

Own Your Trade: The Subcontractor's Guide to Taking Control of Project Collaboration



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Introduction

As a subcontractor, you need to provide high quality, experienced tradespeople and excellent service. But that's only a small portion of what you do.

Your job is to meet productivity demands, stay on schedule and stay on budget. While other professionals balance those same responsibilities in the air for their own business, you have to magnify those demands by the number of projects you're working on.

Successful subcontractors are working with different general contractors (GCs), subcontractors, architects and clients. That's a lot to keep track of. Even whittling it down to the basics for success, you need to:

- Provide the highest level of service on every project.
- Meet staffing requirements to assure the project is completed competently and on deadline.
- Manage production to adhere to the schedule.
- Keep an open line of communication with other subcontractors and the GC.



A Look Back and a Leap Forward

If you've been in the construction industry for a while, you can remember a day when project managers kept binders, hard copies of spec sheets and several sets of blueprints for any given job. On many jobs, you'll still see this. You might even be that guy who likes his information in hard copy.

The old way works. But it has its drawbacks. For instance, you might be working off outdated plans. Even if you have current information, it still takes time to sift through large job binders to find it. And, of course, all of the different players might not be on the same page. Hard copies don't immediately notify other subcontractors that there are changes.

Technology allowed us a big leap forward. Sophisticated software gave you instant access to the latest plans, spec sheets, you name it.

But there are two problems with enlisting a technology solution:

- **Not every GC or subcontractor uses the same software.**
- **Some of those programs are hard to use.**

Construction Productivity Software solves both of those issues while delivering an optimal solution to help your company increase productivity and decrease overhead. It integrates with all the programs you might be using now. This means that you can easily take control of your projects and transfer necessary information from subcontractors, project managers and any of your GCs.

And finally, Construction Productivity Software was designed to be user friendly.

Your project managers and staff were hired because they have experience, knowledge and talent at their craft. Not all of them are tech savvy and, for the most part, they shouldn't need to be.

These tools were designed to simplify the process in a language that's easy for them to understand.



Challenges for Today's Subcontractors

As a subcontractor, there are numerous issues you need to address on a daily basis. Because your livelihood depends on your ability to juggle multiple projects simultaneously, communication is a key concern. You need up to date information in real time.

What this means is that you need to have access to all communication, any changes or revisions to your proposal and any updates on scheduling. But that's not just your own company's internal information. You also need the updated communications from clients, GCs and other subcontractors. If there's a delay in the process, you need to know.

Here are a few of the top challenges you need to find solutions for on a regular basis:

- **Staying on Schedule.**

Staying on schedule is likely one of your chief concerns. This is what makes your reputation—your ability to complete projects to specification on time. In a professional relationship, it really does come down to the quality of your craftsmanship and whether your clients can count on you to deliver on time. The things that keep you from delivering on time can sometimes seem outside of your control. But many of these time constraints can be overcome through excellent organization.

With the right knowledge at the right time—you can fully take control of your projects. You'll be able to pinpoint where you need more labor, which schedule might need to be adjusted due to other tradesmen and what the progress is on any given project at any given time.

- **Out of Pocket Investments.**

[Scheduling and payments](#) come in at the top of the list of contractor challenges. Subcontractors are typically paid after the GC is paid for completion of the project. While this might mean being paid in increments throughout a longer project, it often means that you need to pay out in expenses well before you're able to recover the overhead. For some companies, this includes millions of dollars out of pocket at any given time in materials, payroll and other overhead costs of doing business. The ability to manage cash flow is an important aspect of your success.



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- **Communication Challenges.**

Communication is at the heart of a successful project. You need to have an excellent line of communication with the GC and the construction manager. You also need to be able to communicate with other subcontractors on the job. In some cases, GCs might parcel out parts of the project to [multiple subcontractors in your trade](#). In other cases, your work schedule might be impacted by the ability of other subcontractors to complete their own job on time. These time delays can cause a ripple effect, pushing back the timeline for all of the other trades and the project as a whole.

- **Finding and Hiring Skilled Labor.**

If you've been in the industry for a while, you know that there's a shortage of skilled labor. That trend will continue in 2018 and into the future. There have been numerous articles written about the lack of skilled labor in the workforce, as traditional education increasingly tells students to pursue formal degrees. There are some experts promoting the trades as a lucrative and stable choice, but none of that will help your labor shortage situation today. Staffing is a big issue because training unskilled labor on the job can impact the work and the ability to complete the process on schedule. In severe cases, the inability to keep skilled workers on staff can mean you'll need to decline projects because you can't meet the scheduling timeframes with the staff you currently have.

