# Construction Management Software Buyer's Guide

Step-by-step guidance to help businesses make better software decisions

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# Introduction

Construction businesses know they must change to meet the demands of their clients and the wider market. This means fundamental shifts in ways of working and how they use technology.

Our 2023 How We Build Now report found that 44% of UK and Ireland construction businesses plan to introduce a construction management platform in the next 12 months, with another 12% already describing themselves as "digital-first" businesses. But nearly half of the companies we surveyed said they had "only just begun" their digital transformation journey.

One of the biggest hurdles is choosing the right software solution to support this process of transformation. Leaders and decision makers in the industry know they can't put off this choice for too long, but the way forward is often far from clear.

There are hundreds of different software solutions that promise to solve a single issue. But choosing multiple tools leads to a tech stack that doesn't integrate and can easily result in:

- Disparate data being collected from different software

- Documentation that requires double entry from software to software

- Multiple sign-ins across a suite of apps with different logins

- Wasted time and increased administration trying to use multiple sources of siloed data to inform decisions

An integrated, multi-functional platform that supports all stages of the construction lifecycle can address these issues and drive your business's digital transformation. This guide aims to help you make better decisions about which software solution is right for you.

— **CHAPTER 1**

# Where You Are vs. Where You Need to Be

To begin, you need to analyse and review your current processes to pinpoint areas that can be improved with construction management software. You should also decide who should be involved in the decision-making process.

## Determine Pain Points and Objectives for Stakeholder Alignment

Successful software selection starts with understanding and defining your business's current gaps and needs. An excellent place to start is outlining what creates inefficiencies and lack of visibility. Is there duplicate data entry, for example, or headaches and delays when it comes to tracking down project information?

Once you've outlined the pain points, you have to put them in an order of priority. Which ones create the most inefficiencies across teams? Which areas impact team communication, cause the most damage to client trust or hamper visibility across the portfolio? What brings the most risk and keeps the biggest opportunities out of reach?

### Managing change: map and align stakeholders

Even before you start your process review, begin to map all the stakeholders that will need to be involved in the research, consideration, testing and decision making. You don't need to complete this before you start, but it is an essential parallel process. Transformation projects are most often derailed when would-be change makers don't consult others, or fail to take key people with them on the journey. This applies to any significant change project in any type of business.

**To ensure you select the right software, be explicit about what problems you expect the technology to address.**

Common pain points include:

- No clear view of the financial health of your portfolio

- Low user/employee adoption of existing tools

- Business functions are manual or require using multiple, siloed systems

- Lack of reporting capabilities across data sources

- No central repository for documents

- Dealing with outdated information

- No or limited integration of existing tools

- Lack of access for key stakeholders due to limited user licences

"The bigger you get, the more projects you have, and the more room for error. We needed to ensure we had the right level of control and collaboration to best serve our clients and communities."

John Barrow, Construction Director, HMS

## Prioritising pain points

Prioritising pain points will help keep your search focused and prevent key evaluation criteria from becoming too broad.

• **Step 1:** Identify the problem

• **Step 2:** Rank your goals and criteria. This will help you weigh the merits and drawbacks of the different solutions you evaluate

## Achieve stakeholder alignment

Achieving genuine stakeholder alignment is a critical step to ensure the right people are involved in the search for the best solutions. You might connect with end-users (both on-site and office staff), IT, security, software administrators, finance, procurement, engineering leads, construction executives and legal teams to help you evaluate the software with multiple use cases in mind.

Starting with a business case can be helpful to get buy-in and support. The business case also serves as a vital roadmap for evaluating solutions and ensuring the purchase will align with your strategic vision.

— **CHAPTER 2**

# Aligning your evaluation criteria to your objectives

Once you've determined what problems you want to solve and the gaps you want to fill, it's time to consider what features you need from software to do this. Start at a high level, then get progressively more granular.

Your business and its ways of working will change post-platform adoption, and that's a healthy development. You will need a plan to support the changes you can foresee, and the flexibility to deal with those you can't.

But remember, one of the biggest considerations is usability. The software you end up with must be easy and intuitive to use, or else your employees and stakeholders are unlikely to fully adopt it (or perhaps unlikely to adopt it at all!).

## Point Solution vs Platform?

Singular-focused solutions, or point solutions, only address one problem, without regard to related issues. In such a scenario, many businesses find themselves buried by the number of software products they need to manage the multiple facets of a single project.

A good solution should remove work, not add to it.

As a general rule, try to limit the total number of applications your staff need to use on a daily basis. There may still be some point solutions in your overall tech stack for specialised purposes. However, finding solutions that integrate on a common platform will limit app fatigue and stress for your people.

### Managing change: think strategically

Think strategically as well as tactically. Which features would have the biggest impact on the business? Which ones are essential or potentially game changing for the business, and which are merely nice-to-have?

# Feature checklist for construction software

Some of the most sought-after features in construction software platforms are listed below. Decide if each one is a 'must have', an 'ideally, yes', or 'not important'.

## ☑ Connect your collaborators and applications

Eliminate the site-to-office divide by bringing your collaborators together with software that offers third-party integrations. If you decide to expand your toolset, all data will be accessible in the same integrated solution. This model is ideal for giving all project collaborators — including clients, subcontractors, consultants and third parties — access to your platform.

## ☑ Open API and integrations

These allow you to easily connect additional applications to your existing system.

## ☑ Mobile functionality

Fully functioning, native mobile applications to maximise project efficiency. The latest project documentation available 24/7.

