

# CONSTRUCTION IN THE CLOUD

## Making the Call

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# Making the call

Many speciality trade contractors are compartmentalized when it comes to decision making. The solution? Pick a champion and streamline the process.

**B**usiness today is all about collaboration and feedback, but that can sometimes become too much of a good thing. Considering a new investment from all angles and needs can result in a more robust decision, but if it goes on for too long or crosses too many desks, the process can be paralyzed.

Just look at what happened at one sheet metal shop when the company bought a new spiral machine that included a metal burning label printer—except the printer that arrived was not the correct model. Rectifying the situation required decisions about several factors, and before long it became clear that no one was available to make the final decision. To solve it, the shop employees, who needed resolution the most, stepped forward and said the decision had already been made.

“It is important to have a champion, and that person doesn’t have to be a technical person,” says James Beveridge, CEO at BuildCentrix. “That person should know why the decision is important, understand how the solution will benefit the group, and be willing to step forward.”

Part of the solution leans on a bigger story about spend management. You don’t want to give employees carte blanche spending power, but there may be times when the shop needs a new piece of equipment, like a specialized printer, and if they can’t get through to anyone to get approval, they can end up stuck and so can productivity.

“The whole decision-making by panel is understandable because consulting people with skill sets in different areas makes sense, but the execution can fail a bit,” Beveridge says.

“Effective decision-making begins with readdressing the decision-making process. That could mean holding specific, action item meetings for these kinds of decisions or using a weighted scale or metric for determining support.”

## Buying new technology

When it comes to choosing new technology, companies seldom want a platform that only does one thing. They are typically looking for something that covers multiple vendors and something they can grow into.

“That works well for us because our system integrates with most popular apps and software, so for the client, everything is in one place,” Beveridge says. “The challenge we face is that a platform with multiple functions requires multiple approvals. Even if several individuals approve, they may need to share the expense with other departments, introducing new layers of approval.”

For instance, a technology decision might need examination and approval from IT, the executive, VDC, field workers, payroll, and, potentially, the operational branch.

“With so many stakeholders, it can be really difficult to get to a place where someone says, ‘Yes, let’s do it’,” Beveridge says.

## Who’s your champion?

The solution begins with readdressing the decision-making process. That could mean holding specific, action item meetings for these kinds of decisions or using a weighted scale or metric for determining support.

A streamlined, effective process should consider the time horizon for the proposed change or purchase. What does the ideal case look like and when can you get there?

“So, if you want your system to be full optimized within 12 months, it’s important to determine the starting case, where the process begins, and subsequent steps to achieve the ideal space,” Beveridge says. “It’s important that the plan covers achievable, trackable milestones from execution to decision making.”

## Budget versus value

When it comes to new technology, the value question is easy and the return on investment is simple to calculate. And once the decision is made, it is not one people wish to revisit. That is why the vendor should be consulted to ensure the correct decision about the most suitable products—for now and for the future—are up for consideration.

“When I meet with clients, I just want to help them,” Beveridge says. “It is frustrating when you know you can help a company move forward, save money, and be more productive but you keep running into roadblocks. We want to help companies and help them see we have ideas for how to do that. We just need the engagement.”

Learn more at [BuildCentrix.com](http://BuildCentrix.com) ▪

# BuildCentrix

BCX comprises the following modules. While there is no requirement to use them all, they are available for contractors to grow into.

- Field ordering of sheet metal and piping and plumbing
- Machine integration
- CAM integration (Trimble, PractiCAM, CAMduct)
- Watts Orbital Welder
- Field timecards
- Shop timecards
- Labor reporting
- Payroll integration (all applicable payroll packages for contractors)
- ERP/accounting integration for jobs and labour codes
- Revit integration
- CAD integration
- Content generation (not dependent on old windows databases)
- Labor and material costing and pricing

# Choosing Business Tech

Implementing new technology is always a game-changer—for the better when it is done correctly, and for the dark side if done hastily or with too little consideration. Understanding the ROI of your tech stack can help you identify which tech investments are delivering benefits and which are not, but determining total value goes beyond net gain divided by investment.

