion and rework across projects.

7. Embrace Incremental Change

Don't try to overhaul everything at once. Start with a pilot project or workflow, gather feedback and expand as your team gains confidence.

Key Takeaways

You don't need to change everything at once. Small shifts in how you manage data can save hours every week, and adopting a simple-to-use-and-learn platform with a modern user experience is the way to go.

Centralizing information, automating workflows and connecting your tools will help you cut down on mistakes, avoid costly rework and keep projects on schedule.

When you use modern information management, you give your team the tools to succeed — on every project, every time. ▲

Victoria Salvador is senior director of marketing at Newforma, a leader in information management software for architects, engineers, contractors and owners (AECO) worldwide. Visit newforma.com.



A Handbook for Understanding Contract Bonds

Bonding basics for business owners

BY SPENCER PARIS

In the world of construction, risk is always present. Whether you're building a commercial complex, upgrading infrastructure or managing a public project, the stakes are high. One effective tool for managing risk and ensuring a successful project is the use of construction bonds.

What Is a Surety Bond?

A surety bond is a three-party agreement that guarantees one party (the contractor) will fulfill its obligation to another (the owner). If it doesn't, a third party (the surety) will step in to cover the loss. Unlike an insurance policy where the insurance company pays out after a loss, with a surety bond, if the contractor doesn't fulfill its contractual obligations, the surety may be required by the owner to step in to cover the costs required to complete the project or pay any subs or suppliers who haven't been paid. But in turn, the surety will expect reimbursement from the contractor. Issuance of the bond by the surety company is contingent upon its assessment of the contractor's ability to fulfill the terms of the contract.

Surety bonds come in many forms and are commonly required across a wide range of industries, particularly governmental entities at the state, city and municipal levels for various programs, licenses or ordinances. In the construction industry, the most common bond types are contract bonds. Contract bonds enable a contractor to bid on a project, guarantee its performance and payment under the terms of the contract, and provide a warranty or maintenance term during which the contractor would be responsible for correcting any of its defective work.

What Is a Contract Bond?

Contract bonds, more commonly known as "performance and payment bonds" provide a project owner with a guarantee that the contractor will fulfill its obligations under the construction contract. Contract bonds ensure the quality of work performed meets the contract requirements, payment of material suppliers, subcontractors and other laborers.

There are different types of contract bonds and forms available to meet the needs of project owners on a range of different project types. The underlying guarantee of nearly all contract bonds is to protect the project owner in the event the contractor fails to complete the work, pay for materials or labor on the project, or meet the required deadline.

The parties involved in a contract bond generally include the following:

- The project owner, known as the obligee.
- The contractor, known as the principal.
- The surety company, or surety, which is the guarantor of the underlying bond guarantee.

Key Types of Bonds

1. Bid Bonds

Bid bonds guarantee that a contractor will perform the work at the agreed-upon price if it is awarded the contract. A bid bond is submitted by a contractor during the bidding process to offer a guarantee to the project owner that if they are the successful low bidder that contractor will enter into the contract at the agreed-upon bid amount. A project owner can require bid bonds from a surety on a "flat amount" or a "percentage-of-bid" form.

Use case: A contractor bidding on a municipal road project would typically be required to provide a bid bond to have their bid submission accepted and considered during the bid opening.

2. Performance Bonds

Performance bonds, sometimes called contract bonds, guarantee the contractor will perform the work in accordance with the contract. Once a project has been awarded to a contractor, it will secure a performance bond from a surety prior to starting the project.

Use case: On a commercial office build-out, a performance bond protects the project owner from delays, substandard work or the contractor walking off in the middle of the job.

3. Payment Bonds

Payment bonds guarantee that the contractor will pay for labor and materials in association with the contract. These bonds provide a guarantee to the project owner that the contractor will pay material suppliers,



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workers and subcontractors according to the contract, which mitigates the potential of liens being filed on a project due to nonpayment.

Use case: A contractor managing a water treatment facility project would provide a payment bond to assure suppliers and subcontractors of timely payment.

4. Maintenance Bonds

Maintenance bonds, or "warranty bonds," are issued for a specified period of time (the "maintenance period") to protect project owners in case of faulty materials or workmanship on the construction project.

After a construction project is complete and accepted by the owner, maintenance bonds provide financial protection should construction defects arise during the maintenance period.

Use case: After completing a pipeline installation, a maintenance bond would cover repairs during the maintenance period.

Why a Contract Bond Matters

Often, a contractor must secure and file a bid bond before bidding on a construction project for government-funded or public projects. Then, if awarded, the contract typically states that a performance and payment bond must be secured and submitted to the owner before the contractor can commence work on the project. If the performance and payment bond isn't provided in a timely manner, the project owner could file a claim on the bid bond and award the project to the next bidder.

Private owners can require bonds as well to guarantee performance for private construction, supply and service-type contracts. General contractors may also require subcontractors to provide bonds to guarantee completion of their subcontracts.

Taxpayers benefit from requisite performance and payment bonds on publicly funded projects by ensuring the completion of public infrastructure projects, from schools to streets and bridges that build communities and support economies, which are funded by taxpayer money.

The Surety & Fidelity Association of America commissioned an EY study, which concluded that construction projects protected by surety bonds have lower contractor default rates, have "lower costs of completion in the case of default" and are finished more quickly than projects that are not bonded.

Common Misconceptions

A common misconception is that only large contractors need bonds; however, many public and private projects require bonds regardless of contract size.

Another misconception is that contract bonds are too expensive. Many owners will not consider accepting bids from contractors who are not able to provide the necessary bid bond to bid the project in order to mitigate their risk. The cost of performance and payment bond generally ranges anywhere from 0.5% to 3% of the contract amount.

The Bonding Process Timeline

The bond underwriting process involves a thorough review of the contractor's qualifications and financials to ensure it has the experience, credit quality, capacity, financial backing and resources to complete the work outlined in the contract.

In most cases, surety companies review the contractor's financial statements, which includes a review of both the contractor's business and personal financial statements. Because bid deadlines can be tight, it is smart for a contractor to prequalify for contract bonds before needing one.

Once a performance and payment bond is put in place, it will remain in effect on that project until the project is complete and all suppliers and workers are paid. These types of bonds cannot be canceled early without release from the owner.

How to Get a Contract Bond

While each surety company is different, the underwriting process typically involves the review of business and personal credit, submission of financial information and demonstration of relevant project experience, in both size and scope.

For smaller bonds, many surety companies may only require a short application and underwrite mainly on business and personal credit, which can speed up the underwriting process.

Regardless of size, almost all bonds will require a signed indemnity agreement, meaning the contractor pledges business and personal assets as a guarantee to the surety company.

Take these steps to obtain a bond:

1. Review bid requirements to determine what type of bond is needed.
2. Prequalify with a surety. This will speed up the process when a project opportunity arises.
3. Work with a surety to secure the bond by submitting required documents in a timely manner to ensure the contractor meets underwriting criteria.
4. Maintain communication and work with your surety throughout the project.

Final Thoughts

Contract bonds are a vital part of obtaining and performing public work, as well as showing project owners that the contractor is qualified to perform the work.

Bonds play an important role in securing projects and getting prequalified for surety support can open doors to not only public work, but also larger projects and more opportunities for contractors.

Working with an experienced surety professional can guide contractors through the bonding process to ensure they secure the protection they need to meet job requirements and help ensure project success. ▲



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Spencer Paris is a regional vice president of contract surety at Nationwide Surety. He specializes in small- to medium-sized contract bonds, leveraging his extensive expertise to support contractors and ensure successful project completion. Paris has more than 20 years of experience in his field. Visit nationwide.com.



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SPEAKER

Andrew Lesko
Account Executive
FARO Technologies, Inc.

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SCAN ME

Get On-Site Faster — & Safer

The ROI of being compliance-ready before the bid

BY DAVE RISI

In today's fast-moving construction industry, time really is money — especially when it comes to mobilizing crews on new jobsites. But for many small and midsized contractors, getting the green light from prequalification platforms like ISNetworld, Avetta or Veriforce can delay that timeline and jeopardize projects before they even start.

These platforms are designed to help hiring clients mitigate risk by ensuring that contractors meet a defined set of safety, financial and insurance requirements.

And while that's a good thing for workplace safety and liability, it often creates a significant burden for smaller contractors without dedicated compliance teams.

More often than not, it's not the quality of your work that causes the delay — it's your paperwork. Or more specifically, your safety documentation. And even if you've done the job safely for 20 years, if your policies aren't properly documented and formatted, you're going to face delays.

The New Prequalification Reality

General contractors and hiring clients increasingly rely on third-party compliance platforms to vet vendors. These platforms look at insurance, training records, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) logs, and — most importantly — written safety programs. If you don't have those safety documents ready, you risk weeks



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If your company is scrambling to create safety programs when the project is already on the table, you're playing from behind. Being compliance-ready before the bid is no longer a luxury — it's a competitive advantage. It gets you approved faster and on-site sooner, and it can even reduce your insurance costs.

and even months of back-and-forth submissions, rejections and delays.

Unfortunately, the standards vary slightly across platforms and hiring clients. One client might accept your fall protection policy, while another might reject it because it's missing a few key words. This inconsistency forces many contractors into a reactive loop, scrambling to revise documents or hire a consultant after the rejection comes in.

