



Driving Productivity in the Office & Field:

4 Ways to Nail Workforce
Management in your
Construction Operations





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Introduction

Construction projects are among the most complex and risky business activities out there. Successful construction operations rein in and coordinate a dizzying array of variables to execute critical infrastructure projects, including managing the people and equipment required to get the job done.

The stakes are high: mismanagement can lead to non-compliance with industry regulations. Far from just a paperwork issue, non-compliance can be costly, especially in direct fines and productivity. The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OHSA)'s maximum first-time penalties can reach \$13,653 per violation, while fines for repeated violations can cost \$136,532 each.

Better workforce and equipment management keeps contractors compliant, helping to avoid hefty fines, legal action, and damaged reputations. On top of that, workforce management also keeps projects on track, budgets under control, and safety incidents at bay.

This short guide covers the importance of workforce management in construction, operational processes that inhibit effective workforce management, and four ways to nail workforce management in your construction operations.



What is workforce management?

To understand the importance of workforce management, here is a definition for the purpose of this guide:

Workforce management is the tracking and scheduling of each worker according to skills, tickets, and licenses, so you always have the right people on the right job at the right time.

The importance of workforce management within your construction operations

At its most basic, effective workforce management requires worker information to be highly organized and easily accessible to enable management to schedule compliant crews and maximize productivity onsite.

Workforce management has a bigger impact than you think—in a 2019 survey of over 200 construction professionals, **68% of trades** pointed to poor schedule management as the key contributor to decreased labor productivity.¹

1. 100+ Construction Industry Statistics - Challenges in Productivity, Autodesk Construction Cloud, April 18, 2021



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Mitigating risk with workforce management

Ultimately, a good workforce management strategy relies heavily on built-in compliance management. With a solid strategy, contractors can minimize labor downtime, improve asset utilization, and ultimately increase productivity.

On the flipside, an ineffective strategy opens contractors up to more compliance risks on the job. And despite the importance of understanding that risk, **40% of companies** do not complete annual compliance risk assessments and don't know where their weak spots lie.²

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Rather than being an exercise in box-checking, investing in workforce management can help you to avoid:



Financial losses—Risks of financial loss come from schedule delays that can lead to liquidated damages claims, and rework that can cost time and money.



Legal costs—Maintaining compliance can avoid legal troubles resulting from violations of laws and organizational standards of practice. When disputes turn into legal battles between stakeholders on a project, documentation is key to resolution.



Project failure—Project failure can occur when budgets, schedules, supplies, and worker management spin out of control. Compliance may not be the single cause of project failure, but compliance measures properly used can control a tailspin and get things back on track.



Safety risks— Safety protocols like good housekeeping, training, and personal protective equipment requirements can prevent real dangers to workers. Non-compliance can lead to worker injuries and time-off, worksite delays, and financial penalties for the contractor.



Environmental incidents—Environmental rules reach into many aspects of construction, regulating jobsites to avoid contamination from factors like toxin release, spillage, and even vibration from power tools. Non-compliance can result in fines or penalties.

These outcomes impede productivity in the office and field and bring substantial direct and indirect costs, like the loss of contracts with federal or state governments. All of this works against the overall success of the business and its financial security over time.

2. Compliance risks: What you don't contain can hurt you, Deloitte

Operational processes that affect workforce management

Despite the importance and impact of workforce management in the industry, contractors can only attain it by tightening operational processes that improve visibility and communication and creating a culture that takes risk seriously. The following are operational habits that interfere with improvement.



Information silos

Information silos occur when data is collected by individuals and used only for specific processes by a specific group, rather than being shared among stakeholders. When this happens, decision makers lose out on broader perspectives that could improve outcomes and mitigate risks. Further, a [2018 study](#) from PlanGrid and FMI indicates that poor data and communication cause 52% of global rework.³



