

WHITEPAPER

# 3 CRUCIAL STEPS

TO MAXIMISE PERFORMANCE IN  
YOUR CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS



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# PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE TODAY

As the world becomes ever more digitally focused, businesses across sectors are turning to technology to streamline operations, enhance service to customers and deliver competitive advantage.

The construction industry is no exception. Modern technology solutions can provide significant benefits to construction companies, enabling them to overcome inefficiencies and ensure businesses have more control over project costs and margins. Many established construction companies will have invested in technology over time and now face the challenges that come from a sprawling, inefficient IT estate.

**Meanwhile, every construction business is looking for ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs.** The solutions construction companies choose must be more flexible, scalable, capable of adapting to changing business needs and able to remain effective for years to come. In short, the IT landscape in construction must be futureproofed to provide greater agility and efficiency while avoiding regular, costly technology upgrades and overhauls.

**So, what questions should you be asking when it comes to choosing a modern software solution?**

Searching for new software isn't an everyday occurrence in construction, nor is it a decision to be taken lightly. This whitepaper is designed to provide you with the knowledge to make an informed decision when it comes to enhancing your IT landscape, highlighting the benefits of an integrated system, the power of Microsoft's platform and the value you can unlock from your data.

## STEP 1.

### Choose a solution built for construction

When it comes to software for construction firms, off-the-shelf solutions rarely meet the industry's specific needs. That's why it's important to choose a software partner that speaks your language, knows construction, understands your challenges and provides a solution that supports your unique business processes. Rather than apply different tools for different functions, choosing an integrated software solution enables you to access multiple applications that work in harmony within a single system. But what does that look like in practice? This section outlines the many benefits of an integrated software solution designed for the construction industry.

#### ACCESS ALL YOUR BUSINESS PROCESSES FROM A SINGLE SYSTEM

Construction companies deal with a range of business processes, from project management and planning to estimating and reporting. By choosing an ERP system designed specifically for construction firms, you can leverage one system to bring all of these processes together. It means you no longer need to jump between solutions or enter duplicate data into multiple applications. With all of your business processes integrated within a single solution, you can save time and boost efficiency.

#### IMPROVE OPERATIONAL MOBILITY

With office-based roles and others in the field, ensuring communication consistency and data accuracy from any location is essential. Modern applications available on a range of devices, from laptops to smartphones, enable access to relevant and up-to-date information about a project from anywhere and at any time. Not only does this ensure staff are fully informed, but it enables them to work more flexibly with access to the information they need available wherever they are.

That's why it makes sense to choose an ERP system that supports such applications, providing your people with full visibility and fewer limits as to where they can get work done.

#### Futureproofing in Practice: Bringing Teams Together

With access to applications that link directly to your ERP system, employees can record the hours they work, create digital work orders or consult the latest project information wherever they are. Any edits they make are automatically reflected in the ERP system. This makes information sharing between the construction site and the office seamless and efficient.

#### ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH SUPPLY CHAIN PARTNERS

Many parties are involved in the construction process. Therefore, it's crucial to ensure good communication with subcontractors, customers and supply chain partners. In addition to collecting and storing documents, a software solution that provides a portal for third parties to use enables you to benefit from clear information flows and provide a better, more efficient experience for everyone involved. If your construction business performs service and maintenance or housebuilding activities, you understand how important it is to communicate with both residents and buyers efficiently.



Futureproofing in Practice:

## Responding to Residents & Buyers

By incorporating service and maintenance and buyer guidance functionality in your ERP, you can manage communication from sales to aftercare in one platform. This means residents and buyers are kept informed and receive swift resolutions to any problems or queries they may have.

**What if** home buyers could be sitting in their own living room on their laptop or mobile devices designing and buying their new home? Or what if you could receive an automatic notification through your system about planned or preventative maintenance? These scenarios are all possible today. By integrating home-owner and buyer communication within your ERP system, you can easily synchronise project data and save an enormous amount of time by ensuring all parties have access to the same up-to-date information and documentation.

## STEP 2.

### Select a solution that integrates seamlessly with Microsoft platforms

It's hard to find a business today that doesn't use Microsoft software for at least one aspect of its operations. It could be for productivity and communication or more specific business processes and analysis. Choosing an ERP system based on the Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central platform offers many opportunities. This section explains what the Business Central platform is and the value of integrating it with your ERP system.

#### WHAT IS MICROSOFT DYNAMICS 365 BUSINESS CENTRAL?

Business Central is the latest platform from Microsoft and is currently the most complete business suite available. This platform has been specifically developed to enable organisations to integrate all their business processes so they can boost efficiency and make decisions faster. From CRM to accounting, all processes come together in one system. Plus, as Business Central is hosted in the cloud, any concerns with hardware availability are removed. The cloud also means staff can access Business Central tools on any device, from any location and at any time. Coming from Microsoft it is fully integrated with the Office tools you already use including Outlook, Excel, Word and Teams; and also links with the Microsoft Power Platform.

