



Adoption rates will improve if software delivers visible impact and is easy to implement
Photo: New Berlin Grading

Two Shifts Reshaping the Software Landscape in Heavy Civil Construction

By Eric Christensen, IVO Systems

Across the heavy civil construction industry, contractors are reassessing how they manage daily operations.

Some companies that invested heavily in legacy construction software suites are reconsidering those systems, while others that relied on spreadsheets and informal coordination are exploring operations software for the first time.

These two shifts are happening simultaneously and are reshaping how contractors evaluate software.

The Friction Most Contractors Feel

Most contractors run on a mix of systems and workarounds. There may be a formal platform in place somewhere in the organization. There may be some custom tools that were built internally over time. And there is almost always a layer of spreadsheets, whiteboards, and phone calls that keep everything moving day to day.

The information usually exists. Equipment locations are known by someone. Hours are written down somewhere. Production quantities are being recorded. But

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when someone needs to answer a simple question in the moment, confirming the answer often takes more effort than it should.

Answering that simple question might take a few phone calls, some cross-checking, and a reconciliation later that day or even at the end of the week. None of it feels catastrophic, but it adds weight to the operation.

Over time, that weight becomes normal. People stop questioning it and assume that's just what running a job looks like. That normalization is part of the reason the first shift took as long as it did.

Shift One: Contractors Re-Evaluating Legacy Construction Software Suites

The first shift is happening inside companies that already invested heavily in software. For a long time, the market was dominated by a relatively small number of large, all-in-one construction software providers. Contractors chose one, committed to it, and built

their processes around it. Once that decision was made, switching rarely felt realistic. Even when adoption wasn't perfect, the disruption and cost of changing systems made staying put seem like the safer option.

What we're seeing now is a growing willingness to re-evaluate that

default.

Contractors are taking a closer look at seat-based licensing models and asking why operational visibility should depend on how many licenses they're willing to purchase. They're questioning implementation timelines that stretch on for months or years

before the field sees meaningful impact. And, perhaps most importantly, they're taking a harder look at whether the tools they've invested in are actually being used by the people running the jobs.

A system can be powerful on paper (or in a demo run by salespeo-



Company-wide access to software keeps team members aligned in the field and the office.
Photo: Integrity Grading & Excavating

ple), but if superintendents and foremen don't use it consistently because it slows down their day, the value never fully materializes.

Switching used to feel unrealistic, but now more than ever, it feels like a serious option.

Shift Two: Contractors Moving From Spreadsheets to Operations Software

At the same time, another shift is happening on the other end of the spectrum.

There are many heavy civil contractors who never adopted an operations software platform in the first place. They built their businesses using spreadsheets, phone calls, texts, and paper. For a long time, that approach worked well enough.

However, as crews expand, projects become larger, and reporting expectations increase, the same informal coordination that worked at one size starts to strain at another. It becomes harder to maintain communication and clarity across jobs, equipment, and crews when everything depends on people remembering

where information lives.

For many of these contractors, the motivation to explore software isn't about chasing technology for its own sake. It usually comes when the operation reaches a point where better coordination starts to matter more.

They're not looking to overhaul everything. In most cases, they just want clearer visibility and a little more control without over-complicating the business they've already built.

Where the Two Shifts Converge

What's interesting is that these two groups are arriving in the same place.

Contractors re-evaluating long-standing software suites and contractors exploring operations platforms for the first time are asking many of the same questions. They care about adoption in the field. They want to see tangible value quickly. They prefer incremental rollout over all-at-once replacement. And they want visibility that reflects what

is actually happening on active jobs.

The center of gravity has moved toward operations-first thinking, and away from accounting-first and estimating-first thinking.

That shift has been building quietly for years. What's different now is that contractors are acting on it.

What Contractors Are Asking Right Now

In conversations with contractors about operations software, a few questions come up again and again.

How quickly can the field start using the system?

Will superintendents and foremen actually adopt it?

Does it improve visibility across active jobs without slowing people down?

And how long does it take before the company sees real operational impact?

Those questions reflect a broader shift in how contractors evaluate software. The focus has moved

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away from feature lists and toward operational fit.

How Software Buying Criteria Are Changing

When that shift happens, the criteria contractors use to evaluate software start to change as well.

Feature depth still matters, but it's no longer the first filter.

Adoption has become the filter. Contractors are paying closer attention to whether a tool fits naturally into the pace of a jobsite.

Access also has become a bigger part of the conversation.

When visibility is limited by licenses/seat counts, it becomes harder to keep the entire team aligned, and contractors are questioning that constraint more openly now.

Implementation speed carries more weight than it used to.

If it takes too long for a system to deliver visible impact, enthusiasm fades quickly.

Operational fit is beginning to

outweigh brand legacy. Recognition alone used to close deals, but now contractors want to understand how a system actually behaves in their environment before they commit.

When the criteria change, the market changes with them, and it's happening right now.

Where Construction Software Goes From Here

The market isn't stuck where it was 10 years ago, and people are no longer locked into the options

that defined the early era of construction software.

Contractors are signaling what they want: practical control, faster adoption, broader visibility, and tools that can actually keep up with the field.

And as those expectations continue to sharpen, the companies building the next generation of construction software will have to meet them. ■



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