Navigating the people side of construction IT

Strategies to keep your departments and systems aligned

Your firm may have the tech solutions you need to succeed in a fast-paced industry, but do you have the alignment?

Data silos and inconsistent software adoption can cause disconnects that halt digital transformation. To successfully leverage technology, firms need to focus on alignment.

Bridging the technological and cultural gaps between on-site operations and back-office teams can help your firm leverage technology for increased profitability, efficiency and competitiveness.

In this e-book, we explore how you can increase collaboration and alignment across departments to drive digital success, including:

- The structural reasons behind **disconnected departments**.
- The benefits of **cohesive technology management.**
- The strategies you can use to **bridge the IT gap.**
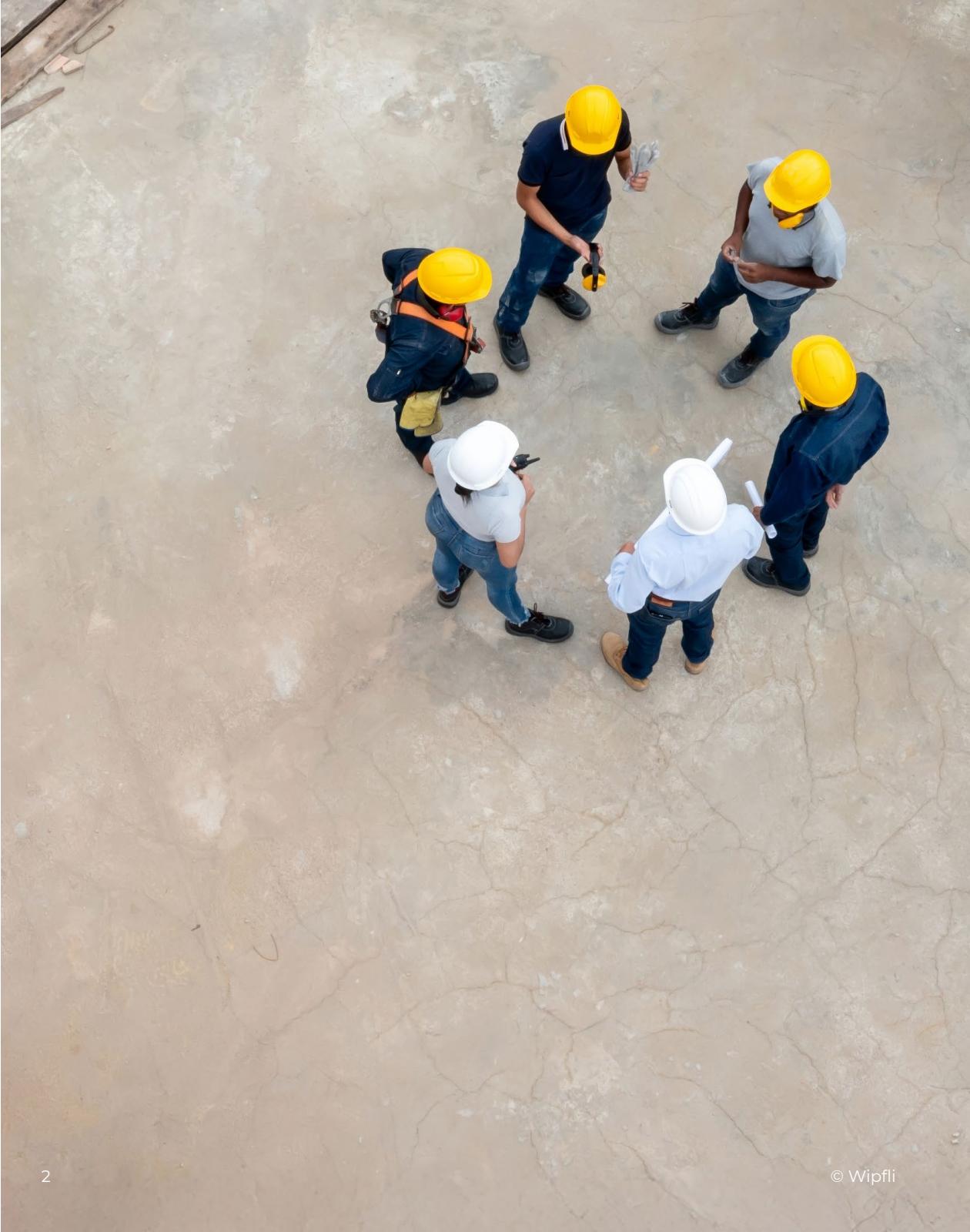
The IT challenges of a modern construction firm

Two departments are vital to technology in construction firms.

- **Finance and accounting:** The main goal of the finance and accounting departments is maintaining financial stability and success. However, for many leaner firms, the CFO's responsibilities extend beyond financial oversight to incorporate managing technology.

- **Operations:** Operations are a firm's revenue-generating powerhouse. These teams are essential for ensuring projects run smoothly from start to finish, making solving their technology pain points critical for revenue.

