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## Contractors Bookkeeping And Construction Accounting Services

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# QUICKBOOKS SETUP GUIDE FOR CONSTRUCTION

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## PROVIDED BY BUSINESS CONSULTING AND ACCOUNTING



“**QuickBooks Setup** is the foundation your entire construction company financial reporting and operations. Get this one thing right and you will have an excellent chance at operating and growing your construction company.

Get it wrong and you will waste countless hours trying to make QuickBooks work and it will not. No amount of yelling, bullying, bad words, banging on the computer will help.”

*Randal DeHart, PMP, QPA, Construction Accountant*

## Contents

Construction Accounting Vs. Regular Accounting .....	2
Construction Accounting has five things in common: .....	2
Example #1.....	3
Example #2.....	3
QuickBooks Setup Options.....	4
Option #01 Do-It-Yourself.....	4
Option #02 Your Bookkeeper.....	4
Option #03 Hire Your CPA / Tax Preparer.....	4
Option #04 Hire Construction Accountant That Understands What You Do .....	6
Five Types Of Contractors Need Professional QuickBooks Setup:.....	7
New Construction Speculative.....	7
New Construction Custom .....	7
Remodel.....	8
Trade Contractors .....	9
Service And Repair .....	9
Our mission .....	10
QuickBooks Setup Construction Accounting Options To Consider.....	11
QuickBooks Options.....	11
Paperless Server Vault Options.....	13
Web Based Reports.....	13
Excel Based Payment Applications .....	13
Outsourced Construction Accounting Services.....	15
Outsourced Construction Bookkeeping Services.....	15

## CONSTRUCTION ACCOUNTING VS. REGULAR ACCOUNTING

To offer some background that may help with understanding what makes construction bookkeeping and accounting different from regular bookkeeping here is a quick story.

Regular bookkeeping is for roughly 80% of businesses in the world use so it is practically the only thing taught in schools, colleges and universities.

This type of bookkeeping is used where customer go to the business. These businesses may also ship or deliver products and services. In essence, they are selling a product or a service from a fixed location.

Regular bookkeeping has four things in common:

1. Sales with 1 to 4 categories of products and/or services
2. Cost of Goods Sold, if they sell products with 1-4 categories
3. Expenses or overhead, required to maintain business operations
4. Breakeven is easy to calculate because there is a direct relationship between income and expenses on every item. It is easy to run reports to determine which items are profitable and unprofitable and make quick adjustments.

Construction Bookkeeping is for roughly 15% of all construction companies with manufacturing making up the balance of 5%. Only a minor part of time is spent teaching construction accounting in schools, colleges and universities. It is disturbing because we see the damage caused to contractors making management decisions based upon inaccurate reports put together by someone who is not skilled in construction accounting.

Construction Bookkeeping is used when the entire business is packed up, loaded onto trucks, vans and cars and driven it to the customer. In essence, you are selling, assembling, delivering and installing a customized product from a mobile shop. Think of it like shooting a movie on location without all the glamour, resources and money to go with it.

### **Construction Accounting has five things in common:**

1. Sales with 1 to 10 categories of products and/or services
2. Cost of Goods Sold has Direct and Indirect Job Costs with 100's of categories and sub categories
3. Expenses or overhead, is extremely complex because some expenses used in regular bookkeeping are actually Direct and Indirect Cost of Goods Sold in construction accounting
4. Breakeven is very difficult to calculate because most projects are one-of-a-kind custom jobs. Proactive contractors have systems and cost libraries with pre-priced assemblies for bidding which works in conjunction with Strategic Construction Bookkeeping to provide management with progress invoicing, job costing and job profitability.

5. Job Costing and Job Profitability Reporting are similar to the regular bookkeeping Profit and Loss report except that it is specific to each particular job and has different expense codes. These reports in combination with the Five Key Performance Indicators are what help contractors understand which projects to pursue and which ones to ignore. They form the foundation of a Business Process Improvement Plan and Construction Business Strategy.

**Example #1** - Contractor asks bookkeeper "How much money did we make on the John and Mary Doe house remodel?" The bookkeeper generates a report showing **\$5,000 profit** when in reality it was a **(\$15,000) loss!** QuickBooks setup was similar to every other Accounting business and \$20,000 worth of transactions was put in the wrong category. Some direct and indirect costs were misallocated and not assigned to the job.