#### BOOST PRODUCTIVITY AND COLLABORATION

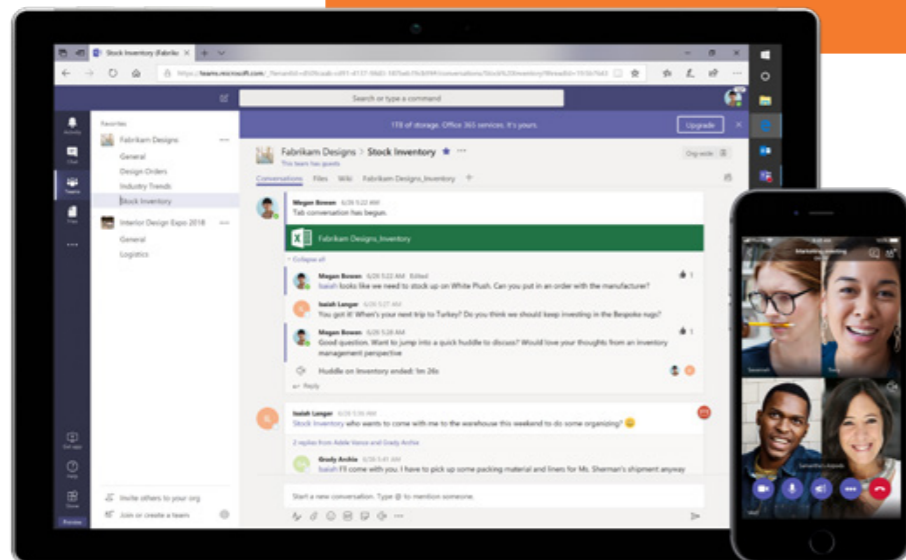
Construction projects require constant communication between teams and external parties and feature many documents that must be accessible and easily edited. Choosing an ERP system that integrates with Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint plus Microsoft Teams and SharePoint means you can collaborate more effectively, easily edit data and documents and share them with stakeholders.



If you use an ERP system on Business Central you can link your Microsoft Teams environment to it so you can harness your Business Central data without leaving the application. By linking your Microsoft SharePoint environment with your ERP system, you can manage all your documents from one place for far more efficient online collaboration as well as document and process management.

### Futureproofing in Practice: **Communication & Document Management**

By integrating your ERP system with Microsoft Teams, staff can communicate more effectively internally as well as access customer cards and contacts, start workflows, edit fields, and more. Document management in Business Central means documents like purchase orders can be created in Word and edited by anyone who has been provided with access to them, making collaboration far more efficient.



#### > **Microsoft Teams**

### **LINK ALL YOUR DATA IN ONE ENVIRONMENT**

In the Microsoft Power Platform, you can combine all your data from Dynamics 365 and Office 365 into one large, linked environment. You can build apps, analyse data and automate processes yourself using tools like Power BI, Power Apps, Power Automate and Power Virtual Agent.

#### > **Automate standard processes**

Power Automate enables you to automate processes and workflows using a wide range of data and applications within your ERP. It's ideal for making standard processes like onboarding new staff more efficiently or speeding up approvals for paper-based tasks, including sick leave forms and equipment purchases.

#### > **Turn your data into actions**

Decision making based on facts has never been easier. Using Microsoft Power BI, you can get the reports you want in easy-to-use dashboards in just a few clicks. Because Power BI is linked to your ERP system, you can immediately retrieve all the information you need and display it clearly using engaging graphical data representations.

#### > **Design your own unique apps**

Using Power Apps can help you to save time by reducing the time taken to complete manual processes like holiday requests. Using Power Apps, you can easily create an app in which your employees can digitally enter their holiday requests. The data is automatically processed within your ERP system and, with all of your tools integrated, you can easily set up dashboards to monitor these apps using Power BI. For example, you could track how many holiday requests have been received across a certain time period to ensure staffing levels remain optimal.

