

BuildCentrix

# CONSTRUCTION IN THE CLOUD

January 2019



**BuildCentrix- Webduct Evolved  
Measure to Improve  
Bits and Bytes**



[www.buildcentrix.com](http://www.buildcentrix.com)

# BuildCentrix

## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was January 10, 2009, when we rolled out the first stable version of our platform. Webduct was originally designed for an HVAC contractor, focused on a single objective: integrate field orders directly into CAM software. It was quite a challenge back then. Blackberry was the be all and end all in the mobile arena, and Apple hadn't even got the iPhone off the launch pad. A lot has changed since then, both in mobile technology and at Webduct.

As the number and diversity of our clients has grown, so, too, have the features and benefits Webduct provides those clients. As fully integrated mechanical contractors came on board and had success within their sheet metal divisions, demand for features and services for their other trades has grown and continues to drive development.

As the company's clients and services diversified, it wasn't long before people began asking why the company was called Webduct. A fair question, to be sure. It was where we started, but the company has evolved to the point where the word no longer fit the picture. It is time for a name change.

In the online world, evolution is the name of the game. Our technology is constantly evolving, and so must the company. Webduct is now BuildCentrix. This isn't to diminish the service we provide in sheet metal/HVAC, but to make it easier to bring the same great service and passion to other mechanical trades. Existing clients will get the same great service and support, and new clients in new trades will get to experience it now, as well.

Joe Perraton,  
President



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# > > > > > BuildCentrix ... Webduct Evolved

By Jessica Kirby

Webduct Systems, Inc. is undergoing a makeover and rebranding that will reintroduce the platform under the BuildCentrix brand. James Beveridge, vice-president of operations for BuildCentrix, said the shift away from Webduct and towards a rebrand was a response to market demand, and way to showcase the company's dynamic product offering.

"There are more and more integrated mechanicals, multi-trade fabrication facilities, and prefabrication than ever before in the mechanical industry," he says. "The rebrand reflects BuildCentrix's expanded offering to serve all trades and types of fabrication in a contractor's fabrication facilities. It includes in-depth reporting of material and fabrication data in the fabrication facility, and the integration of this information into other business systems."

Webduct has spent the past decade building a strong technology platform, and the first stable version rolled out in January 2009. It was designed for a single HVAC contractor wishing to take operations to a new level, and for that contractor it changed everything. "That platform had a single objective: integrate field orders directly into CAM software," says Beveridge. "Alas, in the technology world there is no finish line, and as we achieved every goal the contractor set for us, a new one would take its place."

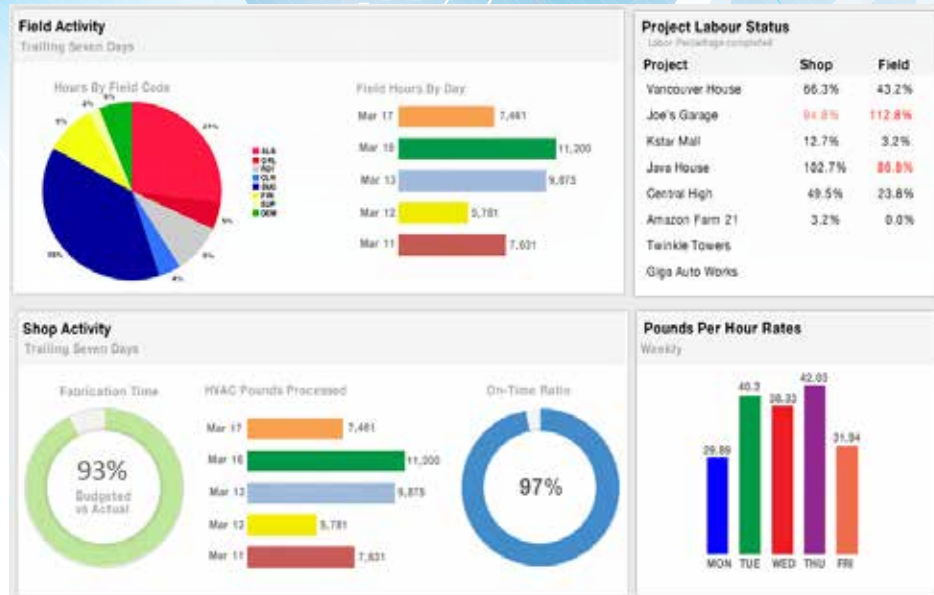
As Webduct's ability to streamline operations and enhance productivity became apparent, other contractors started taking interest. "It was time to create a new company that would allow other contractors to enjoy the service," says Beveridge. "Webduct Systems, Inc. was created two years later and has been in continuous operation ever since."