The challenge? Most small contractors don't have a safety manager. Some aren't even sure what a compliant program is supposed to look like, let alone how to build one from scratch that passes a platform audit. The result is lost time, stress and, in some cases, lost contracts. It's not unusual for crews to be benched while the office team tries to piece together the right paperwork to get back on-site.

Being Compliance-Ready = Competitive Advantage

Let's say you've just been asked to bid a project, but the client requires preapproval on the platform they contract with. If you have your safety documents ready, aligned to their requirements and up to date, you can submit your packet in hours, not weeks. That agility helps you win jobs others can't start.

It's not just about being first in line: It's about being the first to be approved and showing that you run a tight, professional operation. That message carries weight with hiring clients who are already juggling deadlines, budgets and legal risks. Being able to mobilize quickly with no compliance red flags builds trust — and trust leads to repeat work.

How It Pays Off in the Long Run

There's a second benefit to being safety-compliant before the bid: lower workers' compensation premiums.

Many states offer discounts for contractors with formal safety programs, return-to-work policies or drug-free workplace protocols. These include state-run programs such as Pennsylvania's certified safety committee discount, Florida's drug-free workplace program or Ohio's industry-specific safety grants. On top of that, many insurance carriers offer scheduled credits for businesses that demonstrate proactive risk control.

Some of these credits are available only when you show proper documentation. So even if your field practices are top tier, you could be overpaying simply because your policies aren't visible to the underwriter.

Contractors using prebuilt, compliant safety programs often qualify for premium reductions between 5% and 30%, depending on the state and carrier. That adds up quickly, especially if you're paying tens of thousands in annual premiums. And the bonus? That's money you can reinvest into training, equipment or growth.

You Don't Need to Be a Safety Expert

For most business owners, the idea of sitting down to write a respiratory protection or heat stress program is not only intimidating — it's completely outside their wheelhouse. And hiring a safety consultant can easily cost $10,000 to $40,000, depending on your needs.

Fortunately, tools and systems now exist that allow contractors to generate platform-aligned safety programs in minutes. Instead of spending days with generic templates, these systems walk you through a short assessment, identify exactly what you need and build documentation that passes audits the first time.

Even better? These tools can stay updated when hiring client requirements change. That means you're not constantly chasing compliance — you're maintaining it in the background. Whether your client updates their requirements or policies, you can regenerate the latest version with a click instead of rewriting the document from scratch.

Final Takeaway

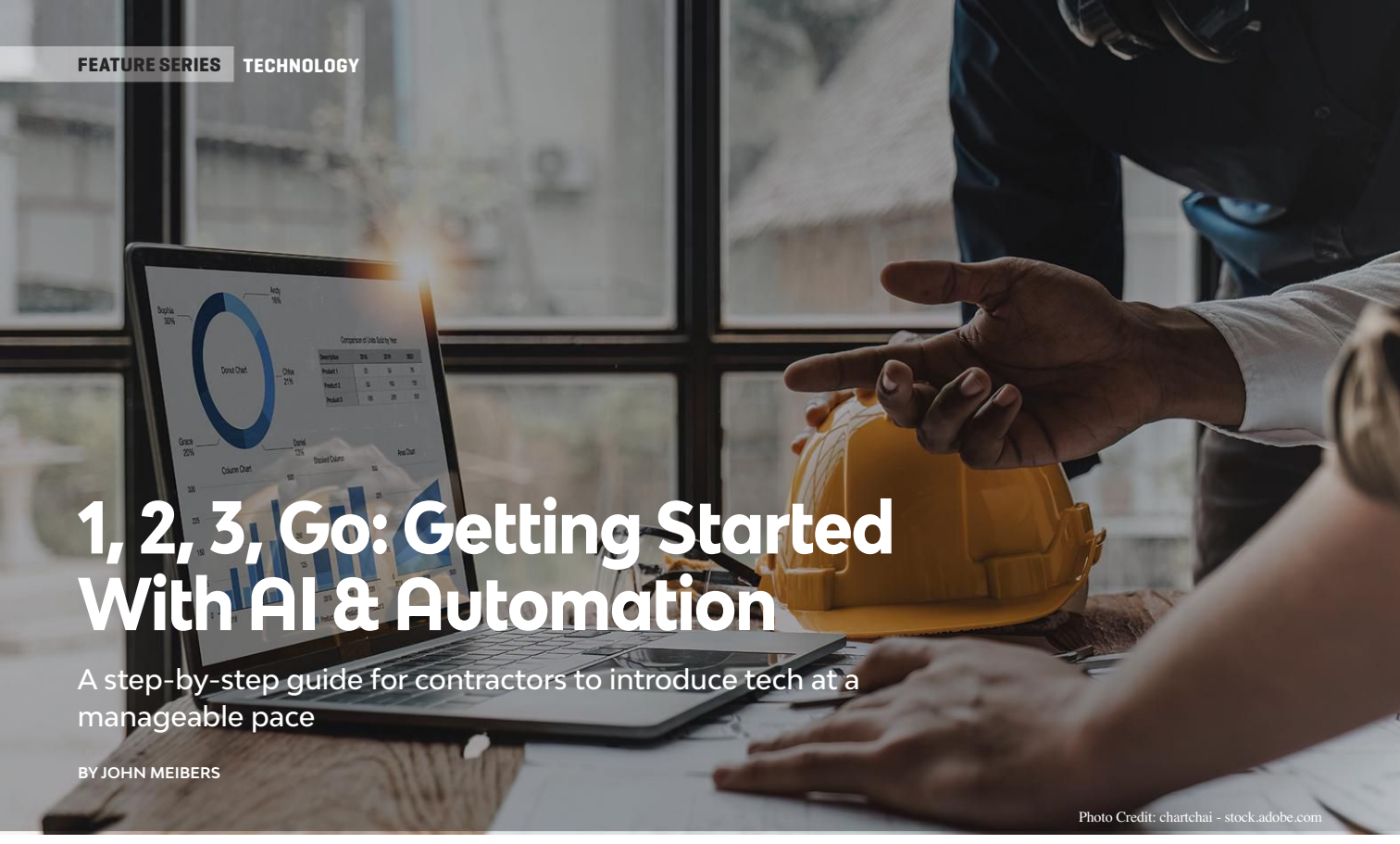
If your company is scrambling to create safety programs when the project is already on the table, you're playing from behind.

Being compliance-ready before the bid is no longer a luxury — it's a competitive advantage. It gets you approved faster and on-site sooner, and it can even reduce your insurance costs.

In an industry where speed, trust and margins all matter, being prepared is one of the best investments you can make. With the right tools in place, even the smallest contractor can look and operate like a big player — without burning through time or money in the process. ▲

Dave Risi is the founder of Work Comp Saver (WCS), a software platform that helps small and midsized contractors stay compliant with prequalification platforms like ISNetworld, Avetta and Veriforce. With nearly 40 years of experience in risk management and software, Risi developed WCS to make safety documentation fast, easy and accessible, without needing a full-time safety professional. Visit workcompsaver.com.





1, 2, 3, Go: Getting Started With AI & Automation

A step-by-step guide for contractors to introduce tech at a manageable pace

BY JOHN MEIBERS

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Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are transforming the construction industry, offering contractors new ways to improve efficiency, reduce costs and enhance safety. However, many contractors feel hesitant about adopting these technologies due to concerns about complexity, cost and implementation. According to the Deltek 45th A&E Clarity Study, 55% of firms expect to lose market share within three to five years if they fail to progress significantly in digital transformation. The good news is that AI and automation can be introduced gradually and strategically, making the transition smooth and manageable. This article is a step-by-step guide to help construction contractors get started with AI and automation without feeling overwhelmed.

1. Identify Areas That Benefit Most From AI & Automation

The first step in adopting AI and automation is to pinpoint specific areas where these technologies can have the greatest impact and set clear objectives of what you hope to achieve, such as increased productivity, improved safety, reduced costs or enhanced precision. Start by assessing common pain points in your operations:

- **Administrative tasks** like payroll processing, invoicing and contract management can be automated to free up valuable time and reduce human error.
- **Scheduling and project management** can be optimized with AI-driven software that predicts delays and suggests better resource allocation.
- **Safety monitoring and compliance** can benefit from AI-powered cameras and wearable devices that detect potential hazards in real time.
- **Equipment and material tracking** using automated inventory management systems can prevent shortages and over-purchasing.
- **Quality control inspections** can be enhanced with AI-driven image recognition tools that detect defects and inconsistencies before they become costly issues.

By focusing on areas that consume the most time or are prone to errors, contractors can see immediate improvements with minimal disruption.

2. Start Small With Simple AI-Powered Tools

AI and automation adoption doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing approach. Instead, start with easy-to-implement solutions such as the following:

- AI-driven scheduling tools that analyze worker availability, job timelines and weather forecasts to create optimized schedules.
- Automated invoicing and accounting software that reduces paperwork and ensures timely payments with minimal manual input.

- Time-tracking apps that allow workers to log hours via mobile devices, automatically syncing data with payroll systems.
- Drones for site inspections that capture high-resolution images and create detailed progress reports without requiring supervisors to be on-site constantly.
- Chatbots and virtual assistants that can help answer routine questions from workers and clients, improving communication and reducing administrative burdens.

These tools require minimal training and investment, providing contractors with a low-risk entry point into AI and automation.

