



FIELDWIRE

The Right Construction Software for Speciality Contractors:

Field Management vs. Project Management

What kind of knife do you use to cut your steak?

At Fieldwire, we're constantly asked, "What's the difference between Field Management and Project Management Software? Sounds like the same thing to me." In all honesty, a lot of the software out there is the same, just with a different coat of paint. However, for us at Fieldwire, it's the difference between cutting into a medium-rare ribeye with a Swiss Army knife versus a steak knife. You can cut into a steak with both, but one was made for the job.



Different tools for different jobs:
Purpose-built vs. All-purpose



Choosing the right software.

If you've been in construction long enough, you've come across your fair share of software solutions. Some solutions work better than others depending on the job, and some are just terrible. As a specialty contractor, you've probably worked with a general contractor who strong-armed you to use their software. This software is typically referred to as "project management software." You likely realized that the GC's software was designed primarily for their office teams and not your field team.


Project management software is designed to give a GC's office a central place for project information, helping them share and receive key documents from multiple subcontractor offices. This software is also helpful for coordinating scheduling between the GC and subcontractors. For a company whose job is focused on coordinating subcontractors, project management software is a good solution to manage the various parties involved, but what's in it for you? While project management software is great for office teams to share information with external project stakeholders, it's clear that the needs of your field teams are an afterthought, if considered at all.

The cost of using the wrong tool for the job.

Project management software lacks a lot of the tools and features needed to get your work done, forcing you to use additional tools like emails, spreadsheets, and phone calls to move your projects forward. Though manageable, it can lead to an array of challenges. When you're managing multiple projects at a time, these methods of communication make it easy to lose track of project information and create gaps in your document trail. For example, when someone is left off of an email thread, they can miss important information leading to potential mistakes and costly rework. Plus, if someone new joins the project without an understanding of your processes, the likelihood of your project being delayed increases substantially.

Unlike email where information is shared in silos, field management software openly displays all project information — documents, tasks, due dates, reports and messages — so that speciality contractors can proactively gather and share information in the fastest way possible.





Empower the field, up-level performance.

As a specialty contractor, your office and field teams need to stay connected to ensure work gets done. You also need to make sure the field team installs work correctly, safely, and quickly. And you also need to prove to your clients that you completed the job to spec.

The best field management solutions offer a suite of tools in one system to enable speciality contractors to do their job effectively. Here are the four key components of the best field management solutions:

1 Collaborative task management means work gets done correctly

Accountability is crucial when it comes to getting work done in the field. Hours can be wasted figuring out who is responsible for a certain aspect of work and when that work should be completed. Field management solutions recognize that tasks without an assignee or due date aren't useful. Great field management software goes a step further, enabling you to provide your field teams with clear instructions and step-by-step checklists to ensure the work gets done correctly. This makes it easy for your office team to see what steps are outstanding or completed.

A lot can happen between the time a task is assigned and when it's completed. With field management solutions, field crews and office teams can message each other in real-time from any device. The messages are made visible to everyone else on the project, helping everyone see the latest updates. Field teams can easily snap photos and attach them to a task, and your field team can use speech-to-text features to quickly make a note on the task. Because every message is time-stamped, the full history of the work is available for everyone on your team to reference.

Tasks rarely exist in a silo — meaning most of the time a single piece of work is part of a much larger process. Many field management solutions will allow you to link any related work together. This way, you're able to see the other steps to complete that work. This visibility also helps to ensure that every part of the process is accounted for. Great field management software goes a step further and enables you to then pin tasks to specific areas on your plans. This makes it easy to know exactly where work should be completed.

In addition to viewing tasks on plans, the best field management solutions enable you to view tasks on Kanban boards and Gantt charts. This allows you and your crews to visually interact with your tasks in ways that make the most sense to you.





2 Customization to match your team's processes means everyone knows what comes next

Every construction project is different and so is every team. The best field management solutions enable you to customize the software to match your team's existing workflows, terminology, and reports. Whether it's task categories or statuses, forms for QA/QC, or safety inspections, you need software that is flexible to work the way you want it to. Customization helps you and your crew focus more on getting work done and less on learning a new system.

You need software that enables you to create custom checklists and custom forms — like safety inspections — that can be tied to specific tasks. Checklists and custom forms give you the option to require approvals from other members of your team. You need software that can templaterize your custom checklists and custom forms so that you can streamline your project setup and ensure standardization across all your projects.

