The technology & innovation issue

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As you’ve heard, Wes’s goal for the year ahead is to reach out to more owners to educate them about how and why conventional procurement methods simply don’t work. It’s true that design-bid-build gives owners the apparently lowest cost for their projects, but price alone doesn’t take into account the costs of fractured relationships and short-term thinking that accompany this kind of work.

I’m all for promoting more collaborative forms of construction delivery. Ones that bring together all the expertise in a room—before a single shovel ever finds ground, before a single drawing is drafted—to plan a great project that meets a client’s exact needs and to plot a method for delivering that building in a way where everyone makes money. Imagine that!

I’ll have much more to say on this subject in future issues of the Journal, but for now I’ll encourage you to turn to our article on page 20 called “What are Construction’s Greatest Barriers to Innovation?” In it, professor Lloyd Waugh of the University of New Brunswick shares with us of his research into the role that construction buyers play in innovation. His conclusions are telling. Owners say they see project-delivery methods as fragmented, and communication, collaboration and innovation in our industry as lacking. That’s food for thought for us all.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

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An association for all stakeholders

It’s a pleasure for me to work with all of the members of our executive committee, and it’s a particular pleasure for me to work with Wes Quickfall this year. He’s exactly the right man for the job at exactly the right time.

As you’ve heard, Wes’s goal for the year ahead is to reach out to more owners to educate them about alternative, more collaborative methods of construction delivery. Mine is to bring those types of ideas and programs to you. I want to bring more members into the room together to talk through these ideas and, critically, find ways of bringing them out of the boardroom and into the planning rooms and onto the construction sites. We’ll do that through focused seminars and sessions that involve not just our members—many of whom understand why these ideas are so important—but also decision makers such as owners, designers and project managers.

We associations face major challenges to stay relevant today. One of the ways we can rise to such challenges is by appealing to all industry stakeholders and involving them in our work.

Let’s go!
GVCA’s Crystal Ball Report is a unique and insightful member service. Updated daily by GVCA staff, the report tracks planned projects during the pre-bidding phases, following them from concept to prequalification, construction and completion.

Howard Johnson Hotel – cluster of high-rise condos

1333 Weber Street East
Kitchener, ON

Project details: Ambitious proposal to build four high-rise condo towers and commercial space on the site of the Howard Johnson hotel on Weber Street. City planners are recommending that councillors approve the zoning change application to allow the development, saying it meets the city’s goals for high-quality, mixed-use, more intense development on a major road.

The proposal includes two 12-storey towers and two 15-storey towers. The towers would provide 544 condo apartments, 585 underground parking spots and more than 14,000 square feet of commercial space. The 3.5-acre site is owned by Pamata Hospitality Inc.

Even if city councillors approve the zoning change application, development may be years away. The application is to change the zoning from the current commercial zoning, which doesn’t allow conversion of residential developments into mixed-use properties. The city planning department is recommending approval, but is also calling for several holding provisions that would prevent any development from happening until several conditions are met.

The most important of these conditions is upgrades to the sanitary services in the area. As well, the developer must carry out detailed noise studies for each phase of the development, to ensure the people living in the highrises won’t be subjected to excessive noise from nearby Highway 8 or surrounding businesses.

Next update: September 2016

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By D. LASSO
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
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Cloud Accounting

As a small business owner, do you feel that time is always against you? As you focus on growing revenues and servicing customers, there is little time left to keep your books and paperwork up to date. Don’t panic! Technology is here to save the day!

**Technology timesavers**

Here are some apps we recommend for construction companies:

- **Receipt Bank and Hubdoc** allow you to take a photo of a receipt with your smartphone and have it automatically imported into your company’s books. The apps extract the taxes, code the expense by type and record the entry directing into your books.

- **TSheets** takes the manual process out of time sheets. It removes the need for illegible paper time sheets by being a mobile time tracker. It also has job costing and invoicing features.

- **Corecon** can help those in construction work collaboratively, regardless of location, by offering modules for estimating, project management, job-cost control and scheduling.

Cloud accounting relies on software and applications stored in the cloud and accessible on any Internet-connected device. And since it’s created and maintained by major product developers, it’s just as secure as any other online portal you use every day.

**Here are just some of the benefits:**

- You have access to your company’s financial information any time, anywhere and in real time.

- No more time wasted downloading updates and making back-ups. The service provider takes care of all maintenance and updates. This ultimately means lower IT-related costs for your business.

- Access is multi-user. This means you and your team can all access the information needed to help the business run smoothly.

- Most importantly, it’s efficient and easy to use. For example, most products can be configured to automatically download transactions from your bank account or credit cards. Say goodbye to data entry!

