

Construction Executive

<http://constructionexec.com/article/selecting-construction-management-and-accounting-software--what-contractors-should-know?>

Selecting Construction Management and Accounting Software— What Contractors Should Know

By Dawn Meeker and Chuck Schwartz | Saturday, June 20, 2020

There's a lot to consider when preparing to invest in new accounting or construction management software. Too often, these investments don't bring about the desired results, go poorly or are never fully implemented. Here's a blueprint for making the best selection for the company.

THREE-STEP PROCESS

There are three key steps to the process of determining the best software management program:

- discovery;
- selection; and
- implementation and training.

Discovery is often overlooked as potential users immediately start reviewing software, test-driving it, being mesmerized by all the bells and whistles, and then rushing to purchase. Having skipped the discovery phase, users arrive at the implementation phase without the blueprint for a successful "go live." This is a formula for failure that can be avoided by taking a deep breath and returning to "go."

THE ALL-IMPORTANT DISCOVERY STEP

A successful discovery consists of the following:

- assembling the right people;
- asking the right questions;
- listening for "we've always done it this way" answers; and
- creating a "go live" blueprint built on a solid foundation.

ASSEMBLING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Too many times, when software projects have not gone well or as expected, excuses range from "no one asked my opinion," or "I wasn't involved" to "this will not work for us." Part of this stems from the "we've always done it this way" mindset, but more of it comes from not assembling the primary stakeholders in the discovery process. The stakeholders are key system

users. This includes the company owners and other leadership (decision-makers), but could also include the CPA, CFO, accounting staff (payroll, A/R, A/P) and project staff (project managers and superintendents).

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Once stakeholders have been assembled, the next step is to understand the systems and processes they are currently using to manage and carry out their job functions. This might include:

- What software and systems do they currently use to get their job done? This includes support systems such as accounting software, payroll services, estimating software, time collection apps, Excel and Word, to name a few.
- What other methods do they use? This includes manual processes, paper processes, email, texting and more.
- What's working? What's not? What could be improved and why? What are the must-haves and why?

The answers to these questions serve two purposes. The first pertains to the kind of system(s) that would best serve the company:

- accounting with job costing only;
- accounting with job costing;
- integrated payroll processing or in combination with a payroll service; or
- accounting with job costing and integrated project management or a separate project management system.

Consideration should also be given to what additional functionality would best serve the company—document management, routed approval processes, field and outside workforce management such as electronic time collection, electronic field reports, etc.

In this phase it's also important to review the company's accounting processes, understand its data migrations requirements (i.e., open jobs, jobs close to being finished that can be closed out in the old system, newer jobs that can be worked on in the new system and also be used for training purposes), and learn about the company's go-to reports and which are required at "go live."

The second is related to how all of the above gets done and what processes can perhaps be improved, and helps cure the "we've always done it this way" syndrome.

LISTENING FOR "WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT THIS WAY" ANSWERS

Taking the time to explore how to improve processes protects the company's investment, too, since rather than simply acquiring a new system to do things the same old way, the company can design and deploy a system that serves future needs.

CREATING A “GO LIVE” BLUEPRINT BUILT ON A SOLID FOUNDATION

Following and carrying out the steps discussed above will give the company the best chance of creating a blueprint for a successful software conversion, and a “go live” that optimizes processes and reports going forward—starting the day the new software goes live.

Before changing accounting or construction management software, make the time to ask the right questions, be open to new processes and doing things better, and build from a solid foundation. Follow this process, and the investment will pay dividends for years.



Written by Dawn Meeker - Advisory Services Director, [Marcum LLP](#)
Contact Info: dawn.meeker@marcumllp.com

Dawn Meeker is an Advisory Services director in Marcum LLP’s New Haven, CT, office. She has 20 years of experience as a controller with companies in the drywall, electrical and mechanical construction trades, where she was responsible for overseeing all bonding, financial and banking processes. Marcum LLP’s Construction Services group provides audit, consulting and taxation services to clients ranging from start-ups to multi-billion-dollar enterprises.



Written by Chuck Schwartz - Business Development Director, [Marcum LLP](#)
Contact Info: chuck.schwartz@marcumllp.com

Chuck Schwartz is a business development director at Marcum LLP, one of the country’s premier construction accounting and advisory firms. Marcum LLP’s Construction Services group provides audit, consulting, and taxation services to clients ranging from start-ups to multi-billion-dollar enterprises.