- **Coordinating and Tracking Activity.**

Your project managers are in the field, making decisions and managing your staff on their jobs. They're your eyes and keep your home office up to date on the project. But for many companies, it's difficult to coordinate activity between the different projects that are going on simultaneously. This might include tracking activities for payroll, staffing and comprehensive communication with the main office so that each project is documented in real time. If you're still working with paper worksheets, it's increasingly difficult to make sure that everyone has the same, current information.

- **Keeping Current on Specs, Blueprints, Submittals and Change Orders.**

It's imperative that your records are up to date on each project, but this can be difficult if your system doesn't offer optimal organization. Information on the latest revisions to blueprints or specs, or change orders which might alter schedules, materials and proposals are essential to keep your company on task. Small mistakes in these areas can cost you in efficiency and productivity. In some cases, it might even lead to needless expenses and damage your reputation with the client.



Top Four Benefits to Using Construction Productivity Software

There are a lot of ways that Construction Productivity Software streamlines your efficiency and keeps your team on track, at all times. The software offers real time solutions that are scalable and integrate with the systems your staff is most comfortable using.

Subcontractors like you need a solution that shows a big return on investment. You want to see where the application saves your company in overhead, reduces man hours and improves workflow. Those are all important features. But you need a system that your staff will use. That's paramount. Construction Productivity Software was designed to be easy to understand. It speaks in a language your staff is comfortable with and easily integrates with the processes you currently have in place.

Here are the top four benefits of Construction Productivity Software for your business:

1. Projects Are Completed on (or Ahead of) Schedule.

Scheduling is important—your company needs to keep to the timeframe you proposed in your bid. In an industry with many different moving parts, it's easy to get thrown off schedule if you're not careful.

PlanGrid helps you to keep track of everything in real time, making scope changes no big deal for your projects. With better organization and access to current information, forward planning improves and projects are completed on time. With the most up-to-date plans and documents always available, teams are always working from the latest set and can easily compare, identify and manage the smallest changes in scope and cost.

2. Allows You to Scale Quickly.

In construction, you need to know where the market is going and to be able to prepare. You don't want to be caught with an overabundance of work, but no skilled labor to complete the projects. At the same time, you need to be prepared for slower turns. Managing your resources and workforce is difficult, but PlanGrid gives you the analytics and ability to see where your current needs are and allows you to plan ahead.



3. Reduces Instances of Rework, Resulting in Cost Savings.

Rework costs you a great deal in (often preventable) expense. In case study after case study, we've seen documented savings in rework for our clients. In fact, [86% of clients](#) surveyed indicated that they've seen rework reduced since they started using the software.

Construction Productivity Software also means you can easily document your work, making sure you get paid. Because teams are able to markup and attach photos while tracking every step of the project, there's no question about what work was done or when it was completed. At the end of the day, you only get paid for what you can document.

4. Encourages User Engagement which Promotes Widespread Adoption.

PlanGrid does two things really well; it streamlines your job and it's easy to use. Project Managers and other employees master the user friendly application in a short amount of time, even if they're not avid technology users. They also find that it saves them time—they don't have to keep cumbersome blueprints and hard copy spec sheets with them at all times. And they can answer any questions they might have about the details of a project with an easy search. They can perform at a higher level while saving themselves time in manually looking through documents or calling into the home office.



Planning Your Roadmap to Success

You built your company on knowledge, hard work and dedication. Your business is thriving because you complete work of the highest quality, offer stellar service and deliver when you say you will.

Those basic premises to building a reputation and business never change. But there are some additional things that you can do to make the day to day process of running your business less stressful. Those spur of the minute "fires" most contractors have to put out because something outside the scope of work came up—using the best system helps you minimize those issues.

Here are some issues that PlanGrid helps you master:

- **Communication.**

Communication is the biggest stumbling block that might impede your business. Each project has different players and each player brings their own work to the overall process. If the communication breaks down, it can impact the entire project. PlanGrid lets you master collaboration between the field and the office, so everyone is on the same page and knows the current status of the job. It improves collaboration with the GC and other subcontractors, so you always have the latest updates and can adjust with new information.

