



It's Time to Innovate: 5 Trends to Transform Your Construction Business

When you think of innovation, your mind often goes to hip Silicon Valley, not the construction industry. But plenty of industries, including construction, are ready for something new.

Like many other businesses in the modern economy, construction is changing, and largely for the better. True, construction has lagged other industries in their adoption of new technology, but that trend is changing. Increasingly, investments in technology are seen as opportunities to outpace competition, control expenses, and have a profound impact on project success.

Why now? What has changed in the industry that finally has construction companies investing in technology? Construction companies are scoring longer, more complex projects. Work schedules are full to the brim and it seems like there's a never-ending list of projects to go after.

At the same time, these changes have brought on new challenges, too.

It's getting harder to afford skilled labor, which means most construction companies are dangerously understaffed. That's a recipe for delayed projects and unhappy clients, which can ruin your business.

When you combine these factors, it's easy to see that the construction industry is ready for serious reorganization.

This climate makes it even harder to run your construction company. Although there have been so many big changes, few construction companies are prepared to take a leap of faith.

But construction brands can't afford to run outdated, inefficient businesses. The market just won't allow it. Instead of feeling like a victim of circumstances, though, you can fight back by changing your business.

Instead of wishing for results, it's time to make them happen. The best time to innovate was yesterday; the second-best time is right now.

Construction companies stand to gain a lot when they embrace technology. Enjoy more productivity, better safety, and improved documentation with a digitally transformed business.

But don't worry. You don't need to spend an arm and a leg updating your business. Digital transformation is about making the most of your resources. If anything, it's about updating your practices so you get more mileage out of your business for less effort.

Isn't it time to make your construction business more efficient?



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Construction's Love/Hate Relationship with Tech

Construction isn't really associated with innovation. In fact, [reports show](#) that construction businesses are usually the last to accept digitization. To add insult to injury, the report says government agencies have been much faster to pick up on digitization than construction businesses.

Instead of embracing technology, most construction companies still plan client projects, submit HR forms, and file documents with old-fashioned paper.

While this was a smart approach in the 1970s, a lot has changed in the four decades since. We have simple, automatic solutions today that help you spend less time on paper processes and more time on your business.

But unfortunately, tech and tools are only one side of the coin. Construction pros are incredibly skilled, but owners and management are often resistant to changing things. Because construction is such a diverse industry, language barriers and a lack of technical knowledge also play a role here.

Whatever the reason, the construction industry as a whole has a lot of catching up to do.

Fortunately, it isn't all doom and gloom. Construction is feeling pressure to modernize and we're seeing great results already. Management consulting firm McKinsey [says construction technology has doubled since 2009](#).

Construction companies that welcomed technology use it in all of their daily to-dos. Thanks to intuitive, user-friendly tools, these companies have become more competitive. They're getting real-time reports to plan projects and better allocate resources. That means tech-forward construction companies are improving margins while saving time.

Turn your inefficiencies back into profit. It's time for the construction industry to shift, and it's your turn to lean into change. Keep an eye on these five digital transformation trends for the construction industry. Which can you apply to your business?



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Trend #1: The Race To The Bottom

Construction businesses feel a lot more pressure from clients today. There's a need to finish even faster for significantly less cost. Timelines are getting shorter and clients are demanding a lot more. It feels like you're racing to the bottom, bidding less and less on projects with narrowing margins and tighter deadlines.

Don't let finicky projects drag you down. You can finish more projects more efficiently with the right technology. The right tools will help you not only meet but exceed your customers' demands.

Get a competitive advantage by making technology work for you. Speed up your timelines and improve margins with these clever tech features.

1. Get real-time visibility

You want fast, error-free communication between the field and the office. The right tool gets everyone on the same page without the back and forth.

Work execution platforms allow PMs to collaborate from any device or location. It's the perfect way to encourage quick communication and transparency.

In fact, [a 2018 study found](#) that 93% of businesses with these platforms improved performance and visibility.

These systems also give business owners an easy way to check in with real-time dashboards and reports.