Here are a few things to consider beyond basic ROI:

- Does the tech offer a sales boost? If the tech stack improves customer experience and satisfaction, it reduces the costs associated with problem-solving.
- Does it improve productivity? Automating smaller tasks, for example, can have an enormous impact on productivity and cost savings, while having more time for larger tasks with measurable impact boosts morale and productivity.
- Does it provide measurable data? Real-time information collection and analysis provides an essential layer of insight that allows forecasting and taking advantage of upcoming trends.

Here are five steps to choosing and implementing the best tech for your business. The answers to the following questions become a checklist for the features you need in the best tech stack for your business.

## Step 1 – Understand your organization's goals

What business problems you are trying to solve? What day-to-day issues does your workforce face? How are they meeting or working around those challenges? What could be easier? What are your SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) business objectives?

## Step 2 – Identify your must-haves

What features or achievements must your new tech guarantee? What would it take to solve your biggest problem? What are the deal breakers you will absolutely not entertain?

## Step 3 – Establish your technical requirements

Does your team mostly operate in a mobile capacity? Do they

place orders from the field? Do you need to send orders direct to equipment? Have you considered cloud versus installed solutions? What does your team require in terms of training, troubleshooting, and ongoing support? How tech savvy is your group to begin with?

What kind of data collection and analysis would help launch your business into its next stages? How important is project management, multiple cost factors (i.e., labour, material, shipping, and others), and real-time, up-to-the-minute reporting?

## Step 4 – Weigh the price factors

There are several cost structures available, including perpetual, subscription, and free/open source, and each has upfront and recurring costs that must be analyzed and considered against the problems the technology solves. Do you fully understand the benefits and caveats of each? What works best with your business model?

## Step 4 – Meet with your team

Any tech decision will affect many teams in the organization, and they should be consulted but not allowed to hold the decision hostage. Choose a champion to lead the charge, give each department clear expectations, and bravely make the decision to shortlist your vendors.

## Step 5 – Shortlisting your vendors

Compare your checklist with vendors' websites and see who checks all your boxes. If they are close, call for a free demo as they may have a way to solve your problem that you hadn't thought about. What can you find out about the companies? How long have they been in business? Who are their clients? Can they provide case studies? Free demos?

While it is essential to keep an open mind about new ways to solve problems, it is also important to hold your ground when it comes to your deal breakers and game-changers. No one knows your business like you do, so be sure your tech vendor is operating from a place where your business needs are the focus and priority. ▪

# How to Streamline Group Decisions



Even at the best of times, decision by committee can lead to productivity lags and increased costs. The tendency to pass off the final say eventually culminates in a swirling mass of confusion and passive time wasting until the unavoidable outcome—nothing happens—settles in.

Let's look at five ways to make sure your team is acing the group decision-making process.

## Find your champion

Group decisions need a leader, a structure, and solid timelines. The key is having a champion who can pull all of those aspects and the affected departments together while still retaining ultimate deciding rights. Depending on the team and how many must be consulted, the leader may provide a small window for feedback (in-person in a meeting or online with a brainstorming tool like Trello) and then take charge of analyzing the feedback and making the decision.

A looser structure has a leader set boundaries while each department answers back with a choice; however, the leader's follow up and availability to step in if necessary will ensure the project sees its way to the end.

## Identify bias

It's human nature for unconscious bias to sneak into our decisions. We may rely too heavily on information that validates the direction we already want to go, something known as "confirmation bias." Or we may look for affirmation from a peer group out of a conscious or unconscious need to be liked. Consider a designated "devil's advocate" on the decision making team, who is tasked with asking questions, examining and fact checking dissenting views, and ensuring the lead decision maker is considering all perspectives.

## Clarity is kindness

Brene Brown, author, lecturer, and subject expert on shame, integrity, and vulnerability, says "clear is kind" and encourages honest and clear expectations and feedback. In a team

environment, decisions can go sideways when the project expectations are mismanaged or misunderstood. If the decision involves input from several departments, each must be clear on their role and level influence.

## Set the standard

Create and use a common decision-making language, methodology, and set of standards because doing so will help the team conquer roadblocks independently. For example, if the company policy is that a department manager is always the tie breaker in a vote, or that there is a standard timeframe policy for decisions correlating to their budgetary requirements, issues in these areas are easily resolved.

