

The business case for workforce planning automation

Learn how five top construction
contractors transformed project
staffing and success.



Commercial construction's embrace of digital automation is transforming traditional workflows. Consider the rise of building information modeling (BIM) and its benefits such as reality capture, sensors, virtual reality, wearables, machine control, drones, and much more. Today, powerful field and office applications have helped transform construction insight and decision-making.

The new planning and construction muscle helps some general contractors think even more broadly about their services and the opportunities they chase, such as the growing owner demand for design-build and integrated project delivery. Yet, for all this relentless push to automate, one corner of commercial construction has remained curiously unchanged by the digital imperative: **workforce planning**.

One recent survey reports nearly 76% of commercial contractors remain dependent on spreadsheets, home-grown solutions, pen and paper, whiteboards, or simply juggling names and faces in their head.



For firms manually tracking dozens, perhaps hundreds, of high-value workers across scores of active projects, pursuits, and locations, the risks of continued reliance on analog planning solutions are considerable.

They include:

- **Reduced operational visibility**
- **Inadequate business planning and decision-making insight**
- **Obsolete data**
- **Miscommunication**
- **Lost productivity**
- **Ceding operational and planning advantages to nimbler, tech-savvy competitors**

Out with the old, in with the automated

Reconciling manual business practices in an otherwise digital workplace presents obvious conflicts, from siloing workforce data from key business units like business development and human resources to obscuring utilization rates and limiting capacity forecasting. If you're a senior business leader already facing labor constraints, thin margins, aggressive competitors, and demanding owner requirements, it may be time to rethink managing your most prized asset with old-school technology.

This playbook examines the business case for automated, proactive workforce planning. You'll see what your peers at other contractors are doing to modernize workforce operations and how they align with HR, accounting/finance, business development, project management, and other digital-first units.

You'll also review the experience of five respected contractors who updated their workforce planning operation:

- > The Boldt Company
- > Rogers-O'Brien Construction
- > DeAngelis Diamond Construction
- > Wohlsen Construction Company
- > Sellen Construction



Commanding workforce insight that's nearly 10 times more powerful than 70% of your competition, is business magic.



What metrics reveal

To better understand workforce planning automation, it's useful to examine where the industry is today. A recent survey sponsored by Bridgit, the leader in workforce intelligence for the construction industry, reveals some expected and unexpected findings.

Forty percent of general contractors assert they would win more bids if they were better able to predict workforce requirements. Yet fewer than 30% of surveyed contractors plan staff allocations more than two months in advance.

The reality is nearly **40%** of survey respondents turned down not just one or two projects but **six or more projects** because they didn't have the right people for the job. What's more, about **86%** of contractors have bid on projects only to later learn they didn't have the people to complete the job. That's more than wasted time, energy, and money: It damages a reputation that may take years to recover.

It's easy to see why having a firm grasp of operational needs up to 18 months and beyond might be seen as an unfair business advantage.

Commanding workforce insight that's nearly 10 times more powerful than 70% of your competition, as the survey suggests, is business magic.

WORKFORCE PLANNING AUTOMATION CAN BE TRANSFORMATIVE

There are several benefits automation has that can change how your business operates, including:

Real-Time Visibility. You gain clarity where your people are, how long they'll be there, and where they're going next. No manual data entry. No more Post-Its. No broken spreadsheet formulas or analog delays. You have on-demand awareness of workforce deployment.

Collaborative Access. The right people have the right data when and where they need it.

Forecast Support. What happens if project X happens but pursuits A and B don't? How do various what-if scenarios look? Analytics help forecast utilization rates, bench costs, and pursuit impacts across various time horizons, up to five years out.

Silo Free. Partitions separating multiple offices go away. You can better allocate talent across the organization by identifying who is willing to travel and their skill sets, reducing the impulse to hire and optimizing current bench depth.

Faultless Integration. A top-grade workforce management system safeguards your technology investment and current workflow by integrating seamlessly with your current tech stack.



“There is no reason to have people fall through the cracks, underutilize personnel, or scramble to support projects with a planning process that should be easy.”

Dave Pimiskern, Chief of Staff at Bridgit

Bridgit Bench, the construction industry's de facto standard for workforce management applications, supports one in four of the 2023 ENR 400.

