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The Cloud ERP

5 Ways Mobile Cloud ERP Can Transform Your Construction Business

Every day we hear about technological developments such as new devices, software, operating systems, and complex programs that can make our lives easier and more pleasant. In the business environment, new and updated technology is essential if you want to stay ahead of your competitors, generate solid revenues, and keep your customers coming back for more.

One such innovation is mobile devices, which are now nearly ubiquitous in the workplace and at construction sites. Construction executives realize mobile software can increase efficiency and offer easier access to information. As companies develop and implement their mobile strategies, their employees in the field are already downloading and installing a variety of apps.

Construction companies are rapidly deploying mobile technology to simplify and automate the capture of information in the field and integrate the data back into company systems. Reducing inefficiencies on any single active construction project can significantly increase productivity, reduce costs, and improve the bottom line. After all, better project results lead to better company results.

This white paper:

Examines the risks of outdated or legacy technology

Discusses the benefits of cloud enterprise resource planning (ERP) software

Offers five ways a modern mobile cloud ERP can transform your construction business

What's the Risk of Staying on Outdated Technology?

Many construction companies still run their businesses on old technology they bought decades ago. While some solutions may still work well, technology moves quickly and renders older systems redundant or inefficient. It's an exasperating reality, but the only way to stay ahead of the competition is to keep your systems fresh.

Most construction accounting systems were developed in the 1990s and now struggle to keep pace with the way construction businesses are evolving. This forces many companies to adapt their businesses to their legacy systems, leading to inefficient processes that hold back the entire organization in the form of higher costs and less satisfied customers. Moreover, their accounting and construction systems will only talk to each other by way of custom integrations that are cumbersome and expensive to maintain. Even in the best of scenarios, most business data will be difficult to access from the field.

> **Shoehorning desktop software into a smartphone is not the same as designing an app with mobile in mind. And bundling together a bunch of point solutions doesn't work as well as a purpose-built, integrated suite.**

Making matters worse, these outdated systems may be using virtual private networks (VPNs) or Citrix to give field teams remote access to key project cost data. These technologies come at an added cost. Field teams may also be using a wide range of apps that don't talk to each other, which means they must log onto multiple apps every time there's a problem or question. Either way, competitors are likely investigating or investing in new technology to allow them to respond to customers more quickly and strengthen their relationships with new potential clients.

There's clearly a need for construction companies to invest in technology that can deliver information on demand—anywhere—and keep pace with the changing needs of their ever-evolving industry.

Why Construction Companies Need Cloud ERP

Cloud-based computing (also called software as a service, or SaaS) gives users access to software applications that run on shared computing resources (for example, processing power, memory, and disk storage) via the internet. These computing resources are maintained in remote data centers dedicated to hosting various applications on multiple platforms.

Cloud ERP is SaaS that allows users to access ERP software over the internet. It generally has much lower upfront costs than on-premise ERP because companies can lease their computing resources by the month rather than purchasing them outright and maintaining them on premises. Cloud ERP also gives you access to your business-critical applications at any time from any location.

Consider the time savings possible with cloud ERP. With a legacy or on-premise ERP, employees in the field must enter data twice: once on location and again when they reach the home office. This double data entry opens the door to errors that are annoying and time-consuming to correct. With cloud ERP, employees simply enter the data on their mobile device and the information is automatically synced back to their cloud ERP software.

Perhaps the cloud's greatest superpower is its ability to deliver real-time data to users across multiple locations:

- Construction firms with several locations can communicate and collaborate using real-time data.

- Remote workers or employees in the field can stay connected to the most up-to-date insights.

- Field employees can update RFIs and project issues, which helps reduce project delays and increase customer satisfaction.

When employees have access to complete, current information, their productivity increases, communication improves, and the entire construction cycle runs more smoothly.

Get Real-Time Information at Your Fingertips with Mobile Cloud ERP

With mobile cloud ERP, users can easily enter, access, and share business information through hand-held mobile devices. This ensures real-time access to data without any significant investment in infrastructure or setup. Simple mobile ERP applications coupled with the flexibility to use them anywhere enables business decision makers to stay informed at all times.

But remember that not all mobile ERP applications are built the same way. An ideal mobile ERP tool should be able to streamline communication for enhanced work collaboration and greater productivity.

Also, remember that an ERP system is only as good as the data you put in it. Collecting up-to-the-minute data via a mobile app and feeding it to your ERP system can help you get greater value

from your ERP system. You can even use mobile ERP apps that are designed to prevent bad data from entering your ERP system. Over time, your mobile ERP may become the one-stop location where all your best data is recorded.

Here are five ways a modern mobile cloud ERP can transform your construction business:

1. Reduce delays.

Delays and rework in commercial construction projects can cost millions of dollars in lost revenue and negatively affect a company's reputation. While most companies can't predict the weather conditions or plan accurately for the red tape around permitting and licensing, at least managers can use mobile delivery apps to organize and sync their operational activities.