**So picture this…**

You visit a potential client to provide a quote. Using your smartphone or tablet, you access your pricing and create a quote on the spot. If the customer accepts, you can have him use his finger to sign and show his approval right on your tablet. Once you complete the job, you can convert that accepted quote into an invoice with a few taps on your smartphone or tablet and email it to the customer before you even pull out of his parking lot. By invoicing right away, rather than when you get around to it a few days or a month, you speed up your collections and accelerate your cash flow.

Cloud accounting brings efficiency to the mundane tasks that small business owners dread. The time saved through these efficiencies can then be spent building your business.

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This article was written by Mariella Scott, bookkeeping support specialist at RLP LLP/Amplify LLP and Kimberly Aitken, CPA, CA, construction team co-leader at RLB LLP. Contact them at 519 822-9933 or you visit them at www.rlb.ca and www.amplifyllp.ca
Innovation is often associated with technology. However, exciting developments may be on the way in Ontario construction law. In anticipation of forthcoming amendments, industry has proposed changes to the Construction Lien Act. Many of these amendments focus on decreasing construction litigation; one focuses on binding interim adjudication.

This process sees disputes quickly but temporarily settled by a third-party adjudicator, avoiding significant delays to a project and often avoiding costly litigation. In essence, when a dispute arises, the parties appoint an adjudicator to settle the disagreement in the interim. The provisional decision binds the parties until the project is complete, at which time the decision can be overruled by legal proceedings, agreement or arbitration as though the initial decision had not been made.

Binding interim adjudication can be imposed by contract or statute. Enforcement of the interim decision is generally done by promise of compliance or by summary court proceeding, if necessary.

Construction litigation can derail entire projects, leading to delays and further damages, even to parties not involved in the initial dispute. This form of temporary adjudication seeks to address these potentially crippling problems.

Binding interim adjudication is not an alternative to litigation or arbitration. It is a stop-gap solution. While an interim decision may be imperfect, it allows the parties to focus on completing the project without the distraction of the interim disputes which inevitably arise.

Experience in countries using this form of dispute resolution (Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom among them) has shown that, once reached, an interim finding is rarely challenged through formal legal processes on the completion of the project. So long as the decision seems reasonable, it often leads to a negotiated settlement at the conclusion of the project.

Although some have criticized the interim process as being superficial or rushed (decisions are generally reached within four weeks), binding interim adjudication has largely been hailed as a significant success where it is common. Further, industry seems to have embraced the process.

It has been reported that the annual number of construction lawsuits in England has dropped from about 1,500 in 1995 (immediately before the introduction of binding interim adjudication) to around 500 annually since 2000.
Safety in Construction

IWH Study
Aims to Benchmark Construction Safety Performance

A new study into workplace health and safety practices among Ontario-based ICI construction companies could yield valuable insight and intelligence – for government as well as contractors.

Run by the Institute for Work & Health (IWH), the study looks to understand the causes of injury rates in construction. It places a particular focus on the organizational practices and policies in place on a job site, rather than those drafted in the company’s offices.

Dr. Ben Amick, one of the study’s principal researchers, explains that the root cause of injuries has to be found on the jobsite itself. He and his team therefore looked beyond the polished corporate safety plans, and spoke to those most responsible for occupational health and safety (OHS) practices within a company.

“We looked at things like how employees are engaged in occupational health and safety, safety leadership, whether productivity is valued over safety, the degree to which joint health and safety committees are present and active on sites, as well as other things like ergonomics, disability management, hazard identification and control – and much more,” he says.

The researchers collected data for the duty via brief surveys with those people most responsible for OHS in the workplace. Their goal was to identify which practices can have measurable effects on a company’s injury and illness rates.

Conclusions drawn from the survey, which are expected to be released in May, will be used to draft best practices that government and industry may use to further improve safety outcomes. IWH hopes to draft a series of trades-specific recommendations that contractors can use to affect improvements in their specific workplaces.
SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION

Still one of the most dangerous industries
Between 2003 and 2012, the construction sector accounted for 27 percent of all work-related deaths in Ontario, more than any other sector. In 2012, the construction sector accounted for 10 percent of all allowed lost-time claims in the province, while representing only seven percent of the working population covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. As well, in 2011 and 2012, the construction sector was among the top three industries with the highest number of days lost to work injuries.

“Effective firm-level OHS policies and practices can play a key role in reducing deaths, injuries and lost days among construction workers,” says Dr. Sheilah Hogg-Johnson, the project’s co-lead. “But what are the workplace policies and practices that actually work to protect construction workers? That is what the IWH study aims to find out.”

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Employee's profanity during call with supervisor was not cause to terminate

The Ontario Labour Relations Board found that, following a phone conversation between an employee and his supervisor whereby the employee used extreme profanity, the employer was not entitled to terminate the employee for cause and place a property ban on the employee. How can this be?

The facts

The employee was an electrician. He had a history of working on and off with the employer and had a disciplinary record. He started parental leave after the birth of his second child. The leave was for six months. However, the employee wanted to extend it to 12 months. He asked his supervisor to also use three weeks of vacation at the end of his parental leave.