[DTI Enterprise Content Management](#) gives your team access to all the documents, data, and information they need to be successful. That means they'll be more likely to deliver projects on time and under budget. It's an easy way to keep yourself, your employees, and your clients happy.

2. Simplify Your processes

If construction were simple, everyone would be doing it. Construction projects have multiple phases, deadlines, and parties involved. Even the smallest slip-up can cost thousands of dollars and delay a project for months.

Do you really need long-winded processes that take up tons of time? Sure, you feel like you're covering all of your bases, but you aren't being efficient. Waiting for information and approvals is costing you time and money.

Tech is the perfect solution for simplifying your processes. For example, [DTI's process improvement services](#) streamline approvals, billing, and other time-consuming tasks. Have the freedom to bid on complex projects with a clean internal process that boosts your revenue.

3. Reduce compliance risk

Compliance Executives in construction companies are highly paid individuals. They provide oversight in facilities and work-sites to ensure that they are accessible, safe, healthy and environmentally sound through inspections, audits, job hazard analysis (JHA), process and procedural reviews. They are responsible for protecting the company, its employees, and their clients. Failure can mean the loss of life. Ensuring these critical departments have the tools needed to manage compliance is absolutely worth the investment if it prevents one catastrophic accident and the aftermath of lawsuits, fines, and operational interruptions.

Technology can manage safety inspections, incident reporting, audits and other processes to support job site safety procedures and federal reporting requirements.

4. Integrated solutions

Tech isn't an answer by itself. It's how you use the technology that matters. Smart tech solutions don't just solve one problem for your business, either; they're multi-purpose.

Look for an efficient solution that isn't a one-trick pony. For example, DTI's Enterprise Content Management Systems let you manage processes, tasks and information, from one central hub. Smart tools allow us to collect information automatically from other systems such as ERP and project management solutions so users go to one place to find the information they need.

5. Get mobile

Your employees are working in the field, at the office, from their mobile devices, and on desktop. You need a cloud-based system that works—no matter your employees' location or device.

Mobile solutions are now mainstream. Your teams expect to be able to communicate and work from a variety of devices. Improvements in wireless connectivity and speed is having a huge impact in every industry and construction in particular is poised to take advantage of a wireless and connected world.

As clients become more demanding, construction businesses have to keep up. Don't let your competitors out-perform you. Embrace efficient solutions that help you bring in more business with better margins.



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Trend #2: Safety's No Joke

Safety should be a common-sense practice and not a trend at all. Unfortunately, hundreds of construction workers still die on the job every year in the United States.

[According to OSHA](#), there were 971 construction worker fatalities in 2017. One in five fatal worker deaths was in construction, usually resulting from falls, vehicle accidents, and electrocutions.

One death is too many for the construction industry; 971 worker deaths a year is unacceptable.

The construction industry serves humanity, and that means construction companies need to make every effort to preserve human life.

Do more than provide hard hats. Put technology to work in these 4 ways to save lives.

1. Look at your processes first

Did you know that [20% of all construction fatalities](#) happen during the victims' first two months of employment?

It's clear that construction businesses need processes in place not only to protect existing employees but to educate new employees on safety.

However, before you buy tech to make this happen, solidify your process first. Once you nail your process, you'll be able to find the right tech to facilitate what needs to happen.

Take a hard look at your onboarding procedures. Do you offer hands-on training to new hires? How long are they supervised? Do they work with experienced coworkers and managers? Are all workers held to strict safety standards?

Working with DTI and using our technologies enables you to give consistent new employee on boarding and training that keeps your employees safe.

2. Automate incident reports

Your clients matter, but your employees' lives matter the most. Don't sacrifice safety by cutting corners.

Fortunately, technology can help construction businesses protect employees without time-intensive reporting.

It's important to have an open culture where your workers have no problem addressing workplace issues. You don't want employees to stay silent about unsafe working conditions!

Build a reporting culture with your construction team. This includes making it easy to report safety issues.

For example, you can place barcodes or QR codes on equipment, signs, and entrances. Employees can use their connected devices to scan the codes and quickly report the issue to management.

