How an innovative building surveying team leverages construction technology to excel in the industry

The three partners of KRT Building Consultants have over 70 years of experience in building surveying between them. If that vast wealth of experience has taught them anything, it is to be open to new technology that can maximise their time and increase their efficiency. Doing so helps them compete at the top of New Zealand's building surveying industry.

KRT's services include providing building management advice, maximising the value of new and existing buildings for property owners and project managing both new builds and refurbishments. However, KRT is growing a strong business line around the implementation of quality assurance programmes to ensure potential quality issues are addressed at the earliest opportunity. This "prevention is better than cure" mindset helps the project team deliver a high-quality end product with a greatly reduced risk of latent defects, legal claims and expensive repairs in years down the line.

The inefficiencies of construction quality control began to add up

Construction quality control inspections are a detailed and time-consuming process. A building's defects must be evaluated accurately and the solutions to fixing them need to be implemented thoroughly before building handover.

KRT's projects can be heavy with paperwork and physical media. This results in a labour-intensive workload when evaluating a jobsite, distilling all the information into an easily digestible report and distributing it to contractors, engineers and clients.

KRT required a way to streamline the traditional "camera and site notes" process, proving the project team with accurate information in real time and delivering high-quality and cost-effective service.

"In the old days, you would take a series of photos and make site notes, run back to the office, do all the mark-ups and so on," says Keith Rankine, a Director of KRT. "I would need to download all of the photographs, individually insert them into a document and dictate all the descriptions so someone could type it all up for me."

"We needed a faster way of reporting QA issues," says Peter Grantham, a Director of KRT. "We tried using iPads to take pictures and notes on site, but compiling the reports was still too slow and cross-referencing exactly where the issues were located on site was still time-consuming. We needed a process where information could be delivered quickly into cohesive daily reports that looked professional."

Distribution of those reports was also a problem. KRT needed a central online repository where they could store all the information related to an ongoing job, and easily access photos, drawings and reports.

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— **Keith Tickner**
Director KRT

Onboarding a technology solution to improve the project workflow

KRT began to research mobile software solutions to see what would fit their needs. The company quickly discovered that PlanGrid was the best product for the team to log issues and upload documents for contractors to access. It made everyone's lives easier on a jobsite.

Peter notes, "We can record a QA issue on the tablet on site, take a photograph and easily locate it on a floor plan or elevation. This makes it easy for the team to know "what" and "where" the issue is. In addition, when we're reviewing drawings or plans, we can mark-up our concerns with commentary that can be easily interpreted. It cuts down on the time spent going back and forth between people in the field and the office."

Keith Tickner, a Director of KRT, found that he didn't even need to take something as large as a tablet to site. PlanGrid ran easily on his smartphone making it easy for him to gather the information he needed for a recent survey of internal finishes and electrical layouts in a block of apartments due to be refurbished.

"Using the smartphone to conduct the survey made me more productive onsite. It was really easy to zoom in on a particular detail in a specific apartment," Keith Tickner stated. "I could quickly photograph the exact window, socket outlet, floor area or the fixtures and fittings we needed to survey, link the photo to an exact location on the floor plan and add additional commentary where necessary. It helped me get through 60 apartments in one day."

Keith Tickner then sent the information to the design team and contractor working on the apartments. This helps them gain a better understanding of the scope of internal works required and agree on lump sum costs for many aspects of the works that would traditionally have been covered by provisional sums.

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Saving time, saving money

Cutting down on all the administrative headaches that came with how they did things "in the old days" also meant cost savings for KRT and its clients.

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Peter Grantham concurs with this assessment: "I used PlanGrid for 12 months and recognised the potential time it could save us. We're a three-team startup company, and now we are all saving time on projects by using the software, we can pass these efficiencies onto our current and potential clients."

He adds, "We even had a contractor who was so impressed with what we were achieving in terms of professional-looking documentation, increased efficiency and cost savings that they purchased PlanGrid for their business."

KRT has only begun to harness PlanGrid's potential to help grow its business. Having achieved great advances in communication and efficiency while saving money, the company would now like to make use of the other features of the software on other current and future projects.

KRT hopes to use PlanGrid on other consultancy work, including assessing maintenance needs and costs for buildings, managing projects and administering contracts plus helping property owners and insurance companies with evaluations of the causes of damages from insured events. No matter how varied the work, KRT hopes to unlock similar achievements by using PlanGrid to make the company work, faster and smarter.

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Collaboration Stats

- **3,000+** Tasks and Issues Tracked

- **700+** Annotations

- **4,000+** Photos Created