Viewpoint Blog

The Connected Construction Professional Series: Construction Estimating Professionals

How Connected Construction Reduces Construction Estimating Errors

Everyone knows profit is a key to sustainable business. But the road to a profitable construction project begins long before the books are balanced. For a successful construction company, profitability often begins in the hands of estimating professionals—the men and women who map out every detailed figure, from supply and labor cost, to the margin of error before costs cut into profit. Even winning the job in the first place relies heavily on the estimating professionals who bid the project. Simply put, no estimating professionals, no profit.

Here's the problem: The job is hard and estimating errors are common. As the name suggests, no estimate is 100% accurate. But if you're an estimator worth your salt, you care about your craft, and you know that most estimating errors can be minimized if not eliminated. It just takes the right people and tools.

The Role of Construction Estimating Professionals


Woman using construction software works at her desk

As a construction estimating professional who cares about your craft, your role is to determine the complete cost of the construction project before it has even begun, which is no small task. Of course, each estimating role itself and the tools you use to do your job might be different, depending on whether you're working on a general construction project, a heavy or civil project, or a mechanical, electrical or plumbing (MEP) project.

One commonality though, is that your role often requires a thorough understanding of mathematics, engineering and architecture, and cost and supply chain economics, all of which heavily influence your day-to-day work. In addition, construction estimating requires an acute attention to detail as well as patience for the meticulous process. Of course, you also must be capable of communicating clearly with other construction professionals such as architects, material suppliers, and finance professionals. All of these skills are important for reducing estimating errors.

But before you can start crunching numbers, there are few key documents you need. First, a finalized scope of work, which details the parameters of the project, is key to your success. The boundaries set by the scope of work document are essential to your ability to estimate figures in your takeoff.

A second requirement, the takeoff, is also a key factor in determining total cost of the project. Takeoff determines the amount of materials needed for the project (or project phases) and relies on building plans and specifications.

Creating a takeoff can be a difficult process, but developing the cost estimates for your assigned projects can be even more challenging. What if supply prices rise due to inflation or supply chain inefficiency? What happens if supplies are lost or damaged during the building process? If factors change, how can you efficiently change your estimate and manage communication of those changes?

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Of course, all of these problems are also pitted against the goal of bidding low enough to win the bid. Whether your estimate is for a general contractor or for a subcontractor that will be included in a larger bid, you are constantly battling to find the sweet spot between winning bids and making a

profit.

As you work through the estimation process, more and more challenges can appear, increasing the risk of estimating errors. For instance, the sheer data workload that must be lifted can cause stress, both because of a lack of accurate data and because of insufficient data organization. To complicate matters, your data might change over the course of a project. To navigate possible changes, you need to be able to communicate clearly with different stakeholders and pivot quickly.

In short, construction estimating is prone to hold ups and estimating errors. Perhaps one of the most difficult decisions is whether to settle for what you have and move on. There is a balancing act between accuracy and your time, and you need to be able to determine the ROI of your own efforts. Your time is your greatest asset, and you need to guard it carefully.

What Construction Estimating Professionals Want and Need


Construction workers plan a project during a meeting

Your job is imperative to a successful construction project, and reducing estimating errors will have a significant effect on your bottom line. So what is it that construction estimating professionals want and need to reduce errors?

Estimating is a data heavy role, and therefore the greatest need among estimation professionals are tools to help them better work with data in real time. For instance, if you're manually entering data into a spreadsheet, it's extremely easy to make a small mistake that could complicate the estimating process farther down the line. However, automated data entry solves many of these errors.

Connected, centralized data is another key to reducing estimating errors. Problems quickly arise when important estimating data is spread across multiple spreadsheets or even physical papers that must be found before they can be used. And the time needed to manually reconcile all of this data means that it isn’t exactly fresh and accurate by the time it’s submitted. Especially when errors need to be corrected, connected data is essential. For instance, imagine that the cost of labor increases due to the shortage of workers. You need to be able to update this figure in one place, and have it updated across your entire estimate instantly.

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Explore how Connected Construction Technology is Fueling Success

Along with connected data, access to accurate data is key. Estimators need to know up to date information such as pricing, part numbers, lead times, etc. You will quickly run into roadblocks if you can't answer questions such as, is this part still available? Is this SKU number correct? What are the volume discounts, if any? Estimators need tools capable of answering these questions.

Construction estimators need more than the average manual process and spreadsheet template used for organizing complex data. Estimators need an automated system specifically designed for estimating and capable of complex data connection and calculation. The good news is that such tools exist.

Why a Connected Construction Suite Like Trimble Construction One™ Is Your Answer

Construction workers view construction software out in the field

Quicker, more accurate estimates. That's what you want, because less estimating errors equals higher profitability, and that's what a connected construction software suite can deliver.

Trimble Construction One is a connected construction suite built to connect all facets of the construction project together through connected, real-time data and solutions. Unlike other construction management solutions, Trimble Construction One leverages a host of leading-edge Trimble estimating solutions designed for all facets of construction and connects your essential estimating data with the rest of your construction data so that you don't have to waste time re-entering data in other applications.

Trimble Construction One offers benefits such as digital takeoff, the ability to track estimates and detailing through the entire project lifecycle to understand profitability, integrated up-to-date material and labor pricing, and much more. These factors benefit not only your role, but everyone

involved down the project chain. Trimble Construction One allows your estimating data to seamlessly feed into accounting, project management, ERP, and so on.

A connected construction suite allows you to reduce estimating errors, increase efficiency in your work, become more competitive in your bids, and increase your accuracy.

Want to learn more? Connect with Trimble Viewpoint today for your own personal tour of how Trimble Construction One could reshape your construction organization.

Posted By

Christopher Nobles

Christopher Nobles is a marketing content intern with Trimble Viewpoint, and is currently a student at Corban University. He has a passion for community leadership, personal development, and all kinds of storytelling.