Conversations that took place after this point were at issue. Apparently, one evening, the employee called his supervisor’s supervisor stating that his wife was having some medical issues and he required the time off. He was told to talk to his immediate supervisor.

The supervisor called the employee at home a couple of nights later. The stories told by each man vary significantly from this point. According to the employer, the two did not even have a chance to get into the discussion about the medical leave because the employee repetitively swore at the supervisor and threatened him. The employee hung up on the supervisor.

According to the employee, he told the supervisor that he needed medical leave to take care of his sick wife. The supervisor said that only women took parental leave and made homophobic comments. This was when the employee lost his temper and started yelling and swearing.

The employee was terminated. He was told that he was terminated for cause because of his verbal attack on his supervisor. In addition, he was banned from company property and ineligible for any job with the company at any location in the future.

In considering the facts, the board held that, in light
of the employee’s disciplinary record, a two-week suspension was warranted. The employee was reinstated with no loss of seniority, but no back pay. Since the employee was reinstated, the property ban could not stand.

Terminations for cause will be examined carefully given the circumstances of the particular case. Aggravating and mitigating factors will always be assessed and balanced. In this case, the aggravating and mitigating factors include the employee making the comments in a brief period of time, while at home, in a way that was not premeditated, when he was under a severe amount of stress.

One significant aggravating and mitigating factor has to do with spur-of-the-moment outbursts. In a heated conversation, where one or more of the parties are under significant stress, it is always important to take a step back and analyze the situation with a cool head. Employers must ask: ‘Was this really a threat?’, and ‘Is this really enough to justify a termination for cause or was this just a momentary blow-up?’ Keep in mind that arbitrators will also ask these questions in a grievance when balancing the interests and trying to come up with the reasonable result.

This article was written by Christina Catenacci BA, LLB, LLM, Editor, HRinfodesk. For more information, please communicate with Yosie Saint-Cyr, Managing Editor, HRinfodesk.com at editor@hrinfodesk.com.
The conversation about innovation in the construction industry is not new. Since the days we first introduced portable computers, wi-fi and smartphones there has been a promise that new technology will bring efficiency and transparency to the construction industry. However, despite the exponential increase in new technology available, the overall sentiment towards change is still fairly fragmented.

This objection is most often raised when a company lacks an IT department, or a budget dedicated to technology. If there isn’t a dedicated budget available, then nine times out of ten the costs will seem too high. Contrarily, when a budget has been earmarked for these kinds of initiatives then you can start the conversation with a number in mind and work to find solutions that fit.

Unfortunately, this objection is typically brought up by the office staff in reference to their site people. Manage it by asking the people who will use the proposed new technology what their thoughts are. If they agree they don’t yet have the technical skills to use it, then get to the root of the problem and help provide the education required to enhance their skills. If in fact this isn’t raised as an objection by the end users, then you’re in the clear.
The most important thing to take away about managing pushback towards innovation is to ask the right questions and fix the root problems first. Sometimes that may mean providing some bridge technology education to your team, or revamping internal processes. That’s OK. Making these other changes before adopting new technology is also a big step forward.

When a company has flawed or outdated processes in place, throwing a new piece of software into the mix won’t fix a thing. Pay attention to this objection and try to learn why the person objecting doesn’t think introducing technology will help. Do they know something about flawed internal processes that you don’t?

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2015 Cliff Bulmer Award
Founded in 2000, CRS Contractors Rental Supply Ltd. is known for its exceptional customer service. Everyone on staff believes that the company is only as good as its last delivery.

The CRS team’s devotion to customer service has led to impressive growth over the last 16 years. They now have 27 locations in Ontario and plan to add another in Niagara in May.

Steve Burns, regional manager for Western Ontario, joined CRS in 2002 and has never looked back. He spent his first six months at CRS driving a truck and doing deliveries.

“I was able to meet the customers, learn about the equipment and get a better understanding of everybody’s role,” says Burns. “What we do best and what we think best suits this industry is customer service. As we have grown, CRS has put better systems and broader policies in place. This has always been in line with the ultimate goal of increasing our customer service.”

Running a construction site is very demanding. Quite often when a customer calls, it’s an emergency. CRS never wants to say no to a customer. They understand most of their customers’ orders are time sensitive.

“If there is a breakdown on site, we are equipped to send a mechanic to the job or another piece of equipment to get the customer up and running,” says Burns. “Our goal is to help in any way to reduce downtime.”

CRS focuses on having the right equipment available at the right time with the necessary merchandise and staff to support it. As part of their full-service customer approach, they stock specialized construction merchandise that their customers cannot find at just any hardware store.

The Internet has helped CRS sell its used equipment all over the world. That, in turns, helps the company keep its fleet age down.