## Prioritize decisions over discussions

State the decision's goal and objective upfront and provide well in advance any background information people will need to form their input so meetings stay focused on practical, effective decisions and stay away from superfluous discussion. Be sure to cover the purpose of and criteria for a sound decision, evaluate the alternatives, and assess the risks, particularly the biggest risks of the best alternative.

## Cultural buy-in and follow-up

If the process is done well, a group decision should be one of the easiest to enforce because everyone consulted feels connected to it. Support adequate time for implementation and learning, and be open to different people requiring more or less time or different learning methods.

Great decisions should be judged after the fact by four factors: quality (whether the decision was correct), speed (faster decisions mean quicker ROI), outcome (how did the follow-through manifest), and effort (how much work did it take to get the process in motion). If upon reflection one or more of these factors didn't turn out as expected, consider this important information and use it to revise the group decision-making process moving forward. ▪

## Loading Bay/Truck Management

The Loading Bay/Truck Management feature allows users to tie work orders or any transaction to a specific truck or loading bay. That means when orders come in, they can be tagged to a specific zone, making them easy to find and track. In the shipping option, it means shipping personnel can prepare for the day by filtering the data by truck and bay and having the order ready in the correct place at the correct time. This can be an immense time, cost, and productivity saver, especially in large companies with multiple bays. Having orders staged this way and in the right areas means the truck drivers also know what is coming and what they should be expecting. ■

The screenshot displays the BuildCentrix interface for order management. It includes several panels:

- Order Details:** Fields for Order # (208950), Tag, Ordered By (BuildCentrix Support), Ordered For (BuildCentrix Support), Measured By (Dani), Organization (ADMIN Group), PO Number, and User Group (SWO Org).
- Statuses:** Overall Status (Active), Production Status (Not started/Received), and Shipping Status (Not started).
- Dates:** Ordered (Apr 12th, 2023), Requested (May 3rd, 2023), Production (Apr 30th, 2023), and Shipping (May 3rd, 2023).
- Attachments (4):** List of files including CID 44 90.png, CID 44.png, CID 47 2.png, and CID 47.png.
- Messages (1):** A message from BuildCentrix: "Updated Shipping / Truck Loading Zone from [ ] to [Pickup - Ls607W]".
- Job Details:** Job (03042023 03042023) and Phase (Default Phase).
- Shipping:** Shipping Option (Send to Job Site) and Shipping / Truck (Pickup - Ls607W). A dropdown menu is open showing options: Zone 1, Zone 3, Zone 2, Pickup - Ls607W, Flatbed - CR50K2, and N/A.
- Special Instructions:** Field for Special Instructions (n/a).
- Decoiled [DEC]:** A table of Decoiled Fittings with columns for Label, Dimensions, Joints, and Status.

Label	Dimensions	Joints	Status
(1) Coil Duct CID 866 Assembly #1	A) Width 18 B) Depth 16 C) Length 20	J1) S&D J2) S&D	Not Started