“Squabbling over spreadsheet data quickly fades,” Pimiskern reports. **“Confidence soars.** Better yet, you see results with a mouse click or two.”



Peer experience with workforce planning automation

How do those results translate at the worksite? Review the experience of five U.S. contractors:



The Boldt Company

Appleton, Wisconsin
#96 ENR 400 2022

COMMENTARY:

Jeremy Moe, Operations Manager

LEGACY WORKFORCE PLANNING TOOL:

Spreadsheets

CURRENT WORKFORCE PLANNING SYSTEM:

Bridgit Bench

ON THEIR LEGACY METHOD

Spreadsheets were our **biggest problem**. It was a pain to maintain them because nothing linked. When something changed, you had to update it multiple times. I never felt like I had time to keep up with resource management. I had to hammer through all that on Saturday.

ON WORKFORCE PLANNING AUTOMATION

One of the first things I noticed is editing and maintenance is easier now. It's one and done.

Workforce planning meetings are fantastic now. They're more about strategy and less about getting data into the system. We chat about how to fill vacant roles with existing, underutilized talent rather than hire another person.

It's easy to bring someone into the system. That lets me step back and worry less about day-to-day system management.

HR and business development have access to workforce planning metrics and tools. That visibility into the workforce lets business development forecast downstream capacity. How much more work can we safely handle? HR now *anticipates* hiring needs, not just reacting to them.

"I can toggle back and forth between people view and project list view. We have endless ways to filter information *just the way we want it.*"

Jeremy Moe, Operations Manager

Rogers–O’Brien Construction

Dallas, Texas
#155 ENR 400 2022

COMMENTARY:

Johnathon Grammar, Director of Operational Excellence

LEGACY WORKFORCE PLANNING TOOL:

Microsoft Excel

CURRENT WORKFORCE PLANNING SYSTEM:

Bridgit Bench

ON THEIR LEGACY METHOD

We had three separate spreadsheets managed by three different operations leaders across four different regions. We were struggling.

ON WORKFORCE PLANNING AUTOMATION

The level of effort required to manage our resources was growing exponentially. Excel wasn’t cutting it anymore. Not just for the individual doing the planning, but also the communication between the teams. **How do we keep business development, marketing, and our HR teams informed?**

Forecasting allows us to think through multiple scenarios. Before it was really tough to think about a scenario at a granular level at 12, 20, and 24 months out. **Now it’s easier and more accessible.**

Ease of use makes onboarding and support almost a hands-off process. Workforce planning automation is so user-friendly.

Workforce planning meetings have changed. Now we spend 15 minutes going through what-if scenarios and about 45 minutes talking about existing projects, issues, and needs, which is the way it should be. No worry wrestling over spreadsheets.

We’re more **confident** about placing bigger bets now. Because we know so much more, we go after more projects now, knowing we’re not overcommitting our workforce.

“Workforce automation turns a new leaf. Forecasting is amazing. The ability to do scenario planning is incredibly useful.”

Johnathon Grammar, Director of Operational Excellence

DeAngelis Diamond Construction

Naples, Florida
#262 ENR 400 2022

COMMENTARY:

Brett Diamond, CIO and Principal;
Brian Hood, Vice President of Field Operations

LEGACY WORKFORCE PLANNING TOOL:

MS Projects, whiteboards

CURRENT WORKFORCE PLANNING SYSTEM:

Bridgit Bench

ON THEIR LEGACY METHOD

One day we walked by a conference room with big whiteboards. One whole wall was full of names and schedules. I asked our VP of operations what this was all about. He said, "That's how we do manpower tracking. Then we put it into the MS Project after that." (Diamond)

MS Project doesn't solve the problem. There's no intelligence behind it. You have no way to know if you're making the right decisions based on where the person lives or what skills they have. That's when we decided to build something or find something. (Diamond)

ON WORKFORCE PLANNING AUTOMATION

The question for me is always, "*How do you manage resources when 50% of your time is in the office and 50% is in the field?*" Thanks to workforce planning software, I'm connected on any device, including my smartphone. I have instant visibility into where we're at and what's coming. (Hood)

Our HR team cross-references our workforce planning tool with our talent acquisition platform. It's an easy way to see if we're hiring too many or too few. Workforce planning insights go well beyond what we thought. (Hood)