“We know the average age of equipment in the industry is about 60 to 72 months,” says Burns. “The average age of ours is 40 months. We always want to ensure that our equipment is in excellent shape. We know this is of great value to our customers.”

As growth has been continuous and progressive over the years, CRS believes in extensive training and promoting from within. Branch managers and staff are empowered to treat their branches like their own businesses. CRS wants to build the entrepreneurial spirit within each branch. It has been a very successful approach to date.

Another great advantage has been CRS’s ability to share its fleet among branches. All branches use the same computer system so they can see each other’s vehicles and track equipment. This way, when a truck is needed, they can search for the nearest location to help service a customer.

“It’s a simple formula,” says Burns. “We take the extra time to know our customers personally, and make their rental experiences worry-free.”
recent construction technology survey conducted by JBKnowledge provides valuable insight into the technology solutions of more than 2,000 construction professionals from a range of company sizes and specialties.

**IT departments: still few and far between**

The results of the survey, published in the 2015 Construction Technology Report, highlight how companies structure their IT departments, ensure cloud data security, implement mobile technologies and explore emerging technologies.

The number of surveyed construction companies with dedicated IT departments did not change significantly in the last year. Over 40 percent of survey respondents do not have dedicated IT departments. The likelihood of having an IT department increases with larger company size and greater sales volumes (as shown below). With more than 100 employees or $51 million to $100 million in annual sales, a company is more likely to have an IT department than not. Ninety percent of companies with over 500 employees and $200 million in sales have IT departments. Interestingly, among those with between $1 million and $20 million in sales volume, the percentage of companies with IT departments remains consistent around 20 percent.

However, just because a company lacks an IT department doesn’t necessarily mean no employees are dedicated to IT. Companies are outsourcing to third-party companies with at least one staff member from those third parties available for on-site support. Construction companies are also assigning IT duties to technologically savvy employees or those heavily involved in a solution’s usage or implementation.

The largest number of builders surveyed do not know their company’s IT budget as a percentage of corporate revenue. Those who do say it is less than 1 percent. Under 1 percent was the most frequent answer, no matter the revenue of the company, indicating that IT spend is a portion of profit, but not proportional to it.

**Cloud security: even less data stored last year**

Every year, according to the survey, the type of software allowed in the cloud stays fairly consistent for construction companies. This year, however, it appears that companies are allowing less data in the cloud in 2015, no matter what the data is. Invitation to bid and plan room software remains the most likely solution in the cloud, due to file sharing and collaboration necessities. Accounting remains the least likely department to have data stored in the cloud, due to the sensitivity of financial data and an irrational fear of cloud-based solutions. Companies are not truly recognizing that digital data is equally at risk whether it is on premise or in the cloud.
Mobile technology: opinions unchanged

Most construction professionals in 2015 consider mobile capabilities important, but not very important, when purchasing software. Field-data collection and project-management solutions are the most likely to have full mobile capabilities with native applications, while project scheduling and prequalification are the least likely.

Between 2013 and 2014, the Construction Technology Report saw a big shift in the importance of mobile capabilities that did not occur again between 2014 and 2015. Would survey participants’ responses change if asked the importance of mobile for each category of software? If builders’ expectations of their software’s mobile capabilities are not high, it’s because technology providers may be setting them too low. In consumer technology today, consumers expect every new technology they adopt to come with a mobile component—most often, an app. The same expectation has not made its way into all business technology, especially not construction.

The report shows that among the 2,000 construction professionals surveyed, the top 20 construction mobile apps currently in use range from augmented-reality to time-tracking to document-management solutions. For the second year in a row, Autodesk led the pack with three apps in the top 20. These apps include AutoCAD 360, BIM 360 Field and BIM 360 Glue. Other top apps in use include AboutTime, HCSS, Sage Construction, SmartBidNet and NoteVault.

One of the biggest security threats to companies in 2014 was CryptoLocker, a ransomware trojan that infects on-premise solutions and encrypts hard drives until the user pays a ransom to get it unencrypted. This illustrates that companies need to take all data security seriously. Whether on-premise or in the cloud, companies should focus on the most secure solutions for scalability, portability and ease of use.

Data in the cloud.

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Emerging technology: comfort with new devices and ideas

Nearly 65 percent of builders say on a scale of 1-10, 10 being “Very Comfortable” with new technology, that they are at least an 8. While this is a self-diagnosis, it is still encouraging. The average comfort level of builders, no matter their role, is 7.8. That average drops to 7.4 for builders who do not perform an IT role, while those who do perform an IT role claim an 8.4 average comfort level.

Along with the technologies that builders have on their wish lists, are emerging technologies they are actually experimenting with today.

Emerging technologies, for the purposes of this survey, are defined as innovative solutions with the capability to impact and improve the construction process. Most of these technologies are either still in the research and development stage for construction use, have upcoming or recent Beta releases, or have just started marketing commercial products.

