

## Needed Software for a Contractor

**Executive Summary.** What are the “necessities” for software and apps for your construction business? Here’s a look at what’s out there – software and/or apps that are in use by successful firms to accomplish necessary functions in your business.

**What do I need?** If you’re doing more than a million dollars in sales a year in heavy/civil construction, I’d say you need the following tools in your construction software toolbox:



**Takeoff** – many folks are still in colored pencils and highlighters. I was too about seven years ago, but on-screen takeoff has changed my life. I’ll never go back. I’m a big **StackCT** ([www.stackct.com](http://www.stackct.com)) supporter for on screen, collaborative takeoff. Other programs are **Plangrid** ([www.plangrid.com](http://www.plangrid.com)) by Autodesk and **Planswift** ([www.planswift.com](http://www.planswift.com)) by Textura. **Bluebeam** ([www.bluebeam.com](http://www.bluebeam.com)) is another great tool but is better suited for working with pdf’s when you’re on the job - the information doesn’t quite organize in Bluebeam in a manner conducive to setting up a bid proposal.

**Estimating** – hands down **HeavyBid** ([www.hcss.com](http://www.hcss.com)) by HCSS is the top software I recommend. There are others out there, but this one has the market share for good reason. HCSS’ **HeavyBid** ([www.hcss.com](http://www.hcss.com)) is robust with stellar customer support, and for Joint Ventures, you’ll find more often than not the other guy is using it. Also, any takeoff software will push into it via **Microsoft Excel**.

**Project Management** – I never seem to run into a lot of this software. **Procore** ([www.Procore.com](http://www.Procore.com)) seems to be heaviest in advertising, but I still see most people in proprietary systems or some use of spreadsheets in Bill Gates’ software.

**PDF Manipulation** – no discussion, **Bluebeam** ([www.bluebeam.com](http://www.bluebeam.com)). Super powerful, super versatile, and affordable. Adobe what?

**Timecard Collection & Job Cost** – again, HCSS’ **HeavyJob** ([www.hcss.com](http://www.hcss.com)) is arms and shoulders above the rest. Easy to use for the oldest old schoolers you got plus tremendous power on cost tracking. The foremen know the day they do the work whether or not they’re making money. And it talks seamlessly with the estimating software, **HeavyBid** ([www.hcss.com](http://www.hcss.com)). Some of the accounting softwares offer a timecard tool, but they lack the muscle combined with simplicity offered with HCSS’ **HeavyJob** ([www.hcss.com](http://www.hcss.com)).

**Accounting** – my top recommendation is **ComputerEase** ([www.construction-software.com](http://www.construction-software.com)). Their staff is good, and so is the customer support. **Foundation** ([www.foundationsoft.com](http://www.foundationsoft.com)) is also very good – affordable and powerful and construction specific. Probably the most common for the \$50 million and up contractors is **Viewpoint** ([www.viewpoint.com](http://www.viewpoint.com)), but I’ve found it to be very expensive with very poor customer support. **Quickbooks**



([www.quickbooks.intuit.com](http://www.quickbooks.intuit.com)), frankly, is probably the most common software based on the number of users owning it, but it is awful on cost control.

**To-Do List** – get the app **Wunderlist** ([www.wunderlist.com](http://www.wunderlist.com)). It's free and wonderful. You can also share lists with your coworkers. It works great on your laptop and your phone.



**My story.** I'm not the most tech savvy guy in the world. I'm lucky enough to have a great IT guy who keeps me current on stuff like that. I do see a lot of companies in both the US and Canada and what you see above is what I see in my travels. The biggest thing I can say about tech is to try to stay current. If you're not going to stay "up with the times" you better get out of the way because someone else will.