

PlanGrid builds culture of transparency at SAM Drylining

SAM Drylining is a specialist contractor that has been operating in the Rhondda Valley, Wales for over ten years. The company specialises in suspended ceilings and partitions, completing projects including the refurbishment of hospitals, schools and offices. The company employs 200 workers in the region and is focused on continuing to deliver construction excellence across South Wales, South West England and the UK as a whole.



The problem

Kyle Spiller joined SAM Drylining in 2013 as a director and shareholder, focusing on the company's commercial performance. Although he was very proud to join a successful business in his home town, he quickly noticed that the company was frequently experiencing challenges in communication between the head office and jobsites.

A major part of the problem was SAM Drylining's continuing reliance on paper for its on-site documentation. Site drawings, change notifications, compliance records and health and safety information were all printed, delivered to the sites and completed or annotated by hand. The company frequently experienced a breakdown in communications, when the team responsible for the commercial management of the business simply weren't aware of what was actually happening on the ground.

"We were constantly running into difficulties where issues on sites were reported too late or not at all," Kyle recalled. "It could take days, weeks or even months to pass the necessary information between individual sites and the head office, which could create a real divide between project teams and the head office. Our quantity surveyors simply weren't fully aware of the actual progress on a project or the status on the site."

These communication problems had serious financial implications for the business.

Quantity surveyors were left with gaps in their information and were not always able to inform clients of changes to projects in the timeframe agreed in their contracts meaning the business was frequently losing its entitlement to be paid for work when it was completed.

At the end of a project, key documentation, including health and safety records, did not always get back to the head office for the necessary compliance checks. This could leave SAM Drylining exposed in the event of any dispute with clients or employees.

Kyle was keen to find a digital solution that would improve communication and collaboration within SAM Drylining and benefit the company's overall performance.



The solution

Kyle spent 12 months looking for a digital platform to improve information-sharing between the head office and project sites. He considered the software that SAM Drylining already used to support the business with pricing on projects, but he found that it did not have the functionality to keep project drawings up to date.

Kyle saw a sales demo on PlanGrid and found that the cloud-based platform delivered every aspect that the business was looking for, including storing all key site documentation in one place, the ability to share and update drawings instantly and a change management tool to tag issues directly onto drawings. The project manager could easily record and communicate changes on the site using an iPad, while the head office would be able to access the latest information on a project at any time. Kyle was impressed by how easy PlanGrid would be to use, which was a major factor in his decision.

SAM Drylining first implemented PlanGrid in June 2018, following a training session with all project managers hosted at the local football club during the annual company seminar. The first project was a new build primary school in the town of Croesyceiliog, where the business was working for a tier 1 contractor. The project manager was issued with an iPad that provided access to all the information needed for the job.

The team was immediately impressed by how PlanGrid could improve productivity on their jobs. "Previously our project managers complained that they were constantly bombarded with paperwork and important information could take months to pass between the project site and the office. Now that information can be shared instantly, no matter where they are in the country. Our project managers could see immediately how it would help them to improve efficiency on the jobsite."



The solution integrated perfectly with the existing systems at the head office and subsequently every new project has been set up with PlanGrid. Importantly the platform is enabling SAM Drylining to undergo a process of standardisation in the business. This means that all project information is being stored and generated in a single, reliable format on the platform, which makes it consistently easy for teams to interpret. In addition, all processes are clearly defined, so that teams spend less time figuring out the best way to approach work. In the long term, this will significantly improve the business' efficiency and ensure that best practices are applied to every job.

Adoption has gone extremely well because of PlanGrid's ease of use. Many of the project managers have worked in the construction industry for many years and were not very confident using technology, like laptops, on jobs. However, the vast majority already use iPhones and iPads in their personal lives, so were much more comfortable with PlanGrid from the beginning.

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“Our project managers were already familiar with lots of the functions on the platform. The overall ease of use gave them a high level of confidence and has helped them to embrace PlanGrid.”

— **Kyle Spiller**

Director, SAM Drylining Ltd



Results

Kyle has been delighted at how PlanGrid has helped to create a change in mindset throughout SAM Drylining, by establishing a culture of transparency. Teams are encouraged to be open and upfront about the status of work, while management are able to check the progress on projects instantly. Since implementing PlanGrid, there is a greater sense of collaboration throughout the business. As everything can be shared instantly, issues can be identified and resolved much more quickly.

"The transparency that PlanGrid has brought to the business is absolutely priceless," said Kyle. "We can see everything that's been done in just a couple of clicks. It's transformed the mindset on jobsites and has definitely boosted our productivity."

PlanGrid has similarly helped to improve communication with clients, which is critical to SAM Drylining's success as a subcontractor. When the business relied on paper, there was a risk that important documents could be lost, leading to tension or even conflict. Now, with PlanGrid, all parties have access to digital copies that can be easily checked to resolve any queries. Project teams feel more confident reporting changes to the client and can report on projects in a timely and productive manner. PlanGrid helps to show clients that SAM Drylining is an innovative, forward-facing construction company and sets the business apart from the local competition.

Kyle and the team find using PlanGrid extremely helpful and they are still discovering new ways that the tool can help them on a daily basis. The platform helps to create a more engaging way of working and supports the professional development of project managers. SAM Drylining will continue to use PlanGrid on all new projects.

As the process of standardisation continues, the business will see further improvements in productivity and communication and will also benefit from the creation of a store of data which can inform improvements to operations in the long term. The focus is now ensuring that everyone in the business is using the tool in the same way, with a key target for success being internal compliance on 90% of all projects in 12 months' time.

How much SAM Drylining has gained from PlanGrid was underlined by a recent project, when a client requested that the team use their own management system – and go back to paper. The team found it a very difficult experience, emphasising the advantages of the new way of working with PlanGrid.

Key Results

- **5 projects** run on PlanGrid
- **218 sheets** uploaded
- **411 photos** on record

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“Once you're used to an iPad, you really don't want to go back to carrying a pen around and making notes by hand. Having to go back to paper served as a real reminder that there are much better ways of doing things. Using PlanGrid is much better for the teams and for the business – and we won't be going back.”

— **Kyle Spiller**

Director, SAM Drylining Ltd