3. Leverage Industry-Specific Software Solutions

Rather than adopting generic software, look for AI and automation tools designed specifically for the construction industry. Some examples include:

- **Construction management platforms** that integrate scheduling, budgeting and compliance tracking into a single dashboard.
- **AI-powered bidding software** that analyzes past projects to generate more accurate and competitive estimates.
- **Predictive maintenance systems** that use AI to detect early signs of equipment failure, preventing costly breakdowns before they happen and saving thousands of dollars in repair costs.
- **Quality control** AI-powered systems can be used for quality control, analyzing data from sensors and cameras to detect defects and ensure that construction meets specified standards. For example, AI can analyze images of concrete pours to detect cracks or inconsistencies, allowing for immediate corrective action.

Using industry-specific solutions ensures that contractors get relevant features tailored to their unique needs, making the implementation smoother and more effective.

4. Partner With Technology Providers for Comprehensive Support, Training & Data Security

One of the most significant hurdles to successful AI adoption is navigating the learning curve and ensuring smooth integration with existing workflows. Furthermore, the increasing reliance on data within AI and automation systems necessitates a strong focus on data security. To overcome these challenges, contractors should strategically partner with software vendors and technology providers that offer comprehensive support, training and a commitment to protecting sensitive information, such as the following:

- **Hands-on, role-based training —** Ensure that all team members — from project managers to field staff — receive tailored training that equips them to use new tools effectively in their daily tasks. This should go beyond basic software tutorials and include practical application scenarios relevant to construction projects.
- **Ongoing support and proactive troubleshooting —** Establish a relationship with providers who offer reliable, ongoing support to address any issues promptly and minimize disruptions to project timelines. This includes access to technical assistance, troubleshooting resources and proactive system monitoring.
- **Customization and integration expertise —** Choose providers with the capability to customize AI and automation tools to align with specific business workflows, project requirements and existing software systems. Seamless integration with platforms is crucial for maximizing efficiency and avoiding data siloes.
- **Strategic consultation —** Look for technology partners who can act as strategic advisors, offering guidance on AI implementation best practices, identifying opportunities for optimization and helping contractors develop a long-term technology road map.
- **Data security protocols and compliance —** These factors are paramount to partnering with providers who have robust data security protocols and can clearly articulate their measures for protecting sensitive project data, employee information and client details. Inquire about their security certifications, vulnerability management practices and incident response plans to ensure they prioritize data protection.
- **Thoroughly reviewing the terms and conditions of any AI and automation platform —** This is crucial to understanding how your data will be handled and protected. For instance, users concerned about data privacy when utilizing AI tools like ChatGPT might opt for a paid subscription, which often offers more control over data usage compared to the free version where data may be used for model training.

By securing a reliable technology partner that provides robust training, support and customization, contractors can mitigate adoption risks, accelerate time to value and ensure a smooth and successful transition to AI-powered operations.

5. Educate & Empower Your Team Through Change Management

Workers may be apprehensive about AI and automation, fearing job loss or complicated systems. Leaders should address potential apprehension and foster buy-in among your workforce. To ease the transition, consider these steps:

- **Communicate the benefits** by proactively explaining how AI and automation will streamline processes, reduce time-consuming and tedious tasks, enhance safety, and ultimately



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enable workers to focus on higher-value responsibilities that leverage their skills and expertise. Emphasize that AI is a tool to augment — not replace — human capabilities.

- **Provide hands-on training** and onboarding programs that ensure every employee feels confident and comfortable using the new tools. Offer ongoing opportunities for skill development, and address any knowledge gaps.
- **Encourage open feedback and active involvement** to create a culture of open communication where employees feel comfortable sharing their feedback, concerns and suggestions. Involve workers in the technology selection and implementation process to foster a sense of ownership and shared success.
- **Designate and empower "tech champions,"** tech-savvy individuals, within the team to serve as champions who can provide peer-to-peer support, answer questions and assist with troubleshooting during and after implementation. These champions can play a vital role in driving adoption and fostering a positive attitude toward new technologies. When the workforce understands the benefits, adoption becomes much easier.

6. Scale Up Gradually

Once contractors see success with initial AI and automation, they can expand into more advanced applications, like these:

- **Machine learning algorithms** to analyze past project data and improve bidding accuracy.
- **Robotics and autonomous machinery for repetitive tasks** like bricklaying, concrete pouring and drywall installation. The tech can improve efficiency while reducing physical strain on workers. For example, Shelby Erectors is using robotics in the field to tie rebar, saving workers from back-breaking work.
- **Automated permit and compliance tracking** systems that streamline approvals and ensure regulatory compliance without manual intervention.

Scaling gradually ensures that each new technology is integrated smoothly without overwhelming the business.

7. Stay Updated & Adapt to Emerging Technologies

Technology evolves quickly, so it's essential for contractors to stay informed about new AI and automation advancements. Strategies to stay up to date include:

- **Attending industry conferences** to learn about the latest AI and automation solutions
- **Networking with peers** in the construction industry to exchange insights and best practices
- **Collaborating with technology providers** to receive updates on software enhancements and new features

Adopting AI and automation in construction doesn't have to be overwhelming. By starting small, leveraging industry-specific solutions and involving your team, contractors can gradually integrate these technologies into their operations without disruption. The key is to view AI and automation as tools for empowerment rather than obstacles, helping contractors build more efficient, profitable and safer projects. ▲

John Meibers is the vice president and general manager of Deltek ComputerEase, a leading provider of accounting, project management and field-to-office software for the construction industry. Prior to joining ComputerEase more than 25 years ago, Meibers spent a decade working for a large mechanical contractor. Visit deltek.com.



LEVERAGING AI TO STREAMLINE CONSTRUCTION HIRING

CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS OWNER webinar

ON DEMAND

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In this webinar, you'll learn:

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- How the labor shortage has shifted power to workers and why a new approach is essential
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SPEAKER



Fraser Patterson
Founder & CEO
Skillit

During his career, Fraser Patterson has been a skilled trade, general contractor, educator, mentor, executive and repeat contech founder.

In 2021, he founded Skillit, one of the world's first data-driven platforms dedicated to helping general and specialty contractors intelligently source and connect with a fast-growing database of vetted craft workers. As a venture-backed startup, Skillit is on a mission to use data to fix the skilled labor shortage globally.

Before SKillit, Patterson was the co-founder and CEO of Bolster, a tech-enabled general contractor that was acquired by Porch Group in 2017.

Fraser began his construction career as an apprentice carpenter in Scotland before starting his own general contracting firm in London. He attended (for a brief spell) University of East London for Anthropology and Kings College London for Pure Mathematics before construction pulled him away again.

He currently lives in New York with his wife and two children.

Inside the Processes Helping & Hurting Pros in 2025

Labor shortages, digital transformation & hacks for avoiding project delays

BY ROBERT SALAJ



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Now is as good a time as any to look at the state of the construction industry and what to expect over the coming months. Two recent Quickbase surveys of over 400 construction professionals uncover what is really happening on the jobsite, the impact of technology on productivity and how to get ahead of issues before they create a ripple effect on project timelines and budgets.

Some of the issues raised in Quickbase's 2025 State of Construction, such as the ongoing labor shortage and skills gap, were expected. For 88%, labor shortages impact their ability to complete work on time. Along with falling behind on projects, labor shortages impede the ability to win new work for 76% of survey participants. Filling the labor pool is getting harder as fewer workers enter the industry and more are retiring, leaving 82% of construction company leaders concerned about losing institutional knowledge from more experienced workers.

A closer look at some of the related challenges, such as project delays, is shedding new light into the newer ways that work gets done these days. One surprising finding was a continued overreliance on outdated processes, such as paper forms still being used to some degree by 91% of survey participants. This likely contributes to 95% of construction projects experiencing unexpected or increased costs, which resulted in exceeding project budgets.

These challenges may also explain the growing interest in using digital tools to close some of the labor gaps and spot project delays before they cut productivity and profitability. While only 12% currently use fully automated software to manage projects, a separate survey conducted by Procore found that 32% of construction professionals say they need new technology to overcome economic and industry volatility.

When Digital Transformation Helps — & — Hinders Projects

For digital transformation in construction, it's not as simple as just moving from paper to digital; it's a larger leap involving processes and employee buy-in. Yet for many construction firms, the ease of downloading digital tools and the ubiquity of project managers bringing their favorite apps to each new jobsite does offer time savings — at least in the short term.

However, there is a risk of having a glut of digital tools, especially when you have crews in the field, subcontractors coming on and off the jobsite, and different systems back in the office.

What happens is each team adapts their own way of doing things, mastering their digital tools of choice. From a strategic perspective, there are technology feature redundancies as similar products are used on various jobsites. This increases the risk of shadow IT and security breaches, along with unnecessary software subscription costs.

Then, when it comes to seeing the big picture on a project or bidding for a seven- or eight-figure requests for proposal



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(RFP), teams must scramble to pull together information from all these disconnected tools. This takes longer than most project managers anticipate and leads to overwhelm.

In the 2025 Gray Work Index by Quickbase, nearly 88% of the 400 survey participants report being overwhelmed to some degree by the amount of software solutions needed to get work done on a typical day.

The lost productivity time is significant, as 59% of respondents are spending upwards of 11 hours per week going through various digital tools and tapping colleagues for their insights so they can cobble together the information they need. This issue is known as gray work, and with it comes an inherent risk that critical data might be lost in the reconciliation process. As a result, 50% of respondents experienced project delays over the past year.