3 A centralized hub for all your drawings, files, and photos means everyone's looking at the most up-to-date info

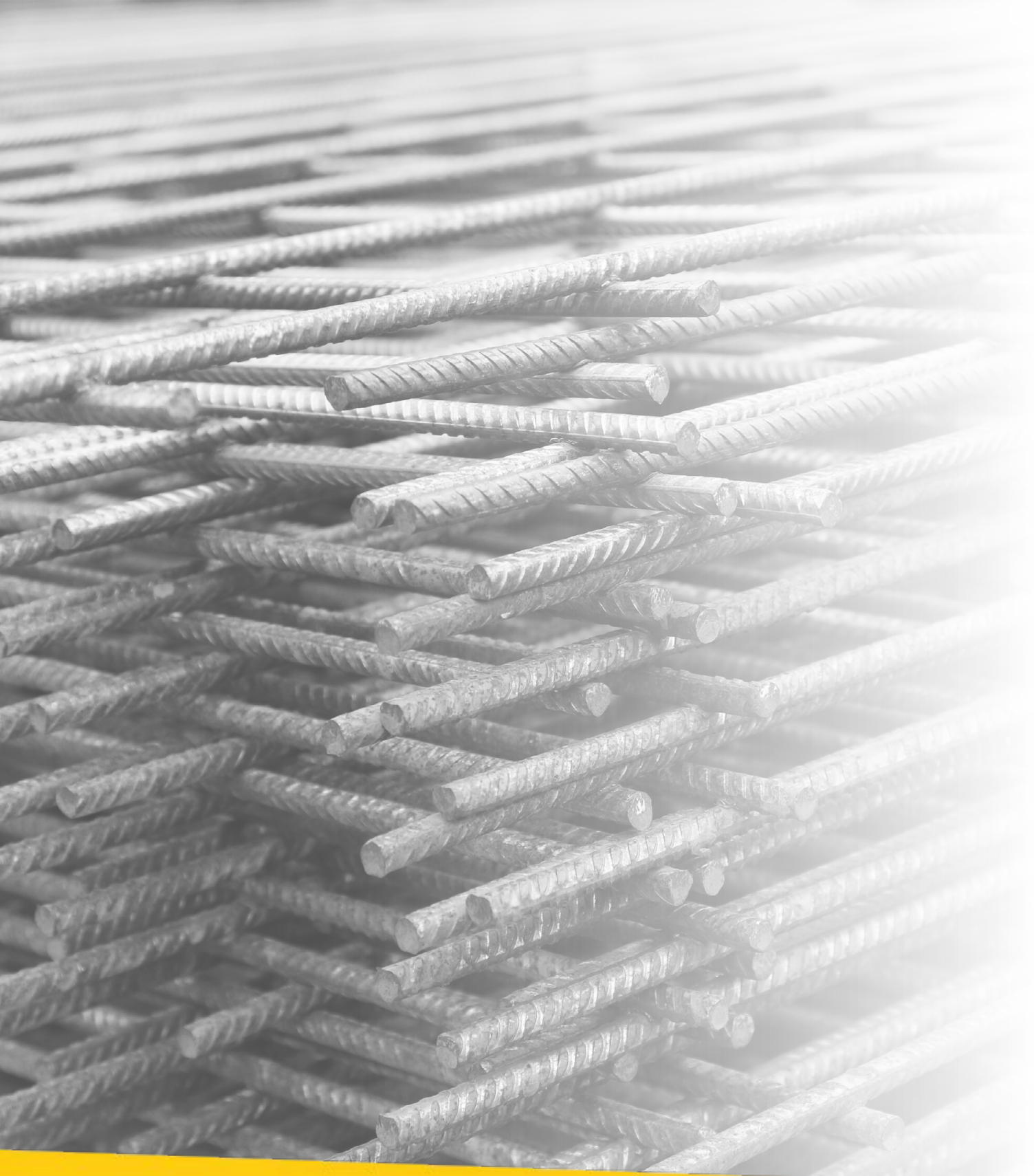
Having digital plans on your desktop or on mobile devices ensures that field teams have access to the most current sets. Good field management software enables you to pull up your drawings on any device.

Great field management solutions will even let you access plans on devices with or without an internet connection. This way, when your field crews are working in an area that has bad reception, they can still access important project info, make markups, notes, and more. When the device reconnects to the internet, any markups that were made offline will upload to the system.

Best in class field management solutions provide an array of different markup tools. From arrows, shapes, to redlines, text, and even a ruler function to help you take precise measurements on the fly. With these solutions, you can also find features that allow you to pin files to exact locations on plans. Detailed markups and the ability to pin files and tasks directly onto plans help your field and office teams quickly locate and address open items.

Lastly, it's important for specialty contractors to always document their installed work. Without the proper documentation, it's difficult to trace back to where a particular issue came up or prove the completed work. With field management software, you can add photos showing your completed work, helping you get ahead of potential disputes that may arise with a client.





4 Professional, custom, and easy-to-make reports means faster progress updates for your clients

As a specialty contractor, you know first-hand there's a lot going on in the field on any given day. Even with so much happening, you're still responsible for providing updates to external teams like your client on how the project is moving along. However, it can be difficult to pull together the correct documentation into a professional report.

Great field management software helps to streamline this process for you so you can keep clients updated without losing precious time. The best solutions enable you to quickly separate your internal team correspondence from client-facing details and automatically generate client reports. With the ability to export specific details about tasks, your clients are able to see your completed work with timestamps and photos, ensuring them that you have met their expectations. You can even schedule client reports to go out automatically on a daily or weekly basis to efficiently share project insights with various stakeholders.

Leverage the best tool for the job.

Ultimately, specialty contractors need a tool designed specifically for them that will lead to better collaboration, efficiencies, and productivity. Spreadsheets and email simply aren't efficient ways to track projects in today's day and age, and using software that is not designed with a field-first focus isn't sufficient for speciality contractors. To better equip the crews putting work in place, field management software is the best solution for specialty contractors to correctly, safely, and efficiently complete high quality projects.





The #1 construction app for the field

Used on 1,000,000+ projects worldwide

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