The company grew quickly. Every month saw new features and benefits rolled into the platform, at first primarily revolving around HVAC, but it didn't take long before production management began to dominate development sprints. Every new tool simplified the workflow process and improved the bottomline for clients, inevitably driving the next new feature.

Dallas Vogels, chief technology officer for Webduct and lead developer on the original software, says the most important change in Webduct has been its ability to help companies collect data that helps to manage, measure, and monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) in the manufacturing process.

"Over Webduct's lifespan, we've added tools and functionality to visualize and manage production on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis; manage and co-ordinate shipping from the production plant to the job site; track tools; and manage shop and field timecards," he says. Webduct also offers CAM integration and accounting integration to major providers like Sage."

When integrated mechanical contractors started using the platform for their HVAC requirements, demand for features



***"BuildCentrix encompasses everything our clients do and allows us to help them manage information, materials, and data to help drive their success."***

***—James Beveridge, vice-president of operations, BuildCentrix***

that handle piping and plumbing started to grow. Feature development started branching out to connect people, materials, and data, independent of what materials or trades were involved.

On top of this evolution came demand for more integration with fabrication, enterprise resource planning (ERP), and accounting software, which would drive efficiencies throughout Webduct clients' operations.

"Over the last couple of years, it became clear the company name no longer fit the picture," says Beveridge. "Webduct had gone from the main operational system to just one module of much broader, much more robust contractor platform. It was time for a name change, one that would reflect the continued development future well beyond duct."

This is where BuildCentrix was born. A multi-trade platform built specifically for integrated mechanical and HVAC contractors managing sheet metal, piping, and other trades, BuildCentrix is a simple way to connect manufacturing teams, materials, and data to the field and office in real time. The software runs on a software-as-a-service basis, which means no downloads or version control issues, and it operates 100% in the cloud.

"BuildCentrix encompasses everything our clients do, and allows us to help them manage information, materials, and data to help drive their success," says Beveridge. "It connects manufacturing with production, delivery, materials, and labor in real time, and it provides administrators, accounting, and IT professionals the integration and data they need to support their workflow and reduce administrative overhead."

The most important challenge BuildCentrix addresses is access to information—where are the materials, what's the status of the fabrication, when will it be received, how did we perform against our budgets? It can take 5 to 10 business days for contractors to create the same type of reporting, and even then it's often isolated in silos. Material reports end up in the shop; time data ends up in accounting/ERP. In that scenario, there is no single report that associates the two in real time and that is simple to access, says Beveridge, but BuildCentrix offers a centralized, unique alternative because it generates relational data.

"BuildCentrix is unique in that it not only creates as built content, but provides a complete workflow to manage fabrication across multiple trades," he says. "We're often asked if we can report on and track poundage in the fab shop. Not only can we do that, we can associate it to time and labour type, which provides a much better productivity metric than just weight."

Most importantly, BuildCentrix continues to upgrade and adapt with the marketplace and client demand. "Our platform's evolution has always responded to customer need and demand, and continues to help contractors simplify and streamline the way they monitor and measure their business operations," says Beveridge. "Pre-fabrication is the direction the mechanical industry is headed, which means the ability to manage production, connect field and project managers, track material, and deliver ongoing real-time reporting is essential and unprecedented."