If you’d like to know more about the findings from the 2015 Construction Technology Report, visit jbknowledge.com.
GVCA’s Building Excellence Awards are the premiere opportunity for you to show off your best work to the local construction industry. Held every two years, the awards celebrate the accomplishments of Grand Valley Construction Association members and their construction teams.

This year’s awards feature the usual array of categories celebrating the best in industrial, commercial and institutional construction, as well as best use of innovation and best restoration/conversion project. They also feature a new award category: for the member company that gives back to the community through charitable work. All projects completed between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2015 are eligible for this year’s awards.

An independent panel will judge entries on criteria such as customer/trades satisfaction, quality of work/complexity of project, trade loyalty and qualification, project management and execution, and safety.

Join us at the Building Awards Gala to be held on April 29th at Bingemans. In order to mingle with other super heroes you have to register at gvca.org.

Since so many GVCA members attend the Building Excellence Awards, the gala evening is also one of the best times to be an event sponsor.

The GVCA is offering three sponsorship levels for this first-class event: the Superhero Sponsor (valued at $5,000), the Alter Ego Sponsor (valued at $2,500) and the Sidekick Sponsor (valued at $1,500). Each comes with its own perks, like free event tickets, recognition on attendees’ name tags, and reserved event seating.

For more information, visit GVCA.org or call the association offices.
What are Construction’s Greatest Barriers to Innovation?

A new study commissioned by Canadian Construction Innovations suggests that short-term thinking and cost-first contracting models stifle productivity and innovation in construction.

Canadian Construction Innovations (CCI) recently commissioned a study of construction owners’ attitudes toward innovation in our industry—and the findings are telling.

Conducted by Drs. Lloyd Waugh of the University of New Brunswick, Thomas Froese of the University of British Columbia and Farnaz Sadeghpour of the University of Calgary, the study asked 30 major buyers from across the public and private sectors about the importance of innovation in the industry, and the aspects of the industry that stifle innovation. It revealed a number of systemic barriers to innovation, most notably: decision making that is based in short-term realities rather than long-term planning, and project-delivery methods that are fragmented, which foster adversarial relations and which yield little or no room for innovation.

“It was important for us to speak to owners at the vice-president and president levels for this study,” explains Dr. Waugh. “These are the people whose perspective is focused on the industry’s structural and systemic performance, rather than the day-to-day, incremental issues.”

Everyone surveyed agreed that innovation was important—as an enabler of a contractor’s ability to deliver better services to its clients and to work more productively—but most rated the current state of innovation in the industry as either “acceptable” or “poor”. When asked about the industry’s greatest challenges and those factors that contribute most to innovation’s poor state, several trends emerged.

Owners’ greatest problem was contract strategies, a lack of collaboration and short-term, project-by-project thinking. They again identified short-term thinking, as well as low-bid selection criteria, as being the greatest impediments to innovation. Dr. Waugh and his colleagues used those ideas to build a series of recommendations for CCI. Most notable among them is that the group work to generate opportunities for collaboration among contractors, designers, owners and suppliers by: hosting sessions and workshops on innovation needs and opportunities, identifying best practices, investigating specific innovation needs and opportunities, and developing alliances with parties that also encourage innovation.

The researchers also suggested that structural and systemic innovation in the industry can only truly be created by promoting longer-term thinking. To achieve this, the industry must move away from fractured, cost-first delivery models that discourage collaboration and encourage adversarial practices, and start thinking about life-cycle decision making.

“Contractors have become more and more specialized since World War Two,” says Dr. Waugh. “Although this development brought about significant improvements to on-site productivity, it also created highly fragmented organizations that do very specialized things. The boundaries between companies have created barriers to innovation.

“We now live in a world where we need to think more about integration. The opportunities for innovation in construction lie in the integration of different
specialized people. The industry should not limit itself to the way things were always built, but adopt new processes and procedures that seek to understand the design of the products and services the buyer offers, and cooperate to create innovative processes and facilities to meet those needs.”

CCI will build on the findings of this research project by undertaking a number of initiatives geared toward a culture change in support of innovation.

“Innovation is about collaboration, performance, competitiveness, profitability and market expansion,” says CCI president Pierre Boucher. “It is also about industry challenging itself through specific actions and in a meaningful way. We hope to make some of those changes a reality for construction firms.”

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**What do owners say are the impediments to innovation?**

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<td>Short-term rather than lifecycle decisions</td>
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<td>Low-bid selection criteria</td>
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<td>By-laws, Codes, Permits</td>
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<td>Different specifications or design standards</td>
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<td>Labor-related issues</td>
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<td>Bid shopping, collusion, unethical practices</td>
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If you’re like most business owners, you’ve toyed with the idea of marketing on social media. You may have taken the plunge by creating your own accounts and issuing those exciting first few tweets and posts. The world was at your feet and millions of potential customers were just a few clicks away. And then the hard work began.

