How Do We Really Leverage Technology?

BY J. BRAD ROBINSON, CCIFP, CHAIRMAN

I am amazed at how often we take technology for granted. Recently, I was on an airplane and watched a movie on an iPad. While that technology alone was not readily accessible even a few years ago, what really intrigued me was the technology that was used in the film.

The actors were using pay phones and pagers to communicate. Pagers! Remember those? They would beep and you would make a call from a landline. One of the actors actually used a cell phone – but it was the size of a small car!

Today, the majority of us walk around with computers – we call them smartphones – in our pockets, but think of all that these devices do that was unimaginable just 10 years ago. (If you are unsure of what your device can do, ask a teenager to show you. They know it all!)

A Look Back
As a young accountant working for an international accounting firm about 25 years ago, I vividly remember the first time I saw a fax machine. I said to myself, “Really? I can drop a piece of paper on this machine and it will print somewhere else?”

Today, very few people use fax machines aside from doctor’s offices and government agencies.

At this same job, I had a client (not in construction) that used punch cards in the ERP system. This was an early computing technology where a series of cards with hundreds of holes in them were passed in sequence over a light source, which created the instructions for the operating system.

While this was fairly interesting technology for the 1970s, it was occurring in 1993! By the time the company decided to invest in more current technology, it was so far behind that it would have taken a significant investment to catch up to current trends.

Leveraging Today’s Technology
Today, we may look at these two examples and laugh, but are we any different today as an industry?

We use computers and systems that range from “off-the-shelf” for small- and mid-sized contractors to more sophisticated systems for larger construction companies.

However, do we really leverage technology as best as we can? Do we really take the time to analyze our internal processes and look for the best ROI of our human capital?

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other activities. These examples do not even contemplate the associated security concerns.

Technology is constantly changing. There are always new ways to leverage technology to improve efficiencies and streamline processes. Sometimes, we proactively push ourselves to be on the cutting edge of technological advances, but more often, we find ourselves playing catch up.

**The Power of Your CFMA Membership**

What are CFMs to do? First, review this issue of *CFMA Building Profits* in detail. From learning how to leverage the cloud for an effective jobsite to maximizing your systems to streamlining the A/P process, there is a wealth of valuable information at your fingertips.

Secondly, I strongly suggest that you use the tools available to you as a CFMA member. Attend a chapter meeting and ask a few questions. There is always someone who is willing to help. No matter how difficult the problem, it is extraordinarily rare that someone in your chapter has not seen or at least heard about the issue.

Also, use the strength and expertise of Associate Members. They have a tremendous number of products and services that can help you improve your business. From credit cards to accounting software systems to IT consultants, these valued partners are not only great friends and colleagues, but they are also experts in our industry.

I strongly encourage you to seek out these resources and determine what they have to offer before you look around one day and realize that your company is the only contractor in your community that still uses punch cards and communicates via fax. ■