Without a dedicated IT leader, such as a CIO or IT director, the CFO must also manage technology spending and strategy for the entire firm. And this dual role can often lead to conflicts.

Shadow IT

Finance and operations may not always align on technology needs, resulting in operations exploring tools independently, without consulting the CFO or the IT department. They may even address significant technology pain points by hiring their own technology leader.

This role, commonly called the construction technology leader or director of operational excellence, primarily focuses on serving operations, with little interest in collaborating with existing IT staff.

The result is a "shadow IT" department — an entirely separate entity managing technology adoption and strategy without collaborating with the CFO or other IT leaders. And while shadow IT can provide operations the technology investments they need to drive revenue, the lack of communication can hinder your firm's overall IT strategy.

Without alignment between departments and IT leaders, it's harder to identify, implement and secure solutions that can scale with your firm's growth and serve your business objectives. Siloed systems can also increase errors and duplicate work for tasks such as data entry, potentially leading to the purchase of redundant or unnecessary systems.

IT challenges

When asked about their biggest IT challenges in the Associated General Contractors of America (ACG) 2025 Construction Outlook National Survey:

- **41% of firms** responded with "keeping company data secure from hackers."

- **32% of firms** responded with "communication between field and office."

- **28% of firms** responded with "integration between software used inside our company."

The benefits of a unified technology approach

Alignment between finance and operations is about more than just collaboration and unity; it's crucial for your firm's digital future.

When your firm is aligned with an overall technology strategy, you're better equipped to:

Allocate resources effectively

Centralized technology management means that all departments use compatible tools and systems, helping leadership monitor and control tech spending and prevent overspending on redundant tools.

It also helps firms avoid the risk of underinvesting in technology.

Maintaining legacy systems and manual processes increases the risk of errors, communication difficulties and cybersecurity incidents — all issues that can cost firms time and revenue. Additionally, older systems can limit your firm's ability to scale for growth and to compete with more technologically advanced competitors.

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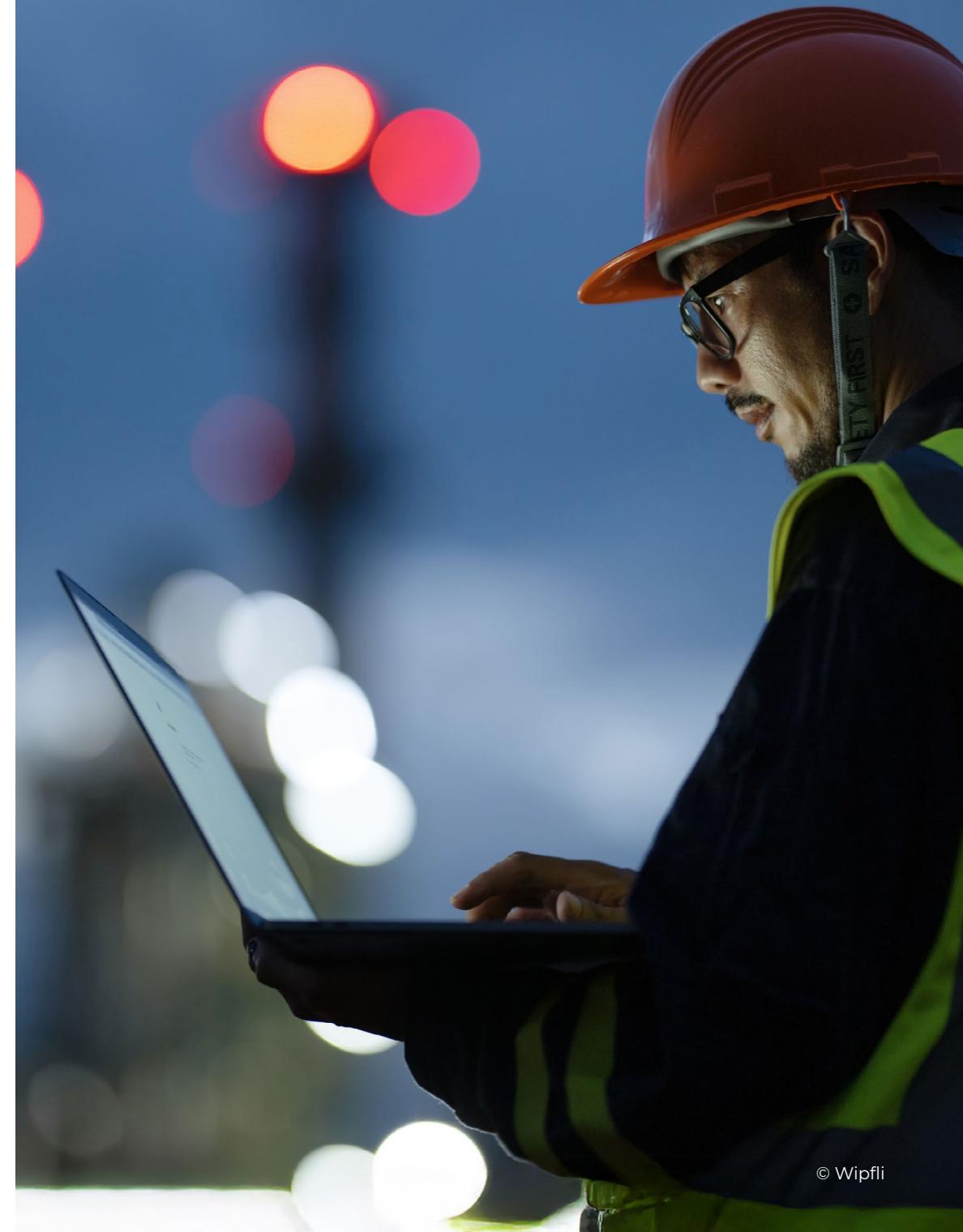
Make data-driven decisions