The truth is that social media for business isn’t easy. It’s not about just posting anything and posting often and watching as legions of followers sign on to watch your every move. Far from it. To be effective at social media, you have to understand each channel: its strengths, its weaknesses, its rules and quirks.

Even more important is the need for you to create a strategy for social media marketing—because if you approach social media marketing as you would conventional marketing (that is, by pinging your audience all the time with things that interest you), you’ll fail.

So learn what your audience wants and then give them more of it, or a different spin on conventional ideas.

Finally, post and engage. Posting your own material or re-posting material created by someone you follow has to be done regularly if you’re to be seen as someone worth following. And try to do this at times when your audience is looking at social media. Above all, engage with your followers. When they comment on something you’ve posted, respond. And be sure to like or re-post the things that you find interesting from the people you follow. The more you give, the more you get.

With all that in mind, it’s time to start marketing. But start where? Let’s run down some of the basics about the major social media platforms.

**Facebook: the world plays here**

About one quarter of the world’s population is on Facebook and each of them spends about 20 minutes using the site every day. That’s a staggering amount of people and time on just one website, so it stands to reason this is where your customers are. A corporate Facebook page is easy to create and gives you direct interactions with your target audiences.

The key to success on Facebook is to post content that’s interesting and relevant to your followers, and to build conversations with them so that they not only understand that you’re a business of choice, but also so that they have good experiences with your company. As you do this, you’ll find your followers like you more often and refer your page to their friends.

**Twitter: fast-moving information**

Information moves faster on Twitter than on any other social network. The latest numbers suggest that users post about 6,000 tweets per second. So if you’re going to get into this game, you’d better be prepared.

Twitter isn’t a great deal more difficult to manage than Facebook. It’s just different. In the Facebook world, a post stays on your timeline—and remains visible to your followers—for as long as you need it to. On Twitter, information is gone almost as quickly as it’s posted. But that doesn’t have to be a problem. Because while Facebook hates a repeat post, Twitter loves it. So go ahead and post five, six or ten times a day, and be sure to repeat posts among them.

Your plan

First things first. Begin by identifying a target market and audience. This can be as broad as anyone in the construction sector, or as narrow as a specific group of buyers or partners within the industry. Regardless of whom you choose, try to develop a profile of a typical individual within this group. Ask yourself: how old is he or she, what interests him/her? These kinds of ideas can help you narrowly focus the materials you push out to them on your social media channels.
Chances are, you’ll catch the attention of new audiences each time. Twitter also has a function called trending, which is where you can see what’s being discussed worldwide, nationally and event locally. Combine that intelligence with things called hashtags (which are ways Twitter users organize information), and you can bring your tweets to almost immediate relevance to larger audiences.

As with Facebook, the rules of posting relevant content and engaging with your audiences still apply.

**YouTube: more than just cats**
The joke on YouTube is that it’s a haven for cat videos. It is that, but it’s also an effective forum for promoting business, building your brand, and entertaining and informing customers.

Use YouTube for showing off videos of your personnel or projects, and be sure to associate your company’s YouTube channel with its website. YouTube is owned by Google. Tying the two pages together helps boost your company’s website SEO rating, which is useful for driving more traffic to your site.

**LinkedIn: also for business**
Most people think of LinkedIn as the go-to tool when you’re looking for a new job. It doesn’t have to be that way. The site also offers a host of benefits to companies. For one, it enables your business to connect with members of communities that are interested in your services. LinkedIn maintains communities of interests that you can tap into to show off your company’s abilities. For another, it allows you to post materials of interest to those communities, and to tie your employees’ personal accounts to your business to further demonstrate relevance.

### Make a plan and stick to it

Don’t be daunted about using social media for business purposes. It’s there to help, and many other companies are successful at bringing their messages to prospective clients through the various social media sites.

That said, come with a plan and stick to it. Don’t go in with good intentions and hope for the best. Be focused. Understand the rules of the game, and play nice. Follow just a few simple rules and conventions and you’ll find that these sites are effective – and free – ways to promote your business like never before.
Looking at this challenge from a tech perspective, Marco Provenzano, owner of Think Wireless Solutions Inc., says his company’s main focus was to discover a process by which it could transfer data from the field to the office in a timely fashion.

“We needed an application that did this seamlessly and had a very high uptake with users,” he says. “Field2Base was the answer. It allows companies to digitize and integrate its existing paperwork into its database via tablets with cellular capabilities.”

It’s like the Swiss Army knife of applications.

“We use Field2Base for our mobile forms on all of our jobsites,” confirms Dan Straus, vice-president, finance at Trade-Mark Industrial Inc. “We are now about 80 percent through the implementation process with approximately 200 tablets in the field. We are trying to get anything that was filled out on paper onto a tablet so that information can get from the field to our office instantly.”