When projects are delayed and contractors can't complete their work on time, profitability is undermined, quality is compromised, and the relationship between contractors and clients is at risk. Meanwhile, rushing to catch up on that lost time leaves the workforce vulnerable to accidents.

Streamline Processes & Information for Strategic Project Management

This is why it's best to start small with a strategic digital transformation. For example, begin by creating reusable digital forms on the jobsite for activities such as signing in, documenting project status, immediately capturing incidents and more. Along with enabling better recordkeeping and the sharing of learnings among coworkers, you reduce admin and manual errors previously caused by having employees rekey handwritten notes.

Once workers get more comfortable with digital tools, you can automate more processes and document on-the-job knowledge to avoid brain drain once workers leave or retire.

To avoid having too many tools and reduce the risk of gray work, centralize information on a work management platform. This avoids confusion or questions about the accuracy of project information by making it available to project stakeholders in the office or on a jobsite.

The Future of Construction Tech

A streamlined work management platform complements existing investments in technology and sets you up to easily add newer technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI). In fact, the Gray Work Index shows that 49.42% of construction professionals are using AI tools daily, while 34.57% use them weekly. A further 70% anticipate their organizations will increase their investments in AI tools. For AI to be effective, the underlying data must be accurate.

The survey results underscore the fact that many delays, including bidding, project management and administrative, are avoidable. When every person involved in a project has current and consistent information on progress and status, their collective experience and intelligence allows them to get ahead of delays to boost profitability. ▲

Robert Salaj is director of the construction customer advisory team for Quickbase. In this role, he is responsible for construction industry advocacy and expanding construction tech by building professional apps that enable construction companies to improve operations and solve problems faster. Additionally, he is a Construction Technology Committee Member of ELECTRI International. Visit quickbase.com.



Problem-Solving With Precision

Determining the ROI of laser scanning in building construction

BY JASON HOOD

Photo Credit: Leica Geosystems

Projects are moving faster than ever, and this increased pace makes it more likely that mistakes will happen if you aren't prepared for the changing landscape.

This new reality makes it critical to understand every aspect of the jobsite at any given moment — and how it is changing from one minute to the next. The only way for mid- to large-size general contractors to stay ahead is to capture reality and make it work for their needs.

The linchpin of capturing, analyzing and presenting spatial data is the laser scanner.

Laser scanners date to the 1960s and have been used for design and engineering since the 1990s. Since then, they have become as ubiquitous on the jobsite as the hammer.

The uses for laser scanning are seemingly endless. At their most basic level, they help teams quickly capture data about a jobsite and enable an immersive, accessible and data-rich digital reality.

These tools can be mounted on tripods, handheld, built to mount on robotic devices or embedded into unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and they play a key role in reshaping how teams operate and how projects are executed.

Laser scanners allow contractors to collect accurate data, revolutionizing construction workflows by creating a single source of truth. Capturing as-built data helps increase project efficiency, ensure quality control and detect errors before installation, all of which can significantly reduce the likelihood of costly rework.

Laser scanners can capture essential data from even small sites and connect to software that facilitates modeling and data export to computer-aided design (CAD) programs. They can also be mounted on drones to capture views or larger areas.

Laser scanning technology is not just a tool but a transformative force that's changing the makeup of in-house teams and the ways companies manage construction projects. Taking the time to scan a jobsite helps verify whether designs are feasible in real-world conditions — preventing costly missteps and rework.

Every Project Is Different; Technology Is the Equalizer

Issues on the jobsite have cropped up since the construction industry's earliest days. While completely eliminating issues may be impossible, the early identification and mitigation of issues is not.

As every contractor knows, their jobs don't entail the construction of manufacturing facilities where everything produced is exactly the same. Rather, the technology for the jobsite must be able to be tailored to various needs.

Every project has challenges. Technology can help teams identify and mitigate, if not fully eliminate, those challenges.

As laser scanning becomes integral to construction, mid- to large-size general contractors increasingly need specialized in-house teams with advanced expertise. Full-time, on-site

scanning roles are now standard on forward-thinking projects because the need for continuous data collection and quality control throughout projects is growing.

While data is critical to the jobsite, it is only useful when coordinated with communication. Success requires that all stakeholders are working from the same set of data, so that when plans change, everyone is immediately aware and adjusts deliverables accordingly.

In-house virtual design and construction (VDC) teams are crucial for working with fast-tracked designs, where construction starts before the design is complete. Because the project's design is evolving even after the first dirt is turned, these projects are harder to manage than the traditional design-bid-build process.

The critical component of making VDC a reality is precision laser scanning, which captures minute details that traditional data capture methods might miss.

Increasingly, companies are turning to digital twins, virtual replicas of physical assets.

Companies should define how they plan to use the asset and develop a strategy to make sure everyone — from architects to contractors — understands the specific goals and data requirements.

Easy to Deploy & Use While Solving a Critical Issue

VDC and laser scanning are becoming standard, with companies spending more on training and equipment, and integrating them into project budgets. Technology allows construction and design services to happen simultaneously to meet tight project timelines.

The return on investment (ROI) is clear: laser scanning enhances project outcomes, mitigates risk and empowers teams to make informed, data-driven decisions.

It's no secret that the construction industry has faced a labor shortage for years. As older workers leave the industry and younger ones take their place, a more technologically advanced industry will help solve the labor shortage in two ways.

First, technology is a transformative force multiplier for the industry, enabling organizations to accomplish more with fewer workers. Additionally, the adoption and deployment of technology will help attract workers who have been surrounded by technology their entire lives and are seeking to work in a technologically advanced field.

Construction workers should no longer be viewed as people who just use a hammer. In reality, the industry is as technologically advanced as ever, and tools like laser scanners are helping the industry advance.

The Future Is Bright

Every day, contractors face a diverse range of projects and challenges, and no two days are the same. Contractors must enter every project with the understanding that it will be different from the last one.

Just as the jobsite is continually evolving and changing from one day to the next, so is the technology available for contractors to use.

Technologies such as robotics, laser scanning and drones are all making a significant impact, and their use is likely to grow. Then there's artificial intelligence (AI), which is poised to bring about the biggest change in the industry in at least a generation.

The use of these technologies is going to be as diverse as the solutions. The data that laser scanners collect today will help power the insights AI delivers tomorrow.

Laser scanning is a key tool in making the future jobsite safe by aiding in the identification of risks as early as possible. Other technologies can then mitigate some of these risks and ensure the industry is well-positioned for a successful future.

Measuring the ROI

Every solution is only as good as its return on investment. However, ROI has different meanings for different roles, and demonstrating value requires looking at it role by role.

Executives generally care about the financial impact, while field teams value how easy a solution is to use and how much time it will save. Successfully measuring the ROI of any technology requires teams to align with leadership early on to define success and the metrics to calculate it.

Many stakeholders focus on up-front costs. The key metrics for a solution like laser scanning should be the performance assurance and peace of mind it delivers, the level of rework it eliminates and the improved project outcomes.

No matter how you slice it, laser scanning ultimately saves time and money. And when everyone on the team can see the benefit of a solution like a laser scanner, it's time to make it an integral part of the jobsite. ▲

Jason Hood is the building construction industry manager at Leica Geosystems. With over 20 years of experience in the construction industry, he has focused on protecting lives and assets through consulting in innovative and technical solutions. Currently at Leica Geosystems, he provides reality capture solutions for as-built conditions, as well as digital layout solutions that help ensure worker safety and risk mitigation. Visit leica-geosystems.com.





Photo Credit: Bobcat

BIG or go COMPACT

Size matters when it comes to your excavator

BY RYAN SAUNDERS

Excavators are essential tools for today's construction sites. Whether you're digging trenches, lifting heavy loads or preparing complex jobsite terrain, they get the job done. While the goal remains the same — maximizing productivity and efficiency — the growing range of machine sizes, configurations and capabilities can make choosing the right excavator a challenge. Both compact and larger excavators deliver significant benefits when matched with the right task.

Before narrowing in on an excavator model, take the time to review specifications, compare tail swing configurations, evaluate transportation logistics and, if possible, even run a demo. To help you zero in on the best size for your next project, I have outlined five key considerations to guide your selection process.

1. Jobsite Space & Application

One of the first and most important factors in choosing the right excavator is your specific jobsite environment. Every inch counts when you're working in tight or congested areas. Compact excavators boast lighter weights, minimal tail swing and narrower widths, letting operators easily maneuver around buildings, fences and other structures.

Tail swing refers to the amount of overhang of movement an excavator's counterweight (rear end) occupies while rotating beyond the widths of its tracks. Three primary types of tail swing configurations are zero tail swing, minimal tail swing and conventional tail swing. Many compact and larger excavator models offer zero and/or minimal tail swing. This allows for greater mobility and is ideal for projects with space restrictions, where maneuverability and stability are both important.

Compact excavators, which are typically 10 tons and under, are perfect for navigating tight spaces like residential properties, landscaping jobs and smaller commercial sites. Some compact models even feature retractable undercarriages that offer more versatility in tight access points. Digging depths for compact excavators range from anywhere between 6 feet and 15 feet, with bucket digging force ranging between 1,856 and 15,130 pound-force (lbf).

In contrast, larger excavators excel on wide-open jobsites with

heavy lifting or digging demands. These machines, often weighing more than 10 tons, provide the raw power needed for high-production tasks like commercial development, rail and roadway work, or demolition. However, a larger excavator's size, weight and steel tracks may pose challenges to sensitive surfaces or landscaped areas, making it vital to match your machine to your environment.