Inefficient jobsite data collection

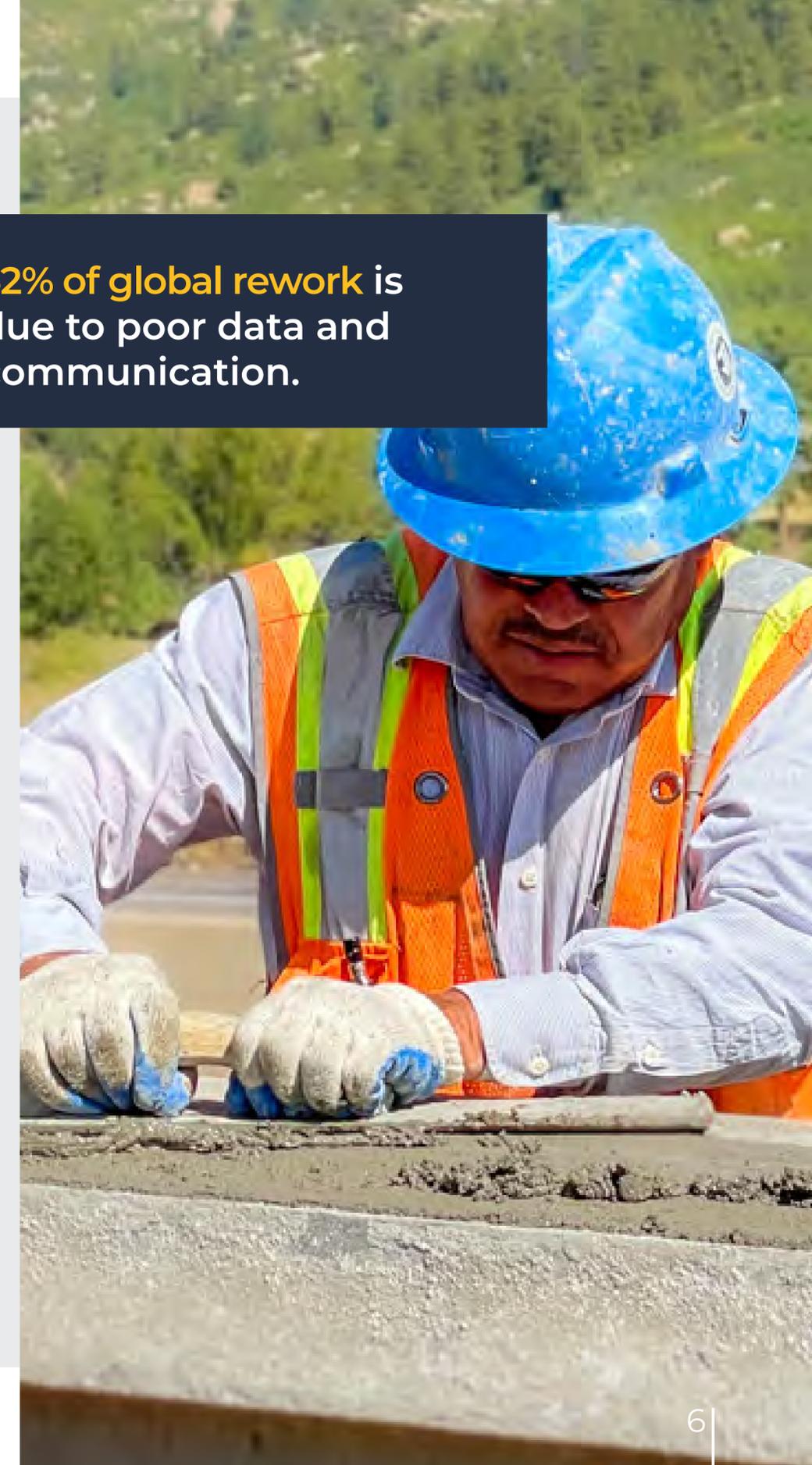
Data from the job site can be collected through reports, photos, site tours, and through fillable forms. If the means of collecting this information is cumbersome, or if the documentation isn't shared for days or weeks, errors that could have been amended can instead cause accidents, delays, and rework.



Communication breakdown

The complexity of construction work means many parts are moving at any given time, making communication critical. Decision-makers need accurate and up-to-date information on anything from supply delays to change orders. Without set communication channels, decisions could be made using incorrect data, causing frustration, delays and increasing costs along the way.

52% of global rework is due to poor data and communication.





Ineffective scheduling of crews and equipment

Construction scheduling requires seeing around corners: understanding when one task will be done so that another can begin and ensuring crews and equipment are ready when the time comes. While daily changes in the pace of the project are inevitable, a manager who's kept apprised of the changes can make necessary schedule adjustments to keep work flowing and productivity up. If changes aren't communicated properly, fieldworkers could also inadvertently subject you to compliance risks. For example, a crew may unintentionally overlap with another onsite, making your company susceptible to a citation against COVID-19 measures that require keeping crowding to a minimum.



Paper-based & manual processes

The use of paper to collect data, disseminate information, and communicate among stakeholders contributes to many of the above problems. Lost, damaged, or improperly completed paperwork can lead to lost data, as well as errors from deciphering handwriting and double-data entry. Paper-based and manual processes hinder the team-wide dissemination of updates, which in turn makes compliance difficult on many levels.

Luckily, there are some steps that companies can take to make compliance management easier and boost productivity. It may take some work to implement the following strategies, but once compliance management is built into a company's workforce management processes, ongoing upkeep will flow more easily.



Four ways to drive productivity in your operations

Create formal processes

Informational workflows should be set into daily routines and built into project steps to create a consistent flow of information and communication between teammates. Operational workflows should dictate the order in which things happen at every stage and create a data flow plan. Even the creation of workflows helps draw attention to each step in the processes, so inefficiencies can be identified and fixed along the way.

