



THE TECH BALANCING ACT

When New Technology & Established Processes Meet

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Introduction

In the last 10 years the construction industry has benefitted from new technology to assist in how we plan our work, communicate with our teams, and document work put into place. Printed blueprints are now the exception rather than the norm. File cabinets have been replaced with cloud servers. Plan tables have been replaced with touch screens. We now use BIM, Bluebeam, iPads, smartphones, 360 video, 3D scanning, GPR, and app-based project management systems. This advancement in technology can create challenges for companies that are built on a foundation of process. Over our 22-year history as a company, Milender White has prided itself as a process-oriented company. This has not only led to our success and growth, but also our outstanding safety record. The key to adopting to new technology is all about how you approach it.

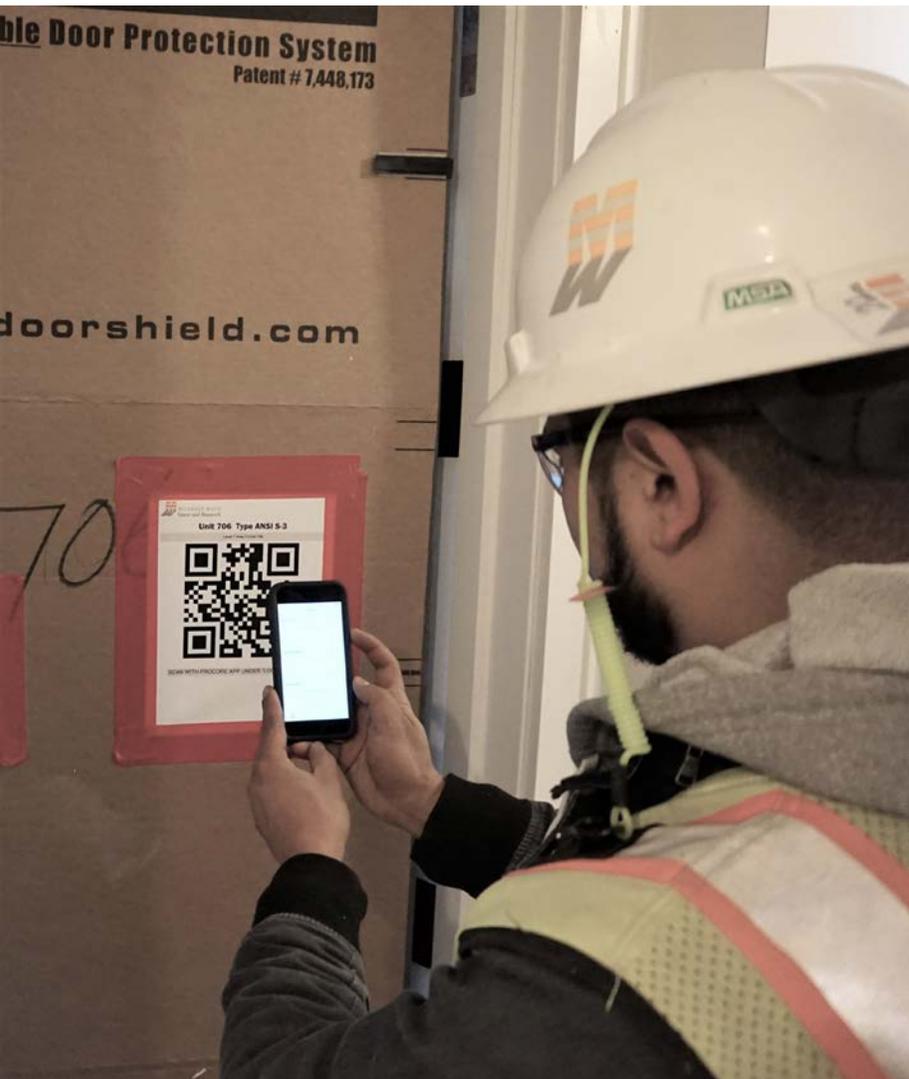
Here are a few items to consider when faced with this challenge.

Update Procedures

In the past, policies and procedures were written with specific instructions on HOW to do everything. Companies have gone to great lengths to develop standard operating procedures that mandate HOW to fill out a time card, HOW to post RFIs, HOW to file documents, etc. Technology has disrupted how information is created, shared, and stored. Old procedures were adequate for processes that saw little innovation for 25 years. Now technology has undermined the old procedures. Construction companies that have worked very hard to grow from entrepreneurial enterprises are now struggling to balance the need to embrace technology with the risk of losing control of the processes that made them successful in managing the risk of construction.

To mitigate this risk, it is important to update your Training and Guidance procedures to survive innovation in process. It's important to keep these procedures relevant and fresh in order for employees to truly embrace them. If policies are outdated or appear to be antiquated, they will not be followed.





Focus on the Why

Focus on updating the policies and procedures to clearly explain WHY the policy exists and WHAT general procedures must be followed rather than getting too specific on HOW to do it. Attempting to define and mandate HOW will be an eternal cycle of continuous updates as technology advances. All energy and time spent updating procedures specific to the current HOW, is inefficiency and effort away from the larger goal of managing risk on our projects. If teams understand WHY and WHAT is needed to be accomplished, they will embrace new technology to be more efficient and specific HOW can adapt with technology as it advances. When teams do not understand WHY they are completing a process they may spend significant time completing tasks that do not mitigate risk or even increase the risk to the project.



Verify the Benefit

What is the point of new technology if it does not make us more efficient, increase productivity, or mitigate risk? Just because we can do something doesn't mean a need exists. If the benefit can't be easily communicated and understood, ask yourself WHY do we need to use the technology. There is a reason that the construction industry has relied on time tested procedures, they work.

Create a Process for Adoption

Embracing new technology does not mean that each project team has the freedom to experiment with every new gadget or application on the market. New technology should be discussed and vetted with leadership teams. If the technology appears to assist in efficiencies within a project, test the product within one or two projects before deploying company wide. This gives the test team time to experiment and learn the ins and outs of the new technology. The team can also then work with leadership to update Training and Guidance procedures as it is implemented company wide.



Conclusion

The increased implementation of technology is a substantial component of today's building process. This new technology is generating new opportunities for the construction industry. The application of new tools and practices can be disruptive to time tested processes but through incremental adoption, a commitment to updating policy and procedure focusing on WHY and WHAT, and integration of a young technology-focused workforce, contractors can boost productivity resulting in more efficient and effective teams.

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info@milenderwhite.com

Corporate Office: 12655 W. 54th Dr., Arvada, CO | 303.216.0420
California: 1401 Dove Street, Suite 410, Newport Beach, CA | 949.724.9531