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**Seeing the Value of the Cloud in Construction**

In recent years, the prevalence of Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) applications has been on a meteoric rise across-the-board, but nowhere does the upward trend serve more aptly than within the construction industry. In occupying a project-centric field that experiences to-the-minute changes in costs, forecasts and tasks, construction companies can readily benefit from the open, real-time nature of cloud-based software. There’s no question that, in this current moment, SaaS-based solutions and *the cloud* are no longer just buzzworthy trends. They’re pushing into the mainstream and construction companies’ everyday activities – and the best thing professionals can do is educate themselves.

Following are just a few of the key benefits and proposed value for any construction business considering moving to a SaaS-based solution.

**Access critical data anytime, from anywhere.**

Easily among the greatest challenges facing the construction industry today is the immensely dynamic nature of the work itself. Project to project, minute to minute – there is constant movement. Equipment is moved in and out of work sites. Change orders are submitted. There’s inventory to be managed and tracked, budgets that need to be appropriately assessed and regularly updated. Accurate time entry is crucial to keep up with labor costs on current projects – all while the organization is composing bids and proposals for new business on the horizon.

Cloud-based software answers these challenges in its inherent mobility, a quality that has risen in significance in the last decade. According to JBKnowledge’s Construction Technology Report, 41.4% of contractors who responded to the 2012 survey believed that mobile capabilities were “not very important.” In just five years, that view has been flipped on its head. By the time of the 2017 survey, only 16.9% of contractors didn’t see the value in mobile functionality, while 83.1% viewed mobility as important, or very important to their business.

And that’s thanks to the value of the cloud. SaaS-based solutions are open platform and web-based, allowing users to access critical data from the field, in the office, on the road, using virtually any device they choose. As early as 2011, already 81% of construction workers surveyed were using their smart phones on job sites, while 69% used laptops and 26% used tablets. As these technologies have only become more accessible and ubiquitous over the last eight years, those numbers are increasing rapidly. And cloud-based accounting and project management software can ensure that these devices are leveraged as fundamental tools, instead of distractions. With the cloud, users can utilize their mobile devices to report from the field, create punchlists, track time, evaluate material inventories and complete vital project management tasks that aim to keep projects on-time and on-budget.

**Improve organization-wide collaboration on every phase of a project.**

Working on a construction project is all about working well with the team that’s been assembled. And at every turn, that team is growing. You have contractors, subcontractors, field technicians, property owners, architects, office personnel, suppliers, who all need to be able to seamlessly communicate with one another to ensure the job gets done in a timely, exacting and highly efficient manner. Transitioning to a cloud-based solution only serves to further encourage that collaboration, creating an avenue of transparency and accountability for all players involved during each phase of a project.

Being able to access the right information at the right time helps to improve communications across project teams and can be critical in catching costly mistakes before they’re made. Cloud solutions are founded on the idea that access to real-time data is essential to the success of a project – and in a highly competitive industry where everyone’s looking to get a leg up, that kind of instantaneous information creates an invaluable edge when being considered for future business.

With cloud-based solutions, every member of the team can stay informed. Communications are bolstered. Collaborations gain an element of longevity. Critical players gain visibility, and project leaders are held accountable. Mistakes are less common, costly reworks are all but eliminated – and hardly anything can slip through the cracks.

**Cut down on IT infrastructure and technology costs.**

When making the decision to transition to a new software, it can’t be denied that the blaring question of cost is top-of-mind for any business owner. While cloud-based solutions can’t necessarily be categorized as inexpensive, the return on investment is swift and undeniable. No matter a business’ size, moving to a SaaS-based solution means a significant reduction in capital costs dedicated to spending on technological equipment, software and infrastructure.

By enlisting with a cloud service provider, organizations will be able to leverage their provider’s resources, instead of having to spend more on IT staff. And, as most cloud platforms are structured using a utility-based model, companies will only have to pay for what they need, when they need it – such as virtual server space – all at a heightened level of security protection. Finally, with the subscription-based cost model put forth by many cloud-based solutions providers – which often covers system upgrades, software updates and more – the initial upfront software investment often comes out to be far less than the cost associated with implementing and maintaining an on-premise solution.

In the long-term, cloud-based solutions have proven to boast the flexibility, immediacy and cost efficiency required of any elemental software within the construction and real estate space. SaaS-based systems offer contractors and their team of collaborators a malleable context in which they can access, view and act on critical project details with the swipe of a finger or click of a mouse. Within the construction industry, cloud services offer a glimpse into the not-so distant future. Don’t hesitate to get on board.