This is BuildCentrix, Webduct evolved. ■



# MEASURE TO IMPROVE

By Jessica Kirby

## CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS MOVE QUICKLY.

With timelines crunched, lead times shortened, and the labor supply in demand, there isn't a lot of time left to collect productivity and efficiency data. But in a fast-paced market, productivity is key and companies that do not measure their efficiency will fail to adapt.

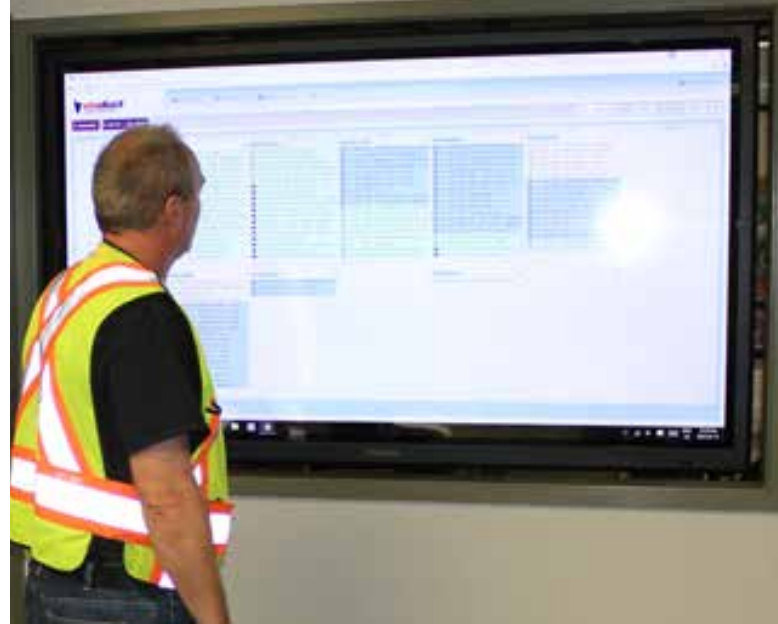
"I believe if you can't measure it you can't improve it," says James Beveridge, vice-president of operations for BuildCentrix. "As pre-fabrication is on the rise in the mechanical industry, being able to manage all of your production in a single platform, connect the field and project managers to the material headed to the job site, and get automated key performance indicators and reports on the fabrication performance is a really powerful tool for contractors."

BuildCentrix provides contractors with relational data for measuring shop time (fabrication labor), and the type of fabrication (material, fitting type, size)—all compared against their budgets. Companies with multiple locations can collect this data and compare it across branches, opening up new possibilities for streamlining operations and processes.

As an example, a company using paper timecards and a variety of different computer aided manufacturing (CAM) softwares across different locations would struggle to compile and compare data in a meaningful way, says Beveridge. "Paper timecards only capture payroll data, and not in any way related to the actual type of fabrication being done in the shop," he says. "Using CAM software – especially different kinds in different shops – does not allow robust reporting. Without a standardized workflow system and a digital shop timecard it is impossible to measure productivity between shops."

Modern Niagara is an institutional and commercial construction contractor with five locations and over 2,000 employees across Canada. The company offers mechanical and electrical contracting, building services, and building control systems, working closely with building constructors, owners, and managers to optimize the performance of buildings of all sizes, new and established.

Mario Pitoscia is director of construction services for Modern Niagara. He says implementing BuildCentrix was a positive move for the company because it allows collection of relational data across locations.



"It was the first time we saw any true sheet metal shop management process and monitoring tool," says Pitoscia. "The whole process for collecting information in our industry hasn't changed much in 60 or 70 years. People used to write on paper with a carbon copy, then came the fax, then email, but really this hasn't amounted to big changes in process or efficiency. BuildCentrix is the first time we've seen a dedicated product to foster and support our company's needs going forward."

BuildCentrix serves all trades and types of fabrication in a contractor's fabrication facilities, the in-depth reporting of material and fabrication data in the fabrication facility, and the integration of this information into other business systems.

"It is really a software system that allows you to identify the labor associated with a fitting and that really provides measurable data," says Pitoscia. "It is a real solution, a true process that allows us to collect measurable data."