## ☑ Offline accessibility

Since many construction sites do not have WiFi, project management tasks must be achievable offline.

### ☑ Reporting and analytics

Streamline, aggregate and report on data flows between people, companies, systems, devices and software applications for better, faster, more agile decision making.
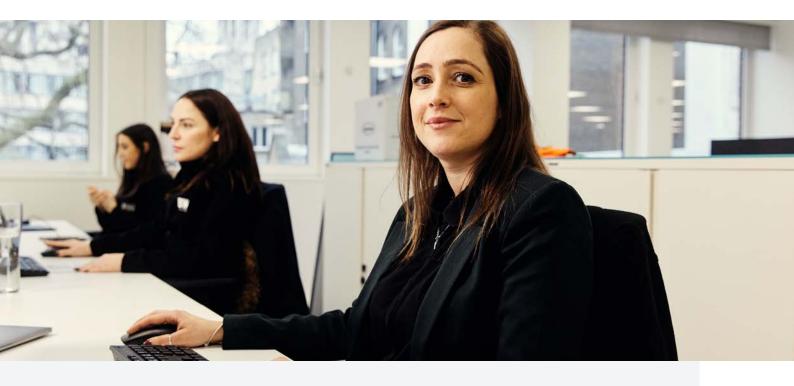
### ☑ Security

A vendor dedicated to providing you with the highest degree of service including security, availability and privacy of data — including third party reviews of Information Security Programmes e.g., penetration and vulnerability testing.

### ☑ Data ownership

Ensure there is a clause in your service level agreement (SLA) that states unequivocally that you own your data.

— **CHAPTER 3**

# Vendor Evaluation: Choosing the Right Partner

Take a step back at this stage. You've conducted an honest assessment of your company's requirements and the features you need. Now it's time to create a shortlist of vendors dedicated to supporting your organisation for the long haul.

Here are some tips — outside features and functionality — to consider when choosing a software partner.

# Considerations before purchase

## Ease of Use

Every aspect of the software needs to be intuitive in design so users understand how to use it with minimal or no training.

> *Tip: Study the software interface and workflow to judge how easily it can be incorporated into your own daily workflows, as well as how easily it integrates with your existing tech stack. A good indicator of software usability is speed of roll out. Look for software with an implementation timeline measured in weeks.*

## Implementation and adoption

With continual software updates and new functionalities, you need resources dedicated to keeping your staff up to speed. Consider ongoing free educational offerings such as:

• Support documents

• Training webinars and certifications.

• Onsite training

> *Tip: Look for companies that go above and beyond traditional onboarding processes such as kick off calls and training documentation. Seek out providers that offer ongoing software education for all your users throughout the lifetime of your licence.*

## Technical Support

Every vendor has world-class support during the sales process, but not necessarily after you've signed a contract. You need to be able to have your team's questions and queries answered in a timely and efficient manner.

> *Tip: Check support is on-demand either via email, chat or phone (or preferably, all three) and is included for anyone with a login, whether or not they work directly for your company.*

## Scalability

No one wants to test, deploy and customise software only to find out they've outgrown it and need a replacement solution a year later.

Review your company's 3–5-year business and growth plans and select a partner that can support these.

> Tip: Seek out software that is always improving a pipeline of new features and product updates. You want to buy solutions from companies that constantly innovate within their cloud-based products and services, so you are receiving updates without having to purchase the latest version of the software or new licences.

## Product Development

Software development that encompasses customer feedback responds to your business needs more quickly, resolving universal system issues and platform enhancement from a single code base.

> Tip: Ask the vendor if/how they collect feedback from customers, and how they use it.

## Reference Check

When you're managing deployment risk, it's comforting to know you're not the first organisation to implement the software, and in this particular configuration. Customer testimonials speak volumes about a vendor, and customer satisfaction is often a clear indicator of long-term success.

> Tip: Pick up the phone. Ask your vendor for a handful of referenceable clients – of similar size and in your sector — that you may speak to about their experiences of working with them.

## Investment vs. expense

The right software is an enabler of business processes that delivers strategic value, not just an IT purchase. You may need to explain this to people, and more than once.

With an integrated platform capable of managing all aspects of a project, the value is far beyond a dollar amount you can tie to something like saving printing costs by digitising drawings. It includes everything facilitated by the software — such as safer job sites thanks to improved visibility into near-misses, or improved employee morale leading to better employee retention.

You may find you need to namecheck the benefits of implementing the right construction management software. These include:

- Lower IT costs
- Predictive analytics
- Enhanced employer brand
- Improved forecasting
- Reduced rework
- Better employee experience
- Visibility into the health of project portfolios

- Fewer internal training staff
- Safer construction sites
- Faster project delivery
- Reduced risk of litigation
- Talent retention
- Increased efficiency and productivity

### Managing change: triple check terms for updates

Make sure the quoted price includes implementation, training, updates and customer support for all software users — including external stakeholders — and that there are no hidden fees.

— **CHAPTER 4**

# Presenting your partner of choice

Selecting a software partner is a significant undertaking, so take your time. Conducting the proper research and gathering feedback will pay dividends in the end. Better a longer, thorough journey to pick the right partner than to select the wrong vendor too soon, and have to start your search all over again.

### Presentation time

It's time to formalise your findings and present your partner of choice to your decision makers.

Update your initial business case for construction software with the findings from your research.

Make sure it's clear why your selected software partner is the best on the market for your business.

Revisit the stakeholder mapping and communication you were doing before and during your software selection journey. This will be gold to you now, and hopefully most (or all) of the key decision makers will already be onside.

Good luck.

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