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The Best Construction Management Apps for the iPhone and iPad



By: **Houston Neal**
 Director of Marketing, Software Advice
 on 8/25/2010
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From time to time we like to write about the "lighter side" of construction technology. This time, it's apps. Specifically, construction apps for the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch.

It's no secret that we love Apple - run a search for "apple" site:softwareadvice.com in Google and you'll see what I mean - but when it comes to tracking down an App for your iPhone or iPad, the App Store isn't the friendliest place to search. Enter "construction" into the search bar in iTunes and you get a list of 234 apps (and counting). This includes apps categorized as "games," "lifestyle" and "entertainment." Or try typing "architecture." You'll get a list of 255 apps that include "photography," "travel" and "navigation." Sure we understand playing SimCity Deluxe might alleviate stress on the job site, but it's not going to help you create a punch list item.

So we decided to build a list of the best architecture, engineering and construction project management software apps for contractors, project managers and architects. Our methodology was simple: filter out the irrelevant apps (e.g. "iShovel" and "Men at Work - Ultimate Sound Box"), sort by trade and functionality, then prioritize by rating and popularity. For anyone interested in seeing a complete list of construction apps (minus the junk), visit this Google Doc. We tagged

each app with one or two category names, then added columns for price, rating, device compatibility and minimum iPhone OS requirements. If there is an app that you think belongs in this list, please leave us a comment below.

Bid Management



SmartBidNet – This app works in conjunction with SmartBidNet bid management software. It allows users to keep track of subcontractor and vendor interactions from their phones. It includes both bid (e.g. status, amount, due date) and project information (e.g. square footage, location, building owner). The app is \$0.99, but it can only be used by SmartBidNet customers using the iPhone (OS 3.0 or later), iPad and iPod Touch.

BIM



goBIM – This app allows you to view BIM models from your iPhone (OS 3.1.3 or later), iPad or iPod Touch. It works by using a goBIM exporter with your BIM application to create a .gbm file. Then you load the file onto a web server and access them later from your phone, wherever and whenever you want them. The app costs \$5.99 and has an average rating of 3.

CAD, Design and Drawing



cadTouch R2 – This app has been rated 144 times and has an average rating of 2.5 stars. It's available for the iPhone (OS 3.0 or later), iPod Touch or iPad. It allows users to draw floorplans, land surfaces (and calculate area and perimeter), facades, mechanical or structural parts (and calculate moments of inertia), diagrams, field notes, and more. Users can then send drawings instantly via e-mail or FTP.



Finger CAD – FingerCAD has received 64 ratings with an average rating of 2.5 stars. It costs \$5.99 and is available only for the iPhone (OS 4.0) and iPad touch. This app allows you to draw houses, bridges, plans of apartments, mechanical components, geometrical figures and more using your finger. Final designs can be saved and delivered using email. This could be used by engineers, architects, surveyors and students.



REVITKeys – This is a simple reference app for AutoDesk Revit Architecture 2010. It includes 260 keyboard combinations separated into 14 categories. It's handy for Revit users "on the go." The app costs \$0.99 and works with the iPhone (OS 2.1 and after), iPad and iPod touch.



Google SketchUp Cookbook – A great app for intermediate and advanced SketchUp users. It provides step-by-step tutorials with detailed color graphics to help users solve design problems. It should be used by users looking to take their SketchUp design skills beyond the basics. The app is \$4.99, it has a good rating (3 out of 5 stars) and it's available on all devices (iPhone OS 2.0 and after).



iRhino 3D – This is a great app from Robert McNeel and Associates. It has a rating of 3.5 from 43 users. It allows you to view native Rhino 3DM files on your iPhone (OS 3.0 or later), iPad or iPod touch. Users can pan, zoom and rotate using typical iPhone commands. 3D models can be loaded from websites, Google Docs, email attachments (iPad only) or from iTunes (iPad only). The app costs \$3.99.

Calculators

Architecture



Architect's Formulator – This is the highest rated architecture calculator in the App Store. It has 17 ratings with an average rating of 3. However, "Architect's Formulator" is a bit of a misnomer. There are formulas for electricians, carpenters, plumbers and other trades. In total, there are 200 formulas, and 23 are designed specifically for architects. The app is \$9.99 and works with the iPhone (OS 2.2 and later), iPad or iPod touch.

Carpentry



Carpenter's Helper – There are both free and paid (\$14.99) versions of this app. It is easily the most popular carpentry app, and one of the most popular construction apps in general. There are over 1650 ratings of this app. It allows contractors to run multiple types of calculations for a variety of projects (e.g. decking, fencing, framing, and more). The app works on the iPhone (OS 3.0 and above), iPad and iPod Touch.