**Example #2** - Contractor asks bookkeeper "How much money did we make on the Bob and Sally house remodel?" The bookkeeper generates a report showing **(\$5,000) loss** when in reality it earned **\$5,000 profit!** QuickBooks setup wrong means \$10,000 worth of transactions are in the wrong category. In this case some overhead costs were classified as direct costs and assigned to the job. **The Inevitable Result Is** - The contractor makes bad decisions on what to bid and not to bid on and eventually runs out of time and money.

## QUICKBOOKS SETUP OPTIONS

### Option #01 Do-It-Yourself

QuickBooks comes with a documentation designed for a very simple construction company and it will take you between 30 minutes to several hours to complete it. The process is designed to sell software not provide the financial tools you will need to operate and grow your construction company. In the end you will have the equivalent of one toolbox with one tool, a hammer.

### Option #02 Your Bookkeeper

Most bookkeepers are not skilled in QuickBooks setup; however, they are normally skilled in knowing what to do with paperwork that needs to get into QuickBooks. They will setup QuickBooks with to match whatever accounts and item codes they normally use to input transactions.

### Option #03 Hire Your CPA / Tax Preparer

**Tax Accountants** - [Can kill more cash flow and profit](#) in your construction business in less than an hour by using a [messed up QuickBooks file](#) to prepare your business annual tax return than you can make up for in sales and hard work in several months, if not years. This is because [they are paid to fill out tax returns](#) not save you money on your taxes.

**This Is Not A Bad Thing** - Rather it is a simple fact of business, people and companies do what they are paid to do. Tax Accountants also do not form, place and finish stamped concrete driveways at high noon on a hot summer day and they do not frame houses or rough-in plumbing, electrical or HVAC for the same reason; that is not their primary skillsets and they are not paid to do it.

**Professional Accountants** - Understand the relationship between QuickBooks and the Internal Revenue Service, IRS and the importance of paying the right amount of taxes; however, most business owners do not until it is too late and they have to turn over a messed up QuickBooks to the IRS auditor. [Read More..](#)

**Tax Accountants** - Are good people and have their place; however, not involved with regular accounting, [bookkeeping](#) or even worse [contractors bookkeeping and accounting](#).

**Construction Accountants** - Should not be preparing annual tax returns because nobody can serve two masters. Either be a tax accountant and serve the tax collection agencies or be a [construction accountant](#) and serve contractors.

**How Many Times Have You** - Hired a [construction worker](#) with the expectation they understood how what to do and then found out they did not have a clue? It happens all the time and the first thing that crosses your mind cannot be posted on this blog. The next thing you do is take action and fix it!

**How Many Times Have Accounting Firms** - Hired what appeared to be a [Professional Bookkeeper](#) only to discover they had all the [traits of a Bad Bookkeeper?](#) It happens all too often and action is taken to fix the problem!

**You Have Mastered Construction** - So you knew what to look for and very quickly you knew if someone has the skillsets you need or not.

**We Have Mastered [Construction Accounting](#)** - So we know what to look for and very quickly we know if someone has the skillsets we need and we proceed accordingly.

**You Know What Happens** - When you send your best [Rough Carpenter](#) that you pay piece work for framing spec tract houses from the ground up in all kinds of weather and working conditions to install some custom made cherry wood cabinets with gold plated pulls and knobs in the home of your best client who happens to live in the wealthiest neighborhood in your town and it is not a pretty sight, is it?

**[Rough Carpenters](#)** - Are good people and they know what they know; which is why he will arrive at your best client's home wearing muddy work boots, wearing bib overalls, smoking a cigarette, un-shaven, with an attitude, and walk across the white plush carpet while carrying a heavy duty fifty foot power cords, a five gallon bucket full of rough carpentry tools including a worm-drive circular saw and a sazall with an 18 tooth blade. He is exactly the person you need to get spec tract houses framed, on time, on budget! Enough said? For more on this see [Construction Psychology](#).

**[Tax Accountants](#)** - Operate like Rough Carpenters because they work fast and furious and they are paid piece work. The main difference is they earn the bulk of their income for the year in three and one-half months. This means they do not waste any time going through your receipts to make certain you get all the deductions you are entitled too.

**The Dirty Little Secret** - Is most [tax accountants](#) have software that gets the numbers from [QuickBooks](#) or whatever system you are using and it puts it directly into the tax form.

**Which Means** - If your [QuickBooks Is Setup Properly](#) and all the transactions are input correctly you could save you some serious money on your tax bill because the tax preparation software will find most if not all of the deductions you are entitled too.