For example, though a worker may be well trained on safety reporting, job site culture may instead discourage reporting for non-serious incidents. Lack of reporting on incidents costs crews valuable education on near-misses on their worksites. Formal protocols can help instill a safety culture and remove ambiguity in incident reporting.

When solid workforce management is employed, site-wide adherence to workflows creates consistency—**every worker has a clear picture of activities and responsibilities**, and compliance is built into the essence of each activity.



2 Create a culture of safety

Safety can't be an idea tacked onto a process after the fact. Emphasize it as a crucial part of each activity to help create a culture of safety that will become a dominant, underlying current through everything the team does.

When potential risks arise on a job site, your team must feel comfortable pointing them out and tracking them for future reference and learnings. Offer ongoing training, workplace seminars, and safety barbecues that emphasize the role of safety in your company. Make safety an open topic by talking about protocols openly and asking for suggestions.

Encourage the team to conduct safety checks through "Take 5s," five-minute safety checks that can be conducted to reduce risks. A Take 5 requires a team member to



Keep every person on the team accountable for maintaining a culture of safety and enacting safety protocols. **One equipment company** near Sydney finds that it wins more work because all machines meet Rolling Stock Operator (RSO) certification, and all workers and machines are fully compliant.⁴

4. DPW Plan Hire uses Assignar to automate their compliance process, Assignar



3

Manage the work

Keep detailed, easy-to-find, and up-to-date records on tickets, licenses, competencies, and qualifications for all workers on site. This information will provide supervisors and managers critical information for workforce management and adhering to compliance rules.

The same rule applies to job site information: recent and complete data should be accessible to all stakeholders and available to team members from the office to the field. Use this information to create reports about project progress and workforce productivity in real time, so managers can schedule accordingly to make the best use of all resources and maintain compliance in the process.

Effective asset management, including maintenance and operations checklists, can save time on breakdowns and extend the life of expensive equipment. Take one **Colorado utility and excavation company**: equipment operators routinely fill out forms on Assignar as to their machine's operation at the end of each shift. The data is available throughout the company, including the maintenance crew who can work proactively to minimize downtime and delays.⁵

5. OE Construction uses Assignar to save \$30,000 on payroll and optimize processes, Assignar

4

Embrace technology to reduce risk

It's clear that paper processes create bottlenecks of information and hinder compliance management.

Technology can help to create consistent flows of information from the job site to the office, establish single-point-of-truth clarity for all stakeholders, and **better trace activities across companies to mitigate risk in real time.**

Tools like Assignar are key to maintaining processes and procedures that support ongoing workforce management efforts, including scheduling, asset management, and risk mitigation and compliance efforts.

Assignar is the operations platform built for self-performance and subcontractors. Its mobile app helps crews conduct their Take 5 checks, complete SWMS and other key safety forms and checklists, and communicate critical field information.

Fieldworkers can update their own competencies and qualifications on the go, ensuring managers can schedule compliant crews and the equipment they can use in the field.

When customers request proof of competency certificates, as they sometimes do for one **Sydney-based demolition and waste removal contractor**, the info is all there in Assignar, highlighting the company's overall professionalism and their customers' trust in them.⁶

6. All Types of Rubbish uses Assignar to meet industry safety and environmental requirements, Assignar



Managing your workforce requires consistency

Poor workforce management can lead to drastic productivity and profit losses, including rework to the tune of a possible **\$13.8 billion** over the course of a year.⁷ Add on an increase of accidents and injuries onsite, damaged reputation when incidents occur or deadlines are missed, and suffering staff morale, and it's easy to see why compliance management and risk mitigation are critical to contractor success.

By employing some of the approaches above, you can build compliance into each component of workforce management, from safety reporting and Take 5s, to consistent and up-to-date job site reports and ongoing communication. Use technology to reduce manual processes and make systems fast and easy—a natural part of the everyday workflow—to encourage consistent workforce management.

\$13.8 billion approximately can be lost to rework over the course of a year due to poor workforce management.



7. Learning Practices as a Tool for Quality Costs Reduction in Construction Projects, RsearchGate, December 2015



About Assignar

Workforce Management, compliance and risk mitigation are critical to the success of any construction company—without them lost time, increased costs, and the potential for injuries skyrocket. Assignar is the operations platform built for specialty contractors and makes your compliance and risk management processes seamless through communication, instant data dissemination, and the enablement of a pervasive safety culture across your sites and business.

Learn more about Assignar.

[Book your free demo today](#)

www.assignar.com

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Recommended Resources



4 Daily Workforce Management Issues That Weaken Your Construction Productivity



Boost Productivity With Workforce Management