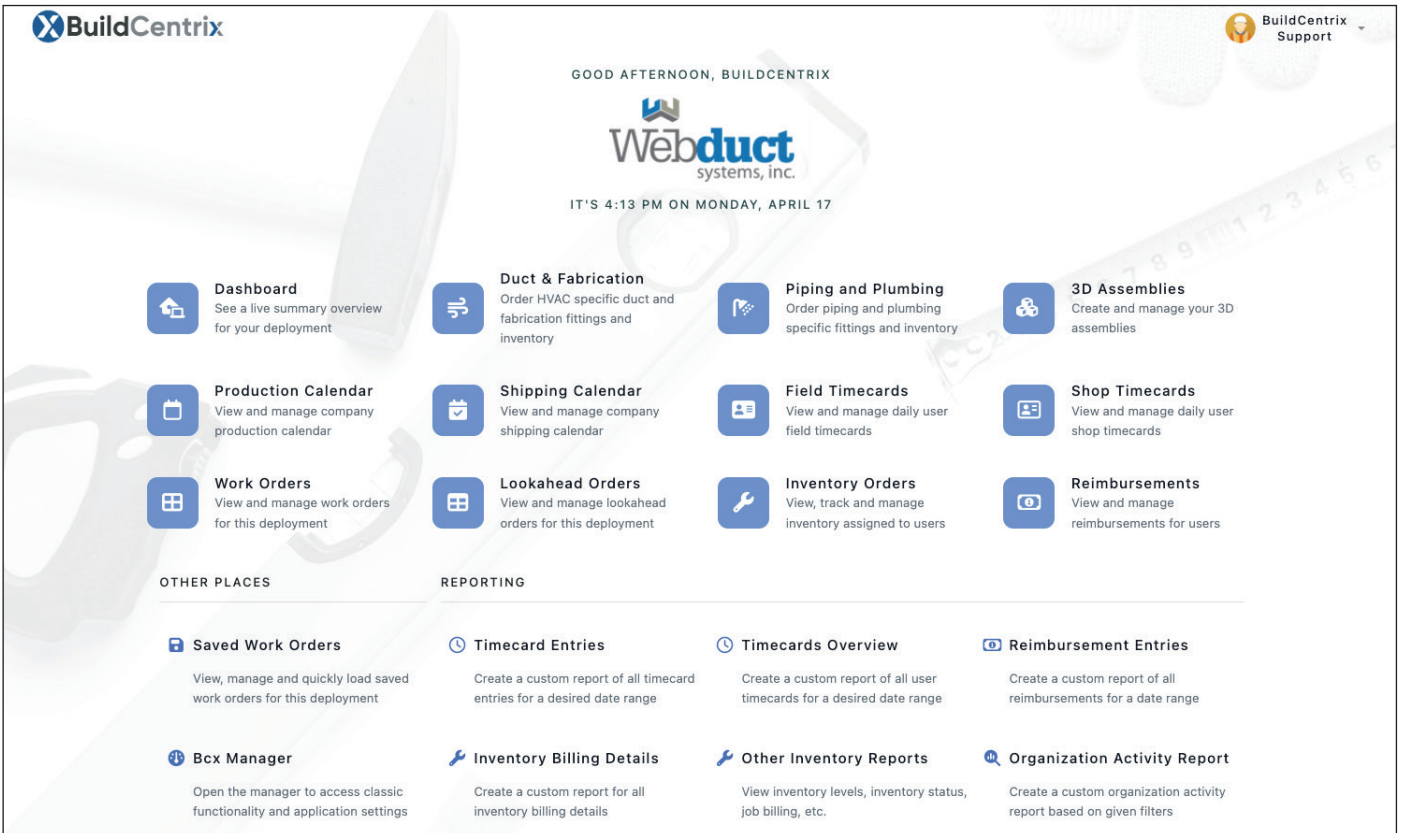
The screenshot shows a detailed view of Order #208947 (Active Order) with a modal window overlay. The modal window contains the following information:

- Job Name:** ABC SM, **Job #:** 21-208946
- User Group:** SWO Org, **Tag:** Tag
- Shipping Option:** Send to Job Site, **Special Instructions:** n/a
- Shipping / Truck:** Flatbed - CR50K2
- Ordered:** Apr 3rd, 2023, **Requested:** Apr 6th, 2023
- Production:** Apr 3rd, 2023, **Shipping:** Apr 6th, 2023
- Ordered By:** BuildCentrix Support, **Ordered For:** BuildCentrix Support
- Production Status:** Not started/Received, **Shipping Status:** Not started
- Fulfillments:** Decoiled [0:05], Not started/Receive...
- Calculations:** Total Fabrication (0:05), Remaining Fabricati... (0:05), Weight (21.4823 lb), Price (\$ 35.91 CAD)

Buttons at the bottom of the modal include "Close" and "View Order".

### Set a Landing Page

When BCX users sign in, they generally land by default on the product or menu page. The new Set a Landing Page feature allows users to choose what page they land on, which means someone in shipping could land on the calendar page, accounting could land on payroll, project managers could land on reporting, and so on. If no landing page is specified, the new default is an attractive, user-friendly menu page that encompasses BCX’s complete menu of services and modules. ■



### Cloning a Row in Timecard

Individuals or crews working the same shifts on the same work order week to week can now clone or copy their timecard rows to save time and reduce the risk of re-entry error. For those working the same hours on different projects, an editable field allows users to assign the same timecard information to different projects by simply changing the order number. ■