2. Versatility & Attachments

So, how do you envision putting your excavator to work? Compact excavators excel when paired with attachments that expand their utility far beyond just digging. From grading and compacting to land clearing and drilling, a huge variety of attachments are available. Plus, many compact machines can be equipped with quick couplers that allow operators to switch tools without even leaving the cab, which boosts efficiency and broadens the range of tasks your machine can handle.

Larger excavators also support limited attachments and quick couplers, and their added power can make a significant difference in high-load applications, such as breaking concrete or lifting heavy materials. Choosing a machine that supports the attachments your work demands — whether compact or large — will directly influence your productivity and profit.

Do you already own or use other compact or large equipment in your fleet? If so, what attachments and couplers do you utilize? Taking inventory of your existing equipment and attachments can help you determine the right selection as some manufacturers make it easier to share attachments between brands.

3. Transportation Requirements

Size doesn't just dictate what a machine can do on the ground; it also impacts how easily you can get it from one jobsite to another. Compact excavators are generally haulable using a 3/4-ton pickup truck or a 10,000-pound trailer, making them a more flexible and convenient choice for contractors who are constantly moving between locations. Their lower cab heights and lighter overall weight mean you'll rarely need special permits or complex transportation logistics.

Conversely, larger excavators likely require a heavy-duty truck-and-trailer setup. Larger equipment may need a 20,000- to 30,000-pound trailer or larger. You'll also need to factor in load ratings, bridge and road restrictions and whether a special permit is required — all critical considerations for your project's timeline and budget. Operators should review their vehicle's towing capacity and the trailering requirements within their area, as they vary from state to state.

4. Project Frequency & Budget

Buying a new excavator is a substantial investment, so understanding how often you'll use the machine, and for what specific jobs, is important. If most of your jobs require smaller or compact equipment, renting a large excavator for those larger, one-off projects might make more financial sense.

Many contractors also find it beneficial to rent a large machine for specific projects and test it under real jobsite conditions before committing to a purchase. Not only does this offer a chance to evaluate comfort, performance and versatility, but rental expenses are typically tax-deductible, providing potential financial advantages over ownership.

5. Dealer Support

An operator's accessibility to trusted dealer support can influence the decision on choosing between different sized excavators. Smaller excavators can be easily transported and dropped off at a dealership for more extensive reviews and repairs, whereas partnering with a dealer that has a service truck that comes to the operator may be more ideal for larger equipment.

Additionally, one of the biggest advantages of partnering with a trusted dealer network is access to trained technicians with access to the latest information, resources and tools concerning your excavator(s). They know what to look for, and they have the proper training in the latest emissions standards, calibrating machines and checking diagnostics with tools and software that are typically not available to customers. Dealerships also stock original equipment manufacturer (OEM) parts. Using genuine parts helps extend the life of your machine and will give you peace of mind that your excavator(s) will continue to function properly.

Choosing the Right Fit for Your Fleet

Different sized excavators bring unique strengths to the table, and the right fit depends on your application, jobsite, transportation options and overall workload. Ultimately, all excavators are exceptional workhorses. But choosing the right size isn't just about preference; it's about optimizing your jobsite for success. Select the machine that matches your environment, complements your crew's needs and aligns with your long-term goals, because in excavation, size truly does matter. ▲

Ryan Saunders is a senior marketing specialist for Bobcat Company. He is a creative marketing professional passionate about educating construction company owners and operators about solutions that create new opportunities for their businesses. Visit bobcat.com.





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It's About Time

7 controls for proactive construction scheduling

BY MICHAEL A. PINK

"How do we solve the construction scheduling problem?"

It's a complex question, one that many companies in this industry find themselves discussing without really making progress. Yet tackling this problem is crucial, not just to avoid delays but also to drive profitability and consistency across the board.

Construction projects are messy by nature. You're dealing with everything from changing site conditions and last-minute design tweaks to resource shortages and a bunch of stakeholders all pulling in different directions. It's tempting to think, "That's just how it is." But here's the truth: A solid critical path method (CPM) schedule is the best tool you've got for managing all that chaos. The goal isn't just to avoid delays — it's to boost profits by leaning on proven scheduling techniques and best practices that actually work.

Why Scheduling Is a Huge Pain

The roots of the construction scheduling problem run deep. While CPM scheduling has been around for decades, scheduling best practices have become less applied over time. Back in the 1990s, many companies increasingly handed scheduling tasks to untrained staff or outside consultants, marking a critical shift: Schedules were now seen as tasks rather than project management tools. This shift reduced visibility and accountability, leading to inconsistent and uninformed scheduling practices.

In my previous career as a consultant, I saw this breakdown play out time and again. Projects would start with a plan and budget, only to hit roadblocks that sent them off track. Each project had its own complexities, yet they all shared a common pattern: With the schedule sidelined, teams lacked the data and insights to make informed decisions. This approach led to increased delays, budget overruns and, ultimately, strained relationships. The solution wasn't just about creating better schedules but also building a proactive process to keep projects on track from start to finish.

7 Controls for Proactive Construction Scheduling

Based on my experience in the field and years spent helping companies navigate troubled projects, we developed seven essential scheduling controls that directly address core issues:

1. Understand CPM Fundamentals

Understanding CPM principles is essential for successful scheduling. This goes beyond simply knowing how to operate CPM scheduling software; it involves a deeper understanding of several key areas:

- *The CPM algorithm* — Understanding how CPM calculates the longest path of dependent activities (the critical path) helps identify potential delays through float values.
- *Interpreting data points* — Learning to interpret key data points such as early start/finish, late start/finish and total float.

- *Making informed decisions* — The value of CPM-generated data lies in its ability to inform timely decisions. Knowing how to use this data allows stakeholders to address issues proactively.
- *Best practices* — Adopting best practices in scheduling ensures accurate calculations and reliable information.
- *Essential metrics* — Focusing on the metrics critical to the project's success, such as schedule variance and earned value analysis (EVA), provide more insight into project health and performance.
- *Recognizing pitfalls* — Spotting potential pitfalls, such as mislinked activities, poor task dependencies or unrealistic timelines enables teams to adjust and avoid future issues.

It's important to note that not everyone involved with the schedule needs to be a master scheduler. However, all team members should have a basic understanding of scheduling principles — and, more importantly, know how to apply that knowledge effectively. Practical skills are often developed through hands-on experience and can be further strengthened by structured guidance.

2. Establish Standards

A standardized scheduling process creates a common framework that all teams can follow, reducing conflicting data and ensuring early visibility into potential issues. With established standards in place, teams can detect and address issues such as delays, bottlenecks or extra work more effectively, leading to improved project performance. Plus, consistency helps refine the schedule and improves overall project efficiency. Key areas for standardization in the schedule control process include:

- Schedule quality
- Updating process
- Analytics
- Reporting
- Information access

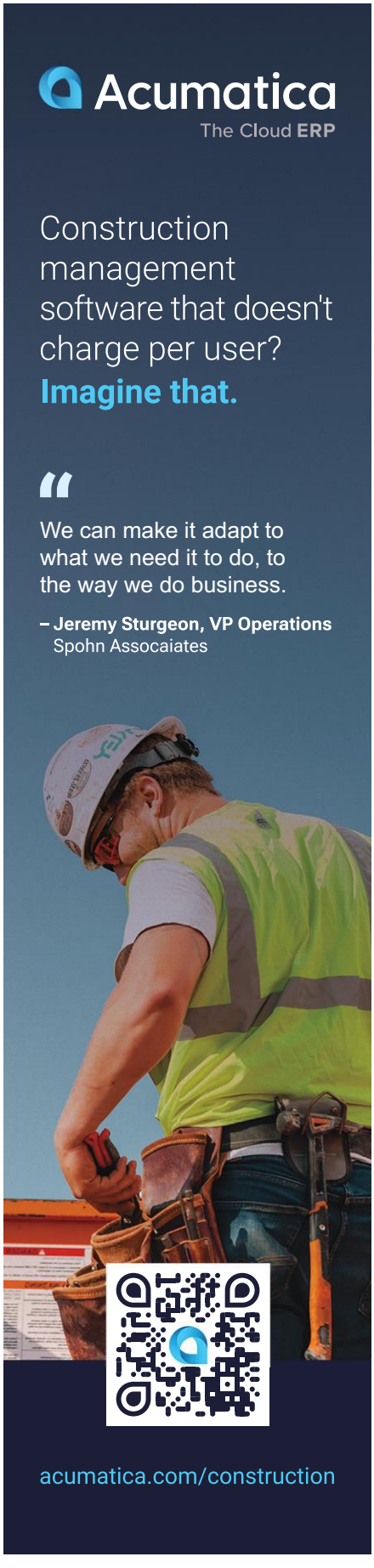
3. Ensure Visibility

Having standards is only effective if there is accountability at all levels of the organization. Without accountability, even the best standards won't be followed consistently. This requires visibility into the scheduling process and buy-in from all teams, not just executives.

- *Executives* — Accountability starts at the top, so executives must actively support the scheduling process by setting expectations and regularly checking compliance.
- *Operations* — Operations teams must ensure that what's planned is accurately reflected in on-site execution.
- *Project controls* — Serving as the bridge between the field and leadership, project controls teams need standards to track progress, monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) and communicate risk to stakeholders.
- *Schedulers* — Schedulers play a vital role in maintaining accuracy and transparency, identifying potential risks and ensuring that all teams are aligned with the same information.
- *Site teams* — Standards must be practical and aligned with site teams' capacity to execute tasks effectively. When site teams understand and trust the scheduling process, they are more likely to follow the standards consistently.