See? With tech, you can have eyes in the field at all times protecting your workers without long paper forms signed in triplicate.

3. Log inspection and safety information

Don't misplace important safety paperwork. Not only does this keep you on the right side of the law but it also keeps your employees safe.

Paper inspection forms are tedious to fill out. There's also a good chance they'll get misplaced or destroyed on the job site too.

[DTI connects your field workers with the office](#), quickly uploading and storing inspection data. Easily locate your information in the cloud so you're always ready for an audit.

4. Make it accessible and simple

Office workers aren't the only ones who need technology. Arming your project managers and foremen with tech makes it fast and easy to share information between employees, no matter where they are.

Empower your workers with mobile-friendly apps to track communication and safety info. You can either provide employees with devices or offer a stipend to use their personal phones.

Remember, many of your employees might not have a background in technology. They also might not speak English. Keep your safety reporting solution simple and intuitive to use. Consider offering the software in multiple languages to inform everyone on the team.

It's hard to change your behavior, but workplace safety is no joke. You have the power to save your employees' lives with proper procedures. Tech streamlines the process, but your business has to make the change first.

Resolve safety issues with improved communication that's facilitated with technology. Stay on track with your projects without compromising human life.



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Trend #3: Open Communication with Technology

Between subcontractors, clients, and employees, you have a lot of communication going through your office.

With paper systems, it's only a matter of time until something important falls through the cracks.

You can't compete with other construction businesses this way. Paperwork and phone calls have their place, but they're slowing down your entire operation.

Get your head out of the 90s and embrace the gift of modern tech for your construction business. Replace your spreadsheets, emails, phone calls, and paperwork with a cloud-based solution that works for you.

DTI is a trusted partner that helps construction businesses communicate with various parties without lag time. In fact, [a recent study](#) found that 71% of construction businesses that switched to Enterprise Content Management solutions like those that DTI supports saw increased productivity, while 47% saw their business become more competitive.

Use these tips to find a platform that helps you communicate with dozens of stakeholders without missing important information.

1. Real-time updates

Communication needs to be happening in real-time. You don't want to operate under last week's schedule after all.

All team members have access to the information they need without waiting for updates. Make faster decisions and speed up your project with a real-time solution provided by DTI.

2. Task management

Sometimes workers need a little ... motivation to stay on task. Prevent

snoozing on the job by holding your office and field employees accountable with task tracking software.

Employees can use task software to check off their to-dos no matter where they are. It keeps employees focused on work and results, building accountability into their day without constant oversight on your part.

Know who's responsible for which tasks and ensure items are completed with a task solution. It's the best way to automatically manage your employees' workload and productivity.

3. Client transparency

Clients can be demanding, but their needs aren't impossible to meet. In fact, the right technology can help you meet and even exceed the needs of finicky customers.

Technology helps you give clients more transparency, accurate timelines, fewer errors, and better client experience.

For example, DTI gives you the power to automatically collect client signatures during construction. Document permissions and client inspections with easy e-signing solutions. DTI integrates with digital signing software so you can collect client communication in one central hub—no digging required.

4. Integration

Remember, technology needs to make your life easier. Look for a solution that integrates with the systems you're already using. This way, you can avoid the headaches of learning a new platform or migrating all of your data.

Look for clean integrations instead of using third party custom code whenever possible. This will reduce communication errors and help you stay up to date no matter what.

For example, [Ratchet](#) integrates content and data for ERP systems and Project Management systems on one content platform for better data without the need for migration.

5. User permissions

Of course, you don't need to be open about all of your communication. Memos between management and sensitive client documents need to be protected for obvious reasons.

That's why DTI provides different levels of access for each user. Designate the level of access to protect sensitive information from prying eyes.

Cooperate better with employees, clients, and subcontractors with technology. Not only will you have a record of all communications, but you'll save lots of time and money in the process.



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Trend #4: Real-Time Updates

It's very, very common for construction crews to use paper documentation in the field.

