

Industry Snapshot:

Why Collaboration is Every Contractor's Secret Weapon



Introduction

Collaboration—in which your project stakeholders work together toward a common goal—sounds easy enough, but in the real world of construction, it can be very hard to achieve. Part of the problem is cultural; many of us have been conditioned to believe that working independently is a virtue, a proactive way to “get things done” quickly and efficiently. The problem? Construction projects are inherently a group effort, requiring individuals and teams to make separate contributions to a single end-product. When one or more people work in isolation, project visibility is reduced. Conflicts and miscommunication can occur. And forward momentum, the driver of profitable business outcomes, slows down.

It should be said that while technology is essential to collaboration, it’s not a solution in itself. In fact, the wrong technology—namely, disjointed third-party systems—can contribute to the problem, giving individuals and groups the ability to create multiple data silos that inhibit information access and sharing. When data is isolated, unconnected and can’t be used by everyone who needs it, there is no “single source of truth,” and collaboration suffers.

The foundation for effective collaboration is good communication. The right technology can provide open platforms that make information visible and available to everyone— which means that discussion, idea exchange and group decision-making can more easily follow. Over the past decade, cloud-based software has had a major impact on the building trade, and a growing number of contractors—large and small—have adopted cloud technology for their construction management processes. Their motive? Faster access, greater connectivity, and the proven business benefits of collaboration.

In this report, we’ll look at why collaboration is so important to the construction process—and how the right technology can enable the kind of collaborative workstyle contractors need to succeed. I hope you find it of value.

Best Regards,



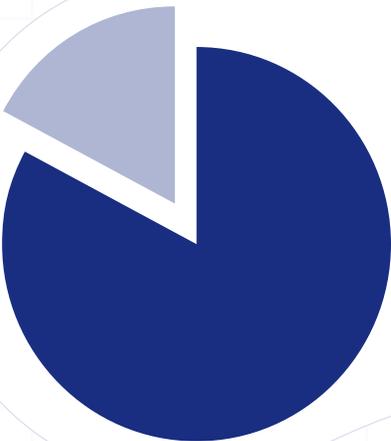
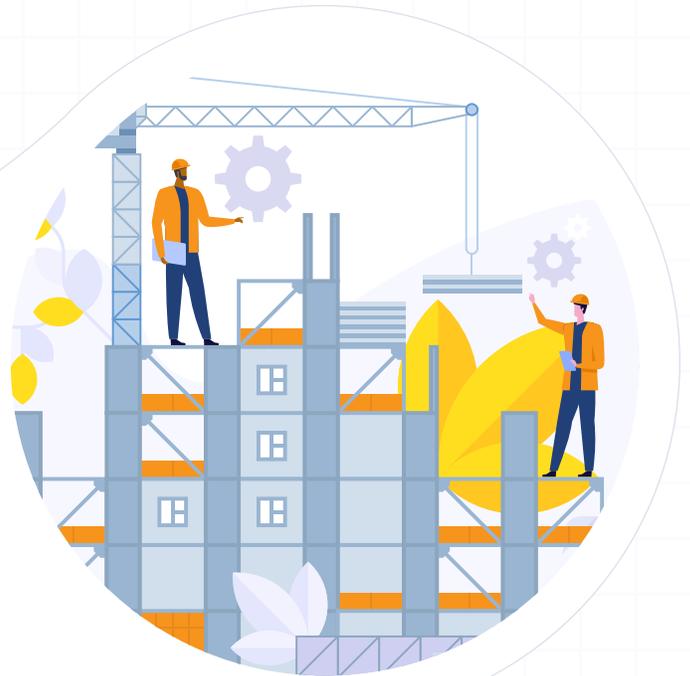
Jeff Gerardi
CEO, ProEst

Reason #1: It informs decision-making

In the best of all worlds, we could anticipate problems, predict outcomes and know exactly what will happen in the future—then tailor our business decisions accordingly. Unfortunately, none of us have a crystal ball, so it pays to be ready with “what if” solutions ahead of time. Collaboration offers the kind of blended thinking that can result in more nuanced decision-making, synthesizing a variety of experiences and points of view. By encouraging open dialogue, ongoing discussion and (even the occasional disagreement) among project stakeholders, you have a new ability to weigh multiple options, obtain buy-in and determine the best path forward together. With a formalized collaborative process—and access to a single, shared source of information—business decisions are more considered and informed.

“*Collaboration isn’t about lightening the load. It’s about getting a result no one person could achieve on their own.*”

— John Reilly, Pre-Construction Manager



83% of workers require some form of technology to facilitate collaboration.

Reason #2: It eliminates duplicate work

It's common for contractors who run multiple projects to take a sequential approach to sales, estimating, project management and accounting functions, relying on different teams—at different times—to provide their expertise in each area. A more collaborative approach is to engage key stakeholders throughout the process, giving everyone access to the same project data as it's generated, updated and modified. With a centralized hub of information, there's no need to create (and recreate) a new data bank as the project moves forward. By providing open access to the same information, duplicate work is all but eliminated, and the potential for errors decreases dramatically.