For example, a construction manager in charge of various job sites can follow accurate, real-time costs across all projects and company operations—on the job site or in the office. The ability for construction managers to see real-time information and monitor multiple job sites through mobile technology can reduce incidents and project delays. Having this critical information helps managers keep construction on schedule by bringing issues to light that might otherwise put projects on hold.

2. Collaborate in real time.

In the past, paper-based processes (such as timesheets, project tasks, and other activities) needed to be completed back in the office. As a result, there was often inefficiency and misalignment among project stakeholders.

Today, cloud-based applications can streamline information between teams in the office and out on a job site. Changes made in the mobile app to items such as RFIs, project issues, and timecards are updated and synced in the cloud ERP automatically. This helps ensure that the business will run smoothly. It can also proactively alert your team of any issues and ensure effective collaboration across all mobile devices. When everyone has access to the same information at the same time, this reduces delays and ensures that important issues will be addressed immediately.
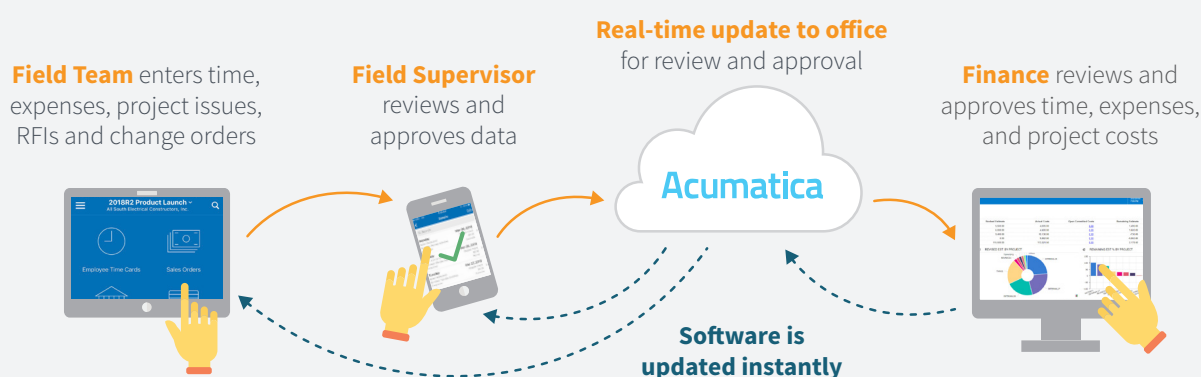
When you're not in the office and there's an important purchase order that needs to be approved to keep the project moving along, mobile ERP provides a distinct advantage. You can even set up an alert and have the approval waiting for you. Most modern systems also provide approval routing capabilities, giving you added control over purchases.

3. Increase accountability.

Without mobile technology, the back office will have no idea what the field workers are doing until they come in and do paperwork at the end of the day. This can lead to a culture with a lack of accountability. Mobile technology allows project managers to track time spent on-site, and to keep better time cards that will save on labor costs.

With real-time updates and notifications, the data entered on a smart phone, tablet, or PC in the field will instantly feed into the back-office accounting system. With workflow capabilities, finance staff can review and approve data such as payroll before updating the system. An employee can easily capture expenses on their smart phone and route it to their supervisor for approval, saving time and ensure that their expenses will be paid in a timely manner.

Connecting Your Field to Office Anytime, Anywhere

Field Team enters time, expenses, project issues, RFIs and change orders

Field Supervisor reviews and approves data

Real-time update to office for review and approval

Finance reviews and approves time, expenses, and project costs

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Software is updated instantly

No matter where you are, data entered through one device is seen and reported throughout the organization.

Real-time data synchronization through cloud-based mobile construction software allows the entire business to respond quickly and more efficiently.

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4. Increase data accuracy.

Companies using mobile cloud ERP also report improvements in data accuracy. Employees can enter data quickly and share it effortlessly with everyone in the organization. Mobile ERP technology can reduce or eliminate mistakes by reducing the need for redundant data entry.

Real-time data synchronization through a cloud-based mobile ERP platform ensures that no matter where you are, data entered through one device is seen and reported throughout the organization. The entire business can respond more quickly and efficiently to needs.

5. Increase visibility.

With mobile ERP, you can track business operations across different work departments and locations right from your mobile device. Unlike paper forms, mobile apps enable you to customize documentation and create reports in the field. It becomes easier to anticipate demand and plan business processes accordingly. A mobile ERP app will gather valuable data and information from different points and provide up-to-date information to keep you informed about what is happening in real time.

Where to Find Mobile Cloud ERP Resources Online

As you search for your next ERP system, there's one more benefit you should consider. Mobile ERPs have access to real-time information related to business accounts, which can help you improve your competitive advantage. With full access to ERP applications on their mobile devices, your decision makers can take better control over business operations. This helps reduce the turnaround time of each decision—enabling you to take advantage of more opportunities before your competitors do.

Acumatica would love to help you find the right mobile cloud ERP for your construction business. You'll find helpful resources online at https://www.acumatica.com/construction/