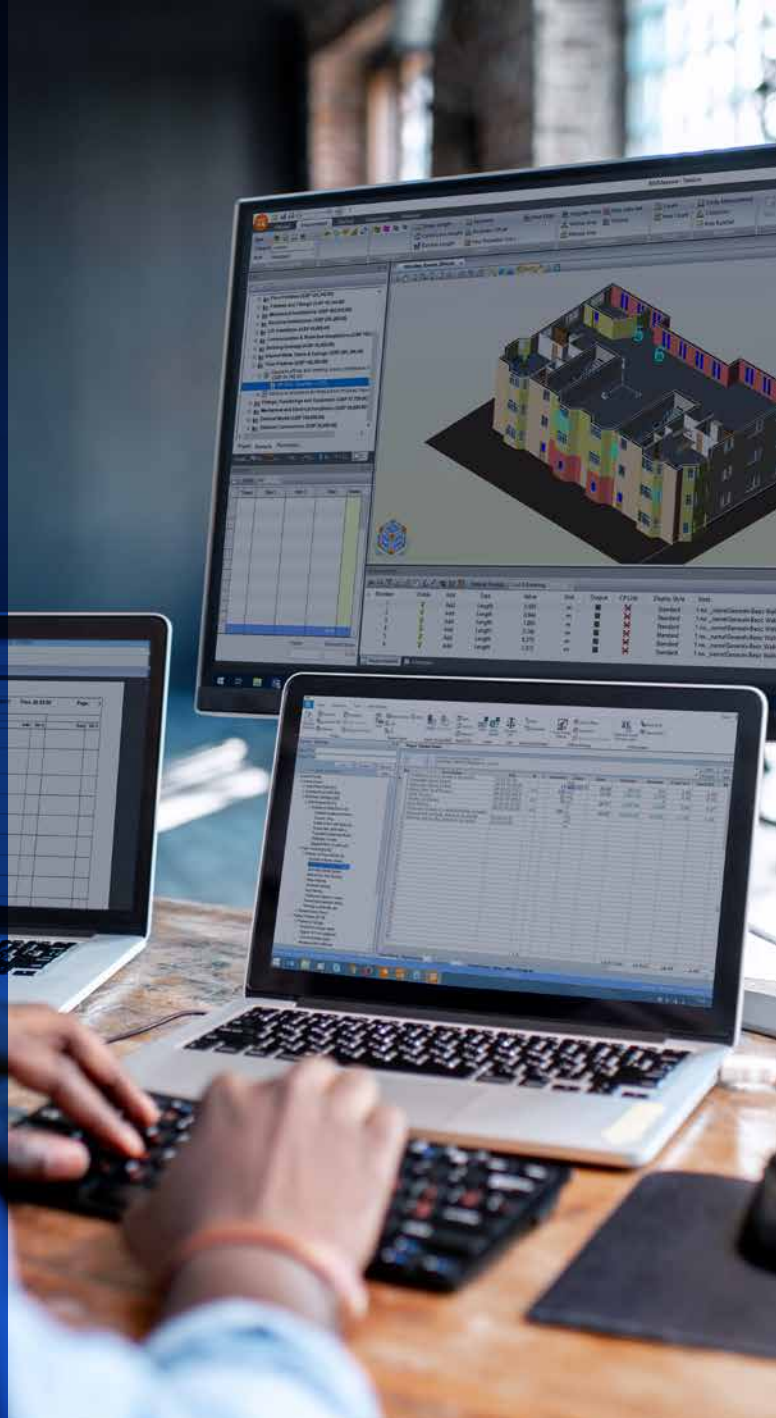


# Hidden Assets

How cost consultants can turn cost data into increased client value





Many cost consultants turn their backs on the hidden asset of historic cost data – now **dormant and unused** in forgotten files and folders.

## Cost data matters

Cost planning is more than simply a 'stage' that happens between design and delivery. It ensures that design develops in line with the budget and sets the benchmark against which contractor selections are made.

Cost planning forms a vital part of design development and relies on both professional judgement and, perhaps more importantly, the ability to draw on cost data. Indeed, the value of the service provided by many of today's cost consultants may often be compromised through the lack of cost data.

The broad impact of good cost planning has extended the boundaries of the traditional Quantity Surveyor (QS) role. Most Professional Quantity Surveyors (PQS) working in consulting today would agree that cost planning is a tipping point around which projects succeed or fail. It is the point at which the theory of a design is transformed into the reality of a feasible delivery plan. It adds vital cost insights that educate the client, influence further design development and force important early decisions about the overall approach.

Timely, accurate cost planning and smart consulting around cost factors should be considered not just as a process stage, but as strategic activity that holds vast potential to add value to client thinking, deepen client understanding of the challenge, inform client decision-making and improve client visibility of their project in its critical planning stages.