Carpet Estimating



Carpet Estimator – This is a great app from On Center Software, makers of On-Screen Takeoff Software. The app can be used by both do-it-yourselfers and professionals alike. It allows you to estimate cost and materials for carpet-laying jobs, store room estimates and specs, and even build reports all from your iPhone (OS 3.1.3 or later), iPad or iPod Touch. The app is only \$1.99 and has high customer ratings in the App Store.

Civil Engineering



Discharge Capacity – This is just one in a series of apps developed by Marui Civil Design & Engineering. They make several other useful apps (e.g. Coulomb's Earth Pressure, Simple Beams, Civil Curve). This allows users to compute discharge capacity using the formula of Manning's mean velocity. It costs \$1.99 and has an average user rating of 2.5 out of 5 stars.

Concrete



Concretulator – This is one of two popular and highly rated concrete calculator in the App Store. It allows users to determine how much concrete is required for a project (by cubic yard and the number of 40#, 60#, and 80# bags). It's a handy concrete calculator for DIYers and can be used by contractors as well. The cost is \$0.99; it has a rating of 5 stars, and; it works with iPhones (OS 3.1.2 or later), iPads and the iPod touch.



Concrete Calculator – This app has an average rating of 3.5 stars and has been reviewed 22 times. It calculates concrete for square or rectangular slabs, circular concrete slabs and concrete columns. The app costs \$0.99 and can be used on the iPhone (OS 2.0 or later), iPad and iPod touch.



Fast Concrete Pad Calculator – This is another concrete calculator for DIYers and contractors. In addition to calculating total cubic yards, it will determine the amount of lineal feet of rebar required and the cost. Users can even send an email with this information directly from the app. This costs \$0.99 and is available for the iPhone (OS 3.1.3 or later), iPad and iPod touch.

Drywall



Drywall Calculator – This is the highest rated drywall calculator in the App Store. It allows users to calculate how much drywall is needed for walls and ceilings (or both). After a user inputs their dimensions, the total square footage is calculated, along with the number of 4' x 8' drywall sheets required. The app is \$0.99, it has an average rating of 3.5 and it works with the iPhone (OS 2.2.1 or later), iPad and iPod touch.

Electrical



E-Calc – This allows electricians and electrical engineers to calculate many common formulas, including: the full load amperage of any transformer, number of wires you can fit into a given pipe and complex voltage drop calculations. There is one caveat: it's based on Canadian Electrical Code. Leave us a comment if you know an app based on US electrical code. It costs \$4.99.

Feet, Inches and Fractions



inchCALC – There are a number of calculators that will perform this simple function. However, this is likely the most widely used with over 3,130 ratings and an average user rating of 3 stars. This app allows you to perform simple math using the feet, inch, fraction format (as it appears on a tape measure). The latest version works on the iPhone (OS 3.1 or later), iPad and iPod touch.

General



BuildCalc – There are many positive reviews of this all-in-one or multipurpose construction calculator. It has a price tag of \$19.99, but it allows you to perform many different types of estimates and calculations, including: pitch, rise, run and diagonal right-angle calculations; rectilinear, cylindrical areas, and volumes, and; arcs, circumference, segments and arched rake-walls.

Lumber



LumberCalc – Allows you to convert a unit of lumber's given dimensions to board feet, and calculate order totals given an MBF price (MBF = Thousand Board Feet). It includes a paneling coverage estimator for common paneling profiles (e.g. tongue and groove, bevel siding, etc). Enter the square footage desired to cover, and you'll get the board feet needed to order, along with the dress width and the face width for that particular pattern.

Roofing



Roofing Calculator – A popular roofing app, this allows DIYers and contractors to estimate the number of roofing shingles, number of squares, or number of bundles for a job. Input the building's square footage, the roof's pitch and tap "Calculate." This app costs \$0.99 and works with iPhones (OS 2.0 or later), the iPad and the iPod Touch

Contract Maker



iQuick Contract Maker – This app allows users to create and email contracts to customers from your phone. The app uses templates and pre-written information for quick creation of a contract. It can also be used to customize contracts for your industry or trade. The app has been reviewed 13 times and has a good rating of 3.5 out of 5. It costs \$2.99 and is available for the iPhone (OS 3.1 or later), iPad and iPod touch.

Document Viewer



Drawvis – There are both free and paid versions of this app. The free version seems to be more popular with 259 ratings as compared to just 3 for the paid version. It allows you to view technical drawings (e.g. drawings from Autocad) so long as they are in DXF textual format. It can be used on the iPhone (OS 3.0 or later), iPad and iPod Touch.



iBlueprint – This app seems to have mixed reviews, but it has been rated by over 50 users, making it one of the more popular document-viewer apps in the market. iBlueprint allows users to create and export custom floor plans. It's handy for homebuyers and real estate agents, but can also be used by contractors for quick access to blueprints on the job site. It costs \$0.99 and can be used on the iPhone (OS 3.0 or later), iPad or the iPod touch.