**You Must Understand That Saving You Money** - On your tax bill is not what they paid to do; [they get paid to fill out as many tax returns](#) as possible is shortest amount of time during the harvest season between January 1 and April 15th.

**If Your [QuickBooks](#)** - Is a mess they might recommend a [Cheap Bookkeeping Service](#) working out of their home who will put everything into [QuickBooks](#) in a way that [makes it easy and quick for them to prepare the tax return](#) with little or no regard for saving you money on your tax bill.

**If They Really Care** - About you they will recommend a [construction accounting firm like us](#). We get referrals from professional tax accountants and we refer annual tax preparation work back to them.

**The Following Is From One Of Our Clients:**

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**[House Builder Mukilteo, WA](#)**

"Having paid another accountant machos bucks only to find a wacko bottom line that even I knew wasn't accurate----I was elated after working with Business Consulting and Accounting.

[Randal](#) is knowledgeable and friendly and I find his expertise invaluable. He has been readily available and happy to share stories in order to enrich my learning.

My books are now in tip-top shape, and I have ultimate confidence in my bottom line. Too bad I didn't know about their services earlier; I could have saved myself a lot of grief." [Read More...](#)

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**We Do Not Prepare [Annual Tax Returns](#)** because we in believe "Trust But Verify" by keeping [contractors bookkeeping services](#) separate from [tax preparation](#) and having a [Board of Advisors](#) watching over each other and your business. [Read More..](#)

**Please Don't Think** we are being too hard on tax accountants when in fact we have great relationships with many tax accountants. In fact, we have tax accountants that we rely on to review our QuickBooks and prepare our business and personal returns for over thirty years and we refer a lot of business to a variety of tax accountants.

**Option #04 Hire Construction Accountant That Understands What You Do**

**The Most Important** - Part of QuickBooks Setup for contractors is having a QuickBooks expert with a deep background in construction accounting who understands what your particular construction company needs. Among other things, you need a fast and easy way to monitor the financial health of your construction company. QuickBooks Premier Contractors Edition provides a running scorecard of [Key Performance Reports](#) and when used with Business Process Management Tools like [what 10 minutes of waste costs their company.](#)

**Which QuickBooks Edition** - Is right for you? It depends on your annual sales volume and what [QuickBooks Reports](#) you want to have. **QuickBooks Pro** - Works well for all contractors with less than \$250,000 annual volume because your [QuickBooks Reporting](#) needs are not great.

**QuickBooks Premier Contractor** - Is what we recommend for contractors with more than \$250,000 annual volume currently or projected in the next 12 months. The difference in cost is very small compared to the potential value.

## FIVE TYPES OF CONTRACTORS NEED PROFESSIONAL QUICKBOOKS SETUP:

**New Construction Speculative** - Land developers, home builders and light commercial builders. These are the contractors who build something in hopes a buyer will emerge during or shortly after the building is built and they need QuickBooks setup so that it will:

1. Your QuickBooks setup is put together so you can track all your construction and overhead costs and generate [Bank Draws](#) and Work-In-Progress (WIP) reports against budgeted estimates to monitor progress.
2. Your QuickBooks setup for your Chart of Accounts needs to be focused WIP Assets with a few Cost of Goods Sold Accounts (COGS) to allocate the sale of the building
3. Your QuickBooks expert can setup the [Five Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPI) to monitor the financial health of the business
4. You need between 200 and 6,000 Items setup to track all the costs of the construction process from the ground up through the roof and final cleanup
5. This is the most difficult QuickBooks Premier Contractor Edition to setup because there is a mix of Direct, Indirect, WIP and COGS accounts
6. The day to day input is also the most difficult and needs to be handled by accounting staff with specialized training in construction accounting
7. You will need a simple yet effective way to keep track of retention and your QuickBooks expert in construction accounting can set it up to meet your needs
8. Your income can be sporadic and extremely sensitive to the ups and downs of the new construction market which is why you need a strategy with an external focus on the global housing market.
9. In order for your Spec Builder Company to reach its full potential you will need an overall strategy including a [Business Plan for Contractors](#)
10. We believe a lot of speculative builders go bankrupt because they do not have accurate reports to base decisions on and that is as direct result of trying to save money with [Cheap Bookkeeping](#)

**New Construction Custom** - Builders of residential and light commercial buildings have special QuickBooks setup needs:

1. You use QuickBooks to track all the costs and generate [Complex Payment Applications](#), Item Estimates vs. Actuals, Job Profitability Summary and Job Profitability Detail Reports to monitor progress
2. Your QuickBooks setup for the Chart of Accounts has a lot of Goods Sold Accounts (COGS) to allocate project costs
3. Your QuickBooks expert can setup the [Five Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPI) to monitor the financial health of the business
4. You will have between 500 to 2,500 Items setup to track all the costs of the construction process from the ground up through the roof and final cleanup

5. This is the second most difficult QuickBooks setup is Premier Contractor Edition because there is a mix of Direct, Indirect, COGS and only a few WIP accounts
6. The day to day accounting and [bookkeeping](#) input is the second most difficult and to be done properly requires accounting staff with [specialized training in construction accounting](#)
7. You will need a simple yet effective way to keep track of retention and your QuickBooks expert in construction accounting can set it up to meet your needs
8. Our experience has been your group generates a relatively unstable income and is somewhat sensitive to the ups and downs of the new construction custom built market
9. In order for your Custom Home Building Company to reach its full potential you need a [Construction Business Strategy](#) including a [Business Plan for Contractors](#)
10. We believe a lot of custom builders go bankrupt because they do not have accurate reports to base decisions on and that is as direct result of trying to save money with [Cheap Bookkeeping](#)

**Remodel** - Residential And Light Commercial Tenant Improvement Contractors QuickBooks Setup:

1. You use QuickBooks to track all the costs and generate [Complex Payment Applications](#) Item Estimates vs. Actuals, Job Profitability Summary and Job Profitability Detail Reports to monitor progress
2. Your Chart of Accounts is focused Goods Sold Accounts (COGS) to allocate project costs
3. You need the [Five Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPI) to monitor the financial health of the business
4. Your QuickBooks setup will need 1,000 to 5,000 Items setup to track all the costs of the construction process from beginning to end in order to get the reports you need
5. This is the **third most** difficult QuickBooks setup in Premier Contractor Edition because there is a mix of Direct, Indirect, COGS and only a few WIP accounts
6. The day to day input is also the second most difficult and to be done properly requires [accounting staff with specialized training in construction accounting](#)
7. You will need a simple yet effective way to keep track of retention and your QuickBooks expert in construction accounting can set it up to meet your needs
8. Our experience has been your group generates a stable income and is not as sensitive to the ups and downs of the new construction market
9. In order for you to reach their full potential of your business you will need an overall [strategy](#) including a [Business Plan for Contractors](#)
10. And of course [Cheap Bookkeeping](#) is the one area where short term savings is overwhelmed by making bad decisions based upon inaccurate QuickBooks reports

**Trade Contractors** - QuickBooks Setup For Plumbers, Electricians, HVAC, Flooring, Sheetrock, Painters, Landscapers and others:

1. You use QuickBooks to track all the costs and generate [Simple Invoices](#) which can then be input into QuickBooks Premier Contractor Edition
2. Your QuickBooks setup for the Chart of Accounts is usually focused Goods Sold Accounts (COGS) to allocate project costs
3. You will need to pay close attention to the [Five Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPI) to monitor the financial health of the business because your sales cycle is so short
4. You will need 500 to 2,500 Items in your QuickBooks setup to track all the costs of the construction process from beginning to end
5. This is the **fourth most** difficult QuickBooks setup is the Premier Contractor Edition because there is a mix of Direct, Indirect, COGS accounts
6. Your day to day input is also the third most difficult and to be done properly requires [accounting staff with specialized training in construction accounting](#)
7. You will need a simple yet effective way to keep track of retention and your QuickBooks expert in construction accounting can set it up to meet your needs
8. Our experience has been your group generates the most stable income and you are not as sensitive to the ups and downs of the new construction market
9. In order to reach their full potential of your Trade Construction Business you will need an overall [strategy](#) including a [Business Plan for Contractors](#)
10. And of course [Cheap Bookkeeping](#) is the one area where short term savings is overwhelmed by making bad decisions based upon inaccurate QuickBooks reports

