



Construction Project Management Tool Buyer's Guide

About this guide

With growing pressure on construction companies to meet demands of clients and stick to strict building regulations, there is a need for the construction industry to embrace technology at a quicker pace than it has in the past. But choosing a tool in an increasingly crowded marketplace can be daunting. This guide will help you feel more empowered to make the right software decision for your business.



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01 What should I look for in a construction management tool?

Of course it's important to look at the features you need for your software, but all of the features in the world won't help if the tool you're using doesn't complement your daily processes and workflows. These are the five key functions or factors that you should consider as you choose.



Unlimited users

If you're working with large teams, and that will often be the case with many subcontractors, per-user costs can quickly add up. As your business grows, you're also likely to have more people working on projects so a tool that allows for unlimited users means you won't be stung by rising costs later on.



True mobile-friendly usability

True collaborative software needs to work in the field, not just for staff based in an office. Updates that happen on a desktop computer should automatically be pushed live to the mobile app and vice versa, ensuring that everyone involved in a project has access to the most recent and relevant information.



Dedicated on-boarding process

Video tutorials are a nice to have, but to be up and running in the quickest time possible means you need a hands-on approach, usually with a software partner that understands the set-up process involved in capturing all the information you need for a multi-project view.



Document and drawing management

This is the core of any construction management system, and where platforms like DropBox, Sharepoint or WhatsApp fall short in their ability to meet the needs of a busy construction team who need to access the latest documents and drawings, often at short notice.



Easy data capture

Sharing pictures via messaging systems and emails doesn't give enough accountability for teams to rely on for audit trails and reducing mistakes. Being able to quickly upload pictures to a central data system is vital.



02 Common questions asked when looking for the best construction project management tool

There are plenty of questions you will want to ask and you should; the more informed you are, the better you'll feel about making a decision. Here's some of the most common questions that you should make a note of and take to any potential software provider.

● How easy is it to use and implement?

There's no guarantee that all construction workers on-site will be tech savvy and comfortable with change, so any system needs to be easy-to-use with decent support from its provider.

● What devices does it work on?

Not every site manager will have the same mobile device, and some prefer to manage their site operations from a tablet device or laptop.

● How much does it cost?

Cost of a system should be considered against the cost of not using a system, and the benefits that the investment will bring.

● How long does it take to see ROI?

Stakeholders are likely to want to see the benefits of any investment, so understanding timescales of implementation is important.

● Do you offer API integrations?

You'll likely use a separate finance system and other tools to support your ways of working; it's useful to know which of these are easily integrated.

● Where and how is data stored?

Data security is a huge concern across all industries, and the sheer level of information on a construction site means data safety is crucial.

● What companies are using your system?

Being able to see companies that are similar to your own use a tool you're considering is helpful to visualise how it might work for you.



03 Should I build a construction management tool in house or work with an external provider?

It's tempting to try building your own software solution in house, especially if you have particular needs that you think aren't met by external providers. Having a bespoke system is an attractive prospect, but there are a number of reasons that partnering with a specialist construction project management provider will be a better ROI in the long term.

● **Cost effectiveness**

Developing software in-house comes with a cost and significant investment, especially if you don't already have skilled developers available. You can bring developers on board with a contract or for the short-term, but there will always be additional costs involved in long-term support and managing any downtime once the software is live.

● **Expertise and specialisation**

While there are a great deal of project management solutions on the market and developers with experience in building them, construction management comes with its own unique set of challenges that might not be well suited to a 'one-size-fits-all' solution. A specialised construction project management software provider is in a position to leverage a whole host of industry-specific knowledge.

● **Scalability**

As construction companies grow and take on more projects across multiple sites, a software solution that scales with them is crucial. External providers with a specialism in construction understand the need for customised accessibility for larger teams, as well as unlimited user volumes and projects.

● **Collaboration and support**

Construction projects involve multiple stakeholders; main contractors, subcontractors, designers and more. Often they will be external and not able to access support as easily. Partnering with a specialist unlocks true collaboration - with developers that understand the range of features needed to support a busy and growing construction business.



04 Making a decision - what do I need to consider once I have decided to go with an external provider?

You've decided you want to outsource your construction project management tool and you've started to look at providers. Before you start shortlisting potential providers, you should take some time to consider what you're trying to achieve to keep you on track when you do start reaching out.

● Don't try to solve every problem or challenge that you have

Make a list of your biggest challenges first. As the saying goes don't try to 'boil the ocean'. Take note of your biggest and most prominent challenges first and look for solutions that address these first.

● Don't involve too many decision makers

While there will be a lot of people with an active interest in the tool you choose, involving too many people in the decision making process can be distracting. Remember the challenges that led you to search for software in the first place, and make sure that you have someone to keep those priorities in check.

● How does the software handle document and drawing management?