Even if your crew is using their phones, it's unlikely that the data is stored in one, trusted hub. It's probably sitting in an email inbox where it could be easily lost.

Other construction businesses give software tools to their office employees but not to their construction crews.

You don't want to be on either end of this spectrum. Transformation can only happen when every employee has access to (and faithfully uses) your business tech.

This lack of technology causes lag time, which means you aren't getting important information when you actually need it. The less information you have, the slower your decision-making. The slower you move, the better chance your competitors have of taking your projects.

When do I use real-time tech?

There are so many applications for real-time technology in construction. Here are three main ways DTI clients use ECM apps to stay in touch.

1. Automation

Every second you wait for client approvals, vendor signatures, and schedule confirmations costs you money.

ECM software automates manual processes, sending and gathering information in real-time. The system works automatically so you can enjoy better insights without the hand-holding.

2. Track data

Many ECM options include workflows for HR, legal, and accounting.

Ditch the reams of paperwork and digitize your data. All of your information is in one central location, making it even easier to monitor every aspect of your business.

3. Communicate with field workers

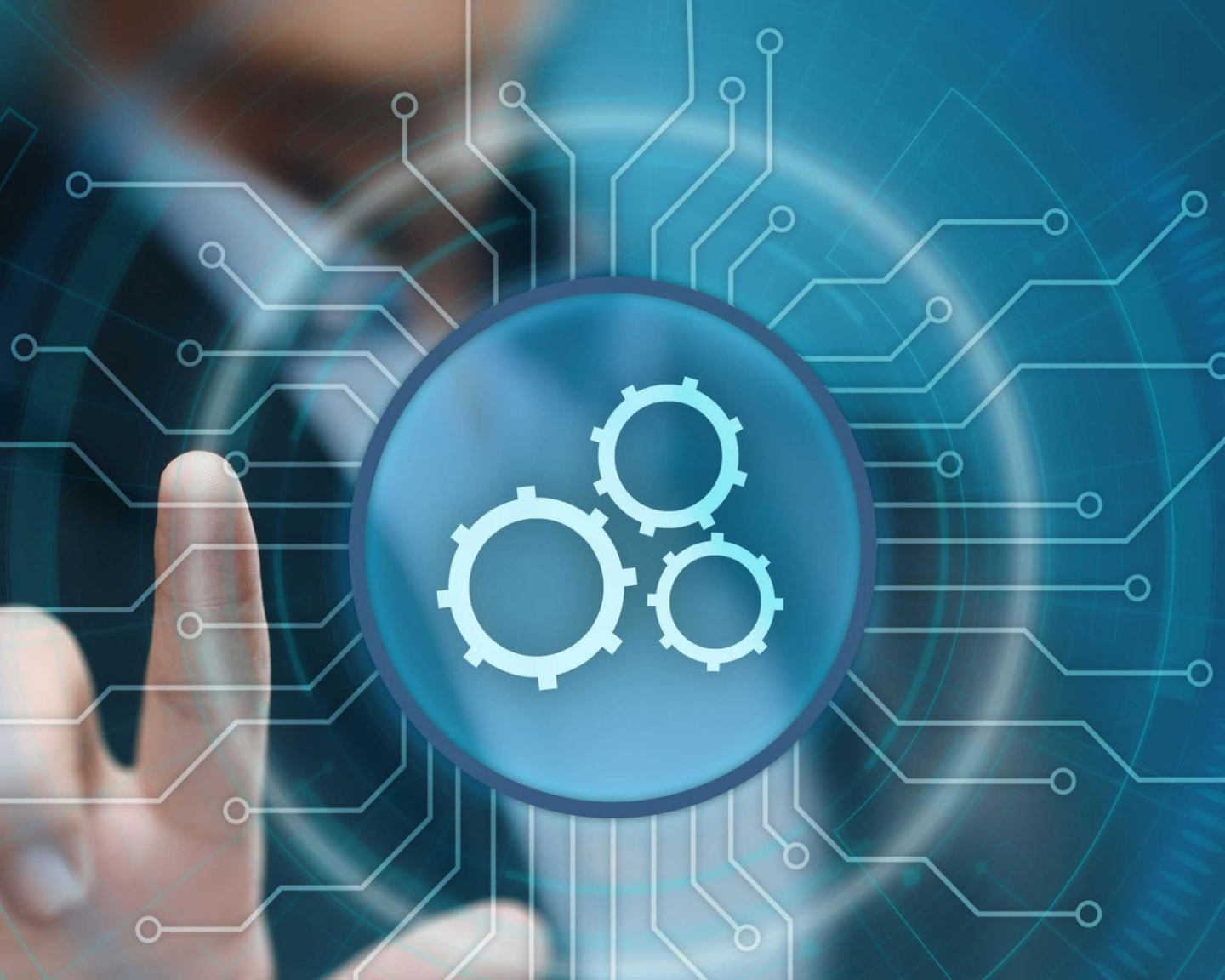
A lot of construction companies still rely on phone calls from field workers for project updates. But that means you're waiting hours between updates from your crew.