“*Collaboration means we don't have to reinvent the wheel every time a project moves from one team to the next.*”

— *Derek Blair, Senior Estimator*



30%

Online collaboration tools could help to facilitate up to a 30% increase in productivity.

Source: McKinsey

Reason #3: It fuels creative thinking

In an age of diversification, each and every one of your employees brings something different to the table. Having a fresh pair of eyes on a problem or a new approach to a process can yield unexpected—and often remarkable—results. Collaboration among individuals and teams encourages dialogue and creative thinking, and often yields the kind of “aha” moments that wouldn’t occur otherwise. Good ideas can come from anywhere; maintaining an inclusive, collaborative atmosphere that generates innovative thinking can help your business stand out.

“*Collaboration has helped us come up with out-of-the-box ideas that differentiate our company.*”

— Frances Klein, VP Construction Management



Reason #4: It reduces project errors

Calculation errors, especially those that are the result of incomplete or flawed inputs, are all too common for contractors, especially during the pre-construction process. And it stands to reason that if data inputs aren't made in the context of a group, they can be a lot harder—and take a lot longer—to detect. A collaborative approach, along with an open online platform that supports real-time data sharing, is the solution, increasing accuracy without being tied to a sequential review process. With more eyes on the task at hand, the probability of input errors is minimized, and those that do occur are resolved far more quickly.

“*Collaboration has helped us catch errors and correct assumptions long before they affect the building outcome.*”

— Sarah Larkin, Pre-Construction Manager



Reason #5: It engages your employees

Research makes it clear that an engaged employee is a happy employee—and collaboration is a proven way to make that happen. By tackling problems, resolving issues and achieving outcomes together, your teams are rewarded both professionally and emotionally. Why is that important for you? As construction companies continue to be impacted by staff turnover and labor shortages, maintaining a satisfying work environment through collaboration can help ensure that your employees will stick with you when you need them most.

“**Collaboration has brought a new level of involvement to our employees. They definitely enjoy the process.**”

— *John Saks, Senior Estimator*

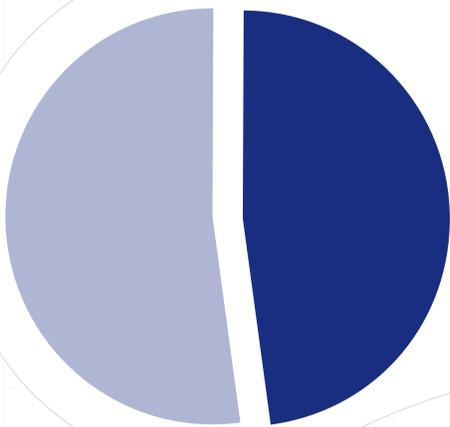


Reason #6: It helps new staff get up to speed

As any employer knows, the first weeks and months of a new employee's time on the job is the least productive of their tenure. With so much information to absorb and so many processes to learn, onboarding staff have a limited capacity to make early contributions to the business. By implementing a collaborative, two-way mentoring process, your new employees can "learn the ropes" far more quickly—while more established workers can benefit from new ideas and a fresh point of view.

“*Collaboration has helped our new employees be more productive faster. Learning from others has been invaluable.*”

— *Oliver Tyndal, Project Superintendent*



48%

of workers rate peer collaboration as their ideal method of learning in the workplace.

Reason #7: It builds better client relationships

Every contractor knows the value of long-standing relationships with owners, architects, engineers and other stakeholders—professional partners who can provide a reliable source of future work. Creating an atmosphere of open collaboration can help solidify those relationships and strengthen your connections; by sharing goals, meeting mutual challenges and exchanging points of view in an inclusive, non-hierarchical way, you can achieve new levels of trust and understanding.

“*Collaboration with project owners has helped us develop new levels of trust. We understand each other better now.*”

— *Richard Mendes, CRM Specialist*



Reason #8: It prepares you for the future

Studies show that teams can aggregate, modify, combine and apply a greater volume and variety of knowledge far better together than individuals can alone—which in turn improves decision-making, problem-solving, idea generation and task execution. As open data platforms and information-sharing expand in the construction industry, collaboration will grow proportionately, an environment of “collective intelligence” that is changing how we live and work.

“*Collaboration is second nature to us now. We can't imagine working any other way.*”

— Tyler Cole, VP Operations Planning



30%

By 2024, enterprises with intelligent and collaborative work environments will see 30% lower staff turnover, 30% higher productivity, and 30% higher revenue per employee than their peers.

Source: International Data Corporation – IDC

Get to know ProEst

ProEst provides advanced construction estimating capabilities for leading companies and public sector clients in the United States, Canada and Australia. Our cloud-based platform combines cost estimating, digital takeoffs and bid day analysis in a single powerful solution—providing a centralized online hub of information that facilitates connection and collaboration among project stakeholders.

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