Document and drawing management is the primary reason that most construction companies look for tools to support their day-to-day operations. While a long list of features may be nice to have and there is the chance to grow into them, how a tool handles organisation, updates, and sharing of documents is central to the functionality that a construction company needs.

Tip:

Be wary of any provider that claims a 'one-size-fits-all' solution; there won't be a tool that can solve each and every issue.



05 How can I confidently compare providers to choose software that best suits my business needs?

Once you start shortlisting providers, you'll want to go into any meetings prepared to ask the right questions so you can accurately compare providers using the same information. No two providers are the same and the software itself can vary massively from features to implementation and the support that the provider offers.

● Ask about future pricing

Most providers will have contract terms and lengths, but some aren't as forthcoming with changes in cost after the end of your initial contract period. There are also potential hidden costs in unlocking other features or support - make sure that you ask for complete transparency on what these terms are.

● Ask to speak to existing customers

The best advocates for a tool are usually the people already using it. Ask for contact details of existing customers to reach out to, where you can have an open and honest conversation about how the tool actually works in the field and how implementation might look for you.

● Specify your needs - and stick to them

Remember that list of challenges you prepared? Have them in front of you during any calls and make sure you ask how the tool addresses each one. If there isn't an immediate solution for your challenges, ask about their development roadmap - just because it isn't there now doesn't mean it won't be in the future.

● Ask for a demonstration

Having an initial demonstration from providers is a great introduction to the tool you're considering and gives you a chance to see how it looks. Refer to your list of challenges and must-have features so you can see how they are addressed. It's also worth asking for a follow-up demonstration to involve any other decision makers, to ensure that any questions you missed are picked up.



Summary

You should now feel more empowered to make the decisions you need to for implementing a construction project management tool. Having a dedicated system designed specifically to manage your flow of information will unlock more productivity for your team, while reducing time and associated costs with lost documents that can lead to expensive rework.

By taking the time to choose the best construction software partner, you also have the assurance of working with industry specialists that can help the wider adoption of technology in an industry that has traditionally been slower to keep up with the digital curve.

Tip:

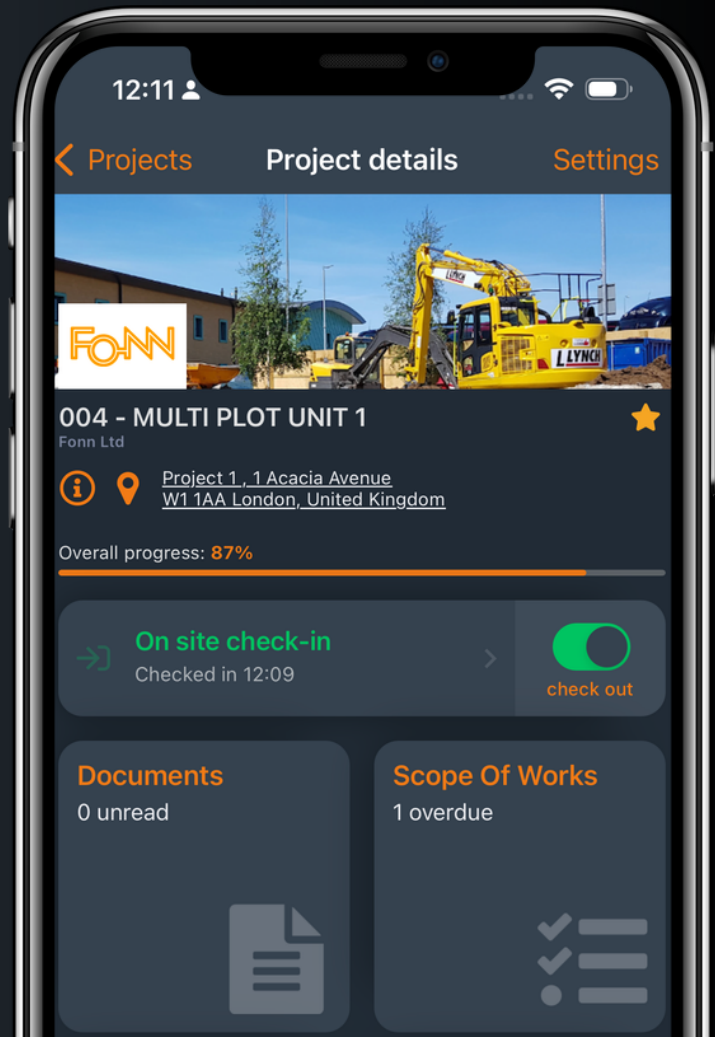
Ask about your provider's on-boarding process and potential training.

Tip:

Remember to ask about mobile app usability for those using a tool on-site.

Tip:

Don't get caught up in a long list of features that you might not need right away.



The guide was produced by



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