**Service And Repair** - QuickBooks setup for companies like drain cleaners, emergency service electricians and others:

1. You use QuickBooks setup needs to be able to track all the costs and generate [Simple Invoices](#) which can then be input into QuickBooks Premier Contractor Edition
2. Your QuickBooks setup for the Chart of Accounts is usually focused Goods Sold Accounts (COGS) to allocate project costs
3. You will need to closely monitor the daily changes in the [Five Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPI) to understand the financial health of your business
4. Your QuickBooks setup will need between 500 to 2,500 Items setup to track all the costs of the construction process from beginning to end
5. This is the **fourth most** difficult QuickBooks setup for Premier Contractor Edition because there is a mix of Direct, Indirect, COGS accounts
6. The day to day input is also the third most difficult and to be done properly requires [accounting staff with specialized training in construction accounting](#)
7. You will need a simple yet effective way to keep track of retention and your QuickBooks expert in construction accounting can set it up to meet your needs
8. Our experience has been your generates a very stable income because you are not as sensitive to the ups and downs of the new construction market

9. In order to reach your full business potential you need an [strategy](#) including a [Business Plan for Contractors](#)
10. And of course [Cheap Bookkeeping](#) is the one area where short term savings is overwhelmed by making bad decisions based upon inaccurate QuickBooks reports

**QuickBooks Setup** - By a QuickBooks expert in construction accounting to work specifically for contractors on whatever year and version of QuickBooks you own because we have worked with QuickBooks since it first arrived in the early 1990's in DOS.

**Having Used** - A number of accounting programs over the years we believe when your QuickBooks setup is done correctly is the best, hands down, no contest! For the construction trades the tiny amount of money difference between QuickBooks Pro and QuickBooks Premier Contractor Edition is worth the investment for the additional a Contractor Reports alone. Upgrading every year is a “no brainer” because of all the new features and if a contractor’s construction accounting staff only saves only [10 minutes a day](#) the savings will more than pay for the program.

**OUR MISSION** is to “Help Contractors Achieve Their Definition Of Success”. Which means we work with them and support them no matter what version of QuickBooks they use? We have observed contractors who use QuickBooks Premier Contractor Edition simply make more money.

**QuickBooks Desktop In The Cloud** We contract with An Intuit Authorized Commercial Hosting company that allows us to access [QuickBooks Desktop Version Online](#). The good news is they are great at providing 24/7 access to client QuickBooks files and nightly backup. The other news is that we need staff that is skilled in construction bookkeeping and accounting and other staff that is very experienced with Microsoft Windows Explorer File Structure because we have to upload, setup, monitor and maintain the QuickBooks data, paperless documents and internal file folders for each client. The great news is that from our client’s point of view everything just works fast and easy so they love it!

## QUICKBOOKS SETUP CONSTRUCTION ACCOUNTING OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

We offer the most comprehensive contractors bookkeeping services system in the world. Your Letter of Engagement includes some or all of the options listed below. If there are options, you would be interested in knowing more about please contact Sharie at 206-361-3950 or email [sharie@fasteasyaccounting.com](mailto:sharie@fasteasyaccounting.com) and she will be happy to review them with you.

### QuickBooks Options

- ◇ QuickBooks Automatic Backup On Remote Server
- ◇ All Expenses And Costs Recorded In Chart of Accounts, Not Items
- ◇ All Work In Process Recorded in Chart of Accounts, Not Items
- ◇ Retention Hold By Your Customers
- ◇ Retention Hold For Subcontractors
- ◇ Job Deposits From Customers
- ◇ Employee Type Tracking - Field
- ◇ Employee Type Tracking - Admin
- ◇ Employee Type Tracking - Sales
- ◇ Employee Type Tracking - Operations
- ◇ Employee Type Tracking - Officers
- ◇ Employee Loans - Field
- ◇ Employee Loans - Admin
- ◇ Employee Loans - Sales
- ◇ Employee Loans - Operations
- ◇ Employee Reimbursements - Field
- ◇ Employee Reimbursements - Admin
- ◇ Employee Reimbursements - Operations
- ◇ Employee Reimbursements - Sales
- ◇ Employee Reimbursements - Officers
- ◇ Payroll Preperation - Field
- ◇ Payroll Preperation - Admin
- ◇ Payroll Preperation - Sales

