



# Site-friendly technology comes to Construct Canada



**C**ontractors aren't reputed to be early adopters of IT. This might explain, at least partially, IT's diminutive presence at Construct Canada in Toronto last December—amongst hundreds of booths, only a scattering featured IT products.

However, regulators, suppliers, and large clients are forcing the issue, and digital documents are rapidly becoming the de facto standard. The challenge for contractors is that resistance remains high among the rank and file, especially in the field, and many of the digital systems still face a steep adoption curve.

Several vendors who appeared at the show are targeting this problem, tailoring their solutions to the archetypical site supervisor who has been in the industry for a few decades and has no time for technology.

## DIGITAL DEVICES

Austin, Texas-based Motion Computing Inc. is taking direct aim at the adoption issue with a family of site-friendly tablet computers. As Canada country manager Scott Ball explains, construction workers tend to leave their personal devices in the truck for a number of reasons—connectivity to the web is unreliable, particularly in sub-basements and in remote areas, many mobile apps call for too much keyboarding, or the device is likely to get damaged.

"Our biggest competition is pen and paper," says Ball. "What people will do is take a piece of paper with them, gather their information, and then come back to the truck, turn the computer on, and sit there and type."

The Motion Computing devices support the standard Windows operating system,

and are available with large touch screens for viewing and editing drawings. They are also robust enough to withstand tough environments.

The connectivity issue is handled through an offering called LINCWorks, a family of portable networking gear that sets up a wireless network on the jobsite and links it to the outside world. "It's wireless, cell, and mesh all in one," says Ball. "It allows us to create a mesh network over a site, but also connect out to the cell environment."

## DOCUMENTATION MADE EASY

Defects that were missed and that show up can be a supervisor's nightmare. Pascual, who began his career as an electrician, knew all about this when he co-founded Vancouver-based MultiVista Construction Documentation.

The Multivista application stores inspection photos and indexes the working drawings so they can be viewed in context. When the company was developing the product, the question of compliance came up. "Would contractors be consistent in taking photos and putting them in the system?"

"Excavation is critical—if you miss a certain section of wall, or if you miss a certain area of the building, then the software isn't going to save you," says Ball. Business development representative at MultiVista.

To fill this need, the company offers a complete photo documentation service. For the typical client, MultiVista photographers snap hundreds, or thousands, of jobsite photos at set points on a periodic basis.

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