

Choosing the Best Project Management Information System

By Brian Tracy, PE



A key element to a successful project controls strategy is selecting the best method to manage the flow and storage of information. For many large projects and organizations, the adoption of a Project Management Information System (PMIS) is an efficient way to facilitate these needs. When deciding upon the best system to use, begin by listing your needs and goals and using them to determine the solution, not the other way around.

Questions to Consider Can Include:

- 1 For One Project or Many?**

Will this be for one project or many over a period of time?
- 2 Who Is Using It?**

Will it just be used for the construction team, or will others in your organization also access it? Will it interface with departments such as facilities, accounting, and their existing systems?
- 3 Collaborative File Storage?**

Do you just need a collaborative file storage option instead of a full PMIS? There are enterprise solutions available from the large established companies like Microsoft OneDrive, Box, Dropbox, and Google Drive.
- 4 Internal or Internal & External?**

Is the system for internal staff use only, or will external team members such as the architect and contractor also work in the system?
- 5 To Control Project Processes?**

Will you use it to control project processes such as RFIs, submittals, change orders, and payment applications?
- 6 Integration?**

Would you like it to be able to integrate with outside software and apps?
- 7 Mobility?**

Is it important that the system be mobile/tablet-friendly?
- 8 What Level of Investment?**

What level of investment are you prepared to make? Some organizations just need a functional, low-cost method to manage workflows and store documents. Other organizations use fully-integrated solution deployed across the enterprise and used by multiple departments, with data exchange between several systems.

We don't recommend any one specific PMIS. Each client's needs are different and each PMIS has different capabilities (and drawbacks) from others. We can, however, recommend options for clients to consider given their requirements. For additional research and insight, Constructech magazine publishes an annual list of their most trusted technology solutions as well as emerging companies to follow.

In addition to the large number of existing options, the pace of advancement in this area is accelerating. A 2017 article by McKinsey & Co. identified over 1,000 start-ups working on construction-phase technology solutions. It's likely that better solutions will be available in the coming years, so it's good practice to remain flexible with your approach and open to implementing new methods once they have been proven.

Whether your needs are large or small, implementing the right technology solution to manage your construction project can save time, improve collaboration, simplify closeout, and ensure convenient access to project records.



ABOUT BRIAN

Brian is a dedicated project manager and project controls specialist. Brian's affinity for projects that benefit the public make him a conscientious, committed project manager who welcomes leadership roles to ensure a smooth and efficient project delivery. Reach out to Brian with comments or questions regarding PMIS.



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