Estimating



iQuick Estimator – This is one in a series of construction apps from iQuick Tools. It can perform simple estimates for framing, roofing, flooring, drywall, paint and concrete projects. After determining material and labor costs, you can email your bid directly from the app to your client. The app costs \$5.99. It has an average rating of 3 from 35 ratings. The latest version is only available for the iPhone (OS 4.0) and iPod Touch.



Fast Paint Calculator – This is a handy app for painters and finishing contractors that need to quickly calculate costs and materials of paint projects. Users can enter the dimensions of the room, enter the price per gallon of paint, then click calculate to determine the job cost. This information can then be emailed directly from the phone. This app costs \$0.99 and works with iPhones (OS 3.1.2 or later), the iPad or iPod touch.

LEED



EcoFlash BD+C Lite – This is a popular and highly rated flashcard app that will help you study for the LEED AP 2009 Building Design & Construction exam. It has an average user rating of 3.5 stars, it can be used on all devices (minimum iPhone OS requirement of 3.1.2) and best of all, it's free.



LEED AP Building Design + Construction – Similar to the previous app, this is designed to help construction professionals study for the LEED AP Building Design and Construction exam. The app includes 200 flashcards and a 100 question practice exam. It has received a 5 star rating by 2 reviewers and comes in at a cost of \$19.99.



Green Pro – This app gives architects, engineers, owners, and contractors the ability to both access and track LEED credits for New Construction and Major Renovations. Users can access information about credit requirements and indicate when a particular requirement has been met. The app costs \$3.99 and can be used on the iPhone (OS 3.1.2 or later), iPad and iPod Touch.

Level



sightLevel – This app popular among homeowners and DIYers, but it could be used on a job site when a normal level isn't available. It works by holding the phone in landscape view, tilting it until the bubble is centered, then using the horizontal red line to determine the slope. This could be used to determine if walls, dividers, fences, wall hangings, and picture frames are level. The app costs \$1.99. It 23 ratings and has an average of 2.5.

News



AEC Info – A simple news app that pulls architectural, engineering and construction industry news from Engineering News Record, Architectural Record, Builder Online and others. There are mixed reviews about this app, but it is one of the few apps that pulls news headlines in from multiple industries. The app is free and can be used on the iPhone (OS 3.0 or later), iPad and iPod Touch.

Plan Room



Mobile PlanRoom – This is the first official construction app for iPads. It allows architects, engineers and contractors to access drawings from the field without having to carry paper plans. It is designed to synchronize with www.BuilditLive.com, a web-based software application that allows project members to share drawings, specifications, and other electronic information. The app also works on iPhones (OS 3.2 or later).

Project Management



Procore – This is our favorite construction app. It allows users of Procore construction software to create, manage and share Procore project data from their phones. Specifically, users can create and manage punch list items, access contact data, share and store project photos, log time card entries and more. The Procore iPhone app has a rating of 4.5 and can be used on iPhones (OS 3.0 or later), iPads and iPod Touch.

Reference



I.D. Wood – This is a very popular app that is highly – and widely – rated. Not only is it an iTunes Staff favorite, but the app has been reviewed by BobVilla.com and "This Old House" staff. I.D. Wood helps users identify different types of woods from around the world. It presents screen samples and detailed information for almost 160 different woods. The app costs \$4.99 and is available on the iPhone (OS 3.0 or later), iPad and iPod Touch.



[steel] – This is a popular and highly rated reference tool about structural steel. It gives users access to the current and historic AISC Structural Steel Database, right from their phone. The developer claims it has "everything you will need when checking / drafting / designing a steel member." With over 60 ratings and a 4.5 rating, this is easy to believe. The app is \$4.99 and can be used on the iPhone (OS 3.0 or later), iPad and iPod touch.

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I want to add the app CartoMap CAD.

Comment by Edward Winter
August 25, 2010 @ 4:23 pm

Thanks Houston! Some great apps, many of which I have not had the time to analyze thanks to the library of 200,000 apps on itunes ;P
-Clark

Comment by clark morgan
August 26, 2010 @ 11:17 am

Vela Mobile: iPad enables construction team members to run checklists and create issues throughout all project phases – anywhere on the job site – with or without an Internet connection. Conduct QA/QC, Safety and Commissioning checklists and list work-to-complete or log punchlist issues while walking in the field so nothing gets forgotten or lost in translation. The simple, paper-like screens make it fast and easy to juggle with your other field tasks.

Comment by Gary Greenberger
August 26, 2010 @ 2:51 pm

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