4. Update Schedules Regularly

Weekly updates ensure that your schedule remains a reliable management tool, and they help you spot risks early. Frequent schedule updates are one of the most effective controls for maintaining schedule accuracy. Ideally, updates should occur weekly or biweekly; at a minimum, they should occur monthly. Upload each update to a shared platform that enables superintendents to break down master schedule activities into more detailed tasks for continuous alignment between the high-level plan and on-the-ground execution.



By updating the schedule more frequently, you gain:

- More accurate start dates, finish dates and percent completes.
- Easier mitigation of a one- or two-day delay on a weekly basis compared to mitigating a one- or two-week delay on a monthly basis (with less accurate information).

Frequent updates also create a stronger connection between the site team and the schedule, encouraging a more thoughtful and proactive approach to problem-solving. Instead of managing with limited visibility and potentially making decisions based on outdated or incomplete information, teams can address issues as they arise, reducing frustration and bias. Implementing a culture that values regular updates is key to maintaining schedule accuracy and achieving project goals.

5. Leverage Analytics

While standardizing scheduling processes is essential, reliable and consistent schedule data analysis is equally important. Inconsistent data interpretation can lead to misaligned decisions and conflicting responses to project challenges. To avoid misinterpretation, implement a clear framework for analyzing schedule data. This framework should distill complex information into actionable insights that align with the specific needs of each project team.

Consistent analytics enable teams to quickly interpret key performance metrics and use these insights for timely data-driven decisions. Standardizing how data is analyzed also makes it easier to benchmark and compare performance across multiple projects. With consistent analytics in place, teams can identify trends, forecast potential issues and develop preemptive strategies. However, analytics alone are not enough to solve the scheduling problem. A comprehensive control process is needed — one that aligns high-level strategic goals with day-to-day field operations. A critical part of this process is ensuring the data is reported consistently across the organization and used to drive decisions at every level.

6. Distribute Progress & Performance Reports

Once the schedule is updated and your preferred analytics are determined, the next step is to synthesize this information into a schedule progress and performance report. This report should distill key data from both the schedule updates and project analytics into an easily understandable format for all internal stakeholders, as well as owner clients. The goal is to transparently

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communicate project performance, including any risks. By synthesizing complex data points — such as variances, critical path delays, project progress, schedule changes and trade performance — the report allows decision-makers at all levels to quickly take informed actions.

Consistency in reporting is key. When reports are standardized and distributed regularly, stakeholders across the project have access to the same reliable information, ensuring everyone is on the same page. This makes it easier to track progress, address issues and meet project goals. The three key components of a schedule progress and performance report are:

- Analyzing progress, performance and delays for better decision-making.
- Managing schedule changes and compression to minimize disruptions.
- Ensuring comprehensive documentation for transparency and accountability.

7. Be Transparent, Objective & Honest

A significant challenge in construction project management, particularly in scheduling, is the prevalence of "optimism bias." This tendency leads teams to underestimate the time required to complete tasks, resulting in overly optimistic schedules that do not account for the inherent risks and complexities of construction projects.

Activity durations and schedule changes then reflect best-case scenarios rather than realistic ones. Project teams often find themselves relying on these optimistic projections, which can lead to increased stress and a pervasive fear of failure. The pressure of unrealistic schedules can even exacerbate mental health issues, contributing to workforce challenges and labor shortages. To counter this, develop baseline schedules grounded in historical data and past performance metrics. Objective analysis of historical data should guide schedule development and be used as a benchmark when implementing changes to address delays. Without a process that incorporates this data, projects face heightened risks of mismanagement and inefficiencies. ▲

Michael A. Pink is CEO of SmartPM Technologies, a leading construction data analysis tool designed to enhance schedule quality, assess risk, review performance and control project outcomes. Follow him on LinkedIn at linkedin.com/in/mapink. Visit smartpm.com.





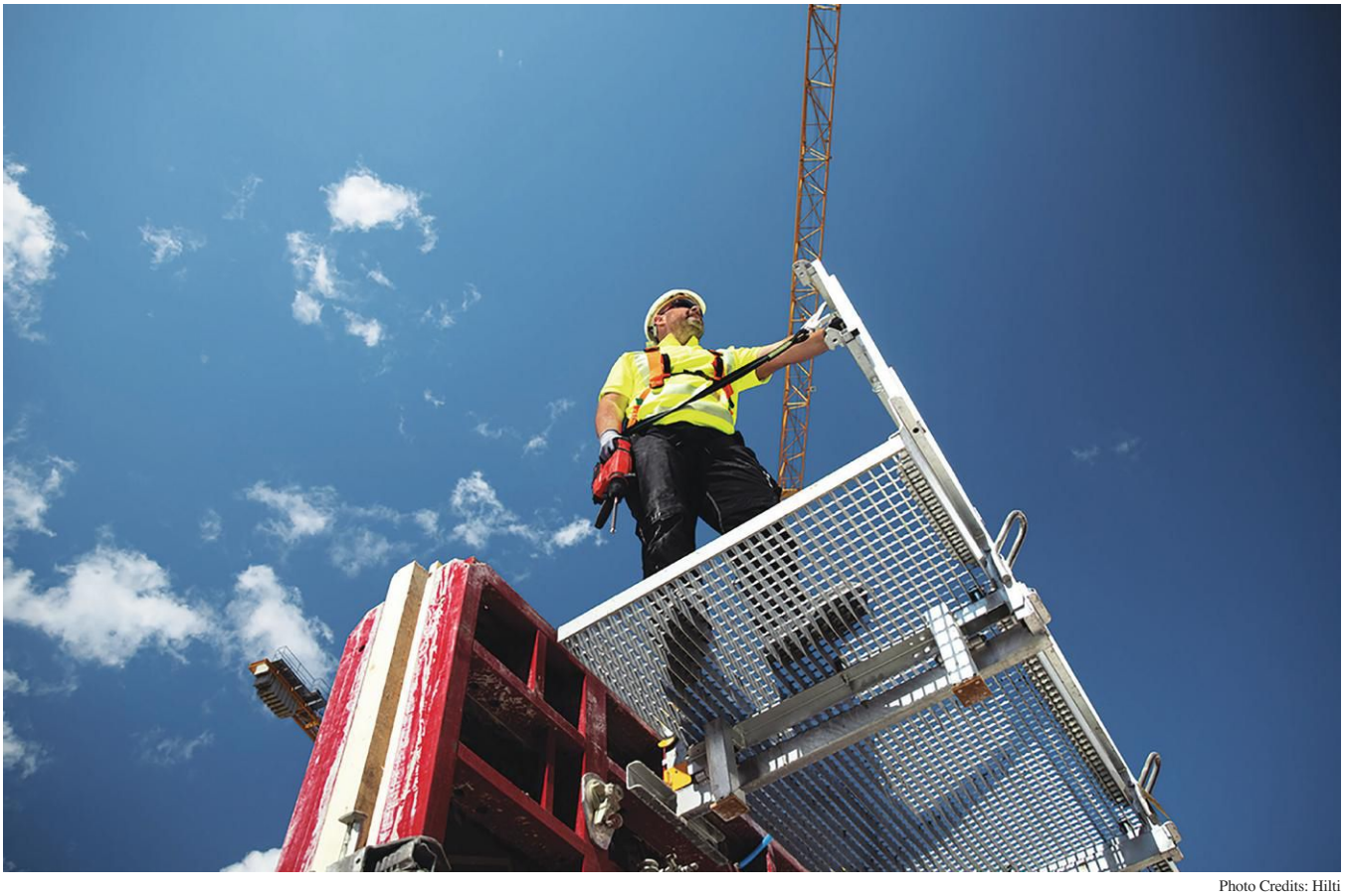


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Health & Wellness Isn't a Trend — It's a Necessity

Exploring tech tools & support that enhance worker safety

BY KHADIJA TALLEY

The construction industry has a bad rap: "dangerous," "unsafe," "unhealthy." Beyond that, work-related injuries and illnesses hurt not just people but team morale, productivity and bottom lines. Unsafe working conditions increase downtime and make jobsites unappealing to young workers, which doesn't help alleviate the industry's overall decline in productivity and worker shortfall (266,000 industry job openings in the U.S. as of April 2025, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics).

In addition to jobsite risks, contractors face compliance challenges. Regulatory bodies constantly update safety standards to meet the demands of bigger, more complicated projects; new working methods; new technologies and materials; fewer skilled workers; and ever-shrinking deadlines that demand higher productivity and faster results.

On top of the physical risks, companies must navigate a growing maze of safety regulations. Earlier this year, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) introduced several new updates aimed to enhance jobsite safety, with stricter penalties in place for violations. While this may feel like a step in the right direction, compliance doesn't always equate to the safest option, and it can also compromise

productivity — creating a risky juggling act for managers trying to meet both expectations. Regulations are a necessity in the construction industry; however, they are often written to satisfy the baseline. A genuine commitment to health and safety often demands exceeding the minimum criteria.

Running a safer and healthier jobsite is not just better for your on-site workforce — it's also better for business.

There are effective strategies that can simultaneously help prevent injuries and illnesses, reduce costs from workers' compensation premiums and the like, and increase productivity — all while keeping workers happier, more engaged and more committed to your team's collaborative success.