Unfortunately, it often isn't always recognised as such. Nor are all cost planning service providers and consultants fully aware or equipped to take advantage of the opportunity that exists in their business to add maximum value to clients. They are not just missing out on potential new profit opportunities, but may be accepting unseen risk and wasting significant time and money by managing cost data in unfit systems.

**Many cost consultants are turning their back on the huge hidden asset that is their historic cost data and previous project experience that is lying dormant in forgotten files and folders.**



# Construction is changing

Time is running out for construction sector businesses that fail to recognise the importance of grasping the digital opportunity – and those that do not will find themselves falling further behind in an increasingly tough economy. The pressure is on for all construction businesses.

**The construction sector is on a path not just to digital transformation but to standardisation.**

Both aspects have become critical, as the sector makes efforts to fix its productivity and efficiency issues. The recession, coupled with the revelations of the Farmer Review<sup>1</sup> and subsequent analyses, started a cascade of change. The strategic aim of the Government's BIM mandate was not simply to force modernisation and 3D modelling into the process, but to encourage the transferability and longevity of asset data, from design through delivery and into the operational lifecycle.

**Every player in the construction value chain is affected.**

The Digital Built Britain<sup>2</sup> strategy predicted that many traditional roles would ebb away, including the quantity surveyor, as digitisation increased. The direction of travel was only reinforced via the 2018 Industrial Strategy and its accompanying Construction Sector Deal<sup>3</sup>. It has made every construction business focus to some degree on how to prepare for the digital business era, and better manage and gain business value from its own data, in pursuit of reducing the cost and boosting the efficiency of construction and asset lifecycles.

**A more structured approach to data is becoming a business essential.**

It is not just construction giants that must take action, because capturing data in consistent ways that are shared by all your professional team, and in ways that can integrate with external sources, is key to creating aggregated information for benchmarking, which can be used to accelerate future cost consulting businesses that are fit for the future.

**It is becoming essential that cost consultants have the right platforms in place, not just to deliver cost services into digital and BIM-compliant projects, but to deliver a return on their existing investment in this hidden data asset.**

1. "Modernise or Die" – the Farmer Review of the UK Construction Labour Model

2. Digital Built Britain – Level 3 BIM Strategic Plan

3. HM Government Industrial Strategy – Construction Sector Deal



The right cost planning platform helps you deliver a return on investment in cost data and increase client value.

# Spreadsheets create risk

When cost consultants rely on generic software like spreadsheets, they tie up professional QS resources on mundane tasks instead of enabling them to put their experience to more valuable work.

Spreadsheets such as MS Excel remain a standard go-to tool for professionals who deal with any aspect of financial information. Cost planners are no exception, and many have become adept at creating and maintaining highly complex workbooks, manipulating formulae and creating macros to manage their jobs.

**Excel's availability on the MS Office desktop makes it seem free – but it isn't.**

**Holding data in documents enables rampant duplication.** The cost of using it is steeper than you think. The fact that data is held in documents without calling on a central cost database drives inevitable and rampant duplication and undisciplined storage spread around your IT estate. Your data is not just on your server, but on laptops, USB drives, personal cloud storage accounts and attached to emails on numerous accounts – and even in some cases within dusty hardcopy files.

**Every element and price must be looked up individually and manually entered.** This is highly inefficient and time consuming, requiring the user to switch between Excel and reference sources including pricing databases and libraries, and can be prone to user error.

**Spreadsheets were also never designed to be used as databases.** They were designed to hold numbers and calculations, but not for data extraction other than via standard exports. They are virtually impossible to query from the outside, other than via clunky Windows searches. This means that work is effectively invisible, un-auditable, and the cost implications of changes are hard to track.

**The easy and ubiquitous accessibility of spreadsheets is a problem in disguise.**

Just because you can create complex, linked networks of sheets doesn't make them a good solution for complex, linked cost data. It is too easy to amend, edit, add and delete content, columns, and calculations such as sub-totals. Errors are common, which means time-consuming comp-checks. Plus, their flexibility works directly against consistency: even when company templates are agreed, they rarely stay standardised in practice.

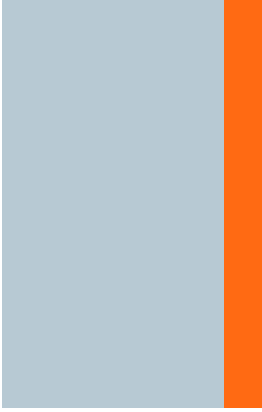
**Documents such as spreadsheets are highly insecure repositories for valuable data.**

Documents created by desktop software such as MS Word or Excel are too easy to attach to emails, send to personal cloud storage or download to USB drives. This creates risk if valuable company data and insight become visible to competitors or in the public domain.

