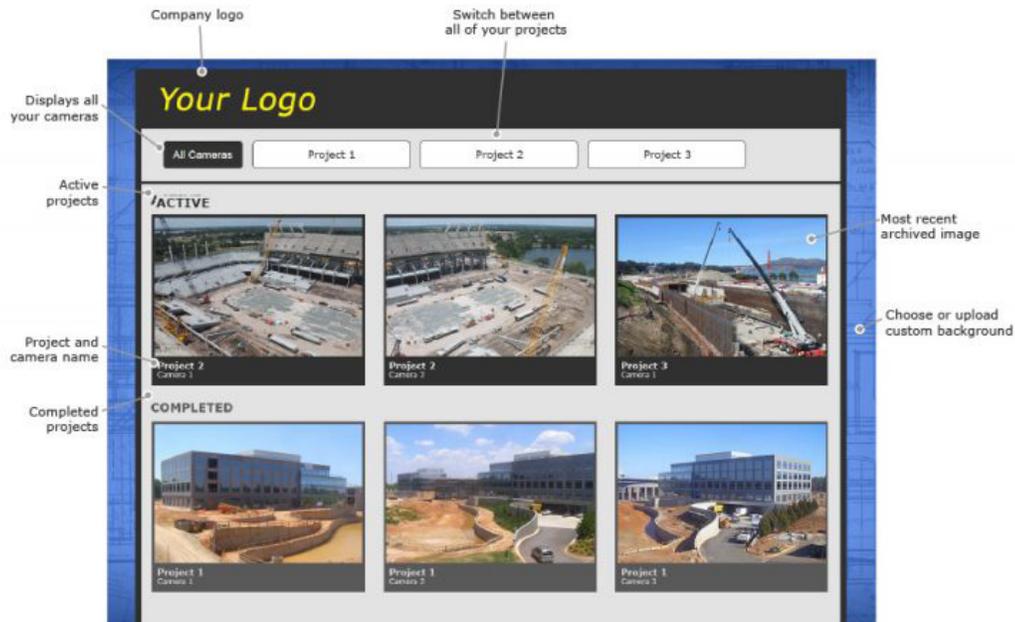


5 Super-Cool Construction Technology Innovations at Groundbreak 2017

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If you want an idea of how far construction technology has come in the last five years or so, you should've been at Procore's Groundbreak 2017 in Austin, Texas in late March.

Fortunately for you, I was, and I got to see all sorts of cool construction technology on display that I can share with you.

The exhibit hall the convention center in downtown Austin was packed with all sorts of companies showing off everything from data-processing tools to unmanned aircrafts. It was like Comic-Con for the construction industry, without the cosplay—unless you count the Mike Rowe lookalike. Oh wait, that was Mike Rowe, telling one of the most disgusting stories ever about his first “Dirty Jobs”-esque TV show in a San Francisco sewer in 2001. Trust me, it's not a tale you want to hear over lunch.

Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak also made an appearance, and Tan Le showed off Emotiv headgear that allows you to control things with your mind. It was a futurologist's dream.

But you probably care more about construction tech that might actually help you do your job better in the future. Here are the five that struck me the most.

1. Uplift Data Partners

(Hurricane Matthew Case Study: Drones Used for Efficient Damage Assessment — Uplift Data Partners)

Site surveys are tough, but today you have the option to do it via drone. One of the technologies Uplift Data Partners featured at the conference is a drone that can fly high above the site for you.

This isn't a do-it-yourself sort of project. Once the drone pulls in the data, Uplift uses a virtual canvas to lay out the project and allow construction teams to add it to their BIM models. It's primarily aimed at aiding construction managers in understanding where their projects stand and how much progress has been made.

But Uplift can also help you spot problems. For example, if you want to find leaks and cracks in your building, you can use the drone to conduct visual and thermal inspections.

The company claims the surveys are accurate to within four centimeters.

2. Botlink

If you want to do drone surveys yourself, consider Botlink, which allows you to take your own drone and fly it with Botlink's software—ideal if you like operating on your own schedule.

The software transforms your own drone into an automated data-gathering tool, so it doesn't need to be operated manually. After installing the software, you're able to choose what data you want to gather and set pre-planned routes, and the drone will do the rest.

The data is then uploaded to a cloud platform, and the software stitches together image files into high-definition maps. The software has a timeline feature so you can keep track of multiple maps from multiple flights.

The Botlink Capture app works with drone models including the Phantom 3 Pro, Phantom 4, Phantom 4 Pro, Inspire 1 V2.0, Inspire 1 Pro, Mavic Pro, and Matrice 100.

3. Work Zone Cam

Time lapses are just about the coolest thing in the construction industry: watching a project site go from a patch of dirt to a gleaming building in seconds is a pretty impressive thing to behold.

Most construction managers don't have the technology to make that happen, however, and have to contract it out for a premium. Work Zone Cam is offering an option for construction firms who want to create these time-lapse videos themselves. You install the camera in a place of your choice, and then when you're ready you can upload the images either to your own server for free, or you can upload it to a Work Zone Cam hosted service for a monthly fee, which comes with some additional bonuses like mobile support.

The Work Zone Cam has an 18-megapixel digital SLR camera and operates off of Verizon, Sprint, and global networks. It has a storage capability of 64 gigabytes and can operate on either solar or battery power.

4. Rhumbix

Rhumbix has partnered with Procore in a new effort to digitize all those time cards, forms, and miscellaneous data that pile up in a construction manager's office with data management that plugs right into Procore's project and document management software.

The aim of the technology is to completely digitize the jobsite and put you on a path toward going totally paperless, so perhaps one day you'll actually be able to see the top of your desk again.

By partnering with Procore, Rhumbix is hoping to find a way to better collect data through channels that people are using today.

Once that data is collected, you'll have endless options to comb through it and identify possible efficiency gains—assuming you can kick that habit of collecting papers.

Used Rhumbix? Leave a review!

5. Busybusy

Ever lose track of a backhoe, only to find out that one of your workers took it to a different site? Busybusy has developed what they're calling an "Equipment Tracking App," which aims to make all your equipment easily trackable through your mobile phone or tablet. It's part of a trend that is starting to take hold in the construction industry called "geofencing."

The app uses GPS tracking to keep tabs on your equipment, and operator reports give you a breakdown of where it is, who operated it last, how many hours have been logged on it, and even how much fuel it has.

Beyond allowing you to track your equipment, it also aims to provide you with vital data that could help improve your project's efficiency. Busybusy also offers tools for payroll and time clocks.

Used Busybusy? Leave a review!

Other new construction technology?

Groundbreak was big this year, but undoubtedly there were a lot of cool technologies that didn't make it to the show floor. What interesting new technological tools or construction software do you know of that could help construction managers in ways they didn't realize? Please feel free to share your knowledge below.