

Keep Building: How to implement new construction accounting software without slowing your business

Construction projects are a sea of moving parts. As a contractor, your ability to complete projects on time and on budget depends entirely on the level of collaboration between your office and your field staff. Construction firms need comprehensive, functionally rich solutions to help them manage their businesses and deliver great customer service. Many firms, however, are saddled with obsolete systems they've had since they were much smaller businesses, or, even worse, starter applications that simply can't meet the challenges a growing business faces each day.

Even contractors that have newer systems may be lagging behind their competitors. Leading cloud software developers are continually adding functionality and technology to support evolving construction practices such as centralizing data across the organization. This technology can connect business functions such as marketing, sales, delivery, and billing.

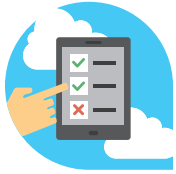
Selecting and implementing new construction accounting software can seem like a daunting prospect—but it doesn't have to be. Proper evaluation and a well-planned, well-managed implementation can streamline your transition so that your business can move forward and thrive.

It's all about how you do it.



Selecting and implementing a new construction accounting solution involves several important business decisions.

But contractors have an advantage: with the right software and team, they can plan their implementation based on their immediate needs. This whitepaper explains how to do it successfully.



Step 1: Identify your strengths and weaknesses

The first step is to take a thorough look at your operations and identify what your current system does well—and where it struggles. Armed with this information, select software that meets your needs and is well supported so that it will continue to grow and adapt to your changing requirements.

Next, plan your transition. Most implementation teams assume that a “big bang” approach is the only viable alternative. But implementing everything at once is not always the best way to go. It’s also the riskiest strategy.

It often makes more sense to plan a phased implementation in which you roll out the most important functionality first and then implement other pieces on a schedule that works for your business. This approach not only reduces risk, but also spreads out the costs and staffing burden over a manageable period.



Step 2: Find a solution that offers phased implementation

As you evaluate construction accounting solutions, be aware that most software systems don’t offer the flexibility of a phased implementation. Because they require a large up-front investment and massive change, you may have to navigate a complex approval process just to get your project started. And once you begin implementing, you’ll have to follow a complex path that delays the time at which you’ll start to notice process improvements and achieve ROI.

By contrast, a solution that allows phased implementation gives you the flexibility to simply replace existing functionality in the first phase and then add new functions later. Or, you might choose to implement a high-priority new feature first and then follow up by replacing existing capabilities later. You could even begin your implementation in one department or office location that’s most prepared to lead the effort.

Your software vendor—along with independent consultants, if you choose—can help you lay out an implementation plan that will work best in your situation.

A phased implementation reduces risk, spreads out costs over time, and introduces changes to internal staff over a manageable period.

Can you do this with every construction accounting solution? No.

As you evaluate potential solutions, be sure to ask vendors whether and how their system would handle a phased implementation.

Also, how complete is their solution? Does it include functionality that you may not need today but could be important in the future? The last thing you want to do is implement a system that becomes obsolete as soon as your business needs change.

Your new system should be built as units of functionality that you can operate independently. Developers use different names—such as modules, editions, or series—to describe this architecture. These applications should be fully integrated and operating within the same database structure, but they should also be designed for use in various combinations.



Step 3: Consider a Fast Track implementation

During your evaluation, you may find a cloud construction accounting software solution that offers you another choice: a Fast Track implementation that enables faster time to value with the software.

In a Fast Track program, the customer typically takes responsibility for more aspects of the implementation, including data import, migration, and customizations. To accelerate the implementation and incorporate best practices, it may include preconfigured Chart of Accounts, Project Account Groups, and Standard Cost Codes.

This approach isn't right for every contractor, but it can be a good way to experience a shortened implementation cycle.



Looking forward

When you're considering implementing any long-term business system, thoroughly research the vendor. A construction accounting software system is a long-term commitment, and you need assurance that the supplier will be around five, 10, or even 20 years from now to continue supporting and expanding the system.

Talk to the vendor's customers and get a feel for how well the vendor supports their users during and after implementation. Find out how good they are at keeping up with changing technology and adding new functionality as new ideas and new customer expectations enter the market. A business system is not a simple purchase; it's the beginning of a long-term partnership that supports your company's success.

Selecting and implementing a new, up-to-date business system doesn't have to be a "big bang" event that comes with steep costs and significant risks. Small and medium-size contractors might want to spread out their costs and mitigate risk by choosing a phased implementation approach. This is entirely feasible—and often advantageous—if you choose the right system and the right partner to work with you through the transition.

The most important aspect of implementation planning is to keep it focused on business needs, prioritizing the functionality and technology that have the greatest value to your firm. Your vendor and consultants will keep an eye on the system capabilities, but it is up to you to make sure the system really serves your business, provides the right functionality, and is compatible with the way your people work. Remember that software is simply a set of tools to help your organization serve your customers profitably. These tools should make your day-to-day activities easier, not more complicated.

Keep focused on your long-term business needs, prioritizing the functionality and technology that have the greatest value to your firm.

Take the Next Step

Start researching cloud construction accounting software that allows you to implement on a flexible timeline and budget. Acumatica can help.

Acumatica's cloud-based construction accounting software provides the best path to thrive in the new digital economy. Built on cloud and mobile technology with a unique customer-centric licensing model, Acumatica Construction Edition delivers a suite of fully integrated construction software, including financials with job cost accounting, project management, field service, CRM and mobile.

This means your teams can get the latest project reports, contracts, budgets, change orders, invoices, purchase orders, and job costs from wherever they are.

To learn more about Acumatica Construction Edition—and request a free custom demo—[visit us online](#).