

How Fortis Group Uses PlanGrid to Improve Project Communication and Relationships

If you have ever set foot in anything from retail or restaurant to industrial facility in Ontario, you can probably thank Fortis Group. The Canadian company is a leading full-service contractor that has designed and built over two million square feet of retail, commercial, recreational and industrial space. Fortis takes control of every phase of a project, from conception to close-out. So, the company is always looking for innovative solutions to help it #BuildStrong. PlanGrid is one such solution.



Empowering Fortis Employees in the Field

The problem for Fortis was simple. The company needed a way to quickly transmit information from the office to job sites and to subcontractors as they worked on projects. Fortis didn't want to force an unproven solution on their team. Instead, the company's field staff went to work looking for applications that could be tested in the field.

"We wanted the employees to pick the tech that would make their job easier and fit seamlessly into their day to day operations," says Joe Maertens, Fortis' Vice President of Field Operations.

To that end, several Senior Site Supervisors sought out a solution. After testing out different options, the clear recommended path was PlanGrid. Maertens had the IT Department load PlanGrid onto iPads and sent them to the foremen at several job sites as a trial. Then he stepped back and let the employees determine the ways in which they wanted to use the software.

"We didn't want to set parameters or overcomplicate things," Maertens says. "Just let the staff use it as needed, evaluate it and determine the parts that work best for them."

The trial period lasted for four months. In that time, Fortis saw a vast improvement in the speed of communication between the office and the field. Site supervisors who had once needed a project manager to email them important documents could now simply look them up on iPads that were constantly with them and readily available at all times.

Now all the field staff who need an iPad loaded up with PlanGrid, have one. And that has made all their lives easier.



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— **Joe Maertens**
Vice President of Operations, Fortis Group

Better Communications, Best Results

Any construction project generates lots of paperwork. There are timesheets and equipment checklists. There are punch lists of work completed and work still to be done. There are RFIs and updated schedules and design changes, all of which needs to be distributed to a swath of subcontractors and workers.

With PlanGrid, all of that information is captured and stored on a tablet. There is no more need to go rooting through piles of paper or email folders to find old plans and compare them to new ones. And it is easy to share information even if a subcontractor is not using PlanGrid.

Rob Chatel is a Site Supervisor for Fortis Group, so he spends more time on work sites than anyone. And when he runs into a challenge, he can solve it right then and there.

"I had to explain to a subcontractor how we wanted a wood canopy building done...the angle, the way the wood needed to be cut, the dimensions," he says. "I pulled up the site plan on my iPad, used the

measurement tool to scale it and the highlighting tool to show exactly where on site I wanted it. We could scale it out right then and there and then email the equipment rental company on the spot to tell them how much fencing we were going to need. No one had to go searching for information and then come back to double-check it. And having that visual reference right there was great."

Another time, a subcontractor had not opened an email containing a change order to build and paint a room. Chatel was able to show him the change order on his tablet and make sure the job got done right.

"From a conflict resolution perspective," he states, "it helps that all of the information is accessible anywhere immediately."

Chatel estimates PlanGrid saves him up to two hours a day finding information and communicating with people. And saved a few confrontations along the way.

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Site Supervisor, Fortis Group



Improving Relationships with Clients

Fortis prides itself on its use of best practices in its business, and PlanGrid helps the company show that to its clients.

This starts in the bidding stage, when Fortis shows prospective customers how PlanGrid has helped integrate its office and field operations in order to bring projects in on time and under budget.

"Sharing how we use PlanGrid proves to the client that communication is key; that we're innovative in that respect," Maertens says. "We invest heavily in technology since it's a proven method of improving communication and maximizing production. Our ownership group allows us to do this because they recognize the value in it."

Once Fortis wins a bid, clients get to see PlanGrid in action all during the building process, too. Those with little or no background in construction might have trouble visualizing a project or see something on a site

that they don't understand. When that happens, Chatel will pull out his iPad and show the customer sketches or other visuals that Fortis is using to bring the owner's vision to life. If the client is concerned that some detail is wrong, he can pull up a project's specs and double-check it on the spot. If the client is elsewhere, Chatel can turn documents into pdf files and email them right away.

Having this capability sets not only the client's mind at ease, but Chatel's as well.

"I feel that much more organized and aware onsite now," Chatel says. "PlanGrid gives me more freedom to focus and work on other things."

Collaboration Stats

- 25,100+ Markups
- 17,000+ Progress Photos
- 4,700+ Field Reports