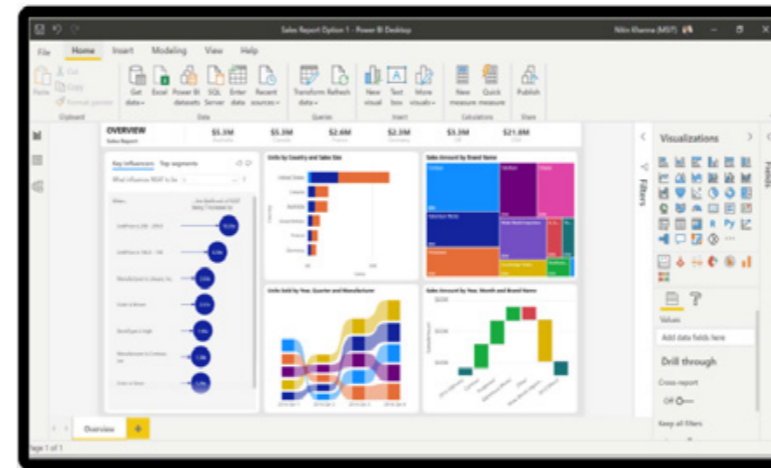
> **Automate simple communication to maximise efficiency**

With Power Virtual Agents in the Power Platform, you can create and manage powerful chatbots without any programming knowledge and easily integrate them with the products and services you use every day. Using a chatbot to answer frequently asked questions from customers or employees saves your staff time so they can focus on dealing with more complex queries.

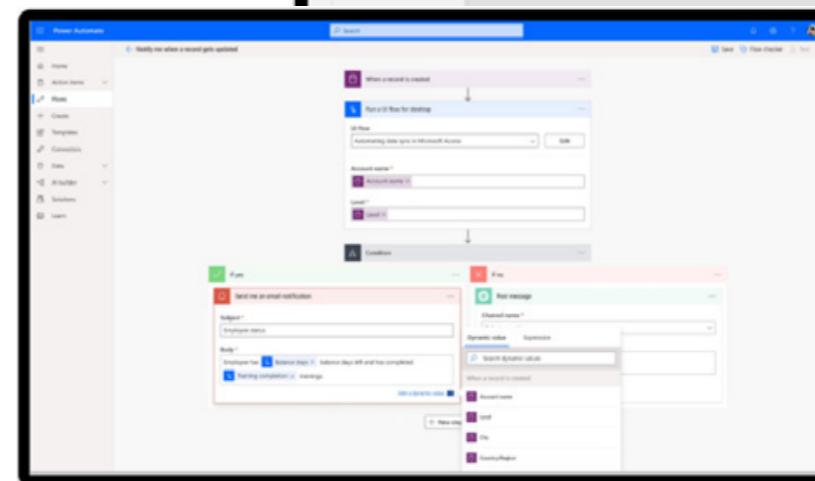
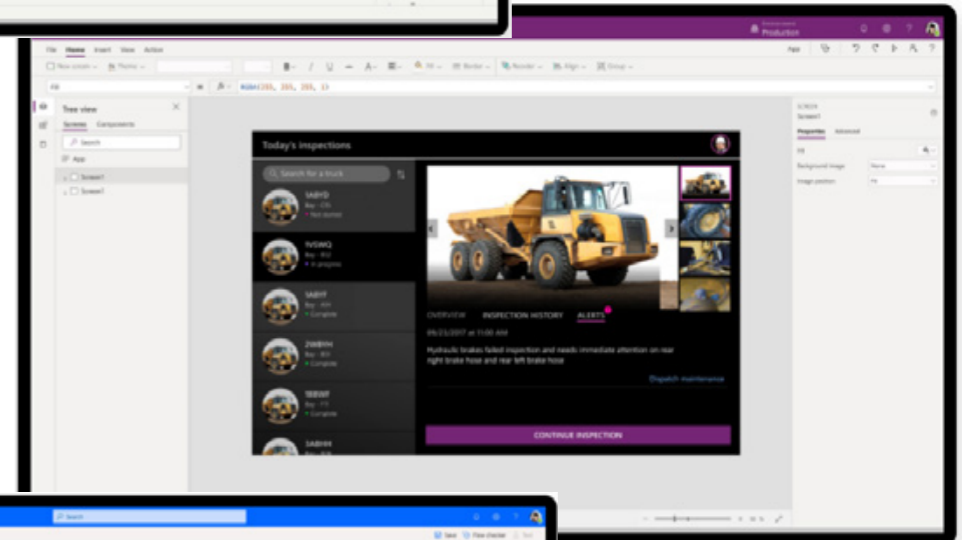
Futureproofing in Practice:  
**Save Time with Automation**

Using Power Automate, you could create a “flow” based on a new employee filling out a form. This data would then be automatically forwarded to five colleagues, with each assigned a specific task. For example, one could be asked to organise login details for the new employee, and another could be tasked with sharing onboarding materials or ordering uniform. Reminders are automatically sent if these tasks aren’t completed, and managers can easily check the progress of each task.

