

Digitizing Field Data: why is it so important?

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In any project management firm, 50% or more of employees are in the field. To be successful, firms need contract management software and field inspection software that will track the work of those employees accurately and convey that information to the back office smoothly. This generates enormous amounts of data in the form of reports and journals, and managing this data has traditionally been a difficult and tedious task. The variety of notebooks, clipboards, forms, field books, scribbled notes, sketches and other paper-based systems is truly amazing and a tribute to the ingenuity of contractors and consultants. However, anyone who's worked with paper-based systems will be the first to admit that they all have problems. They're slow to fill out, prone to transcription errors, can be hard to read, tedious to reenter into other systems, difficult to synchronize, and almost impossible to search and index. In short, paper-based field data

capture systems generate a lot of errors and you know what they say... garbage in equals garbage out.

There is a better way to capture, transmit, and organize field data. Capturing field data digitally eliminates all the downsides of paper-based systems and gives contractors, owners, and capital management companies enormous opportunities to create efficiencies that save time and money. For example, one firm that switched to inspection automation software reduced the time spent filling out inspection reports by 30%.

But all digital field data capture systems are not created equal. Excellent systems should meet most or all of the following criteria:

- **Standardized Forms and Collection:** Inspecting work and filling out forms is a common task on job sites, and inspection automation software is therefore one of the most important features to look for in a digital field data

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system. Forms should be easily filled out, mainly by use of check boxes and other interface features that minimize typing. These forms should be useable on a variety of devices, such as notebook and laptop computers, PDAs, and tablets.

- **Wireless Data Transmission:** If a digital field data system only speeds up field entry, it's missing a major opportunity to save time elsewhere. Since most modern job sites have wireless internet or cellular phone coverage, it makes sense for a field data system to transmit data to the office wirelessly with online project management software and hardware. This data can be transmitted immediately, thus keeping the back office in very close touch with field operations. It can also facilitate better onsite project management. On the other hand, since internet and cell phones can be unreliable, systems should be perfectly capable of working in offline modes.

- **Easily Customized:** Many reports and forms are standard, but all firms develop their own way of doing things. Good field data systems will have a variety of reports that can be used right away, but there should also be easy ways to customize reports—after all, you want your system to adjust to you, and not vice versa.

- **Integrates With Other Software:** Successful contractors and owners are likely to be using capital project management systems (CPMS) and

enterprise resource planning (ERP) software in addition to their building construction software. Since field data is integrated into these systems for analysis, reports, and archiving, field data capture should use standard data formats and integrate tightly with other systems. Ideally, field data capture should be a module or component of a CPMS.

- **Eliminates Re-entry:** To avoid data entry errors, there should never be a need for field data to be reentered after forms have been completed in the field. All subsequent reports that rely on field data should import the relevant data automatically, and this data should be archived in central data repositories and synchronized as needed.

- **GPS Compatible:** Since it is now routine for laptops and PDAs to be equipped with GPS location, good field data capture systems should automatically record this information where relevant. For example, automatic capture of coordinates at the time of data entry can verify that inspection reports were actually filled out in the field, and not in the truck or a coffee shop.

At Aurigo, we've built the field data capture module in our CPMS, from the ground up with the above requirements in mind. In fact, we have the best inspection automation software available, and our combination of power and customizability is unmatched. The Aurigo CPMS data capture

module can be used both stand-alone or as part of a comprehensive CPMS solution.

Simply put, Aurigo CPMS is the best available software for construction purposes. It is widely used and substantial data exists to verify cost savings and shortened project timelines. In fact, Tim Pratt, the CEIS manager of Lincoln, Nebraska, says that, "Aurigo CPMS has helped Lincoln to automate and streamline all of our estimation, bidding, contract management, and field inspection processes, and has increased productivity and information retrieval speed by almost 70%."

We hear that from owners and project managers all over the world, and we're confident that Aurigo CPMS can help you achieve similar results on your projects. Call us today for a free demonstration.