A lot can happen in two hours, and that's why you need real-time updates from your crew.

This is a simple fix too. Your field workers can quickly update their progress using an app connected to your Enterprise Content Management software. As soon as they enter their information, DTI populates that data in your central hub. We can even include photos and forms to give your office workers richer information.

Remember, your employees will have different skill levels with technology. That's why you need to choose an intuitive platform that's super simple to use.

Your employees deserve real-time mobile solutions that improve efficiency. Stop waiting on paperwork, emails, and phone calls. Let the data come through automatically with enterprise content management solutions from DTI.



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Trend #5: Automate Your Business

Construction isn't easy. Not only are you facing a lack of skilled labor, but client needs and competition make it harder for you to earn a living.

With fewer skilled employees and more pressure on your business, you're more likely to make mistakes. Incorrect data entry, illegible forms, endless meetings—these manual processes feel necessary, but they're destroying your margins.

You don't need to waste your time on manual processes. Software like Compass automates repetitive tasks so you can deliver projects on time, ensure compliance, and make better decisions.

Compass is one possible solutions that will speed up your business in four major ways with the power of automation.

1. Spend less effort on menial tasks

Does your team spend hours on paperwork? Are they married to their inbox? Do your employees spend hours every day in long, unproductive meetings?

Automation fixes all of that. DTI Compass has features like real-time updates and automated approvals, as well as task tracking. Monitor your project status and never skip a beat paying invoices.

Instead, you can spend your time on what matters: growing your construction business.

2. Reduce error

Your decisions are only as good as your data. But if you're using manual processes and paperwork, you aren't collecting error-free information.

No business is perfect, but automation will significantly reduce the number of errors in your system. Thanks to automated forms and real-time updates, you can collect better data with the power of DTI technology.

3. Remove the red tape

Have you ever worked on a project that kept getting held up by red tape? Bottlenecks happen a lot in construction, and they're a big reason why projects go over budget.

Automation helps you streamline approvals and avoid as much red tape as possible. In fact, DTI's workflows will help you see upcoming due dates, ensuring the project stays on track.

4. Standardize workflows

Speaking of workflows, traditional construction businesses aren't always consistent. If you have a training manual, it's usually out of date, which means employees have to learn from each other.

Instead of hoping your employees are taking the right steps, make it automatic. DTI Compass automates your employees' tasks so they know what's expected of them and when.

Remember that technology is a tool. You'll need buy-in from the team to make workflow automation a reality.

Instead of telling your employees what to do, collaborate with them on your workflow automation. Create a system that works for everyone so employees will actually follow your process.

Now is the time for digital transformation

The rumblings of change are happening in the construction industry. This industry is going to be unrecognizable within ten years thanks to technology.

There's a lot of pressure on construction companies to evolve. Change isn't easy, but it's necessary to succeed in a digital future.

Embrace technology to transform your construction business for the better. Scale faster and be competitive in the space by optimizing through better processes, better software, and a partner to walk you through digital transformation every step of the way. Put these five trends to work for your construction business to become a faster, better, and stronger presence in your industry.