Modern Niagara is still in the early stages of using BuildCentrix, and its various locations across Canada are in different stages of implementation. Once established, however, the software's use across branches is expected to produce key deliverables for the company.

"We now have the ability to review data of five regional offices using the same format," says Scott Black, manager, project support for Modern Niagara. "We are now able to quickly identify where we may excel on a particular item in one region over other regions, and with this knowledge we are able to drive change."

Prior to using BuildCentrix, Modern Niagara collected data using an ERP system and Excel spreadsheets, which was cumbersome and negated the ability to easily access data across a robust range of sources.

"The value [with BuildCentrix] is the data is only inputted once," says Pitoscia. "Previously, we spent a lot of time getting data through various resources and trying to compile it. Now it is a one-time entry and very user friendly." ■

# Cloud Computing in Business: What you need to know

Although it feels relatively new, having taken hold as a buzzword over the past five years or so, cloud computing is actually as old as the internet. What has changed to make it a household name is the evolution of devices to more effectively deliver cloud-based services. That means anyone who has used a computer, smartphone, or tablet say, in the last decade, has used cloud technology and services.

Some of our favourite online brand names – Gmail, Outlook, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo – store their data in the cloud and the public is eager to access its smooth, speedy interface at all hours of the day and night. Businesses have been warier. Before the cloud became ubiquitous, there was doubt—is my sensitive data really safe out there?

Businesses are coming to terms with the functionality, flexibility, and reliability of storing information in the cloud. In 2017, 64% of businesses were running at least partly in the cloud, and by 2020, 78% of businesses are expected to shift completely to the cloud. This means the prediction that “the cloud is the future” isn’t altogether true—more accurately, the future is here now.

The cloud is secure, affordable, and efficient. Its services are customizable and globally accessible, which opens unlimited possibility for data sharing and collaboration. Businesses in the cloud don’t lose data because it updates in real time, and version upgrades to software are automatic and immediate. These and other benefits of cloud computing are well-known—but do we know exactly what they mean? What can businesses actually do in the cloud, and what will that mean for operations?

## Software as a Service (SaaS)

The main way nearly any company can take advantage of what the cloud has to offer is through software as a service (SaaS)

applications. Examples you may already be using are web-based email and calendars, document software like Microsoft 365, sales record programs like Salesforce, internet conferencing tools, and project or time tracking software. These tools are productivity-focused and completely integrated into your company’s daily operations. There is no software to download or updates to search for—these tools can be accessed by anyone with the correct login and password and can be shared by anyone with the authorization to do so. Your software is updated in the moment and immediately so there is no confusion about version control, and monthly or yearly costs usually include all support and updates.

## Choosing Right for Your Business

The best way to decide what services to use, how to implement them, and where to turn for help is to first develop a cloud strategy. Decide what you want to achieve, what deliverables you are after, and how moving to the cloud can help. Look at implementation options, create a timeline, and factor in training and support to get everyone on board.

Once you know which services you wish to use, choose a provider willing to customize the service to meet your company’s specific needs and who can streamline the integration process so your company isn’t disrupted during the process. Ask potential providers about their track record in helping businesses like yours and have them review their security system and policy so you know what is in place.

Most importantly, stay flexible. Technology is always changing and should you wish to add new functionalities to your service, your provider should be able to do that or point you in the direction of someone who can. ■

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## Technology in the Construction Industry:

### What’s the hold up?

We see it everywhere we look: technology adoption is growing with break-neck speed. Everywhere, that is, except the construction industry. According to a 2016 report by McKinsey & Co., the industry’s productivity rate has only grown about one percent per year for the past two decades, compared with 2.8 percent labor-productivity growth in the general economy. In fact, some sectors of construction show declines in productivity rates, and a lack of operational and management tools are an important factor in the proliferation of disorganization and inefficiencies.

Productivity loss in construction costs the global economy \$1.6 trillion every year. Only 25% of projects are completed on time and North America’s labor shortage will only add to the burden. While there are many reasons for the lack, there is an important co-relation between industries demonstrating increased productivity rates and also using technology. Surveyed constructions firms in the United States reported only 27% can receive integrated, real-time data on projects; fewer than 30% use mobile devices to monitor projects; and less than a third use any type of automation or robotics.



