

The future of project management

Software keeping construction on track

Viewpoint Team is a powerful but easy-to-use tool set for planning, co-ordinating and achieving tight project controls, data flows and governance.

Construction is a high stakes game, with massive projects and equally massive budgets balancing on a knife-edge between success and failure.

Ian Desbrow, managing director of Australia and New Zealand sales for US-based construction software firm Viewpoint, knows the scale of the problem.

"A 2016 report by McKinsey, Managing Construction's Digital Future, showed that around the world, on average, large projects go 20 per cent over schedule and up to 80 per cent over budget," he says. "Australia is no exception. The industry is highly volatile, many contractors operate with razor-thin margins and just a handful of project issues can dramatically affect profitability."

Desbrow says the main problem is that contractors don't know where they are in a project to manage cash flow.

"They think they're on track to book a \$1 million profit at the end of the month and, in fact, they're \$1.5 million in debt."

Such crises occur because "they were using spreadsheets and different pieces of applications that didn't give them a single view of the truth across all aspects of the project," he says. "If you're using bespoke technologies that don't talk to each other, you just don't have that visibility."

Portland, Oregon-based Viewpoint aims to solve these problems with its new project management software, Viewpoint Team(tm).

Viewpoint Team is a cloud-based platform that integrates with Viewpoint's established products – Viewpoint Vista(tm), its construction-specific

enterprise resource planning solution, and Viewpoint Field View(tm), its mobile application for managing job site processes such as quality and safety. Desbrow says Viewpoint offers the only horizontally integrated suite of software focused exclusively on the needs of the construction industry.

"Our clients can come to a one-stop shop and have one hand to shake, instead of having to deal with three, four, five or 10 different players."

Some of Viewpoint's competitors, he says, offer broad software suites that are primarily designed for clients in industries such as manufacturing, banking, utilities or mining. Others cater to only one vertical slice of the construction industry's requirements, such as document management or field management.

"That's a best-of-breed strategy, while ours is a best-of-suite strategy. We are the only company that does the breadth, and also focuses solely on construction," Desbrow says. "We span technologies that are needed by the asset owner, architect, developer, head contractors and sub-contractors and suppliers, and we take that data back to them."

Desbrow says the software is well established among clients in the United States and United Kingdom, and is now "the solution that project managers across Australia and New Zealand have been asking for".

"Viewpoint Team is a powerful but easy-to-use tool set for planning, co-ordinating and achieving tight project controls, data flows and governance," he says. "With Viewpoint Team,

companies can focus on actually managing their projects and making critical decisions in real time rather than trying to navigate a sea of paperwork, co-ordinating multiple communication tools and struggling to make sense of stale project data."

Viewpoint Team's dashboards help managers and users to prioritise their work, while the portal enables quick navigation to the other solutions in the suite.

"Viewpoint Team brings everyone involved in a construction project together through a comprehensive, easy-to-use and collaborative platform," Desbrow says.

"It keeps the entire project team up to date and ensures they are accountable at every step of the process. It also creates a permanent audit trail of 'who did what and when' on key tasks such as requests for information (RFIs), site instructions, technical queries, daily diaries and action items."

Desbrow says Viewpoint Team ensures process transparency across the project ecosystem by building in smart project control and governance tools.

"Viewpoint Team is designed to be clear and simple to use," he says.

"So, sub-contractors and individual project participants can use the system quickly and accurately, without extensive training, from any browser and using any mobile application they access on their phone or tablet."

Viewpoint Team allows collaboration, transparency, visibility and consistency, he says.

It supports daily logs to capture job site details and simplifies project processes with secure and

collaborative workflows for issuing, reviewing and closing them out.

Subcontractors and suppliers can create requests for information via the web and mobile apps, and issues that might evolve into variations can be assigned, tracked and resolved.

Dashboards provide visualised action items to eliminate time spent searching for tasks or, worse yet, missing something entirely.

Viewpoint, founded in Oregon in 1976, has nearly 8000 clients in 28 countries.

It now counts as clients more than 43 per cent of the companies in the ENR 400, a list of the top 400 contractors compiled annually by industry journal *Engineering News-Record*.

The privately held Viewpoint was acquired by NASDAQ-listed Trimble Inc from investment firm Bain Capital in an all-cash transaction worth \$US1.2 billion in early July.

Desbrow says Viewpoint works with its customers to connect their office, team and field operations, and is continually reinvesting in research and development, leading the charge of future construction technology innovations.

This commitment to technology and automation helps clients improve project profitability, enhance productivity, and it fosters effective collaboration across the broad construction ecosystem.

"Our innovations transform construction by aligning financial and project accounting systems, project management tools and mobile field solutions to minimise risk and increase efficiency," Desbrow says.

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