Straus emphasized that the time savings and accuracy have been the biggest.

“Getting things done faster with more accuracy in the field is paramount in the fiercely competitive construction industry.

Looking at this challenge from a tech perspective, Marco Provenzano, owner of Think Wireless Solutions Inc., says his company’s main focus was to discover a process by which it could transfer data from the field to the office in a timely fashion.”

“It’s like the Swiss Army knife of applications.”
benefits to adoption of the technology. In the past, it could take as many as three days for paperwork to make its way to Trade-Mark’s head office from a jobsite that was far enough away. Now, the company collects paperwork as it’s done – and in a more legible form.

“Our foremen are filling out the same forms on their tablets that they always have,” says Straus. “That includes anything from time sheets to work orders to safety forms. There really has not been much resistance to the new technology by staff.”

Additional benefits, such as being able to append information such as video clips, voice annotation and photos directly to the forms, also help. Often some of this information could get lost among multiple emails. The software even provides triggers such as reminders about other forms that need to be filled out.

Trade-Mark’s next stage of implementation is to incorporate an automated approval process, called Workflow, so that its electronic forms move directly to the company’s specific departments. Its final implementation stage will see form data integrated directly into its back-end enterprise management system.

If you were using paper and pen on Friday, you could be using a tablet and your fingertip on Monday.

Trade-Mark has dedicated one staff member to managing the Field2Base implementation. She shows staff members how to use the tablets and is available to answer any questions or field any suggestions they may have.

So far Trade-Mark is the largest client in Canada using Field2Base. The application has taken off like wildfire in the United States.

As Provenzano points out, the learning curve couldn’t be simpler.

“If you were using paper and pen on Friday, you could be using a tablet and your fingertip on Monday.”
Virtual Design in Construction

USING BIM

In late January, GVCA hosted a seminar presentation by Autodesk and IMAGINiT about construction procurement. It was a free sharing of ideas about the use of building information modeling (BIM) in construction and how it can provide cost savings, how to determine its appropriateness for a project, and how it can be used even post-construction to guide operations and maintenance work.

Virtual design is happening all over the world. The City of Calgary, for example, has declared that it wants all new construction to go through BIM process by the end of this year. The City of Vaughan is now asking that all capital projects for the city be done in BIM. They want a virtual build of a 3D city to help the development-application process. Virtual design helps the public at large picture how a building, a neighbourhood or a city will look, and to better understand capital projects.

BIM’s value proposition
BIM is at the heart of optimization. It creates digital data that more people can touch sooner to give more feedback into discussions about design and construction. Access to information is paramount. The real challenge is to push information through smart devices to make it available to anyone anywhere and at any time.

Owners are now mandating BIM as a process to avoid the adversarial relationships that are created with bad drawings and poor documentation. Manual documentation is the main reason for rework with a project delivery.

It is estimated that between four and 14 percent of project costs today are due to rework. More than half of that rework cost occurs in late design changes, scope changes with errors and omissions being the biggest part. These are what Ruest calls the dominoes of waste. Rework translates into more RFIs, change orders and delays, increased overtime and greater safety risks—and ultimately lower project quality and reduced customer satisfaction.

The BIM delivery process provides intelligent 3D models in a digital process which is collaborative, proactive and predictable.

The main benefit from BIM comes on the operations and building maintenance side. The old way of maintaining individual facets of a building is old-fashioned. BIM looks at the solution holistically and invites intelligent solutions.

It can help municipal owners, for example, build and run long-term maintenance management plans. For example, several Autodesk studies estimate that building owners pay about 22 cents per square foot per year in the cost of waste due to reuse of data that is hard to find, out of date or not available.
"There has been a definite change of mindset," said Reust. "We need to stop asking for drawings. We need to start asking for intelligent models and have them as a single source of truth."

BIM isn’t a quick fix. It takes time and money to learn the tool and apply it. Reust estimated that architects, for example, will need more upfront money to use BIM. The model takes about 50 percent more time to apply. The real gain will be on the drawings creation side, he added. Drawings will come out 70 percent faster.

“We studied 32 projects in 2007 and found that using BIM created a 40-percent elimination of unbudgeted changes and an 80-percent decrease in the time to generate a cost estimate,” he said. Simply put, with BIM any cost increases are well offset by quick drawing turnaround and the savings gained on the operations management and maintenance of a building.

GVCA’s goal is to bring together owners, buyers, consultants and contractors to exchange ideas on topics such as BIM and agree to strategies for the future.

"The industry will not move to virtual design until you as the owners force us to – it just won’t happen," GVCA president Martha George told the audience. "We all know the golden rule in our industry: the guy with the gold makes the rules."

