

Coordinating construction through the cloud

The construction industry is highly collaborative. Building specialists such as builders, tradespersons and contractors work together through the different stages of design, tendering, construction and fit-out to complete a project.

The online 'cloud' service, also known as managed services or software-as-a-service (SaaS), is delivered through web-based software that allows everybody involved in a project to share the same documents, plans and project information in real time over the internet.

High-speed broadband will enable a new generation of cloud services to be used by the construction industry.

Online project management

RCQ Pty Ltd, a large construction company in Townsville, administers six to eight building sites at any one time. 'These days, the internet and mobile phone network is the nervous system that keeps projects functioning efficiently', said Justin Stainton, Project Manager. 'There is more pressure on builders than ever before to meet completion targets and many contracts include damages for overruns. So we have to be able to keep everybody up to date with plans.'

RCQ uses a fee-based SaaS online system for document and construction management across all of its projects. The system allows project managers and contractors to share project documents and plans online, simply and easily, at any time.

When people make a change to documents or schedules, it is made once and for everybody. All members of the project are notified of the change straight away by SMS or email. The service provides the benefits of project-wide record keeping and document management, and improved communication for RCQ's project teams.

Affordable, efficient technology

Construction management software was once only something for big builders, but with major advances in the way that buildings are now designed, including the use of 3D, 4D and 5D computer-aided design (CAD) files, everybody is beginning to see real benefits from the new technologies.

With the emergence of mobile broadband and the impending National Broadband Network (NBN), which will provide speeds of up to 1 gigabit per second, builders of all sizes are considering using the software. As it is available as a cloud-based service, it has become affordable for trade contractors as well.

'Over the course of a job, you could be saving hundreds of hours by having high-speed connections to the sites', said Justin Stainton of RCQ. 'So you can see why the NBN is so important to us and our industry.'

The NBN will provide high-speed connection to educational facilities, businesses and homes right across Australia. The Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation aims to promote and encourage the adoption and best use of broadband communications by Queensland businesses and industry sectors, to create a competitive digital economy.