**Spreadsheets may well be a repository of the majority, if not all, your cost data. Invisible. Insecure. Un-queryable. Un-auditable. Un-standardised. Unreliable.**

Spreadsheets may well be a repository of the majority, if not all, your cost data.

**Invisible. Insecure.  
Un-queryable. Un-auditable.  
Un-standardised. Unreliable.**



You can re-use, re-base, re-normalise and re-purpose data, then benchmark against a growing body of trusted data.

## Unleash the value

Effortless access to historic cost data enables cost consultants not just to speed up their delivery process and boost team efficiency, but also to enhance their ability to serve and advise clients better and faster.

**The ability to re-use, re-purpose and benchmark against a growing body of carefully measured, accurately priced and highly trusted information can be turned to your advantage to:**

- Deliver faster and more accurate order of cost estimates and projections based on historic cost data mapped to industry standard figures and client specific classifications, accurately informed by your real experience of risk and challenges.
- Focus the investment of QS time where it can add maximum value in terms of value engineering and value-based consulting advice.
- Enable a QS to spend less time on sourcing or searching databases – or, worse, dusty files – for pricing information, and more time using it and levying their expert judgement.
- Allow consulting teams to produce order of cost estimates and cost plans faster, and therefore at lower cost, with the opportunity to process more projects each month.
- Process more projects in the same timeframe or with the same resources, as every stage of the cost planning process is speeded up by effortless access to previous project data.
- Improve costing accuracy as estimates and cost plans are based on actual experience and benchmarked against re-based, re-normalised data, for validation with external benchmarks.
- Close information gaps when creating cost plans for early-stage projects when data is often insufficient. Instead, benchmark with your own accessible, standardised historic data instead of relying on educated estimation and external benchmarks.
- Build a trusted, and marketable, benchmark database focused on your area(s) of specialism, such as high-end residential or commercial construction, around which you can create a proprietary knowledgebase and services.



## Overcoming barriers

The pressured and competitive world of independent consultancy will often mean your team is busy – and keeping them that way always feels important!

There is often concern about the delay, pain and cost of change, and the discomfort of losing familiar ways of working.

Yet the historic cost information that you have gathered and reported via all your past projects represents an irreplaceable and valuable knowledgebase. You have already spent significant time and money building it, even if you didn't recognise it at the time.

With margins always tight, maximising the value of your existing investments, as well as building on them, is the smart thing to do. Leaving that data to age instead of putting it to work is a huge waste.

The time and cost of change may be far less than you assume – and the payback far greater. It simply takes a leap of faith, for the future of your business.

Capturing your cost data as part of the process also removes the pain often associated with lifting the information required from each completed project.

Moving to a digital cost planning platform may seem daunting, but it is likely to be far simpler than you think. While setting standards for capturing future data in a consistent and defined way may be easier, historic cost data does require normalising to be usable – but with modern platforms, much of that process can be automated too.

Moving to a digital cost planning platform may seem daunting, but is likely to be **far simpler than you think.**



# 7 steps to unlock your future

Implementing a purpose-designed cost planning solution is a project that you can move forward faster and with less stress than you may imagine. Like any change, it simply requires a clear process to be outlined. These are some of the critical steps:

- 1 First, find your data** – one of the main challenges we see among our new customers is that the first task is to work out where valuable historic cost data is buried. It is often not just held in spreadsheets but filed in hard copy, stored on USBs and left on laptops. Remember that once you have created your initial library of legacy cost data, adding to it is simple and often seamless!
- 2 Focus on value** – the second is to make some clear, upfront decisions about what data is most valuable, so that you can focus on surfacing data from projects that typify your most common activities, or which hold the most business potential, instead of attempting to locate and transfer all of your past cost information including small run-of-the-mill projects.
- 3 Choose the right platform** – you need one that has been developed for your needs. Look for a platform that not only gives you full cost planning functionality and easy take-off tools but has seamless integration with essential databases and measurement libraries. You need the efficiencies of a custom platform alongside an intuitive user interface and easy-to-use tools.
- 4 Choose the right provider and partner** – not only one with a track record of supporting businesses like yours, but one which can demonstrate integrated capabilities and offers for each stage of the construction lifecycle, rather than providing point solutions in isolation. That way you can select and configure the best cost planning solution that meets the needs of your entire business.
- 5 Transition your data** – good solutions will allow you to import data direct from spreadsheets, to minimise the time and effort of transitioning. Choose the right partner, and they can help you to expedite and complete your data transfers faster than you imagine is possible.
- 6 Train your team** – make it easy for your team to do things differently by planning early training around how the software will support core business processes. Emphasise the ease and speed they will gain, rather than the angst of letting go of their spreadsheet habits. Ask your software provider what they can do to help you reduce resistance and concerns about the transition.
- 7 Build your business** – with unfettered access to cost data, plus software to increase the speed and efficiency of your cost planning capabilities, you can enhance services and explore opportunities. Consider the potential of design engineering, cost modelling and dynamic analytics to increase your service value and scope, increase margins and drive increased profitability.