Some examples of these strategies include adopting technological innovations in tools and processes, changing working methods and implementing effective management strategies that start at the top, with leaders, managers and especially CEOs demonstrating — not just expressing — their commitment to the health and wellness of employees.



Image 1. Hollow drill bits, cordless vacuums and tool-integrated dust removal systems can be utilized to create work environments that are virtually dust-free.

That starts with management fostering a culture and workplace environment that prioritizes team health and safety above all else. The philosophy should then trickle down to employees looking out for one another every day and taking co-ownership of jobsite safety.

Leaders can enable a people-based safety culture by implementing regular injury-prevention activities such as



near-miss analyses, safety inspections, worker-led committees and worker-established key performance indicators (KPIs) for measuring safety. This doesn't require a huge financial investment, but instead relies on group alignment, process execution and personal accountability. For a manager, that's all in a day's work.

Managers can also lead by adopting a health, safety and environment (HSE) strategy that takes advantage of technological innovations. Investing in products and services that help reduce jobsite risk is a proactive approach that can also help potentially keep companies a few steps ahead of regulators.

Employees respond positively to genuine commitments to improving the health and safety culture, and business leaders who take an active role in executing effective safety strategies can expect a more engaged workforce, which leads to quicker adoption that can help measurably reduce injuries and downtime.

How Can Technology Help?

Innovations in software, tool development and engineering can all contribute to jobsite safety. Applications such as drilling and anchoring in concrete, for example, can be substituted with innovative fastening systems to virtually avoid dust, vibration and potential ergonomic strain altogether. And if hammer drilling is unavoidable, an OSHA-compliant dust-extraction system can help remove almost all the dust directly from the bit.

With new solutions hitting the market almost constantly, companies can equip their staff with tools that work smarter and safer, while giving workers assurance that they're protected and valued.

One solution is using cordless tools with higher performance-to-weight ratios, meaning they're lighter and more comfortable to use, especially when working overhead. However, comfort shouldn't come at the expense of power — the effort required to use them should remain manageable.

In addition to jobsite-specific innovations, back-office technology can also help businesses move away from reactive, ineffective organizational processes. Operations teams can look to proactive, cloud-based construction management apps to tighten up common administrative inefficiencies and blind spots, including training certification tracking and personal protective equipment (PPE) management. These solutions can alert staff when trainings need to be renewed to maintain compliance and track PPE stock to help supervisors ensure dust masks, gloves and protective eyewear are always available on-site.

Support Worker Well-Being With Tools That Combine Performance & Ergonomics

- Lighter, more ergonomically friendly and comfortable tools
- More productive tools that reduce trigger time
- Power tools with vibration reduction technology such as active vibration reduction (AVR)
- Exoskeletons for assisting with lifting and overhead work
- Automated machines for dangerous or repetitive tasks
- Rig-mounted wet diamond drills with automatic feed

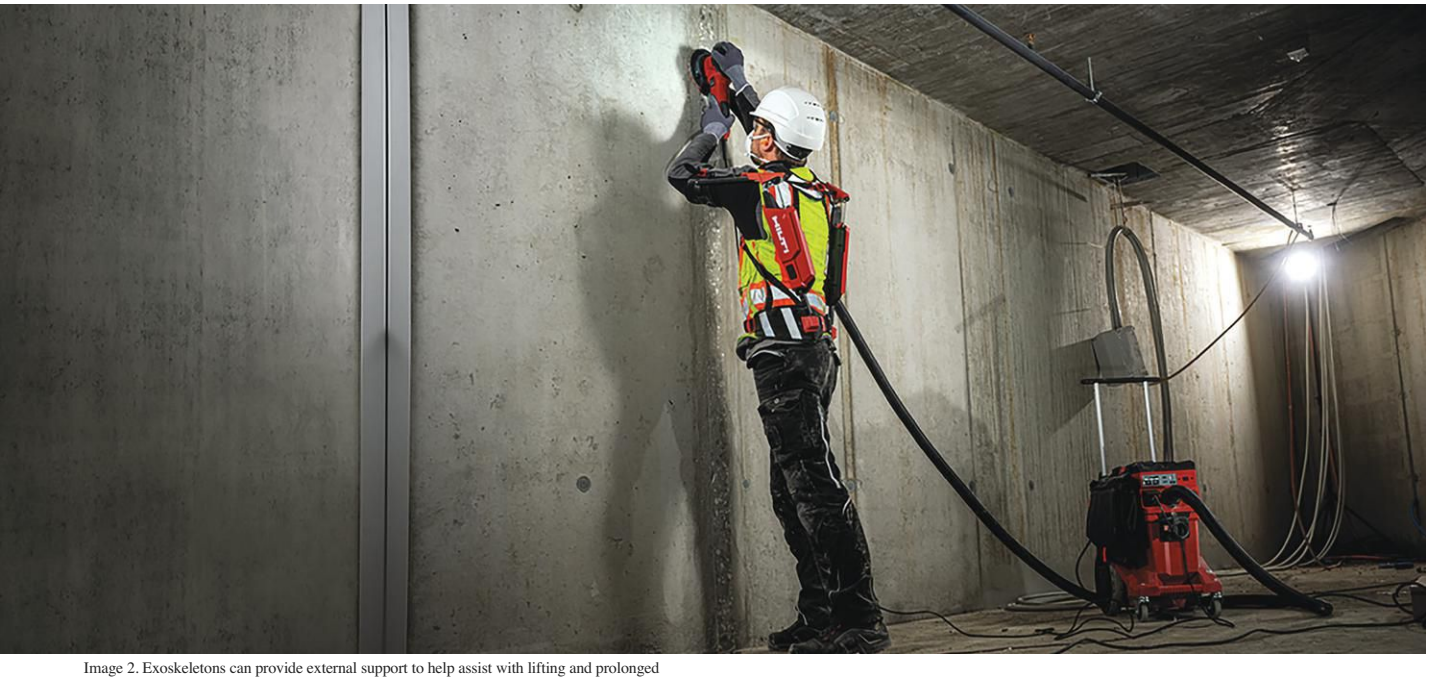


Image 2. Exoskeletons can provide external support to help assist with lifting and prolonged overhead work.

Strengthen Safety Culture With Modernized Solutions

- Tool-connected mobile apps that provide dust and noise ratings, on-demand safety training modules and trigger-time recommendations
- Asset management software for tracking worker qualifications and certifications, providing tool maintenance alerts, enabling transparency into PPE stock availability, and activating smoother repair or replacement of damaged/dangerous tools
- Cordless tool systems can help eliminate the weight, mess and trip hazards of cords, hoses and compressors

Help Make Dust Control Effortless — Not Optional

- Tool-integrated dust removal systems that extract virtually all dust from the source
- Hollow drill bits that integrate better with dust extraction systems
- Powerful cordless vacuum cleaners for more convenient extraction and cleanup
- Building information modeling (BIM) processes that identify ways to avoid drilling (e.g., by specifying cast-in anchors)

Reduce Risk By Adopting Built-In Protection

- Torque-control technology that helps prevent stuck tools from uncontrolled spinning such as active torque control
- Tether-ready tools to help avoid falling objects when working at heights
- Dead-man and touch-activated switches for stopping tools when the user lets go
- Battery-powered fastening tools can replace powder-actuated solutions, helping eliminate cartridges, tool recoil and sparks
- Pole tools for overhead installs mean fewer lifts, fewer ladders and fewer falls

The real world can be unpredictable, but in theory, if every hazard can be mitigated then every injury can be avoided. With a forward-thinking,safety-focused culture, purpose-built tools and technological support to address today's toughest challenges, construction companies can go from dreading compliance audits and accident reports to embracing a new era of healthier, more productive jobsites. ▲

Khadija Talley is a certified safety professional (CSP) with 15 years of experience leading HSE strategies. As Hilti's health and safety manager, Talley drives innovative, customer-focused programs, trainings and product marketing initiatives, and is passionate about using technology and education as tools to build proactive, safety-first cultures. Visit hilti.com.





New Products To Watch

Selected by the editors of Construction Business Owner, these new-to-the-market products are just a few of our favorites recently released to the construction community. Stay tuned in every issue to find out what you need to know about the latest gear, solutions & industry-leading innovations.



▲ KEEN UTILITY

Synchro

Released: 3/1/25

Availability: U.S. & Canadian markets

What's new? Built with the newest KEEN.ReGEN+ midsole foam returning over 60% energy with every step, the Synchro propels workflow and features a redesigned carbon toe with a sleek, nonbulbous fit and KEEN.LOCKFIT technology in the heel that provides lateral stability. Other performance features include a sticky rubber outsole that increases grip and an athletic mesh upper featuring a KEEN.DRY waterproof, breathable membrane for indoor and outdoor versatility. Built to handle nonstop workloads.

Specs: Each shoe is 17.21 ounces. Shaft height: 2.95 inches. Heel height: 1.57 inches. Heel-to-toe drop: 0.59 inches. Style number: 1030316.



▲ PHILIPPI-HAGENBUCH

Zero-Emission Steel

Released: 4/2/25

Availability: U.S., Canadian & European markets

What's new? Philippi-Hagenbuch Inc. is expanding the steel options for its custom solutions portfolio by offering zero-emission SSAB Zero steel for its haul truck equipment. SSAB Zero uses recycled steel, which supports the circular economy.