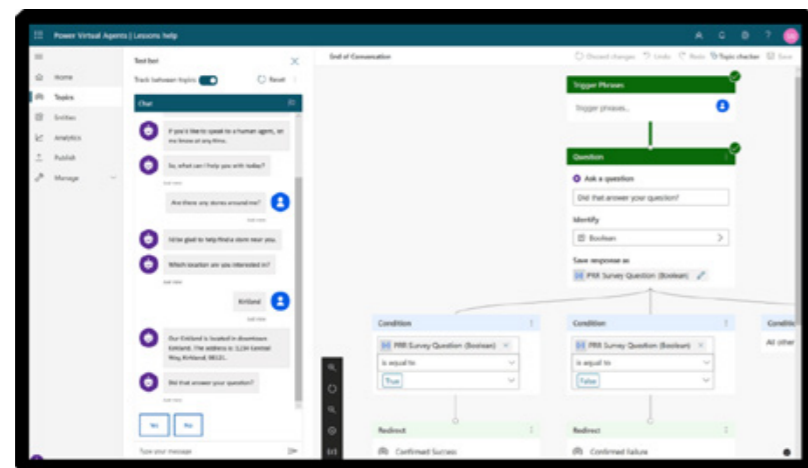
> **Power BI**



> **Power Apps**



> **Power Automate**



> **Power Virtual Agents**

## STEP 3.

# Unlock value from your data

As well as ensuring your organisation is more agile and prepared for the future, an integrated solution provides the additional benefit of bringing together previously siloed sources of information. As a result, you can extract far greater value from this previously dormant data, using it to provide insights that aid business decision making. This section explains how you can access and harness real-time data using a modern ERP system.

### ACCESS YOUR DATA ANYWHERE

To truly futureproof your technology environment, a cloud-based solution is essential. Not only is it provided as a service for a manageable cost and without the need for infrastructure investment, but the supplier is also responsible for the availability and maintenance of the software and systems. Choosing an established provider is important to ensure the system and your data are always accessible, with Microsoft, for example, guaranteeing availability of 99.9% in its Azure cloud.

### MAKE USE OF THE INTERNET OF THINGS

Construction projects produce an enormous amount of data, but few companies are making use of it in a smart way; clearly this is a significant missed opportunity. By collecting and analysing data from your projects, you can identify trends and predict outcomes more accurately, enabling you to deliver better and more efficient services in the future. The Internet of Things (IoT) is one example of such smart data. IoT refers to machines and devices that communicate with each other via networks. Choosing a software partner that understands your industry and processes and can help maximise the value of your connected devices will help you develop new ways to leverage data to benefit your business.

They can provide input on which data is most relevant to you and what insights you need to gain from it. It is wise to involve your software partner early in the process to investigate how simple or complex it will be to create the necessary IoT links.

Want to know more about the Internet of Things? Download the whitepaper ["Internet of Things - 5 frequently asked questions in construction"](#).

#### Futureproofing in Practice: Leverage IoT Data

Sensors placed in building materials and machines make it possible to keep track of important indicators, such as temperature changes, leaks or excessive vibrations. When an event like this is detected, a maintenance team can be sent immediately, preventing expensive damage or breakdowns. Such sensors can also pinpoint the exact location of materials or tools, ensuring important items are tracked to avoid loss and theft or project delays.



# 3 TIPS HOW TO FUTUREPROOF IT FOR CONSTRUCTION BUSINESSES

## TIP 1.

### **Make sure your chosen solution matches your industry**

If you want software that is fully developed based on the needs of your business, you should choose software that speaks the language of your industry. This means choosing a partner that provides a software package to support your business requirements.

## TIP 2.

### **Choose a solution system based on Microsoft technology**

When you choose a software solution built on the cloud-based Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central platform, you can be sure that it's prepared for the future. Linked to all your Microsoft applications, Business Central provides powerful business-wide integration and a consistent experience.

## TIP 3.

### **Choose a futureproof software partner**

Choose a partner that not only has a solution fit for today but one that will evolve over time and support you going forward. Understand your partner's development plans and ask to see the company's roadmap to determine how it intends to develop and innovate. It's also worth determining the company's available capacity and the platform it builds its solutions on. For example, ask if the platform is self-developed or based on a robust foundation like Microsoft Dynamics 365. Ultimately, you're looking for a partner with a strong vision for the future using technology that supports their ambitions.

## ABOUT 4PS CONSTRUCT

4PS Construct is an innovative, integrated software solution that supports all your primary business processes. It is a total solution uniquely suited for construction, civil engineering, M&E, housebuilding, plant hire and service & maintenance organisations. Based on the most user-friendly and modern platform available, Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central, it operates in the cloud and is available to everyone in your organisation wherever they may be. Always up-to-date, scalable and secure, 4PS Construct is the complete software solution for forward-looking construction companies.





## About the author



Paul Broderick | Paul has developed a keen eye for seeing specific customer requirements and recommending solutions to deliver business benefits and returns-on-investment. In the last three years Paul has focused this experience and knowledge specifically on the Construction industry, where digitisation is now the hot topic in IT, which has evolved and matured to become most relevant in today's construction industry.

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