When it comes to your data strategy, having accessible, clean data is essential.

Alignment between your back office and operations makes it easier to unify data from all departments so that you can fully leverage solutions such as construction management or customer relationship management systems. And when data is integrated, leadership gains a real-time, comprehensive view of the business that drives smarter decision making.

Centralized data and IT management also help ensure that all systems adhere to the same security protocols, reducing the risk of data breaches and making it easier to maintain regulatory compliance.

Stay future-ready

Unified data, systems and strategy are also essential for preparing your firm to effectively adopt innovations such as AI.

Your CFO or other IT leaders may already have a vision for AI and a data strategy with tactics for maintaining clean data. However, these efforts can be derailed if operations adopt new tools that can't integrate into your current technology infrastructure.

Aligning on IT goals can help your firm understand your current tech capabilities, identify gaps and stay prepared for future innovations and market changes.

*According to **Adroit Market Research**,* AI in the construction market is expected to be worth over $2.7 billion by the end of 2028.

The strategies that can help bridge your IT gap

Digital success starts with unifying your firm's IT strategy and infrastructure.

Effective collaboration helps ensure that your firm stays aligned on organizational, technology and security strategies.

To help bridge the gap between departments in your firm, consider the following approaches:

Create a unified vision

When developing your vision and IT road map, involve all major stakeholders.

Collaboration between operations and the back office facilitates alignment around critical objectives and creates a roadmap that integrates operational tech needs with the broader IT and financial vision.

As your CFO oversees IT, they have to understand how operations generate revenue and the necessary tools to support those activities. Additionally, when operations identify a need for technology, they should collaborate with the CFO and IT department.

You can also establish standardized processes, particularly in data governance and cybersecurity, to help ensure your firm stays aligned.

Promote cross-functional collaboration

When you're completing a technology initiative, form cross-functional teams so that all departments have the opportunity to voice concerns and offer suggestions.

Inter-departmental collaboration fosters a deeper understanding of how each team uniquely contributes to solving technology challenges. For example, field teams can highlight practical constraints that may not be obvious to IT, while finance can offer insights into cost-efficiency and ROI.

Seeking a wide range of perspectives leads to a more robust IT roadmap that aligns with both business goals and operational realities.

Reconsider your organizational structure

Many firms currently have CFO managing technology, but this isn't the only option for structuring your organization.

Appointing a CIO or IT director to handle the technology needs of all departments can help eliminate technology divisions between operations and finance. Unfortunately, this approach may not work for leaner firms that lack the resources to staff those positions full-time.

Outsourcing your CIO role is one alternative that can help cut the costs of hiring a C-suite-level leader. You can also report technology matters to the CEO instead of the CFO. Much like working with a CIO, this arrangement helps bridge gaps between both departments by having technology fall under a neutral party and centralizing your IT resources and leadership.

When to outsource your IT

While hiring an in-house IT team allows direct oversight of long-term projects and full control of priorities, culture and workflows, it may not be the most efficient choice for your firm.

Key indicators that your firm should consider outsourcing IT functions include:

- You need specialized expertise in areas like cybersecurity and cloud migration, where hiring in-house staff may not be viable.

- You lack centralized IT leadership, such as a CIO, to help guide strategy and decision-making.

- You want to increase tech capacity without the overhead of hiring full-time IT staff.

- You have short-term or project-based work, such as implementing a new solution.

Firms can also benefit from a blended approach, where strategic leadership — such as a CIO and specialized services — are outsourced, while an in-house IT team is available to handle day-to-day support and operations.

Charting the future of your construction firm

From optimizing your existing tech stack to implementing custom solutions, Wipfli can help you apply innovation to your biggest challenges.

We know that technology can be transformative, enabling a more agile, data-driven approach to work so that you're investing in the right projects, staying on budget and keeping on schedule. But finding the right strategy and solutions to enable success can be challenging.

We're ready to help you overcome your digital confusion and cultural obstacles and make solutions work for you.

Wipfli's digital team can give you:

- IT management that helps you better leverage your resources.

- Custom, construction-specific solutions that can help you unify your systems.

- Project management solutions to help you increase profitability.

- Cybersecurity strategies to help you address your industry-specific security needs.

- Relationship management systems that provide greater insight into projects and clients.

- Solutions that can improve your bid estimating and tracking.

Let's get started

Contact us today and see how we can help you achieve IT excellence.

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