- **Improving Protocols in the Field.**

The forward movement of your projects happens in the field. PlanGrid offers easy user adoption, so the tools are all usable and offer immediate value. Your project manager can continually update their information offline when necessary. PlanGrid will be updated as soon as they go back online. Issues and developments can be documented as they happen, complete with pictures and updated forms, right from the field. This eliminates the need for some of the antiquated systems that may not work as well, especially while your staff is busy with the details of their position.

- **Improves Cost Tracking Measures in Real Time.**

This allows your staff on site to immediately add documentation to the project files so that you always have up to date figures on current expenditures.

- **Allows You to Retain Your Data.**

In many instances, subcontractors don't keep track of their data. It goes to the GC to file with their project management system. For the subcontractor, that data offers a wealth of knowledge for growth. It allows you to assess your own productivity and make improvements. When you own your data, it allows you to study performance across different jobs, GCs and employees.

- **Maintain Updated Knowledge and Current Revisions.**

There's no worry over working with an outdated set of blueprints or spec sheets with PlanGrid. You're able to upload the current revision and it's available to everyone with access to the file through cloud sharing. You can also track changes and have access to different versions of documentation to reference as the project progresses.



Power Design - A Prime Example of PlanGrid ROI

Power Design, Inc. evaluated most of the solutions on the market prior to partnering with PlanGrid. You can read their full [case study](#).

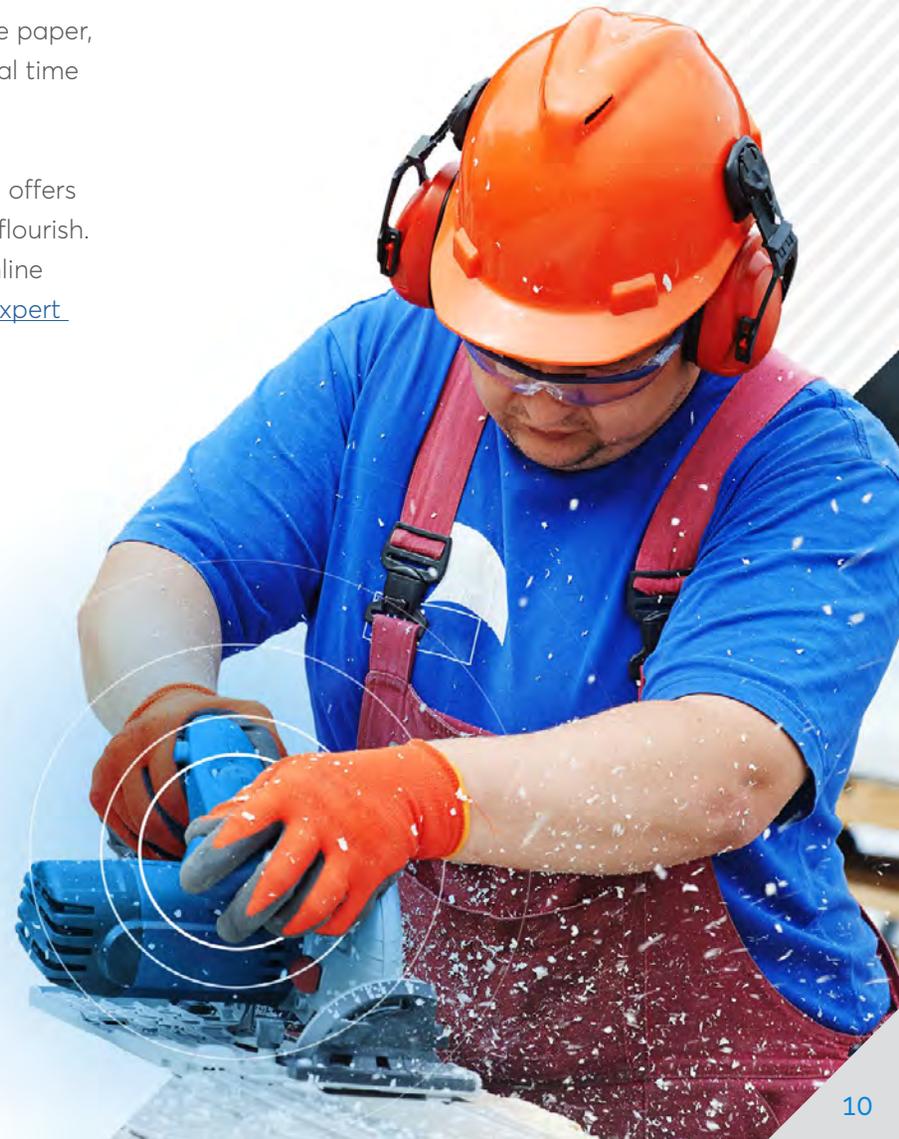
What Power Design found was that their paper based workflow was causing them considerable delays and costing them man hours. They wanted a solution that would help them eliminate paper, streamline their workflow and improve communication. The change didn't only streamline the process. It helped them save a staggering \$6.7 million dollars per year.