"We attended a Procore Groundbreak conference. After our internal team demoed workforce planning automation, we knew we had to put it in play *immediately.*"

Brett Diamond, CIO and Principal

Wohlsen Construction Company

Lancaster, Pennsylvania
#357 ENR 400 2022

COMMENTARY:

Ed McCauley, Vice President of Innovation

LEGACY WORKFORCE PLANNING TOOL:

Homegrown solution and spreadsheets

CURRENT WORKFORCE PLANNING SYSTEM:

Bridgit Bench

ON THEIR LEGACY METHOD

We had a custom application designed to meet the needs of each operational leader. It had so many tentacles into other systems no one knew where to make changes that everyone could see. We eventually fell back on Excel as a second source of truth.

The limitations of Excel didn't allow us to see beyond a single region into other regions for availability or capacity. It resulted in overhiring and poor team member utilization.

ON WORKFORCE PLANNING AUTOMATION

Anyone who knows how to use a web application knows how to use our workforce planning application. It's very easy to use. Because there's less friction, more people put better data into it.

What-if scenarios are easy to put in place. We can see what the impact is, learn on the fly, and make quicker, more confident decisions. We know we have the talent to put on a project to be successful.

"System utilization exceeds target metrics. We have full organizational insight. For example, someone in Pennsylvania now supports a Connecticut project. That could *never* happen before."

Ed McCauley, Vice President of Innovation

Sellen Construction

Seattle, Washington
#190 ENR 400 2022

COMMENTARY:

Jamie Miller, Director of Engineering Development

LEGACY WORKFORCE PLANNING TOOL:

Data management software

CURRENT WORKFORCE PLANNING SYSTEM:

Bridgit Bench

ON THEIR LEGACY METHOD

Our **biggest challenge** was each business unit had their own system. I have a system for engineers. The executive team and project directors had a system. Field operations leadership had a system for managing superintendents, assistant superintendents, and foremen.

It was hard to consolidate our information with five different people with five different systems trying to manage construction operations.

ON WORKFORCE PLANNING AUTOMATION

We don't throw people on a project without thinking about how they'll work together. We look for strengths that complement each other. Workforce planning automation helps foster collaboration because everyone can see when I've assigned an engineer to a project. They can offer feedback about their working relationship with other team members.

Having a strong team helps us win projects. A workforce planning automation helps us assemble compelling teams in the most *efficient manner*.

Don't be afraid of new software. Especially in construction, people are afraid of a long training period or general difficulty. The right workforce planning tool is **insanely easy to use**. People are up to speed in less than a week.

"Forecasting is huge. I don't spend hours creating spreadsheets and then explaining how to interpret them because basically I'm the only one who knows."

Jamie Miller, Director of Engineering Development

Get started on switching from manual to automated management

Risk mitigation is a central responsibility of any senior leader. Think of how your team treats life safety, equipment, accounting, business liability, software, or nearly any risk exposure. You make substantial investments to ensure the wellbeing of the enterprise against business hazards.

In many respects, how you manage your workforce is no different. Yet, the idea of trusting your people to old-school analog processes like a spreadsheet or whiteboard may seem misplaced in an industry rapidly transitioning to a digital-first future.

As you consider your present approach to workforce planning, ask yourself how it helps advance business-critical processes. You'll want to determine how it advances:

- Pursuit activity
- Worker utilization
- Project allocation
- Forecasting
- Collaboration
- Decision-making
- Recruiting and retention
- Business development, human resources, marketing, finance



With so much of the construction industry moving to integrated, data-driven processes, from project management to CRM, doesn't it make sense to modernize operations too?

Today Bridgit Bench is emerging as the go-to solution for a growing body of performance-minded contractors. Learn more at gobridgit.com.

Bridgit

Bridgit Bench helps general contractors put the people with the right skills, on the right projects, at the right time and is the first and only end-to-end workforce planning platform with functionality to support operations, field ops, and preconstruction respectively.

Bench is easy-to-use, flexible to your planning process, and offers in-app communications, pursuit management, and labor forecasting capabilities. Contractors like Ryan Companies, Balfour Beatty, and The Boldt Company use Bridgit Bench to create a more efficient planning process and a more effective workforce strategy.

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