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April 30 marks the expiry of the majority of Ontario’s construction industry collective agreements. The Ontario Labour Relations Act provides for a two-month “open period” at the end of each collective agreement’s term during which employees may apply to decertify the union, or a rival union can apply to displace the current union through a process known as a raid. For agreements that expire on April 30, the “open period” started on March 1.

Under the Labour Relations Act, an employer is not permitted to initiate a decertification application or facilitate a raid by another union. However, that does not mean an employer does not play an important role if a decertification or raid application is filed. To the contrary, a proactive employer can participate in the process with a view to achieving a result in the best, long-term interests of the company.

Prior to an application being filed

Before an application is filed, an employer is allowed, within certain legal limitations, to answer questions from employees and make statements about existing terms and conditions of employment and the current bargaining relationship. An employer or an employee is not obligated to speak with a union representative and representatives of a rival union are not granted unfettered access to jobsites. Further, an employer is within its legal rights to request that employees and unions not address decertification or raid issues during active work time or on the jobsite.

Following the application filing

The response to a raid or decertification application is due two business days after the application is served on the employer. This is just one of a number of tight timelines involved in the process. If the employer does not file its response in a timely fashion, it can lose its ability to participate in the process, meaning it loses the right to influence the outcome in the way that’s best for its business.

In the event of a decertification or raid, the Labour Board will generally order a supervised secret ballot vote, usually five business days after the application was served on the employer. In the weeks following the vote, the employer must file detailed submissions, documents and legal arguments with the Labour Board on any outstanding issues (including which employees’ votes count). Failure to file complete submissions (including a range of information regarding payroll, time sheets, etc.), could result in the board making a decision without considering the employer’s position.

What an employer can do to prepare

It is prudent to take steps now to ensure that record keeping is complete and easily accessible, and site supervisors and managers are trained on the decertification and raid processes.

This is a complex and fast-moving process and it is advisable that any response to an application be undertaken with the assistance of labour counsel experienced in the area of construction labour relations.

In this delicate framework, in which every minute counts, it is important to do everything possible to ensure those minutes count for the employer, not against it.

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The best-known government incentive for research and development continues to be the SR&ED tax incentive. Many construction and construction-related companies do not take advantage of SR&ED incentives because of the common misconception that the program is for “white lab coat” R&D. However, the SR&ED program is intended to encourage businesses in all industries to conduct projects that will lead to new, improved or technologically advanced products or processes.

It doesn’t matter if you wear a white lab coat or a white hard hat. If your company has encountered technological problems that could only be overcome through trials, experiments or analysis, then you should consider a SR&ED claim.

Expenses that are eligible for SR&ED tax credits include:

- labour – technical staff performing SR&ED eligible activities including but not limited to design, testing, trials, analysis, data collection and prototyping
- materials – consumed as a result of SR&ED
- contracts – for work in support of the taxpayer’s SR&ED including engineering, design, testing, programming and data collection
- overhead – calculated as a function of your labour expenses.

Ontario Innovation Tax Credit and/or the Ontario Research and Development Tax Credit at rates up to 10 percent and 4.5 percent respectively. (The Ontario 2016 budget has reduced these tax credit rates to 8 percent and 3.5 percent, respectively, for eligible expenditures made after June 2016.) The cumulative effect of these credits can be has high as 44.1 percent of your eligible expenses.

Now more than ever, companies large or small and in all industries are seeking government assistance to provide necessary cash to grow their businesses. Navigating the world of government incentives can be difficult, particularly in an industry such as construction, where so much focus is on the job site and solving in-situ technical problems. The good news is that the work performed to overcome these technical challenges may be eligible for Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) tax credits.
EVENTS CALENDAR

April 20
LinC Block Three Brewery Tour – Registration Required

April 29
2016 BE Awards Gala – Registration Required

May 10
WinC Spring Social at the Pines – Registration Required

TO REGISTER
To register, or request additional information please contact admin@gvca.org or call 519-622-4822 X120

EDUCATION CALENDAR

April 5
Emergency First Aid Level C with CPR – Registration Required

April 5 and April 6
Standard First Aid Level C with CPR & AED – 2 Day Course – Registration Required

April 7
Construction Claims Series - Session 3 - Claims Avoidance – Registration Required

April 12
Approved Working at Heights Training – Registration Required

April 13 and April 14
MS Project for Construction – 2 Day Course – Registration Required

April 20 and April 21
In From the Site: Office Computer Programs Simplified – 2 Day Course – Registration Required

May 25 and May 26
Advanced Microsoft Project for Construction – 2 Day Course – Registration Required

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- More than $20 Million

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- $2 Million to $5 Million
- $5 Million to $10 Million
- $10 Million to $20 Million
- More than $20 Million

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- $2 Million to $5 Million
- $5 Million to $10 Million
- $10 Million to $20 Million
- More than $20 Million

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