For specialty contractors like Power Design, standardizing on PlanGrid results in more productive field and office teams, healthier relationships with GCs and other stakeholders and better business outcomes.

Are You Looking for an Innovative Way to Bring Your Company into the Future?

Whether you're looking to eliminate paper, improve communication, access real time information or all of the above.

Construction Productivity Software offers the right tools for your business to flourish. If you're looking for ways to streamline your current process, [contact our expert staff](#) today.



See a Live Demo

or give us a call at +1 (415) 429-1227

PlanGrid construction productivity software is the easiest and most cost-effective way to get substantial return on your investment in construction mobile apps. By using PlanGrid you will:

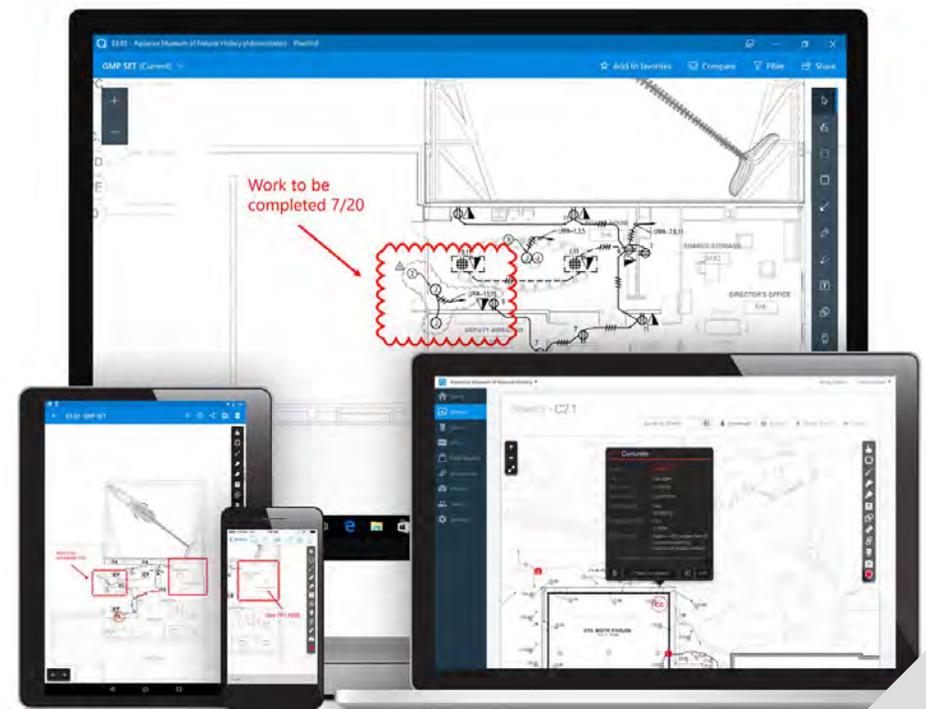
- **Complete projects faster:** 90% of project costs occur in the field not the office and most can be attributed to time waste or delays. With PlanGrid, you can reduce wasteful trips to the trailer and time delays while eliminating costly rework with faster collaboration and communication.
- **Reduce costs:** PlanGrid allows you to optimize productivity in the field, which eliminates time waste that causes project overruns. By completing projects early or on time with PlanGrid, contractors will benefit from reduced costs.
- **Win more bids:** The best way to bid more competitively is not just to track costs so you can provide more accurate estimates—it's to improve your overall productivity. PlanGrid's construction productivity software will allow you to increase productivity so you can reduce costs and win more bids.



Try PlanGrid for Free



There is a reason why PlanGrid is not only the #1 construction app, but also the highest rated. With PlanGrid construction productivity software, you can streamline document management, access all project information from any device, and seamlessly collaborate within teams.





Used on more than 1,000,000 projects around the world, PlanGrid is the first construction productivity software that allows contractors and owners in commercial, heavy civil, and other industries to collaborate, collect, and share project information from any desktop or mobile device through the entire project lifecycle.

PlanGrid increases project efficiency by streamlining document management, providing construction teams with easy access to all project information from any device, and enabling seamless collaboration within teams.

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