According to contech (construction technology) blogger Grace Ellis, there are three main roadblocks to adopting technology in your construction firm: using management-only software; choosing software that is difficult to use; and not leaving enough time for training. Ellis says while software implemented at the management level can save a company time and money, integration with the field can significantly boost your return on investment. In fact, field integrated software can improve the ROI on management productivity by as much as 50% alone.

Choosing software that is easy to use requires focus, because it generally means avoiding bells and whistles and looking solely at functionality. (There is a reason Steve Jobs tested iPad

functionality with 10 year olds.) Be sure to choose something powerful, robust, and flexible, preferably something that integrates all your management and field tasks into one place. If a provider doesn't have every function you need, ask whether that feature will eventually be under development.

Finally, don't forget that choosing technology is a commitment, not a fling. It will take time and support to get the crew on board so budget time for the implementation phase. Train your keenest workers first and have them assist the resisters. This will smooth out the process and lead your company into a brighter technologically-driven and productive future. ■

## Golden Rules for a Successful Kaizen

An essential element in Lean thinking is Kaizen. Kaizen is the Japanese word for continuous improvement or change for the better. It's a tool to make work easier, safer, and more productive by studying a process, identifying waste, and applying small incremental improvements that ensure the highest quality. As no process can ever be declared perfect, there is always room for improvement. Kaizen involves building on gains by continuing experimentation and innovation.

From my experience there are some golden rules to make your kaizen successful:

1. Kaizen starts with the three "actual" rule.
  - Go to the actual place where the process is performed.
  - Talk to the actual people involved in the process and get the real facts.
  - Observe and chart the actual process. (Improvement is not made from a conference room.)
2. Ask why (five times) to get to the root cause.
3. Base decisions on data, not opinions.
4. Try-storming
  - Don't spend too much time talking about a solution, try it!
  - It's okay to fail early on as long as you learn from your mistakes.
5. Value of the team
  - Listen to the operators, your team, and your customers.
6. Don't seek perfection. This will be obtained one step at a time.
7. Think of a new method that works. Throw out all your old fixed ideas on how to do things.



By / Tim McMahon

8. Creativity before capital. Don't substitute money for thinking.
9. Think safety during the Kaizen, both for employee and process.
10. Assure a quality product will be consistently produced through standardization and process controls.

Not all techniques will work for everyone the same way. Acknowledge what you learn and use what is useful to you. Improvement is made from action. All improvements must be maintained if we wish to secure consistent gains. Think of the smallest step you can take every day that would move you incrementally towards your goal. ■

Republished with permission from Tim McMahon. Tim McMahon is a Lean implementation leader, author, and blogger. He is the founder and contributor of [A Lean Journey](#) blog. This site is dedicated to sharing lessons and experiences along the Lean Journey in the Quest for True North. As a Lean practitioner, Tim brings nearly 20 years of leadership experience implementing Lean manufacturing. He has held a number of leadership positions within operations management, Lean, and quality disciplines of innovative high tech manufacturing companies. Tim has a passion for teaching problem solving skills, Lean philosophy, and quality improvement methods by actively learning, thinking, and engaging people. Read more of Tim's work at [aleanjourney.com](#).

# BuildCentrix

Webduct Evolved



BuildCentrix, a simple way to connect your manufacturing team, materials, and data to the field and office in real-time.

## **BUILT FOR YOUR INDUSTRY**

BuildCentrix is a multi-trade platform built specifically for integrated mechanical and HVAC contractors managing sheet metal, piping, and other trades.

## **STAY LEAN**

Empowering lean construction practices for continuous improvements in production, workflow, and performance.

## **ALL THE TOOLS YOU NEED, NONE OF THE HASSLE**

100% cloud-based software with integration points for accounting, ERP, and fabrication software provides a high return on investment without sacrificing the power you need in the field, shop, and office.

See it for yourself. Visit [www.buildcentrix.com](http://www.buildcentrix.com) to schedule an online demo today.