- ◇ Payroll Preparation - Operations
- ◇ Payroll Preparation - Officers
- ◇ Payroll Tax Reporting – 941
- ◇ Payroll Tax Reporting - 940
- ◇ Payroll Tax Reporting - 940
- ◇ Payroll Tax Reporting - W-2
- ◇ Payroll Tax Reporting - W-3
- ◇ Insurance Audit Reporting
- ◇ Insurance Audit Support (Business Consulting And Accounting Office)
- ◇ Bank Reconciliations
- ◇ Credit Card Reconciliations
- ◇ Washington State Cities Business And Occupation Tax Reporting - Monthly
- ◇ Washington State Cities Business And Occupation Tax Reporting - Quarterly
- ◇ Washington State Cities Business And Occupation Tax Reporting - Annually
- ◇ Washington State Business And Occupation Tax Reporting - Monthly
- ◇ Washington State Business And Occupation Tax Reporting - Quarterly
- ◇ Washington State Business And Occupation Tax Reporting - Annually
- ◇ Washington State Sales Tax Reporting - Monthly
- ◇ Washington State Sales Tax Reporting - Quarterly
- ◇ Washington State Sales Tax Reporting - Annually
- ◇ Petty Cash Register
- ◇ Fixed Asset Tracking
- ◇ Monthly Depreciation Transactions
- ◇ Intercompany Transfers
- ◇ Security Deposits Tracking
- ◇ Loan To Shareholders / LLC Members / Partners
- ◇ Cost of Goods Sold - Direct Costs
- ◇ Cost of Goods Sold - Indirect Costs
- ◇ Your company Schedule of Values
- ◇ Prevailing Wage Reports

- ◇ Work-In-Process Reporting
- ◇ Tool Lease Tracking
- ◇ Vehicle Lease Tracking
- ◇ Equipment Lease Tracking
- ◇ Schedule of Values For Job Costing
  - QuickBooks Default Schedule of Values
  - Fixed List Of Your company Schedule of Values
  - Your company Schedule of Values For Each Project
  - Construction Specification Institute 16 Basic Cost Codes
- ◇ Heavy Equipment Allocation
- ◇ Occupancy Expense - Office
- ◇ Occupancy Expense - Shop
- ◇ Marketing Cost Tracking By Chart of Accounts
- ◇ Vehicle Costs – Admin / Sales / Operations / Officer
- ◇ Other Income Tracking
- ◇ Other Expense Tracking
- ◇ Investment Property Tracking

### **Paperless Server Vault Options**

- ◇ Upload Documents To Inbox
- ◇ Read, Print And E-Mail Documents

### **Web Based Reports**

- ◇ 24/7 Access To Web Based Online Financial Reports

### **Excel Based Payment Applications**

- ◇ Payment Application - Single Payment
- ◇ Payment Application - Multiple Payments Without Change Order Tracking
- ◇ Payment Application - Multiple Payments With Change Order Tracking

## WHO WE HELP

**We Work With** residential and commercial contractors, homebuilders, remodelers, specialty contractors, subcontractors and architects.

If you are like most of our contractor clients, you have an enormous amount of skill, experience, passion, knowledge in construction. They came to us because they wanted to spend less time on paperwork and more time making money; which meant more time and money to spend on friends and family.

### **Do Any Of These Apply To Your Situation?**

**You started your construction company within the past five years (or just starting one now).** It seemed like a good idea at the time because you were laid off or you had a few friends and relatives that needed some work done on their homes and businesses on your day off and now you are stuck with a lot of paperwork to enter, taxes to file and bills to pay, timecards to enter, payroll to process and you need to know if you made or lost money on those jobs.

**You have been in your construction company more than five years ago.** Now it feels like you are running in place and not getting anywhere. The dream of being your own boss is becoming the nightmare of being pushing a boulder up a hill only to have it roll back down to the bottom every time you get close to the top.

**You need to know which jobs are most profitable and how to get more of them.** It seems like everyone is asking you to cut your prices, get everything for them at wholesale and does change orders for free. The answer to fixing this problem is very simple and it might surprise you!

**You tried to setup your contractors bookkeeping system and it's not working.** You want to keep track of all your income and expenses and after fighting with it you gave up and are using it like an expensive check register that never matches the bank statement.

**You make an Invoice and it comes out wrong.** It has the wrong cost codes, the amounts are wrong, the numbers don't add up, it doesn't show previous deposits and payments and your customers lose faith in your contractors bookkeeping services and refuse to pay until you can explain every bit of it in detail and in a way that makes sense to them.

**You know you need financial reports to run your construction company.** You got into business to have more freedom which means more money in the bank and less stress and yet no matter what you try the Profit & Loss Report and Balance Sheet Report doesn't look right and you are having a hard time understanding what it all means.

**Explore the next step by clicking the button below:**



How We Help



**CONSTRUCTION ACCOUNTING SPECIALISTS**

**[Outsourced Construction Accounting Services](#)**

**[Outsourced Construction Bookkeeping Services](#)**