Unlock historic cost data to deliver faster, assure accuracy, and boost value in order to **delight clients and build your reputation.**

## Time to transform

Every business leader is realising that digital change is an inevitability, and those within the construction business are under particular pressure to update ways of working and managing information, to operate in a sector that is poised for disruption and change via adoption of digital technologies. Turning your valuable body of work into a true business asset by surfacing all of its hidden data is a strategic move that complements this perfectly.

Unlocking the value of accessible, usable, benchmarked, structured historic cost data can transform cost consulting businesses to deliver more value at any stage of the construction process.

Whether you are delivering pre-contract consulting services or supporting your client throughout the design and build, the assurance of having your own firm foundation of data on which to build and communicate new value should not be underestimated.

With more information at your fingertips, you can create new services that truly showcase your expertise in your specialism or target sector and differentiate your firm from the competition. With better and more accurate information, you can create more complete, robust and highly defensible costings that will stand out from the crowd and keep clients coming back.

By failing to act to unlock the value of your historic data, you risk falling behind in a competitive marketplace in which clients are increasingly looking for maximum possible value in every engagement. That could mean reduced market share, potential client loss, and missing out on new opportunities. However, building a reputation for service excellence, a body of delighted client testimonials, and a track record of accuracy in every cost activity you undertake, can push your business out in front and win you all the clients you could hope for.



# Unlock your hidden assets with CATO

Causeway's integrated cost management platform provides a single solution to meet the needs of major cost consultants and smaller consulting practices. It offers a comprehensive solution that enables cost advice and management to be provided quickly, consistently, at the lowest price and at the highest quality.

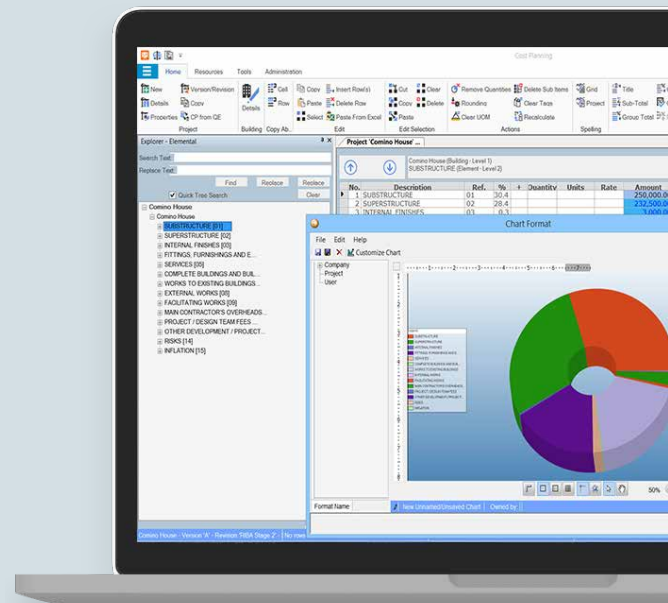
Causeway's CATO cost management suite is in use by some of the leading cost consultants and construction businesses around the world because it provides cost consulting businesses with capabilities such as:

- Collaboration between users working together on projects
- Enhanced visibility of performance within and across projects
- Easily use current pricing through seamless links to pricing services
- Minimise risk with built-in safeguards, verifications and checks
- Protect and build your reputation with consistent reporting
- Efficiency is enhanced by eliminating needs for time consuming comp-checks

**Discover more at:**

[www.causeway.com/products/cost-planning](http://www.causeway.com/products/cost-planning)

Essential, Professional and Enterprise level bundles provide options to adapt the end-to-end capabilities of the **Causeway Cost Planning Suite** to your individual requirements.



# Ready to unleash your data?



## Get in touch today

Ask us how we can help you to unlock the hidden value of your historic cost data and create a platform for valuable and profitable cost consulting client services.

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## Why talk to us?

Causeway is helping solve construction's biggest needs by helping transform the commercial performance across the front line of our customers' businesses. Our software and services help businesses across the construction industry realise the benefits of digital transformation today. Our construction software solutions are built upon years of deep knowledge and hard-won experience in the industry. We provide solutions that span the complete life cycle of the built environment, so that you always have our expertise to fall back on – whatever stage of the process you call your own.



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