Specs: Zero-emission steel is available for Philippi-Hagenbuch's entire line of engineered-to-order products, but is most impactful on complete body replacements, such as HiVol Bodies, HiVol Water Tanks and Rear Eject Bodies. Philippi-Hagenbuch's zero-emission solutions provide the same benefits and specifications as those manufactured with traditional SSAB steel, and do not compromise in terms of durability or abrasion resistance.



▲ RANGER DESIGN

Trazer Utility System

Released: 3/4/25

Availability: U.S. & Canadian markets

What's new? The Trazer Utility System is a comprehensive truck utility system. Razer is a fully modular, forklift-loadable truck bed rack and toolbox storage system designed for professionals who need gear that works as hard as they do. Unlike traditional one-size-fits-all upfits, Trazer is built to adapt. With its aluminum construction, late-point configurability and seamless accessory integration, it's engineered to maximize cargo capacity, protect tools and keep jobsites running.

Specs: Features versatile extrusion channels for added functionality and forklift compatibility for effortless loading and unloading:

- RRB-2055 Aluminum Truck Rack for 5 1/2-foot short bed
- RRB-2065 Aluminum Truck Rack for 6 1/2-foot standard bed
- RRB-2080 Aluminum Truck Rack for 8-foot long bed



▲ BOSCH POWER TOOLS

18V Brushless ½-Inch Mid Torque Impact Wrench (GDS18V-350)

Released: 6/4/25

Availability: North American market

What's new? This compact tool delivers high power-to-size ratio for use in tight spaces. Users can control max torque and speed with three settings. Auto Bolt Release stops rotation when there is no load on the tool to help prevent dropping bolts during removal.

Specs: The brushless motor delivers up to 258 foot-pounds of fastening torque and 410 foot-pounds of max breakaway torque. Easy-to-use interface offers intuitive access to modes, speed-settings, tool-status feedback and LED light control. Friction ring and pin hole allow for quick socket changes and a secure fit, and a belt clip keeps the wrench close.



▲ CATERPILLAR

Cat 980 GC Wheel Loader

Released: 7/14/25

Availability: Global markets

What's new? This wheel loader offers low fuel consumption with an on-demand fan, load-sensing hydraulics, intuitive controls and Performance Series buckets. Easy to own and simple to operate, the new wheel loader is an economical solution for a broad range of applications.

Specs: Performance Series buckets use a system-based approach to balance bucket shape with the machine's lift and tilt capacity, weight and linkage. The bucket design improves material retention and reduces dig time with build options that include general purpose, flat floor, heavy duty rock, coal and light material. Ladders are standard on both machine sides, providing easy access to the cab from the left-hand side and to service points from the right-hand side. Extended windows with wide, flat and distortion-free front windshield combined with rearview mirrors with spot mirrors offer clear visibility to the jobsite.



▲ JLG INDUSTRIES INC.

Rapid Replaceable Platform

Released: 7/2/25

Availability: U.S. market

What's new? The Rapid Replaceable Platform allows for quick and efficient servicing of boom lift platforms in the field with minimal interruption, helping operators to increase uptime. Its innovative design enables damaged platforms to be removed and installed in a fraction of the time compared to traditional methods, keeping machines on the job and reducing costly downtime.

Specs: Includes center storage tray, self-closing gates, and Dual USB-A and USB-C charger as standard. Tool clips are located on both sides of the console box with a 22-pound capacity. Equipped with an LED light beneath the console box to illuminate the platform.





▲ SUBSITE ELECTRONICS

GeoRanger XR Series

Released: 6/26/25

Availability: U.S. market

What's new? This new generation of ground penetrating radar systems is engineered to revolutionize utility locating for contractors and field professionals. The series includes the GeoRanger XR and the GeoRanger XR2. Both systems are designed to identify both shallow and deep utilities — including those without tracer wires — in a single pass, delivering precision and efficiency.

Specs: The XR is equipped with dual-frequency antennas. The 750-megahertz (MHz) antenna detects objects up to 10 feet deep, while the 350-MHz antenna reaches depths of 20 feet, ensuring thorough and reliable utility locating. The XR2 features integrated GPS mapping with RTK correction, achieving up to 2-centimeter-level accuracy for precise location data. Both systems feature adjustable cart suspension, which enables smooth operation over rough or uneven terrain, ensuring consistent data quality in diverse environments.

▼ MGT NORTH AMERICA

GXH50 Backpack Concrete Vibrator

Released: 6/10/25

Availability: North American market

What's new? This ergonomic internal vibrator is designed to meet the demands of construction professionals. Ideal for small- to medium-sized projects, the GXH50 delivers high-frequency vibration through a flexible shaft system, efficiently eliminating air pockets and ensuring optimal concrete compaction. Its backpack-mounted design, paired with a Honda GXH50 4-stroke engine, offers operator mobility, comfort and productivity on the jobsite.

Specs: The lightweight backpack frame includes an ergonomic harness to maximize maneuverability and operator comfort. The shaft system is available in multiple lengths (3 feet to 20 feet) and compatible with heads from 1 inch to 2.25 inches. This machine operates between 9,000–12,000 vibrations per minute.



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❑ 04 Water, Sewer and Utility Construction
❑ 05 Heavy Construction
❑ 06 Concrete Work
❑ 07 Excavation Work
❑ 08 Wrecking and Demolition Work
❑ 13 Architecture, Engineering and Construction Management Services
❑ 11 Consulting Contractor
❑ 99 Other (please specify)

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❑ 12 Engineer, Architect
❑ 06 Consultant
❑ 99 Other (please specify)

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(Check only one)
❑ 01 Less than $500,000
❑ 02 $500,001 – $1,000,000
❑ 03 $1,000,001 – $2,500,000
❑ 04 $2,500,001 – $5,000,000
❑ 05 $5,000,001 – $10,000,000
❑ 06 $10,000,001 – $20,000,000
❑ 07 $20,000,001 – $50,000,000
❑ 08 More than $50,000,000

4. Which of the following products/services are you planning to buy during the next 12 months?
(Check all that apply)
❑ 01 Earthmoving Equipment
❑ 02 Trucks, Trailers and Accessories
❑ 03 Compact Equipment
❑ 04 Lifting and Hoisting Equipment
❑ 05 Safety Equipment and Apparel
❑ 06 Attachments
❑ 07 Concrete and Paving Equipment
❑ 08 Survey and Site Prep
❑ 09 Compressors, Generators and Pumps
❑ 10 Financing and Accounting Services
❑ 11 Software and Technology
❑ 12 Insurance and Bonding
❑ 13 Training and Education
❑ 14 Telecommunications
❑ 16 Greases, Lubricants and Filters
❑ 17 Jobsite Lighting
❑ 18 Building Supplies
❑ 19 Rental Equipment
❑ 21 GPS Equipment and Security

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Annual Value of Construction Put in Place

June 2023/2024/2025 Annual Rate Comparison

This chart compares the two previous years' total value of construction put in place to an annual forecast based on June 2025 figures. (Millions of dollars. Totals may not add up perfectly due to rounding.)

	2023	2024	2025
Total Private Construction	**1,516,910**	**1,664,594**	**1,621,932**
Residential	856,302	927,986	883,089
Nonresidential	660,607	736,608	738,844
Total Public Construction	**421,447**	**483,850**	**514,278**
Residential	10,106	11,820	12,004
Nonresidential	411,342	472,030	502,273
TOTAL Construction	**1,938,357**	**2,148,444**	**2,136,210**

**Seasonally Adjusted Annual Rates. Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

$2,136,210

JUNE 2025 TOTAL ANNUAL VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION PUT IN PLACE

"Business conditions were soft nationwide in June, with a slight billing increase in the South for the first time since October," said Kermit Baker, Ph.D., AIA chief economist. "Other regions saw declining billings, though at a slower pace. While all specializations experienced softer billings, the decline slowed for commercial/industrial and institutional firms. Multifamily firms faced the weakest conditions, with further declines."

AIA Architectural Billings Index (ABI)

National			*Regional - Billings				*Sectors - Billings			
Month	Billings	Inquiries	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	Multifamily Residential	Commercial/ Industrial	Institutional	Mixed
Jan-25	45.6	51.4	41.1	45.6	46.0	48.8	45.0	43.1	47.4	44.3
Feb-25	45.5	47.8	41.3	45.2	47.6	48.1	46.1	46.9	46.4	42.1
Mar-25	44.1	47.7	40.5	45.5	48.3	43.0	40.3	45.1	46.2	46.1
Apr-25	43.2	48.0	40.2	44.4	46.2	42.1	40.8	40.5	46.3	47.6
May-25	47.2	51.4	43.6	43.5	49.2	44.3	46.1	43.8	46.2	45.4
Jun-25	46.8	53.6	46.5	45.7	50.6	45.8	43.8	47.4	49.2	45.5

For more information on the index or to subscribe to the complete historical data going back to 1995 for your internal analysis, **please contact economics@aia.org.** The ABI presents monthly construction billings data, using a base score of 50. A score of more than 50 indicates a growth from the previous month, and a score of less than 50 indicates a contraction from the previous month. A score of 50 indicates no change. Source: The American Institute of Architects (AIA), Architecture Billings Index (ABI).

*Regional and Sectoral indexes are three-month moving averages, due to small sample size. All data is seasonally adjusted.
**Every January, the AIA research department updates the seasonal factors used to calculate the ABI, resulting in a revision of recent ABI values.



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